

Minutes of the 64th SCQF Partnership Board held on Thursday 14 December 2023 at 09.00 at SCQF Partnership Conference Room, 201 West George Street, Glasgow, G2 2L

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**Confirmed minutes for website**

**Members Present:**

Rob Wallen (RW)  
John Evans (JE)

Marie Hendry (MH)  
Stuart McKenna (SMcK)  
Malcolm Foley (MF)  
Kathryn O'Loan (KO)  
Alastair Sim (AS)  
Fiona Robertson (FR)

Chair SCQF Partnership  
Chair Designate of SCQF  
Partnership  
College Development Network  
STF  
QC Chair  
QAA (Alternate Director)  
Universities Scotland  
SQA

**In Attendance:**

Pauline Radcliffe (PR)  
Sheila Dunn (SD) Items 1 - 4.1, 4.3 & 4.4  
Marissa Lippiatt (ML) Items 1 - 4.1, 4.3 & 4.4  
Laura Wilding (LW) Items 1 – 3.4  
Beverley Wallace (BW) (Secretariat) Items 1 - 4.1, 4.3 & 4.4  
Jane Duffy (JD) Observer

SCQF Partnership  
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SCQF Partnership  
Scottish Government

**Welcome and introductions**

The Chair welcomed John Evans as Chair Designate of the SCQF Partnership and Marissa Lippiatt as the Partnership's new Head of Development and Engagement.

**Apologies for absence**

Apologies were given for Alastair Delaney and Naureen Ahmad.

**1.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2023**

There were two minor corrections noted and BW would correct these.

**ACTION**

Regarding the minutes for the website the Board confirmed they were happy with the recommendation that no redactions were needed.

**1.2 Matters Arising**

The Chair drew Directors' attention to the paper on matters arising from the previous minute. Most items had either been actioned or investigated, with several items included in the Board Agenda.

MH informed Directors that she was still looking at CDN's networks to suggest ways to increase college representation on the Quality Committee. No updates had been provided by NA in terms of whether SG had any written guidance relating to working with specific countries. FR said that SQA had undertaken some assessments of its own around working with other countries and would be happy to share some of the findings with the Partnership.

ACTION

The Board then noted the actions carried forward and the progress on matters arising.

### **1.3 CEO update**

The CEO report was taken as read, with PR highlighting the Partnership's attendance at the QQI conference in Dublin, saying it was informative and provided good networking opportunities. JE and PR updated Directors on a recent meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. PR added that the Cabinet Secretary planned to visit an SCQF Ambassador School in the near future.

*JD joined the meeting at this point.*

A discussion then followed around the forthcoming Education Bill, with particular focus on what progress had been made against the recommendations in the Hayward Report. The Board then noted the CEO update.

### **1.4 Board response to Minister on post-compulsory education and skills reform**

The Chair spoke to the paper and attachment, reminding Directors that following an agreement by the Board via email a paper on the Board's response to the Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape had been submitted to the Minister for FE, HE and Veterans. To date no response on the points raised had been received back from the Minister. However, JD informed Directors that the Minister was still considering responses. The future of the functions and form of the Partnership was considered a longer-term priority and further discussions were expected to take place between SG and the Partnership in late January/early February 2024.

Discussing the publication of the Board's response on the Partnership's website, the Board asked to be informed in advance of any future intentions to publish or circulate to stakeholders which PR duly noted. Directors then noted the update.

### **1.5 Skills Recognition Scotland**

Directors discussed the Board's position (given the updated situation) and what the next steps would be and were in agreement with the CEO's stated position on the risks associated with the funding and timescales for the programme. Further concerns around the reputational damage to the SCQFP were also raised. The Board then noted the current position and asked PR to provide a final update and recommendation at the March 2024 Board meeting.

### **1.6 Communications and marketing strategy review**

ML spoke to the paper, providing some details around the review that had been undertaken by the 'Word Up' media and communications consultancy. ML then provided a summary of the main recommendations to come out of the review and an update on progress to date. Some key questions were then raised:

- who was the Partnership's key audience?

