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SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE – 18 JANUARY 2023

Minutes of the one hundred and seventieth meeting of the Accreditation Committee held on Wednesday 18 January 2023.

Members

*Mr G Smith (Convenor)
*Ms V Mann
Ms J Handley
*Ms A Newton
*Ms E Hutton
*Mr I Wilson
*Mr A Clark
*Ms F Robertson
*Ms K Summers

Observers

*Mr D Middleton
Mr S Boal (SG)
*Mr F Quinn (SDS)
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*Mr J Keenan (SG)

Officers

*Mr G Brown

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* indicates present

170 ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Convenor informed Members of the format of the meeting

The Convenor asked Members to declare whether they had any 'conflicts of interest' in the papers. The Convenor informed Members that, as he was no longer a member of the Board of Skills Development Scotland, his previously declared conflict of interest in relation to apprenticeship framework development no longer applies.

170 WELCOME

The Convenor welcomed Members to the meeting. The Convenor advised that Mr Stevie Boal and Mr John Keenan would attend the Committee as observers from Scottish Government. Mr Boal is the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Sponsorship Team Leader in the Colleges, Young Workforce and SFC Sponsorship Division which is part of the Lifelong Learning & Skills Directorate. Mr Boal also has sponsorship responsibility for SQA Accreditation. Mr Keenan is the Policy Team Leader for the New Qualifications Body.

The Convenor welcomed Mr Keenan to the meeting and noted Mr Boal's apologies.

170 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Ms J Handley and Mr S Boal.

170/01 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the one hundred and sixty-ninth meeting of the Accreditation Committee were approved as a correct record.

170/02 MATTERS ARISING

The Convenor asked Mr Brown about progress in identifying new Accreditation Committee Members. Mr Brown informed the Committee that he had spoken to Opito and the Federation of Small Businesses but no names had been put forward and that he is meeting with the SAAB Employer Engagement Board in the next few weeks and will ask its members if they know of anybody who might be interested in joining the Committee.

170/03 PROVIDER MONITORING VISIT REPORTS (RAD, ECITB, SAFECERT, CITY AND GUILDS AND FAQ)

■■■■■ introduced paper AC170/3 and provided an update on the above Provider Monitoring Visit Reports.

Members were informed that five provider monitoring visits were carried out. ■■■■ gave an overview of the issues graded low, medium and high. The issue graded high was discussed. This was around the awarding body's external quality assurance reports and that the same issue had been identified in the 2018-19 Provider Monitoring Report. It was noted that providers had to ask on numerous occasions for these reports to be provided, although the Provider Monitoring Report did not say exactly how many times these had been requested.

■■■■■ informed Members that the awarding body in question, SAFECERT, is rated high risk and will be audited on an annual basis. The Regulation and Accreditation Managers will continually monitor its performance.

Outcome: Members approved the Provider Monitoring Visit Reports.

170/04 OPERATIONAL PLAN 2023 – 2024

Mr Brown introduced paper AC170/4 and gave an overview of the Operational Plan 2023 - 2024.

It was highlighted to Members that there are seven deliverables, three of which are continuations of activities from this year's operational plan. The deliverables are:

- Ensure that SQA Accreditation delivers its activities in accordance with its documented key performance indicators (KPIs) – this remains the same
- Continue to implement the Fast-Track Approval Process where appropriate for potential Awarding Bodies – insufficient applicants to date to be able to fully test the new process

- Following the consultation into improvements to the SVQ brand, implement any agreed changes – hoping to go to consultation end of January beginning of February, if so, it will be out for a four/five-week consultation
- Continue to organise and host awarding body forums and consider the introduction of standard settings organisation forums – the awarding body forums have been successful and a further update will be given under paper 170/06. Standard Setting Organisations forum will also now be included in 2023/24
- Conduct provider monitoring activity in relation to the implementation and support provided by awarding bodies for the new qualifications developed by the Technical Expert Group (TEG) Process - one provider monitoring visit was carried out this year with no issues. As more frameworks have now been approved by the Apprenticeship Approval Group, there is a need to continue this objective
- Promote alternative accreditation options to ABs eg unit accreditation – this came up from an awarding body which said that it needed to keep an SVQ so that they could use one of the units, hence the need to promote this
- Conduct review of regulation activity and strategy

Members also discussed the ongoing education and skills reform programme and agreed that, in light of the potential work involved for SQA Accreditation and the Committee, this needed to be reflected in the operational plan.

The Covnenor asked [REDACTED] if he would give an update on the Awarding Body Forums held in November 2022, later in the meeting under paper 170/05.

