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SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE – 26 JULY 2022

Minutes of the one hundred and sixty-eighth meeting of the Accreditation Committee held on Tuesday 26 July 2022.

Members

*Mr G Smith (Convenor)
*Ms V Mann
Mr P Campbell
Ms J Handley
Ms A Newton
*Ms E Hutton
Ms L Trainer
Mr A Clark
*Ms F Robertson

Observers

*Mr D Middleton
Ms E Townhill (SG)
*Ms M O'Neill
*Ms P Radcliffe (SG)
*Mr F Quinn (SDS)
[REDACTED]

Officers

*Mr G Brown
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

* indicates present

168 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. Mr G Smith declared an interest if apprenticeship developments should come up.

This meeting was held remotely through Microsoft Teams. All Members were informed that the meeting would be recorded for minute taking purposes and that the recording would be deleted once the minutes were drafted.

168 WELCOME

The Convenor welcomed Members to the meeting. The Convenor introduced Mr Frank Quinn, Skills Development Scotland as an observer along with two new [REDACTED].

168 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr P Campbell, Ms J Handley, Ms E Townhill, Ms F Robertson, Mr A Clark, Ms L Trainer and [REDACTED].

168 RESIGNATION

Members were informed that Mr P Campbell will be resigning due to work commitments at the end of October 2022. Members acknowledged his contribution and a formal thank you letter will be sent on behalf of the Committee to Mr Campbell after the October meeting.

Mr Brown informed Members he is currently looking for new Members and invited any suitable recommendations.

168/01 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

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

As the last meeting of the Accreditation Committee was not quorate both Ms Mann and Mr Clarke approved the decisions that were made.

168/02 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

168/03 ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mr Brown introduced paper AC168/03 and informed members that at a number of recent meetings, the Committee has not been quorate and it is therefore necessary to add two additional members to the Accreditation Committee to ensure that the Committee is quorate at every meeting.

Mr Brown informed Members of nominees to join the Accreditation Committee. The first nominee is Kirsty Summers, who is the Head of Workforce and Skills for the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA). The second nominee is Ian Wilson who works with Dawnfresh and has been a member of the Technical Expert Group on Aquaculture.

In addition to those two nominees, it was advised that Ms Mann has agreed to stay on the Committee for a further two years.

Mr Brown invited Members to approve the nomination of Kirsty Summers and Ian Wilson as Members of the Committee for submission to the SQA Board for formal appointment.

Outcome: Members agreed to propose Kirsty Summers and Ian Wilson as Members of the Committee for formal appointment by the SQA Board.

Members discussed if meetings should continue to be held virtually with a consensus to have at least one face to face meeting per year. The Convener suggested that as the next meeting in October includes the strategy Session, this would be an appropriate opportunity to meet in person.

Members will be informed of arrangements in due course.

168/04 AWARDING BODY AUDIT REPORTS (QFI, NEBOSH, CMI, CITY AND GUILDS, ECITB AND FIREQUAL)

██████████ introduced paper AC168/4 and provided an update on the above Awarding Body Audit Reports.

Members were informed that six audits had been carried out which raised six Issues. One Issue has been closed out.

██████████ informed members that the awarding bodies are fully engaged with SQA Accreditation and there are no concerns related to the outstanding issues.

Members asked if issues specifically Covid related are tracked in these audit reports. Ms McKay informed members that a separate tracker for issues relating to Covid is not being kept as this is still considered in the overall tracking process. ██████████ agreed to keep this under consideration for future reporting to the Committee.

Outcome: Members approved the Awarding Body Audit Reports.

168/05 PROVIDER MONITORING VISIT REPORT (SFEDI AND ITC FIRST)

██████████ introduced paper AC168/5 and provided an update on the above Provider Monitoring Visit Reports.

Members were informed that two provider monitoring visits were carried out. Five Issues were raised, and three Issues had been closed out.

Outcome: Members approved the Provider Monitoring Visit Reports.

168/06 SQA ACCREDITATION ANNUAL REVIEW 2021 - 22

Mr Brown introduced paper AC168/6 and highlighted to Members the activity undertaken over the past year and the plan for the coming year.

Mr Brown highlighted that the number of registrations and certifications in the last financial year are almost back to pre-pandemic levels.

Prior to going on maternity leave the ██████████ concluded the report of the SVQ research for phase 1.

Two successful fora events were held with Awarding Bodies, and it is planned to hold more in the second half of this year.

The Convener highlighted that the report picks out the key issues that are ongoing including the wider educational reform programme and developments with the Scottish Qualifications projects.

The Committee put on record its thanks to the Accreditation team for the work carried out over the last year.

Outcome: Members approved the SQA Accreditation Annual Review 2021 -22.

168/07 SQA ACCREDITATION'S RISK REGISTER

Mr Brown introduced paper AC168/7 and updated Members on the SQA Accreditation's Risk Register.

Mr Brown highlighted that the risk we raised some time ago relating to Foundation Apprenticeships and the inclusion of SVQ units as there were concerns the units would be assessed inappropriately, due to the pandemic. SDS has subsequently introduced customised SVQ units, potentially a unit based on the same NOS as a SVQ unit but is not assessed in the workplace and that this has mitigated the risk. Although the risk is at green, Mr Brown advised that this should remain on the register so it can continue to be monitored to ensure there is no potential impact on the SVQ brand through inappropriate assessment of SVQ units in Foundation Apprenticeships.

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

168/08 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

Mr Brown introduced paper AC168/8 and provided Members with an update on the Quarterly Performance Report for the first quarter of 2022 - 2023.

Members were informed that there have been no formal applications from perspective Awarding Bodies and that this was likely due to the uncertainty caused by the consideration being given to the future location of SQA Accreditation in the ongoing Scottish Government Education Reform process.

