

Minutes of the 62nd SCQF Partnership Board held on Thursday 15 June 2023 at 09.00 via video conference and also at SCQF Partnership Conference Room, 201 West George Street, Glasgow, G2 2LW

**Confirmed**

**Members Present:**

Rob Wallen (RW)	Chair SCQF Partnership
Marie Hendry (MH)	College Development Network
Stuart McKenna (SMcK) by vc Items 1-6.4 & 7.3-7.5	STF
Alastair Sim (AS) by vc Items 1-6.4 & 7.3-7.5	Universities of Scotland
Malcolm Foley (MF) by vc	QC Chair
Alastair Delaney (AD)	QAA

**In Attendance:**

Pauline Radcliffe (PR)	SCQF Partnership
Sheila Dunn (SD) Items 1-6.4	SCQF Partnership
Julie Cavanagh (JC) Items 1-5.5	
Laura Wilding Items 1 - 5.4	SCQF Partnership
Beverley Wallace (BW) (Secretariat) Items 1-6.4 & 7.3-7.5	SCQF Partnership
Stevie Boal (SB) Observer – Items 1-5.5	Scottish Government
Naureen Ahmad (NA) Observer Items 1-5.5	Scottish Government
Alasdair Smith (AS) Observer	SQA
Keith MacPherson (KM) Auditor by vc Item 5.1	Henderson Loggie

**Welcome and introductions**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and formally welcomed Marie Hendry, CEO of CDN as the new appointed Director on the SCQF Partnership Board on behalf of the College Development Network following the departure of former CDN Chief Executive Jim Metcalfe. The Chair also welcomed Alasdair Smith who was sitting in place of Fiona Robertson as an observer and Naureen Ahmed and Stevie Boal as observers from Scottish Government (SG).

**Apologies for absence**

Apologies were given for Fiona Robertson.

**1. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2023**

The Directors confirmed they were satisfied that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting.

Regarding the redacted minutes, the Board confirmed they were happy with the recommended redactions.

## **2. Matters Arising**

The Chair drew Directors' attention to the paper on matters arising from the previous minutes. In relation to matters not covered in the action list, regarding Operational Objectives 23/24, PIs would be incorporated into the first quarter report at September's Board meeting. The Board then noted the actions carried forward and the progress on matters arising.

## **3. CEO update**

The CEO report was taken as read. PR then highlighted the large amount of 'business as usual' activity the team had undertaken in recent months, in addition to navigating and advising on the various education reform reviews. PR thanked the team for their hard work and for keeping pace with the changing educational landscape in an efficient and competent manner. It was noted that the Board would have the opportunity to discuss what the changing landscape meant for the Partnership at the Board Development Day in September 2023. This would provide thinking space and enable the Board to come to a collective view of the Partnership's position. NA and SB informed Directors that SG Ministers were broadly supportive of the recommendations in the Withers Report and would be working with the Partnership when looking at the implications going forward.

Included in the CEO update paper was information around the division changes within the Scottish Government. NA also clarified that the Partnership's reporting line would be to the Enabled Learners Division within the newly formed Lifelong Learning and Skills Directorate (LLS). NA, in her role as Depute Director, would be the Partnerships main point of contact and would provide further updates and an organogram of the revised Directorate structure when available.

PR added that the senior management team for the LLS Directorate would be attending a briefing at the Partnership's office on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> June. Additionally, the CEO and Chair were in the process of trying to re-schedule a meeting with the Minister for Higher and Further Education. The Board then noted the activity detailed in the CEO report.

## **4. Skills Recognition Scotland update**

The Chair began by commending the work that JC had undertaken on the project to date before summarising the current position to the Directors.

JC then informed Directors that the draft business plan was almost complete, with Scottish Government indicating that it was happy with progress made and that it had confidence in the Partnership to deliver the plan. Directors noted the report.

### **5.1 Trustees Report and Financial statements & Auditor's Report year ended 31 march 2023 (taken after Item 5.2 on the agenda)**

KM join the meeting. PR informed KM and Directors that the SG grant letter had been received, addressing immediate risks identified in the paper and auditor's report around going concern. Trustees would therefore be asked to approve the Financial Statements on that basis.

The Chair invited KM to provide Directors with a summary of the Audit Findings Report. The main areas to highlight from the report were:

- the audit had been completed and an unmodified audit would be issued following approval by the Board (Section 1);
- there were no issues relating to management override of controls, income recognition or Fund accounting (Section 3);

- with the receipt of the Scottish Government funding letter the Auditors were happy to recommend the business as a going concern for the next 12 months from date of sign off as there was sufficient funding and a reasonable level of unrestricted reserves in place (Section 3);
- there were no systems and controls issues or difficulties with the audit process or fraud to highlight (Section 4 & 5);
- there was no issue around independence of the Auditor (Section 6);
- A standard Letters of Representation had been issued (Annex A)
- No major changes or adjustments were required to the financial records prepared for the audit.