Outcome: Members approved the Operational Plan 2023 – 2024.

170/05 SQA ACCREDITATION'S RISK REGISTER

Mr Brown introduced paper AC170/5 and updated Members on the SQA Accreditation's Risk Register.

One new risk has been added to the Accreditation Risk Register. Although the Cabinet Secretary had decided the Accreditation function should be placed within the new Qualifications Body, no decision has been made in relation to the scope of the function. If the scope is not extended, then this could be seen as a rebranding exercise and staff morale could be negatively impacted. If the scope remains as is and does not change then this would be a missed opportunity for learners.

Members noted that the business case for the funding for two new Regulation Officers, made at the end of 2022, had been rejected.

Mr Brown gave an update on the risk associated with the grant-in-aid. It was noted that this has stayed the same (£1.025m) and informed members that it had been forecasted three years ago that this amount would be insufficient to pay staff wages. It was reported that Mr Baxter, SQA Director of Finance and Corporate Services), had confirmed to Mr Brown that the end of year flexibility funding will be available to cover any shortfall that there may be in terms of the next operating year. Ms Robertson highlighted to Members that SQA Awarding Body is unable to subsidise SQA Accreditation. It was noted that Scottish Government had to make some difficult budget decisions this year. It was noted that the risk of insufficient resources had been graded red.

It was noted that a number of risks related to the future of the accreditation function and the Convenor asked that, given the decision had been taken regarding future location within the new Qualifications Body, these risks be consolidated to focus on the future scope of the accreditation function.

Outcome: Members discussed and noted the SQA Accreditation's Risk Register.

Action: The risks relating to the future scope of accreditation function within the new Qualifications Body be consolidated.

170/06 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

Mr Brown introduced paper AC170/6 and provided Members with an update on the Quarterly Performance Report for the second quarter of 2022 - 2023.

It was noted that three deliverables have been completed. It was noted that:

- SQA Accreditation is now implementing the fast-track approval process. Due to the number of applications to date this has not been fully tested, and it was noted that it has been rolled over into the next financial year.
- the outcomes of the review of the awarding body self-assessment process, have been implemented and is now being embedded within the regulation and accreditation section.
- the implementation of the revised awarding body risk strategy that was undertaken in the previous financial year has been concluded.

All other activities are ongoing and are rated green (on target).

Mr Brown reported that an Awarding Body approval enquiry was submitted in Q3. The Convenor asked how long it normally takes to process an enquiry. Ms McKay gave an overview of the process and advised that it is up to the awarding body on how quick it presents the information to SQA Accreditation. It was highlighted that if there is no contact after three months the application restarts as financial checks need to be carried out.

████████ informed Member that there had been three awarding body forums and these were now well established. There had been representation from about 2/3 of approved awarding bodies. Originally it was one attendee from each awarding body but with forums being virtual it was possible to accommodate more. As the session lasted no more than an hour and a half more people attended as they were not spending a full day away from the office.

Most of those in attendance were looking for an update on the implications for SQA Accreditation of the ongoing education reform programme, although at that point in time it was not possible to provide this. It was reported that, the announcement that the accreditation function would be located with the new Qualifications Body, had subsequently been notified to approved awarding bodies.

The subject of unit accreditation had also been raised. Given the positive reaction of those in attendance, it was felt that SQA Accreditation should explore this further, hence its inclusion in the operational plan for 2023/24.

It was noted that the next round of awarding body forums will take place in either April or May 2023. Once dates have been confirmed Accreditation Committee Members will be notified and invited to attend.

Outcome: Members discussed and noted the Quarterly Performance Report.

Action: Dates for the next round of awarding body forums to be emailed to Members.

170/07 STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORKS COMMISSIONING

██████████ introduced paper AC170/07 and updated Members on the projects.

██████████ gave an overview of the Standards and Frameworks Commission work for the new Members of the Accreditation Committee.

It was noted that, since the paper had been produced, one project has been approved with 90% of the projects expected to be approved in February and March 2023. It was anticipated that a couple of projects will be late but that this can be accommodated.

Members asked if the projects could be spread throughout the year, to reduce 'end-year' work pressures. It was reported that, if Standards Setting Organisations can complete them earlier, they will. However, they tend to prioritise other work which results in standards and frameworks projects being completed nearer to the 31 March deadline.

Outcome: Members discussed and noted the Standards and Frameworks Commissioning paper.

170/08 ISO 9001 AUDIT REPORT

Mr Brown introduced paper AC170/08 and updated Members on the outcome from the audit.

