



Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

One hundred and nineteenth meeting of the Board of Directors

Minutes of the meeting on 16 December 2020

Present

Board Members:

Professor Simon Gaskell (Chair)
Ms Eve Alcock (to item 12)
Dr Vanessa Davies
Ms Sara Drake
Ms Linda Duncan (Vice Chair)
Ms Hillary Gyebi-Ababio
Professor Maria Hinfelaar
Mr Oliver Johnson
Professor David Jones (to item 16)
Ms Angela Joyce (to item 19)
Professor Denise McAlister
Professor Craig Mahoney
Professor Sue Rigby
Professor John Sawkins
Professor Oliver Turnbull
Mr Craig Watkins
Professor Andrew Wathey
Professor Philip Wilson

In attendance

Officers:

Mr Douglas Blackstock (Chief Executive) (to item 19)
Ms Caroline Blackburn (Finance Director) (to item 19)
Ms Millie Crook (HR Manager) (for items 11 and 18)
Dr Ailsa Crum (Director of Membership QE & Standards) (for item 15)
Ms Lisa Evans (Governance Officer)
Mr Luke Myer (Public and Policy Affairs Officer) (For item 4)
Ms Vicki Stott (Executive Director of Operations & Deputy Chief Executive) (to item 19)
Mr Tom Yates (Head of Corporate Affairs)

Company Members:

Kirsty Conlon (representing Universities Scotland) (for items 13 & 14)
Gordon McKenzie for (representing GuildHE) (for items 13 & 14)
Keiron Rees (representing Universities Wales) (for items 13 & 14)
Charlotte Snelling (representing UUK) (for items 13 & 14)

Apologies

Welcome and apologies

1. The chair welcomed all attendees, particularly David Jones who had been unable to attend the previous meeting and was therefore attending for the first time. There were no apologies for this meeting.

Quorum and interests

2. The meeting was declared quorate. No interests were declared beyond those previously notified and included in the Register of Interests.

Minutes

3. The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2020.
4. The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 15 October 2020 were approved subject to the following amendment in bold:
 - Minute 4 – Executive Directors had informed the NRC that **they** would prefer to take no pay increase or bonus payment.

Actions

5. The Board noted the completed actions from the 14 October meeting. The following updates were provided to outstanding actions:
 - Action 32: Caroline Blackburn reported that there was no need to revisit the Committee and Board meeting schedule, as previous delays had been caused by exceptional events (TCC and the pandemic). Approval of the annual budget would be factored into internal timetabling in 2021.
 - Actions 34 and 38: CB reported that the potential opportunity to reallocate time that colleagues had previously spent travelling for reviews had been considered; the current view was that any travel time saved was being used for other purposes, for example adapting review methods. This might change over time, as familiarity with online methods increased; the situation would be kept under review.

Matters Arising

6. There were no other matters arising for discussion.

Discussion items

Chief Executive's Report (item 4, BD-20/21-12)

7. The Chief Executive updated the Board on recent developments, mentioning that he would deal with some matters more fully when Company Members joined the Board for a discussion following the Annual General Meeting.
8. The sector was still responding to the Covid crisis and the evolving restrictions imposed to tackle it; institutions had had to prepare for mass testing, and staff were fatigued.
9. QAA had expended considerable effort reassuring international stakeholders about the state of the UK higher education sector; colleagues in other countries were of course also grappling with the effects of the pandemic. In China, there was a clear reliance on

QAA's published reports on UK institutions; QAA was in discussion with Chinese authorities about a UK-China event on online and blended delivery.

