

Minutes of the 60th SCQF Partnership Board held on Wednesday 08 December 2022 at 15.00 hours and at SCQF Partnership Conference Room, 201 West George Street, Glasgow, G2 2LW and also via video conference

Confirmed

Present:

Rob Wallen (RW)	Chair SCQF Partnership
Stuart McKenna (SMcK)	STF
Alastair Delaney (AD)	QAA
Jim Metcalfe (JM)	College Development Network
Alastair Sim (AS)	Universities of Scotland
Malcolm Foley (MF)	Chair of Quality Committee
Gill Stewart (GS)	SQA
Pauline Radcliffe (PR)	Scottish Government

In Attendance:

Elizabeth Shevlin (LS) for Items 1-3	SFC
Aileen Ponton (AP)	SCQF Partnership
Sheila Dunn (SD)	SCQF Partnership
Julie Cavanagh (JC)	SCQF Partnership
Beverley Wallace (BW) (Secretariat)	SCQF Partnership
Laura Wilding (LW) for Item 6 only	SCQF Partnership

Welcome and introductions

RW welcomed all to the meeting and also welcomed PR from Scottish Government who would shortly be taking up her role as new CEO of the SCQFP and ES from SFC who was attending for Items 1-3.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were noted from Fiona Robertson, with GS attending in her place.

Register of Interests

Directors are required to complete a Register of Interest Form annually and RW asked Directors to complete this and submit to BW if they had not already done so.

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. Update on discussions with Scottish Government

RW invited PR to provide an oral update on Scottish Government's response to further embedding the SCQFP following the Ken Muir report. PR informed Directors that a number of consultations and meetings had taken place within the Scottish Government, with SFC and also with the SCQF forum in the form of a focus group. The outcomes of these various meetings along with the set of recommendations submitted by the SCQFP Board had been considered and a set of priority areas had then been identified and passed to the Cabinet Secretary for consideration. Out of that set of priorities the key areas were identified as:

- a national strategy for RPL and skills;
- a national framework for micro credentials;
- extending the framework to include more non-formal learning achievement and attainment.

PR indicated that a response from the Cabinet Secretary was expected in Spring 2023. AP commented that the Partnership's operational and strategic plans were normally brought to the Board in March and it was important to have the Cabinet Secretary's response as early as possible. Finally PR informed Directors that her Directorate had been merged with part of another Directorate and was re-named the Directorate for Life Long Learning and Skills.

Asked if there was any indication of what the Partnership's 2023-2024 funding position was PR said she was not able to provide an update at this stage.

2. Update on discussions with Scottish Funding Council

RW invited ES to provide an oral update on the ongoing discussions with SFC. ES was newly in post and provided Directors with a summary of her role at SFC, which included being the lead liaison person for the Partnership and other public bodies including SQA and Education Scotland.

ES had met with AP and had seen the discussion paper that had been submitted to SFC, highlighting areas where closer collaboration with the Partnership would be beneficial. Further discussions would take place with the Partnership in the New Year around areas such as the Micro credentials Framework, the National Schools Programme and the Quality Assurance Review for the tertiary sector. Some discussion had also taken place around the five broad themes in relation to the Senior Phase. LS finished by assuring Directors that now she was in post further conversations with the Board around a more collaborative approach would take place.

AP informed Directors that the Partnership's business case had been submitted to SFC for 2023-24 and an update was expected in the New Year adding that she felt there was lots of synergy between SFC and Scottish Government priorities and the Partnership was in a good position to take forward initiatives that could add value to both sets of priorities.

Finally a short discussion followed around the potential role that the Partnership could play in the Regional Skills Pathfinders programme.

3. CEO Report

AP began by asking JC to provide an update on the Learning for Sustainability (LFS) project. JC provided Directors with some background to the project and some detail around the funding process. Forty two applications had been received and 8 organisations had been successful in securing a share of £38,400 funding. With some of those successful organisations having already taken part in a Would You Credit It? workshop the next stage in the process would be for the organisations to write and submit their project plans to then allow contracts to be issued and funds released.

JC then provided an update on the School Ambassador programme and impact assessment. 187 schools were now on board, with around 20 more in the pipeline, covering 31 of the 32 local

authorities; however training had been scheduled in for the final outstanding local authority of Western Isles. In terms of the impact assessment, surveys had been completed for school staff and parent and carers, with some focus groups planned for January 2023. Surveys were also currently running for pupils in ambassador schools and pupils holding the role of SCQF ambassadors. A report on the findings from the surveys and focus groups was expected at the end March 2023.