Members were informed that one of the minor non-conformities was raised against SQA Accreditation. This was in relation to data missing from the complaints log. It was noted that the complaints log has been amended and the process has been reviewed. This has been forwarded as evidence to National Quality Assurance Limited (NQA). SQA Accreditation was notified in December 2022 that the ISO 9001 certificate has been renewed. Once the certificate is received then the website will be updated accordingly.

Outcome: Members noted the ISO9001 Audit Report

170/09 UPDATE ON THE REFORM

Mr Brown gave Members an update on the Education Reform.

It was reported that, the Cabinet Secretary had decided that the accreditation function would be located with the new Qualifications Body. In a letter from the

Cabinet Secretary to Ms Robertson, she referred to the fact that there may be opportunities in terms of considering changes to the relationship between the future accreditation function and the awarding body function. This would reinforce more clearly the independence from one another.

This could include changes to the remit of the Accreditation Committee, more specific direction and the appointment of its members and convenor.

Mr Brown advised Members that SQA Accreditation is now formally part of the Delivery Board and the internal reform program.

Mr Brown informed Members that there are a series of workshops planned with the reform program team internally, looking at personas, developing stakeholder mapping and high-level value chain. It was reported that there is much work to be covered in a very short period of time. The key issue is trying to get a sensible timeline to allow as many people as possible from the accreditation team to participate in these activities.

Part of the activity is consideration of the scope of the future accreditation function. It's been highlighted, at the Delivery Board, that Mr Baxter has written to Scottish Government about possible impact of the ongoing Hayward and Withers Reviews on the remit and function of the awarding body and the accreditation function, in the future.

Members were informed that there are qualifications awarded in schools that are not SQA provision and not accredited or regulated so there could be an opportunity for the new accreditation function. SQA is tasked with developing Target Operating Models for the new qualifications body and for the accreditation function. At present there is not a clear view of what the landscape will look like and what the potential impacts might be.

Ms Robertson reminded Members that the Committee was involved in overseeing the production of a paper which was sent to Ministers last September in relation to both the location and governance arrangements of SQA Accreditation. Those proposals are with Scottish Government. In response to the Cabinet Secretary's decision regarding the location of the accreditation function, Ms Robertson has written to the Cabinet Secretary welcoming the decision but also highlighting the need to progress with decisions in relation to scope and remit. This will be crucial to help inform some of the detailed work Mr Brown referred to earlier.

Members were informed that there are challenging time constraints for the team, not least because the draft legislation is expected before the summer recess. This is quite a short time scale in legislative terms, so, it is welcome that discussions have been scheduled to take place in the next few weeks.

Ms Robertson informed Members that a response from both the awarding body and SQA Accreditation had been submitted to the Skills Landscape Review being undertaken by James Withers. Ms Robertson will circulate this to Members.

It was agreed that the Convenor, Mr Brown and Ms Robertson would meet to discuss how Committee Members would be able to help and support the reform process and if Members need to meet before the scheduled meeting in May this would be arranged.

It was noted that Mr Brown would I consider how the work being undertaken in relation to education reform should be referenced in the 2023/24 Operational Plan.

Outcome: Members were Updated on the Reform.

170/10 ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2023 - 2024

██████████ introduced paper AC170/10 and asked Members if they were content with the work plan for 2023 - 2024.

No further items were added to the work plan for 2023 - 2024.

Outcome: Members discussed and approved the Accreditation Committee Work Plan 2023 - 2024.

170/11 SQA ACCREDITATION STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

Mr Brown introduced paper AC170/11 and updated Members on SQA Accreditation Stakeholder Survey Action Plan.

Members were informed that the Action Plan has been updated as the awarding bodies' SharePoint sites now contain their Accreditation Licence and Schedules.

Outcome: Members noted the SQA Accreditation Stakeholders Survey Action Plan.

170/12 ACCREDITATION DECISION LIST REPORT

██████████ introduced paper AC170/12, drawing Member's attention to those qualifications that had been accredited from 1 October 2022 until 31 December 2022.

The paper provided a summary of decisions made by the Accreditation Coordination Group (ACG) between these dates.

Outcome: Members noted the contents of the paper.

170/13 AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE BOARD

It was agreed that the role of the Committee in supporting the SQA in contributing to the ongoing education reform programme should be drawn to the attention of the SQA Board.

170/14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

170/15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date of next Accreditation Committee meeting: Wednesday 3 May 2023 at 1000 hours via MS Teams.