



Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Minutes of the meeting on 10 March 2021

Present

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

In attendance

Officers:

Mr Douglas Blackstock (Chief Executive) (until item 17)
Ms Caroline Blackburn (Finance Director) (until item 17)
Ms Millie Crook (HR Manager) (for item 17)
Mr Alastair Delaney (Director for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) (for item 14)
Ms Lisa Evans (Governance Officer)
Ms Stephanie Sandford (Director of International & Professional Services) (for item 14)
Ms Vicki Stott (Executive Director of Operations & Deputy Chief Executive) (until item 17)
Mr Tom Yates (Head of Corporate Affairs)

Guest

Dr Anneke Luijten-Lub (member of the NVAO Executive Board)

Welcome, apologies and Chair's opening remarks

1. The chair welcomed Dr Anneke Luijten-Lub, a member of the NVAO Executive Board who would be providing a presentation later in the meeting.
2. The Chair reported that he was currently half way through his annual conversations with Board members. He had agreed with members that there should be the opportunity for collective reflection and this would be provided at a future Board meeting.

3. There were no apologies for this meeting, although it was noted that Sue Rigby, David Jones and Andrew Wathey all needed to slip away from the meeting at various times.

Quorum and interests

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

Minutes

5. The Board **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2020.

Actions

6. All actions from the previous meeting were complete and the Board noted the updates provided.

Matters Arising

7. There were no other matters arising for discussion.

Consultative Board Update

8. The Chair provided an update on the two meetings of the Consultative Board that had taken place since the last Board meeting in December; these meetings had taken place on 19 January and 1 March 2021.
9. The Chair reminded members of the purpose of the Consultative Board, which had been set up in lieu of having observers at Board meetings, an arrangement which had not proved satisfactory. Consultative Board meetings received updates from the Chief Executive and other colleagues, and were an opportunity for Consultative Board members to provide input to Board discussions.
10. The Chair reported that the first meeting had generated lively debate on a range of topics including no-detriment policies and their impact on quality and standards, student wellbeing, inter-agency work to support postgraduate research students, and the Credit Framework review, on which Sue Rigby had spoken. The last meeting had received similar updates but there had been less input from members.
11. It was agreed that it was useful for Board members to receive the Consultative Board notes. Board members added that some Committees would benefit from the Consultative Board notes. It was **agreed** that notes of Consultative Board meetings should in future be shared with the Board, either in Board papers or, where there was no approaching Board meeting, via a link in the weekly Board update.

Introduction and Overview of NVAO's work

12. The Chair welcomed Dr Anneke Luijten-Lub of the NVAO, the quality assurance agency for the Netherlands and Flanders. AL-L explained that her role was as a full-time executive Board member, and that she had been working online for a year. NVAO had been established in 2005 by a Treaty between the Netherlands and Flanders, and was headquartered in the Hague. The agency was publicly funded; safeguards were in place to ensure the agency's independence, although ministers could be called to parliament to address any concerns.

13. AL-L reported that the statutory task and mission of NVAO was to assess and ensure the quality of new and existing programmes and institutions of higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders, and to issue formal accreditations. It was noted that institutional reviews were optional, although compulsory re-accreditation took place every six years. AL-L reported that assessments must be proportionate; the agency did not wish to create a burden on small institutions or to accredit every micro-credential.
14. AL-L provided information on Higher Education provision in the Netherlands. There were 54 publicly funded HEIs, and 60 non-funded (private) institutions with over 3000 programmes offered which were mainly taught in English.
15. Hillary Gyebi-Ababio asked about student engagement and quality enhancement. AL-L reported that there were some very active student organisations in the Netherlands including NUS type organisations and representative bodies of institutions. Regular meetings took place with the student bodies to understand current issues. There were some very active students who were politically involved, some of whom had gone on to become members of parliament. NVAO tried to balance enhancement and accountability and worked on the basis of trust. There was one student member of NVAO's general board. The agency was currently looking into further development of enhancement work.
16. Asked what made institutions undertake voluntary reviews in the Netherlands, AL-L reported that the NVAO voluntary reviews were not overly bureaucratic, they focused on the programmes, they did not ask institutions to explain financials or staffing; she added that it was mainly larger institutions which opted for these, whereas smaller institutions were more likely to just have a full review at six years.
17. SG noted that NVAO and QAA had a number of challenges in common, and recognised the benefits of learning from each other. If an appetite developed for voluntary reviews in England then QAA might value specific discussions on that subject. DB thanked AL-L for attending and said that with lively political debate around potential constitutional changes in the UK, QAA might need to consider how we work in the future and there could be further opportunities for learning from NVAO's experience.