10. The Board noted the update on Academic Integrity and the work being undertaken to combat Essay Mills. The Department for Education (DfE) had asked QAA to develop proposals for legislation, but it was now clear that the legislation would not be considered until the new year.
11. QAA's consultation on a new method for reviewing Transnational Education (TNE) had closed on 18 November. In general the consultation responses were positive and confirmed that no substantial changes to the draft proposals were required, and that the proposed method was sound and welcomed. The Office for Students (OfS) had expressed concern about potential conflicts of interest with Designated Quality Body (DQB) work; a response had been provided which explained the rationale for QAA's involvement, and the work would proceed.
12. QAA anticipated discussions with OfS about issues relating to compliance in England with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). DfE was supportive.
13. QAA had agreed with OfS to suspend development of the new review method in England, in the context of the OfS consultation on the regulation of quality and standards.
14. OfS had contacted QAA regarding the DQB Annual Report which had been considered by OfS's Quality Assurance Committee in September. OfS had asked QAA to make redactions which would in essence remove implied criticisms of OfS and reference to OfS's judgement of limited confidence in QAA. DB advised that in his view the report was fair and balanced, and that it was QAA's report, approved by the Board, and should not be amended by us; OfS could then decide whether to publish it in full, redacted, or not at all, as part of its release of minutes.
15. The Board discussed how to proceed, and the Executive was asked for further assurance that the report was factually accurate. Vicki Stott confirmed that there was no doubt about the factual accuracy of the report; much of the criticism had been reported previously in quarterly reports to the OfS.
16. The Chair and other Board members reflected that the report had been discussed at length by the DQB Committee and the Board, and indeed by the QAC. The issues were historic rather than current, with regulatory visits currently paused. Openness and honesty were essential principles. There was a unanimous view that the report should not be changed, but some concern about the implications for the relationship with OfS, which was recognised to have improved but still to be fragile in some respects.
17. In response to a suggestion that QAA could publish the full report itself if OfS decided not to, DB noted that it was QAA's report to OfS, and that publishing it might reasonably be seen as unhelpful. The Chair agreed but asked VS to check the formal position.
18. The Board **agreed** that there was no justification for changing the Annual Report to the OfS but recognised that the OfS could redact it for publication if it saw fit.
19. The Chair reported that he had held a friendly but frank telephone conversation with Simon Levine (Board Member of OfS and chair of its QAC). Simon Levine was a supporter of an assertive approach by the regulator. They had agreed to keep the lines of communication open.

OfS Consultation Response and Triennial Review (item 5, BD-20/21-13)

20. Vicki Stott presented the paper on QAA's response to the OfS Consultation on Quality and Standards, and on the Triennial Review. VS reported that QAA welcomed the fact that OfS was consulting, and many of the proposals, and that QAA appreciated that more detailed rounds of consultation were to follow. However, there was concern regarding the proposal to move away from the Quality Code in England, which could undermine both the coherence of the UK sector and its international reputation.
21. Board Members discussed the implications of the OfS consultation and identified key points that might be included in the QAA response. There were concerns about the narrow focus on outcome metrics as a measure of quality, and the potential impact on access and participation for underrepresented student groups was noted. There were further concerns about the impact on the reputation of UK higher education of moving away from the UK Quality Code; there was particular concern about the potential impact on the sector in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland of England departing from what had been a carefully reached compromise between the nations of the UK.
22. The joint chair of SSAC reported that the Committee endorsed the QAA response around the removal of the Quality Code and was keen for the views of the Committee to be included. The Chair indicated that student input to QAA's response through SSAC would be positive if possible in the timeframe, and VS agreed to follow up, but that this should inform QAA's response rather than be provided independently. Concerns had been raised by students around value for money and their future in the workplace. The Chair agreed that there was some confusion around the distinction between quality and value for money.
23. The Board noted that the deadline for the response to the OfS was 12 January. DB confirmed that as a UK wide body, QAA would respond on behalf of its members and the sector, including students, with technical points included as DQB.

QAA Strategic Risk Register Review (item 6, BD-20/21-14)

24. Tom Yates referred to the latest updates to the risk register in its current form, and presented the proposed new format as endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee.
25. TY reported that the risk register was now considered at monthly meetings of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), but that in this context the existing format had proved somewhat unwieldy. The format overhaul was intended to allow consideration of risks at a strategic but meaningful level; this should provide the right level of detail both for Board discussions and for SLT, including where risks cut across different areas of the Agency. The Audit and Risk Committee had endorsed the approach to changing the format, and commented on the mocked-up version, which TY had populated with a first attempt to describe QAA's risks in the new format; if the Board was content with the new format then the content would be refined and gaps filled.
26. The Chair agreed that the Risk Register could serve both Board and SLT needs. Craig Watkins (Chair of ARC) confirmed that the Committee supported the change in format, which had facilitated a useful conversation about the risks and mitigations. Following the ARC meeting TY had also met with the outgoing internal auditors to discuss the changes.
27. There was some discussion of the balance of risks between the four nations – England seemed to feature heavily. TY advised that this had been discussed; but noted that many of the key risks facing the Agency did currently seem to originate in England. The Board **agreed** that the balance of risks across the nations should be revisited.

28. The Board **approved** the updates to the current risk register and noted the report on its use in practice. The proposed approach to changing the format was **endorsed**, and the Board looked forward to seeing an updated version at the next meeting.