Finally JC provided an update on a piece of work the Partnership was undertaking for the Scottish Government around developing a shared terminology for post school education and skills as detailed in the paper. A proposal had been submitted and accepted by Scottish Government which included the creation of a small sub-group made up of representatives from key partners to take the project forward. Once the representatives had been selected the next stage would be for the sub group to meet in January 2023. Once an initial report had been drafted, this would be fed back to the core Scottish Government group for comment and a final version would then go to the Cabinet Secretary for approval. The Directors then provided a range of feedback that was duly noted, including a request to ensure that, as the project was being undertaken for free, a record of the number of hours spent on the project was recorded. PR added that she would feedback to Scottish Government to ensure Universities Scotland got the opportunity to see and comment on the report before it was finalised.

Set out in the CEO report were a number of potential areas for future development that AP felt the Board, new CEO and Heads of Service may wish to give consideration to. In particular AP highlighted the following potential key areas:

- A review of the Quality Assurance Model and Handbook;
- Embedding RPL more clearly in the education landscape and how the partnership could demonstrate leadership in this area;
- Skills recognition and profiling;
- A review of the Level Descriptors;
- A review of the statements on shared confidence that relate to how Quality Assurance is carried out in relation to Credit Rating.

Following a short discussion on some of the areas highlighted the Board noted the updates and agreed to consider future development areas further in 2023 once the funding positions and response from the Cabinet secretary were available. LS then left the meeting.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 05 September 2022

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

RW then talked through the redacted minutes and the Board agreed to the redactions.

5. Matters Arising

Referring to Item 2 JC confirmed a meeting had taken place with SQA to discuss the technical logistics of updating relevant LfS SQA programmes on the SCQF database and progress had been made in terms of agreeing the best way forward.

Also referring to Item 2 AP confirmed that following meetings with Scottish Government and the Veterans' Commissioner the Veteran's Toolkit launch was now scheduled for the New Year. The Board then noted the Matters Arising. LW joined the meeting at this point.

6. Management Accounts 2022 – 23 Quarter 2

LW began by saying that the Quarter 2 accounts were in line with the budget, highlighting that the deficit had increased to £58k following an agreed £30k additional overspend from reserves. All overspends were in line with what had been agreed with the Board.

A short discussion then followed regarding a recent change in payroll procedures. On a separate note JM suggested a small addition to the format of the Management Accounts paper and would provide LW with an illustrative example for her to follow. The Board then approved the Q2 Management Accounts. LW left the meeting at this point.

7. Report from the Audit and Risk Committee

AP provided an update as detailed in the paper. A recommendation was then made to add cyber security to the register to which AP agreed and would action. The Board then approved the amended Risk Management Strategy; noted the progress on the workplan; noted the updating of the BCP; and noted the range of other business conducted by ARC.

8. Report from the Quality Committee

SD spoke to the paper, providing an update on the business of the Quality Committee as detailed. In addition SD informed Directors that a decision had been made to appoint a consultant to help develop a Rough Guide to Ukrainian Qualifications, benchmarked against the SCQF. This was as a result of various discussions and enquiries.

Related to the recommendations from the CRB survey, the development of an online version of the SCQF Level Descriptors was well underway and was expected to launch early 2023. The survey results showed that the poor uptake of the funded projects was related to timing and resource issues and CRBs were still interested in funded opportunities.

RW then informed Directors that MF had agreed to extend his tenure as Chair of Quality Committee by 1 year. The Board then noted the business of the Quality Committee.

8a. OPITO Periodic Review Report

SD provided Directors with a summary of the review findings as detailed in the paper. Following its first periodic review the review team recommended that Opito be assigned a green (very low) risk rating along with two sets of conditions and two recommendations. Following the submission of an action plan by Opito to address those conditions and recommendations, the Quality Committee members recommended to the Board that OPITO could continue to act as a Credit Rating Body subject to the conditions and recommendations as outlined in the report to which the Board agreed.

8b. ICAS Periodic Review Report

SD provided Directors with a summary of the review findings as detailed in the paper. Following its second periodic review the review team recommended that ICAS be assigned a green (very low) risk rating along with three recommendations however there were no conditions attached. Following the submission of an action plan by ICAS to address those recommendations the Quality Committee members recommended to the Board that ICAS could continue to act as a Credit Rating Body subject to the recommendations as outlined in the report to which the Board agreed.

9. Investors in People Report

AP provided the Board with an overview of the re-evaluation process. Gold was retained, achieving high performance in three categories. Improvements had been made in several other categories meaning now all but one were in Advanced or above. AP thanked the sub-team for preparing the re-evaluation and commented on how well the Team worked together. The Board congratulated the Team and praised the report, saying it was clear that it demonstrated an effective and happy team and AP would pass these comments on. The Board also thanked AP for the leadership she had provided and for leaving the organisation in such a good position.

10. Any other business

As this was AP's last Board meeting the Board offered its thanks and appreciation for all the hard work over last 15 years and for creating and building up such an effective and respected business.

11. Date of next meeting

Thursday 16th March 2023 from 13.00 –15.00.