Trustees were then given assurance by PR that the Partnership, in terms of going concern, had sufficient reserves to cover the period to June 2024.

A date related textual error on page 5 was highlighted and BW would liaise with the Auditor to have this amended.

#### **ACTION**

The Chair acknowledged the work LW and PR had undertaken and also thanked KM and Henderson Loggie as this would be their last audit. The Board then approved the Financial Statements. KM left the meeting at this point.

## **5.2 Management Accounts 2022 – 23 Q4 22-23**

LW spoke to the paper and attachments, highlighting the positive financial position, savings made, over spends and carry forwards. The Board then approved the Q4 Management Accounts, thanking LW for keeping the accounts accurate and up-to-date.

## **5.3 Audit and Risk committee: draft minute**

The Chair invited PR to highlight any outstanding issues arising from the Audit and Risk committee. PR informed Directors of the reason for the departure of Henderson Loggie as the Partnership's Auditors. PR also asked Directors to email LW with any recommendations for auditing firms that support smaller organisations, as the Partnership expected to go to tender in August 2023. The Board then note the business transacted by the committee.

#### **ACTION**

## **5.4 Risk register update**

PR spoke to the update, providing Directors with an update on the changes to the register. The main risks highlighted were:

- Risk 1 – increased risk due to the current recruitment climate - recruitment of a new member of staff was proving challenging in terms of the quality and quantity of applications received;
- Risk 2 – decreased risk as Scottish Funding Council continued to be committed to supporting the Partnership;
- Risk 3 – this risk relating to home working would be removed following an upcoming review of the Flexible Working Model;
- Risk 4 & 6 – the risks had increased due to recent ministerial and departmental changes and a funding review taking place within the Scottish Government.

A discussion then followed around potential difficulties in recruiting for the Skills Recognition Scotland posts and possible solutions. A brief discussion also took place regarding the layout of the Risk Register, with a suggestion to list the risks in order of priority. PR agreed and would action this for future registers.

## **ACTION**

Regarding the current education reforms and number of SG reviews taking place, a question was raised around whether there was a need to create a new risk on the register relating to Scottish Government policy. Following a discussion, it was agreed that Scottish Government policy would be itemised as part of Risk 4.

## **ACTION**

The Board noted the changes made and approved the Risk Register. *LW left the meeting at this point.*

### **5.5 Operational Objectives review 22/23 with KPIs**

The Chair introduced the paper, reminding Directors that the new style presented was based on feedback from the June 2022 Board meeting, where a more qualitative visual set of information was requested, that provided clearer links to the operational objectives.

SD and JC then talked to the paper, providing Directors with a summary as highlighted. Directors commented on the new format, saying it was in an appropriate format and the information provided was easy to read and provided the right level of detail. The Chair added that the contextual commentary also helped to provide context against raw numbers. The Board then noted the progress against the operational objectives. *SG representatives and JC left the meeting at this point.*

### **6.1 Report from Quality Committee**

MF spoke to the minutes of the Quality Committee and highlighted the following:

- the runout of City and Guilds programmes on the SCQF was moving forward without any issues;
- the impact of staff changes within CRBs was one of the biggest issues arising from the 2022/23 CRB reviews;
- further research into International Considerations was required;
- the School Ambassador presentation delivered to the Quality Committee was insightful and well received.

The Board noted the general business conducted by the Quality Committee.

### **6.2 Revised Approved CRB fees policy**

The Chair began by reminding Directors that the CRB fees policy had been approved at the previous Board Meeting, subject to an impact assessment being carried out. The Board had also authorised the Partnership's management team to finalise the policy in the event that no issues arose from the impact assessment. Directors were informed that following an email to all SCQFP approved CRBs, no concerns were raised regarding the new fee structure therefore the policy could be implemented as agreed. The Board then noted the approved CRB fees policy.

### **6.3 International Relationships: Bahrain Memorandum of Understanding**

SD spoke to the paper and annex, providing some background on the Partnership's longstanding relationship with Bahrain, the purpose of the MoU and Bahrain's request to expand this by a further 5 years.

Directors then considered the following points:

- the benefit of having MoUs in place where two Frameworks were formally referenced, as it helped keep referencing documents in place and mapping up to date;
- maintaining the MoU would not cause a capacity issue as the Partnership only had two MoUs in place;
- Bahrain was planning to further develop its education system in the coming years therefore its relationship with the SCQF was likely to become more relevant;
- cross referencing with other frameworks was in line with Scottish Government policy.