Quarter 1 Monitoring and Performance Report on Annual Plan and Finances (item 7, BD-20/21-15)

29. The Board noted that the 2020-21 Annual Plan and Budget were developed months in advance of delivery and were, therefore, at risk of not reflecting the latest position of the organisation.
30. As a result of the significant changes in the operating environment in England, with an increased level of uncertainty and volatility, monitoring and reporting of the Annual Plan and finances to the Board took place on a quarterly basis. This, combined with the monthly reports reviewed by the Executive, allowed QAA's Executive and Board to assess current progress towards strategic aims and delivery of the budget on a timely basis. Progress against the 2020-21 Annual Plan priorities was noted.
31. Vicki Stott provided a high-level update on the annual priorities and KPIs agreed for the organisation at the Board meeting in June 2020, for the first year of the new strategy.
32. The Board noted the update for Quality Assessment England (QAE) in the Annual Plan 2020-21 and VS reported that QAA input to the triennial review was due to be presented to the OfS in May before being shared with DfE in September. The Project plan would be considered by the DQB Committee in January. The Board noted the update for the nations, and it was **agreed** that the progress on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) change report would be updated.
33. Caroline Blackburn reported on the forecast for the quarter. The Board noted that the overall operating surplus was £194k, an improvement against the budget of £123k. The majority of the variance was driven by reductions in DQB assessment activity and the phasing of international income. These had in turn reduced the associated non-pay costs. Further reductions in non-pay expenditure across all areas were likely in general to reflect phasing of spend rather than permanent decreases; this would be confirmed at the end of Q2.
34. The Board noted the summary of the financial position for the year ended 31 July 2021; the forecast deficit for the full year was £9k, a reduction from the budgeted deficit of £99k.

Report on Financial Matters (item 8, BD-20/21-16)

35. Caroline Blackburn provided the Board with an update on the Rathbones Investments and the position regarding the lease on Southgate House.
36. The Board noted that as reported in October, after the sharp reduction in the All World Index in March, markets continued to fluctuate. The Board noted that the Rathbones fund had followed the same pattern, and comparative data for the quarter ended September showed the growth of 1.6% was also in line with similar available funds.
37. Craig Mahoney noted that although the market had now bounced back, QAA's fund remained lower than in December 2019. CB responded that the figures provided in this report were for the period to 30 September and the position may have improved since; Rathbones appeared to be performing at least as well as similarly invested funds which QAA tracked. Oliver Johnson concurred: more adventurous funds had made headlines, but this was not an untypical performance for a relatively cautious charity.

38. The Board noted that as previously discussed in the update on the Future Ways of Working project, QAA's Gloucester office, Southgate House, was being marketed on various property websites for subletting. CB reported that there had been some interest, but no firm offers to date. Under the Scheme of Delegated Authority, the Board must approve all purchase, lease or rent of land and buildings. It was **agreed** that should any decision on the lease be required between Board meetings the Board would be asked to approve by email.

Annual report on Complaints, Appeals and Legal Actions (item 9, BD-20/21-17)

39. Tom Yates presented the annual report of complaints, appeals and legal actions received throughout 2019-20. The paper summarised the extent and nature of activity over the past year and highlighted opportunities for learning across the organisation. The Board noted the report.

Policy Reviews

40. Tom Yates presented the updated versions of the Whistleblowing Policy and Conflicts of Interests Policy for the approval of the Board. The Board noted that both policies had been reviewed and updated in line with current best practice and corporate style.
41. With respect to the Whistleblowing Policy, Vanessa Davies suggested adding a provision at 4.3 to allow for cases where the cause for concern was a Board Member. Sara Drake suggested renaming the policy; such policies were now often referred to as 'Freedom to Speak Up' policies. It was **agreed** that the policy would be amended in line with both points.
42. The Board **approved** the Whistleblowing and Conflicts of Interests Policies, subject to the changes above.

HR Annual Report (item 11, BD-20/21-19)

43. Millie Crook reported on Human Resources (HR) activity over the period 2019-20 and to date during 2020-21. The report included key data for the year 2019-20 and focussed on strategic HR objectives, namely QAA's future ways of working and improving organisational capability. This would include management development, recruitment and implementation of a new HR system.
44. The Board noted the appendix to the report which detailed the 2019-20 end of Year HR statistics. The Chair queried the ethnicity balance for QAA reviewers, which might be expected to be closer to national data than staff. MC agreed that there appeared to be room for improvement. MC reported that unconscious bias training was being developed which could be rolled out to reviewer recruitment. CB added that greater flexibility in location when recruiting new staff might start to improve Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) representation among staff.
45. The Board noted that HR activity was fully aligned to organisational objectives and strategy, with the primary focus to drive efficiency across the agency, while developing and empowering our people. This allowed QAA to support the sector effectively.