Members agreed that this matter should be added to the risk register.

Outcome: Members discussed and noted the Quarterly Performance Report.

168/09 STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORKS COMMISSIONING

██████████ introduced paper AC168/09 and updated Members on the projects.

██████████ informed members that the tender for the Scottish Qualifications Products was published on Thursday 21 July 2022 with a tender deadline of Thursday 11 August 2022. The award of the contracts should hopefully be announced on week commencing 29 August 2022.

The relatively low funding of £75,000 made available to support the review of sixteen qualifications and the development of two new qualifications was highlighted. It was highlighted that, due to the low amount of funding, there is a back log in the maintenance of Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) and that a strategic agreement is required on how SVQs are maintained. It was noted that this issue was identified in the SVQ research project.

Members agreed that the risk in the register should be expanded to highlight this issue and its impact on the economy and should be drawn to the attention of the Scottish Government.

It was also agreed that the implications of this issue be considered in more detail at the strategy session in October.

Outcome: Members discussed and noted the Standards and Frameworks Commissioning paper and agreed that its concerns over the impact on the economy of the lack of funding for SVQ maintenance and development be drawn to the attention of the Scottish Government.

168/10 UPDATE ON MUIR REPORT

Mr Brown introduced paper AC168/10 and updated Members on the Muir Report.

Members were informed that colleagues in Scottish Government have met with the Accreditation Team, Standards Setting Organisations (SSOs) and approved awarding bodies. Most awarding bodies had advised that they are content with the current arrangements and understand the difference between the two awarding and accrediting functions of the SQA. It was reported that an awarding body had suggested there could be an improvement in transparency in terms of the branding between SQA Accreditation and SQA Awarding Body as some their customers, employers and candidates don't understand the difference. It was noted that there was no strong support for the accreditation function moving away from an awarding body or into a separate organisation.

Members were informed that there was no further update from Scottish Government on the Review. Fiona Robertson had asked Mr Brown to look at the relationship between the Accreditation Committee and the SQA Board if the accreditation function was to remain a part of the qualification body. It was reported that Mr Brown has been working with Mr Steve Borley, Head of the Chief Executive's Office on issues around the governance of the Accreditation Committee, including taking relevant legal advice and considering comparative governance models including that of the Competition and Market Authority.

It was noted that a paper that explores three options: the status quo; a different brand for the Accreditation function in the new qualifications body; and enhancing the governance for the Accreditation Committee was being prepared for submission to the Scottish Government.

It was agreed that the paper be circulated to members for consideration prior to being submitted to the Scottish Government.

While it was noted that, it would not be covered in the paper, the Committee confirmed its view that the scope of the Accreditation function should be extended to cover all qualifications in receipt of public funding, recognising the potential resource implications involved and the positive outcomes for learners and the economy.

The Committee agreed that it should seek a further meeting with the Scottish Government on the location and scope of the accreditation function prior to any definitive decision being taken on these matters.

The Convener advised that he would ensure the Committee's views on the future of the accreditation function would be fed into the ongoing discussion on education reform at the SQA Board.

Outcome: Members discussed and agreed a number of actions in relation to the Muir Report and the ongoing education reform process.

168/11 ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2022 - 2023

Mr Brown introduced paper AC168/11 and asked Members if they were content with the work plan for 2022 - 2023.

Outcome: Members discussed and approved the Accreditation Committee Work Plan 2022 - 2023.

168/12 FUTURE WAYS OF WORKING

■■■■■ introduced paper AC168/12.

■■■■■ informed members that future ways of working is under consideration for the next schedule of regulatory activity, commencing in January next year. It was noted that, pre – pandemic, most visits took place face to face. However, due to the pandemic, visits required to be conducted remotely and the Future Ways of Working paper considered how these two approaches should be balanced in the future. ■■■■ highlighted three key issues: funding, resource and Covid issues as considerations in this regard.

It was noted that options being considered included thematic audits rather than a focus on all 18 principles and a risk-based approach, with priority given to face to face audits for awarding bodies with a higher risk profile. Ms Mann advised that her employer was considering a similar approach and it was agreed that she should engage with ■■■■■ to provide advice as the SQA's approach is being refined.

The Convener asked if considerations being given to how awarding bodies are operating post-pandemic and if the regulatory principles as currently defined capture this. ■■■■■ advised that how awarding bodies are operating should not impact on any new approach the SQA audits and that a benefit of the principles approach is that it is not prescriptive on whether or not awarding bodies work remotely.

The Committee agreed that it should consider this matter again when a definitive proposal has been developed.

Outcome: Members noted the paper on Future Ways of Working.

168/13 ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT 2021 - 2022

Mr Brown introduced paper AC168/13 and updated Members on the Annual Statistics Report 2021 - 2022.

Outcome: Members noted the Annual Statistics Report 2021 - 2022.

168/14 SQA ACCREDITATION STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

Mr Brown introduced paper AC168/14 and updated Members on SQA Accreditation Stakeholder Survey Action Plan.

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

168/15 ACCREDITATION DECISION LIST REPORT

Mr Brown introduced paper AC168/15, bringing Member's attention to those qualifications that had been accredited from 1 April 2022 until 30 June 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.

168/16 AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE BOARD

Members asked that the following be brought to the attention of the SQA Board:

- The relationship between the accreditation function and the new qualifications body being considered as part of ongoing discussion on education reform.

168/17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

168/18 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date of next Accreditation Committee meeting: Tuesday 25 October 2022 at 1000 hours. Arrangements to be made for a face-to-face meeting at the SQA Office, Optima, Glasgow.

The strategy session will also take place on Tuesday 25 October 2022.