PR also added that some research was planned in the coming months regarding the Partnerships' strategic position on MoU's.

Having considered the points Directors approved the signing of a refreshed MoU with BQA.

#### **6.4 Terms of Reference Quality Committee**

SD provided some background to the review of the Terms of Reference (ToR) document as discussed and agreed by the Quality Committee.

The Membership section of the ToR had been amended to give clarity around those specific organisations that were required to nominate a member. It also now allows members to send a substitute person in their absence. There was also a further addition to the Membership section stating 'Further members representing learners, employers and schools may be co-opted as required'. The Chair suggested that the wording should be amended to read 'Further members representing learners, employers and schools may be co-opted as required, subject to approval by the Board' which the Board approved.

**ACTION**

Discussions had taken place at the Quality Committee regarding whether there was sufficient representation from colleges, as currently there was only one representative on the Quality Committee. Discussing how best to increase representation, MH volunteered to look at CDN's networks and would feedback to PR and SD some suggestions in due course.

**ACTION**

Also included in the new version was a section on Terms of Office of the Chair. This specified that the Chair of the Quality Committee would be a co-opted Director of the Board and that their period of appointment (and re-appointment) would be in line with co-opted Directors' terms of office, laid out in the Board's Articles of Association

The Board then approved the terms of reference with those amendments.

*Items 7.1, 7.2 & 7.6 were taken after Items 7.3 - 7.5. AS, SMcK, SD & BW left the meeting for those items.*

#### **7.1 People Update**

PR updated the Board on a range of issues. The Board noted the effectiveness of her approach to managing the team. The Board agreed that this was now an appropriate time to review and revise the Flexible Working Model to ensure that it provided a balance between staff preferences and the needs of the organisation. It was noted that in due course there would be a need to review the use of office space, to make sure that it was appropriate for the working practices adopted; this might involve adopting a clear-desk policy to maximise space utilisation, and considering co-locating with some other body/bodies to achieve maximum efficiency of space usage.

## **7.2 Remuneration and Benefits Policy**

The Directors discussed the proposed policy and agreed that it provided a clear and fair model, and approved PR to implement it.

## **7.3 Good Governance Activity**

The paper was taken as read and the Board noted the activity to date and noted the policies still to come to the Board before the end of this financial year.

## **7.4 Review of Board forward agenda 2023-24**

The forward agenda had originally been brought to the March 2023 Board meeting. PR highlighted subsequent changes to the forward agenda as highlighted in red in the annex. The Board then noted the forward plan proposed, and the revised timescales for some items proposed.

## **7.5 Update on Chair recruitment**

PR began by asking Directors to help promote the post, but reminded Directors that employees from colleges and HEIs (as existing CRBs) would be not be eligible to apply. Three applications had been received so far and the closing date was 30<sup>th</sup> June. The Board noted the actions taken and Directors agreed to let PR know if they had any personal recommendations for the post.

**ACTION**

## **7.6 Development Day 13 September**

The Directors discussed the paper outlining proposed arrangements for the Development Day. They agreed that the paper provided a sound basis for the day. It was agreed that:

- ideally more time could be made available for the discussions; this could be achieved by moving the start of the Board meeting to 9 or 10 o'clock;
- the event should be divided into sections each with a defined output (as suggested in the paper provided);
- there was no need for an external facilitator, but instead individual Directors would be asked to lead particular sessions.

PR agreed to further develop the proposal and submit a revised version to Directors by email for their approval with a view to finalising arrangements in August.

It was agreed that Jim Metcalfe should be invited to join the Directors for the evening meal that would follow the event, as there had been no opportunity for most of the other Directors to say farewell to him in person when he left the Board.

## **8. AOB**

There was no AOB

## **9. Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 13.00 – 15.00

## Action List

Item No	Action	By whom	Completed
5.1	Date related textual error on page 5 to be amended Auditor to have this amended.	BW & KM	
5.3	Email LW with any recommendations they had for auditing firms that support smaller organisations,	Directors	
5.4	List the risks in order of priority.	PR	
5.4	Add Scottish Government Policy as an annex to Risk 4	PR	
6.4	Wording in the ToR to be amended to read 'Further members representing learners, employers and schools may be co-opted as required subject to approval by the Board'	SD	
6.4	Review CND networks and suggest ways to increase College representation on the Quality Committee	MH	
7.4	Email PR with any recommendations for the position of Chair of SCQFP	Directors	