Gender Pay Report (item 11, BD-20/21-20)

46. Millie Crook presented the report which demonstrated the difference between the average hourly earnings of men and women, expressed relative to men's earnings. The

report provided the gender pay gap data in QAA as at 31 July 2020 and allowed a comparison with last year.

47. The Board noted that the proportion of men and women employed in 2019 and 2020 had not changed; however, when considering all employees, the median gender pay gap had reduced from 24.1% in 2019, to 14.8% in 2020. This was lower than the national median of 17.3% (ONS Gender pay gap in the UK: 2019) and the higher education sector, where the median was 15.5%.
48. MC reported that the overall mean gender pay gap had also reduced from 18.2% in 2019, to 14.3% in 2020 (national mean was 16.2% and higher education sector mean was 15.9%). This meant that, on average, men were paid £4.29 more per hour than women (last year's figure was £5.51).
49. David Jones asked whether there had been any proactive salary increases for female employees; MC confirmed that no conscious decisions on salaries had been taken due to the gender pay gap data. She added that the biggest factor in the gap remained the low numbers of men in apprenticeships or entry-level positions. The Chair asked if the mix of employees matched the mix of applicants; MC reported that data held currently was not sufficient to provide an accurate answer, but that this was being worked on.
50. DB commented that female applicants tended to be more successful in reaching interview and being offered posts at QAA, and the numbers of women in high-level positions were good. Craig Watkins asked if a Diversity and Inclusion Plan was being developed; MC reported that this was not in train currently but was being considered. The Board noted that the new ways of working which offered more flexibility on location had been helpful.

Eve Alcock left the meeting; Company members joined the Board meeting as guests.

QAA Annual Report and Financial Statements 2019-20 (item 13, BD-20/21-22)

51. Craig Watkins presented the Annual Report and Financial Statements which had been considered at the November meeting of the ARC and needed to be approved by the QAA Board prior to consideration at the AGM.
52. It was noted that the consolidated financial statements included the results for QAA Enterprises Limited (QAAE), and Caroline Blackburn advised that the financial statements for QAAE had been approved at its Directors' meeting on 7 December 2020. QAA's report and accounts had been prepared in line with the requirements of the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) 2015 and Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102. It was noted that the report and accounts had been circulated to the Board in draft form for comment, prior to consideration by ARC, and subsequently reviewed by the Honorary Treasurer and the ARC.
53. The QAA Board **approved** the QAA Annual report and Financial Statements 2019-20 and **agreed** that this should be presented to the AGM. The Board **authorised** the Chair to sign the Annual Report and financial statements on its behalf.
54. The Board **noted** the internal audits conducted during the year.
55. The Board **noted** the evaluation of the auditors and **recommended** the re-appointment of the external auditors to the AGM.

- QAA Letter of Representation

56. The QAA Board noted the letter of representation and **authorised** the Chair to sign this on its behalf.

- QAAE Directors' Report and Annual Accounts

57. The QAAE Directors' Report and Annual Report were noted.

The Board meeting was adjourned at 13:00 for the QAA AGM (separately minuted).

The QAA Board meeting resumed at 13:10 with the Company members in attendance for the following item.

Update on current issues from the Chief Executive (item 14)

58. Douglas Blackstock reported on current issues. The Board and Company members noted that QAA had been closely engaged with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) review and had contributed to the tertiary education consultation in Wales.

59. Discussions had taken place around the barriers to credit transfer and opportunities for new pathways to higher education, including with the Prime Minister's Implementation Unit. Sue Rigby reported that the Credit Framework review group which she chaired on QAA's behalf would shortly be consulting on a draft report and aiming to publish it around Easter. The intention was not to propose radical change to the original Credit Framework, but rather to show how it can be adapted to enable flexible and nesting qualifications. Bundling intermediate modules seemed more promising than unbundling existing degrees.

60. Kirsty Conlon asked about learning from the experience in Scotland and other devolved nations. SR responded that Ailsa Crum's move from QAA Scotland into a central QAA role was helpful in this regard, and that the review group was indeed looking north of the border, but that place-based solutions might be more easily achieved than ones that were transferable within or between nations of the UK. Number 10 seemed amenable to attempts to be agile, flexible and local.

