Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Confirmed minutes of the Board meeting on 15 June 2016, British Academy, 10-11 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH (1100 – 1500)

Open session (Board Members, Company Members’ representatives, QAA officers, and observers)

Present

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<tr>
<th>Members:</th>
<th>Mr Christopher Banks (Chair)</th>
<th>Mr Jon Prichard</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Robert Cashman (designated member)</td>
<td>Ms Sue Reece</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Antony Chapman</td>
<td>Ms Sorana Vieru</td>
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<td>Ms Jane Hern</td>
<td>Mr Gary Warke</td>
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<td>Ms Janet Hull</td>
<td>Professor Andrew Wathey</td>
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<td>Mr Chris Jelley</td>
<td>Professor Philip Winn</td>
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<td>Professor Denise McAlister</td>
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<td>Professor Tim McIntyre-Bhattys</td>
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<tr>
<th>Officers:</th>
<th>Mr Douglas Blackstock (CEO)</th>
<th>Dr Anett Loescher</th>
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<tr>
<td>Miss Lavinia Blackett</td>
<td>Mr Will Naylor</td>
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<td>Mrs Liz Rosser</td>
<td>Ms Rowena Pelik</td>
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<td>Mr Ian Kimber</td>
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<th>Company Members’ representatives:</th>
<th>Mr Alex Bols (GuildHE)</th>
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<td>Mr William Hammonds (UUK)</td>
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<th>Observers:</th>
<th>Scott Court (HEFCE)</th>
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<td>Nick Davy (AoC)</td>
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<td>Bethan Dudas (NUS)</td>
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<td>Ben Elger (OIA)</td>
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<td>Helen Gartley (Department for the Economy, NI)</td>
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<td>Aaron Porter (NCUB)</td>
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<td>Alex Proudfoot (Study UK)</td>
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<td>Helen Steers (BIS)</td>
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<th>Apologies:</th>
<th>Professor Joy Carter</th>
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<td>Members:</td>
<td>Professor John Grattan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Professor Craig Mahoney</td>
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Welcome and apologies

12. The Chair welcomed members, officers, company members’ representatives and observers to the meeting and noted apologies. Particular welcome was extended to designated independent student Board member Mr Robert Cashman.

Quorum and interests

Quorum and interests (item 2)

13. The meeting was declared quorate. No interests were declared by members to the meeting.

Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings

Minutes from the meeting held on 15 March 2016 (item 3, BD-2016-24)

14. The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2016 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Matters arising from the minutes (not otherwise on the agenda) (item 4)

15. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Discussion items

Chief Executive’s report (item 5, BD-2016-25)

16. The meeting received the Chief Executive’s report. Mr Blackstock highlighted the following key events and external policy developments:

- QAA’s Annual Conference, held on 13-14 April 2016, had seen an increase in delegate numbers, with a noticeable increase from Universities and a small decrease in college delegates. This was attributed to the conference content, which was seen as having succeeded in engaging the sector – an objective that would be pursued for future conferences. The slight reduction in student delegate numbers was explained by the Annual Conference’s proximity to QAA’s event on student engagement which had attracted a significant number of student delegates. Future Annual Conference programmes would be reviewed with a view to making the content relevant for a broad spectrum of delegates.
- The sector had responded very positively to the establishment of the M5 group, the partnership between Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), Jisc and QAA. The organisations continued to explore increased collaboration and cost sharing and expected to put in place a formal agreement over the summer to support this activity.
- The implementation of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) was being undertaken in a constructive collaboration between QAA and HEFCE.
- A formal public announcement had been made on 7 June 2016 regarding QAA’s organisational change programme.
- Mr Richard Jarman (Director, Public Engagement Group) had left QAA in April 2016. The Board extended their thanks to Mr Jarman for his dedicated work with the Agency, and wished him every success for the future.

17. The Board thanked the Chief Executive for his report and thanked the executive team for continuing to deliver the core activity of the organisation on time and to target during a period of uncertainty.
White paper – policy discussion (item 6):

18. The Chair invited the Chief Executive’s perspective on current developments relating to the White Paper. Mr Blackstock reported that since the publication of the White Paper and the Higher Education and Research Bill, further supporting documentation had been published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), including the Case for the creation of Office for Students (OfS) and an impact assessment of the Higher Education and Research Bill. The Bill’s second reading was expected shortly after the EU referendum.

19. QAA had welcomed the White Paper’s commitment to co-regulation and was pleased to see that the Bill made provision for an independent designated quality body. The Chief Executive and other senior officers of the Agency had held recent discussions with senior BIS officials and would continue to engage to help BIS shape the Bill as it progressed. The Board noted that during QAA’s engagement with the sector common issues raised were:

- the OfS’s statutory responsibility for assessing quality and standards. In QAA’s and sector bodies’ discussions with BIS the case has been made that the current definitions of ‘academic standards’, ‘academic threshold standards’ and ‘academic quality’ – as developed and agreed jointly by the sector as set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education – should hold for the purposes of the envisaged co-regulatory framework. Clarity was also being sought on the powers of the OfS and the Secretary of State in that regard. BIS had confirmed that it was committed to the principle of co-regulation, albeit there was concern in the sector that the Bill appeared less clear than the White Paper.
- the award of degree-awarding powers (DAPs) on a probationary basis. QAA had been in constructive discussions about proportionate processes for granting and monitoring probationary DAPs which were being developed to ensure the student interest and the reputation of the sector were safeguarded where providers had received DAPs on a probationary basis.