- how did the review link to the Partnership's strategic objectives?
- how did the review link to the Partnership's partner institutions and how could those partners be involved in the review process?

PR advised Directors that identifying who the Partnership's key audiences were would be the first step. Following on from this would be a review of the Partnership's key messages. ML confirmed that she would bring a new Marketing and Communications Strategy to the next Board of Directors in March 2024.

ACTION

## **2.1 Management Accounts Q2 23-24**

LW spoke to the paper and attachments, informing Directors that the budget was broadly on track and highlighted: the £5k unbudgeted income; the £7k carry forward for the Research & Evaluation peer review; and the expected £8k overspend.

## **2.2 Q2 Operational objectives report**

PR reported that Q2 was showing a few more objectives with amber or red ratings. These were due to either awaiting decisions/direction from externals, internal resourcing issues or because a decision had been made not to progress the objective in the current year. The Board then noted the progress against the Q2 Operational Objectives.

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

The paper was taken as read and the Board noted the draft minutes of the Audit and Risk committee.

## **2.4 Risk register update**

PR reminded Directors that the Risk Register was ranked in order of importance. Following a recommendation from the Audit and Risk Committee a new risk had been added to reflect the impact of educational reform reviews on the Partnership. Regarding Risk 2, the Partnership was waiting for a response from SFC around priorities for 2024-25. In terms of budget, flat cash was expected but not guaranteed.

Although the risk register was showing several ambers post-control, Directors agreed that this reflected the uncertainty of the current educational landscape. The Board then approved the Risk Register.

## **2.5 Delegation of Authority: new Scheme of Financial Delegation**

Directors were informed that the Delegation of Authority presented in the paper was an amalgamation of two previous policies approved by the Board. The revised policy had been approved at November's Audit and Risk Committee, subject to a number of changes. These changes had been made apart from inserting a paragraph relating to matters reserved for the Board which PR confirmed that she would amend. The Board agreed that the delegation limits were appropriate for the size of business. The Board then approved the policy subject to the agreed amendments.

ACTION

## **2.6 Confirmation of Director as member of Audit and Risk Committee**

The Partnership's Audit and Risk Committee was looking to appoint a new member as RW was stepping down from the committee. In accordance with the Partnership's Articles of Association one member of the Audit and Risk Committee must be drawn from the number of Appointed Directors on the Partnership's Board. Alternate Director KO had therefore agreed to serve on the committee at least in the short term. PR indicated that a review of the Articles of Association would be tabled for discussion with the Board at future board meeting in 2024, which would include consideration of making the membership terms less restrictive. The Board approved the appointment of KO to the membership of the Audit and Risk Committee.

## **2.7 Confirmation of Appointment of External Auditor**

PR confirmed that an agreement was now in place with The Kelvin Partnership as external auditors. The Board then approved that The Kelvin Partnership be appointed as Auditors of the Partnership.

## **3.1 Report and Draft Minute of Quality Committee**

The paper was taken as read and the Board noted the general business conducted by the Quality Committee.

## **3.2 CBI Periodic Review**

SD provided Directors with a summary of the review findings as detailed in the paper, highlighting that CBI had attained both ISO 9001 and ISO 27001 accreditation in March 2023 and operated robust credit rating processes and procedures. Following its periodic review, the review team recommended that CBI be assigned a green (very low) risk rating along with two conditions as detailed in the paper.

A brief discussion took place around the external reviewer's selection process. The Board then agreed to the Quality Committee members' recommendation that CBI continued to act as a Credit Rating Body.

## **3.3 Police College Scotland Periodic Review**

SD provided Directors with a summary of the review findings as detailed in the paper. Following its periodic review, the review team recommended that Police College Scotland be assigned a green (very low) risk rating along with one condition and two recommendations as detailed in the paper. The risk had decreased from the previous review as Police College Scotland were no longer undertaking 3<sup>rd</sup> party credit rating. The Board approved the Quality Committee's recommendation that Police College Scotland continued to act as a Credit Rating Body.