61. The OfS consultation was discussed briefly.

62. DB reported that QAA had been asked to lead on the development of legislation aimed at combatting essay mills, which were now the subject of comparison sites and TrustPilot reviews. The draft bill had been shared with DfE and it was hoped that it would go before parliament in the next session.

63. DB also reported on QAA's TNE review work. The approach was endorsed by the sector, and QAA was working on a handbook; OfS had expressed some concern about conflicts of interest but QAA had written to explain the position. UK-NARIC had caused some confusion in launching its benchmark service; QAA had worked to counter that confusion.

64. A major change report had been submitted to EQAR regarding new review methods in England and Wales. EQAR had no concern in Wales, but in England there were compliance issues, and QAA had engaged with DfE.

65. The Chair commented that QAA's work on policy and strategy highlighted the influence the Agency held with Governments and regulators across the UK. He added that those providers who took up membership should be reassured by this and those who did not

might be reminded of the important work that they were neither contributing to nor benefitting from.

The Company members left the meeting.

Service Presentation – Membership, QE and Standards (item 15)

66. Ailsa Crum provided the Board with a brief overview of recent activity in Membership, Quality Enhancement and Standards; she was two months into this job, but had been at QAA for 22 years. The team had a UK-wide role, and coordinated the QE offer for members based in England with the Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and International teams.
67. AC reported that QAA now had 273 Members, more than this time last year; this would soon rise to 275, as the NI teacher education institutions were in the process of joining. The Board noted that a further recruitment campaign was planned which was to target further education colleges and alternative providers. AC outlined the types of members who had joined already, and the different packages taken up.
68. AC reported that the team was future focused, anticipating opportunities and challenges to help members shape their thinking. The team was providing imaginative activities and resources which were attractive and useful for busy staff and students. The Board noted the range of engagement activity underway, the developments taking place and the priority areas for the team.
69. AC reported on the challenges affecting the work of the Membership team, which included:
 - Financial position: impact on retention & recruitment and ability to generate additional income
 - Pros and cons of placing resources behind the 'log in'
 - Potential restrictions to growth associated with other sector bodies
70. The Board noted the difficulty in deciding whether to make resources freely available or to place them behind a paywall, and wondered whether member institutions were aware of QAA's access to governments. AC said that this was not as widely known as she would like, but meetings such as the breakfast briefings with Pro-Vice Chancellors were highlighting the extent of QAA's influence to existing members, and through other fora the same message was being transmitted to non-members, including for example via the Russell Group. It was also hoped that sharing limited information with non-members would highlight the useful information they were unable to access.
71. The Board thanked AC for a helpful presentation which had led to a useful discussion.

Membership Update Report (item 15, BD-20/21-23)

72. Ailsa Crum provided Board members with an update on implementation of QAA's Membership offer. The Board noted that QAA's Membership model had now been in place for 18 months.
73. AC provided a summary of recruitment and retention of providers, and the Member feedback received. The paper also updated the Board on the plans in progress to enhance the Member offer.
74. AC asked Board Members to support Membership activity in the following ways:

- Supporting communications activity, for example by providing short quotes to accompany materials and correspondence, and sharing our notifications amongst professional higher education networks including on social media (e.g. Twitter, LinkedIn)
- Joining selected events to meet Members and perhaps to facilitate discussion
- Engaging in ad-hoc focused discussions with QAA officers to help us test ideas

75. The Chair advised AC to send out requests to members inviting them to become engaged in selected events or focus groups, while noting that they may have limited capacity. A number of members expressed interest in helping; Sue Rigby reported that she had enjoyed collaborating with AC on the micro-credentials work and she endorsed this type of working to members.

Board and Committee Business

Reports of the Audit & Risk Committee

- Audit and Risk Committee's Annual Report to the Board (item 16, BD-20/21-24)

76. Craig Watkins, chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), presented the Committee's annual report. CW outlined the Committee's conclusions and recommendations to the Board in relation to the conduct of business through the Committee in the financial year 2019-20. CW thanked the Board members and officers for their work and reported that the Committee had fulfilled its role in holding the Executive to account.

77. The Board noted that ARC provided independent scrutiny, oversight and assurance of risk control and governance procedures on behalf of the QAA Board. Minutes of the Committee's meetings and terms of reference were available to all Board members on the Board site. Thorough conversations had taken place around risk management; the new-style risk register had been discussed; internal audit reports were received regularly and accepted by the Committee and good feedback had been received from the external auditors. CW reported that this was testament to CB and her finance team and the underlying controls in place within the organisation.