20. QAA welcomed the opportunity to continue to work closely with BIS as the Bill progressed.

Chair’s verbal report (item 7):

11. The Chair reported that QAA had won four bids under the funding councils’ tender process. The Chair thanked both the Board and officers leading the preparation of the bids for enabling this success.

12. The Chair highlighted the following issues that would be under consideration at the Board’s closed session later that afternoon:
- Proposals from the Governance Review Working Party on the Agency’s future governance in light of the White Paper in order and to enable the Agency’s efficient and streamlined operations.
- The 2016/2017 subscription model which was currently under consideration with key stakeholders.
- The Agency’s organisational change programme.

Reporting items

Term 2 Finance report (item 8, BD-2016-26)

13. The Board received a summary report about QAA’s financial performance for the eight months ended 31 March 2016 and the reforecast for the full year to 31 July 2016; the Finance and Strategy Committee (FSC) had previously considered the detailed report at its meeting on 17 May 2016.

14. The Board noted the favourable variance to forecast in the results for the period to 31 March 2016, and that the reforecast showed an improvement of £180K on the previous forecast
position. The Board noted the decrease in forecast free reserves to £1.315m which fell below the range approved by the Board of £2.5-5.7m. It was agreed that the reserves range would need to be recalculated and a plan for rebuilding reserves implemented.

2015-16 Delivery plan – Term 2 monitoring and performance report (item 9, BD-2016-27)

15. The Board received the report on QAA’s performance against the 2015-16 Delivery Plan. A summarised monitoring report had previously been presented to the FSC on 17 May 2016. The FSC Chair reported that the Committee was satisfied with the overall strategic position of the Agency, was content that appropriate action was identified to address the exceptions, and commended staff both on delivering the Agency’s core business to target and on bringing exceptions back on track despite the turbulences of the past months.

Appointments to the Board and Board Committees (item 10, BD-2016-28)

16. The Board approved the following QAA Board and Committee appointments:

   to the Board:
   • Mr Robert Cashman as independent director pursuant to Art 46(iv) for a one-year term to 15 June 2017.

   to ACDAP:
   • Ms Dorothea Ross-Simpson, Head of Governance and Quality Assurance, University of Keele for a three-year term to 15 June 2019.
   • Professor Phil Cardew, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Leeds Beckett University, for a three-year term to 15 June 2019.
   • Mr Thomas Lowe, REACT project manager, University of Winchester, for a one-year term to 15 June 2017.

   to ARLC:
   • Professor Denise McAlister to take the position of Chair from 1 September 2016 for a three-year term (subject to re-appointment to the Board).
   • Mr Gary Warke from 15 June 2016 to 10 December 2018 (end of Mr Warke’s second term as a Board member).

   to the Audit Committee:
   • Ms Sue Reece to take the position of Chair from 17 December 2016.
   • Professor Andrew Wathey from 1 September 2016 for a three-year term (subject to re-appointment to the Board).

   to QAA Wales Committee
   • Ms Fflur Elin, NUS, for a one-year term starting from 1 July 2016 to 1 July 2017.
   • Ms Jackie Grapper, Estyn, for a three year term to 15 June 2019.

   to QAA Scotland Committee
   • Professor Alastair Sambell, nominated by Universities Scotland, for a second three-year term to 15 June 2019.
   • Professor John Gardner, nominated by Universities Scotland specifically for the areas of access and credit, for a three-year term to 15 June 2019.
   • Professor Craig Mahoney for a three year term to 15 June 2019.

   to the Student Advisory Board
   • Mr Robert Cashman as Co-Chair for a one-year term to 15 June 2016

17. The Board noted the appointment, jointly by the representative bodies, of Professor Craig Mahoney to the Board.
18. The Board **noted** that in light of his retirement as Vice Chancellor of Cardiff Metropolitan University, Professor Antony Chapman had resigned from QAA’s Board of Directors, Audit Committee, QAA Wales Committee and ARLC with effect from 31 August 2016. The Board extended their thanks and appreciation to Professor Chapman for his outstanding contribution to Higher Education and QAA.

**Summary report of Board Committee meetings (item 11, BD-2016-29)**

19. The Board received and **noted** the summary report of Board Committee meetings since March 2016.

**Any other business**

20. No other business was raised.

21. The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 12 October 2016. The meeting would be an awayday and would be held in either London or Gloucester, further details would follow shortly.

22. The Chair thanked all attendees for their contributions and closed the open session of the Board’s business.