## **3.4 Proposed standard statement on criteria for overseas organisations becoming an Approved CRB and guidance for CRBs on third party credit rating**

At the last Board meeting Directors had requested SCQFP Officers draft a standard statement around overseas organisations becoming a CRB and also provide some further guidance for CRBs around the credit rating of overseas third-party programmes. Following approval from the Quality Committee SD presented Directors with two final draft statements and provided some context around how both statements would be used.

The Board then approved the standard statement around overseas organisations becoming a CRB and the additional guidance for CRBs around the credit rating of overseas third-party programmes.

*LW left meeting at this point. Items 4.2 & 4.5 were taken after Items 4.1, 4.3 & 4.4. SD, ML & BW left the meeting after Item 4.4.*

#### **4.1 Recruitment of co-opted Director to Chair Quality Committee**

The position of co-opted Director to Chair Quality Committee had been advertised and distributed to relevant stakeholders. Two expressions of interest had been received to date and initial conversation with both PR as CEO and MF as current Chair of the Quality Committee had taken place. Directors were invited to encourage suitable applicants to apply and forward any notes of interest on to PR.

ACTION

#### **4.2 Flexible Working Policy and Framework (*this item was taken in private*)**

PR introduced the proposed Flexible Working Policy and Framework which had been developed with the support of 'Flexibility Works' (FW), a social enterprise specialising in advising companies and organisation on progressive flexible working policy and practice. The cover paper highlighted the perspective of employees and their preference for hybrid and/or remote working in terms of productivity and team collaboration.

Directors thanked PR for the paper but felt that the policy needed further work to ensure that the values articulated by employees recently (*Collaboration, Respect and Integrity*) were more clearly exemplified in terms of what these meant in practice for flexible working. A wider discussion took place on encouraging greater in-person interaction and collaboration across organisations and on whether the Policy should seek to be more or less prescriptive in terms of employer expectations to provide clarity for the team.

The Board asked PR to convey its thanks to the team for the flexibility they had shown over a difficult period during the pandemic and its aftermath, but was now looking at the next phase and asked PR to revisit the policy in light of Director comments to bring back to March 24 Board.

ACTION

#### **4.3 Lone Working Policy**

PR spoke to the paper and attachment. Asked if the policy had the right balance, Directors felt it had, saying the policy was appropriate for the size of the organisation however questioned how staff who felt at risk could raise concerns. PR explained that risk assessments would be conducted for higher risk activities. Also, if a staff member was in a situation where they felt it unsafe to be overheard contacting their line manager or the office, they would contact stating an agreed standard alert phrase.

The Board then approved the Lone Working Policy.

ACTION

#### **4.4 Review of Board forward agenda 2024**

PR began by encouraging Directors to share any thoughts they had around items to be included on the agenda and how these should be prioritised. PR then highlighted the inclusion of an income generation paper and annual Board Development Day in the forward agenda. Directors then noted the forward agenda.

#### **4.6 People Update**

PR updated Directors on a number of matters, including item 4.2.

#### **5. AOB**

Directors were invited to join the staff team to thank the outgoing Chair Rob Wallen for his service to the organisation, following the AGM.

## 6. Date of next meeting

Thursday 7 March 13.30 – 16.00

### Action List

Item No	Action	By whom	Completed
1.1	Two minor corrections to be amended	BW	
1.2	Review CND networks and suggest ways to increase College representation on the Quality Committee	MH	Ongoing
1.2	SQA to share guidance relating to working with specific countries with PR	FR	SCQFP already discussed this with SQA team who have shared relevant guidance produced
1.6	Marketing and Community Strategy to next Board	ML	
2.5	Insert a paragraph relating to matters reserved for the Board into revised Scheme of Delegation	PR	
4.1	Directors were invited to encouraged applicants for QC chair and forward any notes of interest on to PR.	Directors	
4.2	Revised Flexible Working Policy to be provided to the Board for March	PR	Will be presented at additional Board meeting
4.3	Amend small typing error in Lone Working Policy	BW	