78. The Board noted the Annual Report from the Audit and Risk Committee to the Board.

- External Audit Findings Report (item 16, BD-20/21-25)

79. The Board noted the External Audit Findings Report which the ARC had considered and ratified on behalf of the Board at its last meeting.

Committees Summary Report (item 17, BD-20/21-26)

80. The Board received and noted the summary reports of recent meetings of the Board Committees.

Consultative Board Update (item 19)

81. The Chair provided an update on the recent (25 November) meeting of the Consultative Board, which he and Hillary Gyebi-Ababio had attended, and commented that such updates would be moved earlier in the agenda in future Board meetings.

82. The Consultative Board had discussed the QAA membership model, and provided some input to Ailsa Crum's early presentation to the Board today. It had also discussed the EHEA Ministerial Forum and Communiqué.

83. Academic integrity had also been discussed. HGA added that she was doing much work in her NUS capacity on academic integrity, and had been pleased to hear it as a topic of discussion at the Consultative Board.
84. DB commented that the Consultative Board meeting had been productive; it was proving a useful form and a worthwhile output from the governance review.

Any Other Business

85. The Chair reported that the second Informal Board Briefing had taken place the previous month. Attendance was modest but the meeting had been helpful.
86. The Board formally recognised the extraordinary work carried out by QAA staff in the current challenging circumstances. It was **agreed** that a note would go out to all staff, via the Chief Executive, to express the Board's appreciation.

Angela Joyce, Douglas Blackstock, Vicki Stott and Caroline Blackburn left the meeting; Millie Crook joined the meeting.

Appointment of a new Chief Executive (item 18, BD-20/21-27)

87. The Chair reported that Douglas Blackstock had confirmed his intention to retire as Chief Executive in late 2021, during his annual appraisal discussion in July 2020. This represented the end of his current contract, and his long-standing intention had been to step down at that point. DB had indicated that he would be amenable to a short extension if this were helpful in bridging to his successor, and that he would be pleased to assist the QAA in retirement should he be asked to do so.
88. The Board noted that the Nomination and Remuneration Committee had considered the implications of DB's retirement at its meeting on 16 September 2020 and in subsequent e-mail exchanges. Particular attention had been given to the timing of announcements. The full Board had been informed of DB's intentions on 12 November 2020 and an email had been sent to all staff on 3 December 2020; the Agency had issued a press release later that day.
89. The Board noted the proposed appointment process for DB's successor as QAA's Chief Executive and **agreed** the proposed timetable and use of an external search firm. The Board **considered** and **approved** in principle the selection process, including the use of interview and consultative panels, whose composition would be decided by the Nomination and Remuneration Committee. The Board discussed and **agreed** the general considerations that would inform the choice of the new Chief Executive.

Date of next meeting

90. The Chair confirmed that the next Board meeting would take place on Wednesday 10 March 2021 at the Jisc offices in London if circumstances permitted, but more likely by Zoom. The meeting was closed at 15:10.

Board of Directors Action List				
Minute:	Action:	Owner:	Due Date:	Update:
16/12/20 17	VS to check the formal position regarding the option of QAA publishing the full DQB Annual Report to OfS	Vicki Stott		VS has checked this with OFS & as the board suspected they feel it would not be appropriate for QAA to publish independently.
23	VS to work with the SSAC to consider how their views could be incorporated into QAAs response to the OfS Consultation and Triennial Review	Vicki Stott	January	NUS would like us to pay particular attention to the consultation's perceived conflation of quality with value for money. We met with Hannah Sketchley from the NUS to discuss this and other areas of interest and concern the NUS had regarding the consultation. These discussions were reflected in our response, in particular relating to the above point and in regards to concerns that relating to potential impact on institutional widening participation agendas.
28	The balance of risks across the nations, set out in the Risk Register should be revisited.	Tom Yates	January	Covered under item 8 of the agenda.
33	The key progress on the EQAR Change report set out in the QAE Triennial Review to be updated.	Vicki Stott	January	Douglas Blackstock, Ben Potter and Alastair Delaney met with representatives of EQAR Registration Committee on Thursday 11 February. This was useful in both explaining the UK regulation position and in QAA understanding the focus of EQAR. QAA is to submit a further short report reinforcing what we outlined in this meeting by 1 March, and EQAR will consider this matter further at their Registration Committee scheduled for later in March.
42	The Whistleblowing Policy to be renamed as 'Freedom to Speak Up' Policy and a further provision to be added at 4.3 in case the cause for concern was a Board Member.	Tom Yates	January	Complete.