Discussion items

Chief Executive's Report (item 6, BD-20/21-29)

18. Douglas Blackstock reported that QAA was coping well with Covid restrictions. Colleagues had been encouraged to take advantage of the spring weather, including via a 'Fit for February' campaign which had aimed to encourage staff to walk (or run or cycle) 2021 miles collectively; in the event over 3000 miles had been achieved, raising money for QAA's charities, Glasgow City Mission and Sunflower Suicide Support. Meanwhile the 'Ways of Working' project was considering how the agency would work in the future. There was likely to be more flexibility, with staff able to work where it best suited the agency's customers.
19. Guidance for postgraduate research students on how to raise issues of quality had been published this week, and there was much work supporting students generally, including on how to raise quality issues.
20. In December, a new programme of Collaborative Enhancement Projects had been launched. 32 applications had been received; around 13 projects would be taken forward, ranging from inclusive assessment to digital/blended delivery. It was hoped that these projects might encourage re-recruitment of some providers currently not in membership.

21. The Board noted that 21 member-only online events for members had been held since December, each attended by an average of 33 different institutions. Among these was the Quality Insights Conference (23-24 February), which had been very well attended with 250 delegates from 92 members.
22. A range of international engagement had been undertaken recently, and QAA was close to reaching agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Nigeria. The first International Quality Review (IQR) had been requested for Vietnam.
23. DB reported that European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) had raised issues of compliance with the ESG under current arrangements in England, including concerns about QAA not publishing its reports, which raised questions about QAA's independence. A meeting with EQAR had taken place on 11 January, to discuss QAA's substantive change report. Discussions were taking place with the Department for Education (DfE) and the Office for Students (OfS), and a written response would be provided to confirm the action to be taken.
24. The Chair asked about sector responses to the OfS consultation on the regulation of quality and standards in England; Vicki Stott would be addressing this further with the OfS. Concerns had been reported around the removal of the quality code and how thresholds were to be applied; OfS had received around 280 responses, and there was believed to be little support for the proposals.
25. Board members noted that a new Chair had been appointed at the OfS, and asked whether this was an indication of change to come. DB confirmed that SG had written to Lord Wharton to offer an introductory meeting, but had been advised that a meeting would not be set up until after he had taken office. DB added that there was no sense of change yet but noted that other OfS board positions would soon be up for renewal.
26. AW asked if QAA had considered setting up a forum for Chairs and Vice Chancellors (VCs). DB replied that Chairs and VCs had been too busy when this was offered before Christmas, but that he agreed it was a good suggestion.
27. The Chair asked about the Committee of University Chairs' appetite for QAA providing services directly. DB said this proposal had been stalled because OfS had suggested there might be a conflict of interest; the suggestion would be put forward again to the OfS in the response on efficiencies, as providing such services could help reduce the burden of overheads on statutory Designated Quality Body (DQB) fees.
28. The Chair noted that some institutions in Wales had approached Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) to delay their Quality Enhancement Reviews (QER). In discussion with HEFCW, these requests had been agreed; in order to accommodate this HEFCW had agreed that the scope of the remaining reviews in the current cycle would be reduced to focus on issues of compliance. QAA Wales was currently working on the implications of this decision, and preparing an addendum to the QER handbook. DB confirmed that this was a temporary measure due to capacity constraints at the institutions.
29. Board members asked the support mechanisms in place for QAA staff and the Senior Leadership Team, and what was done to create a culture of openness. DB reported that the Executive team was meeting daily, as were teams across the organisation. Mental Health first aiders had been appointed; difficulties with childcare had been considered and there were mechanisms in place to check in on colleagues who lived alone. The Executive team ensured that staff know the services available, and managers were asked to check in with staff and encourage them to talk to each other. DB added that staff had been pleased with the Board's commitment to staffing of the Membership team.

30. The Board noted that conversations were taking place with staff about the future and it would be interesting to hear how colleagues felt about travel and working in busy offices and campuses. DB reported that the current way of working had allowed QAA's part time flexible staff to feel more involved and Zoom meetings had also been valuable to colleagues in Scotland and Wales. SG added that Caroline Blackburn was leading the 'Ways of Working' programme which would look at how QAA worked in the future; the biggest consideration would be around service provision. Board members agreed that there would be a need to support a mix of working from home and the office, the Chair encouraged Board members to feed back on their own experiences.

Report and Interactions with Funders and Regulators (item 7)

31. Vicki Stott reported that, while there were no substantial reports to bring to the Board this time, this would be a standing item at future Board meetings.
32. The next report to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) was due on 19 March; the QAAS meeting had been moved to accommodate this and to receive a presentation from the SFC. Concerns had been raised that having already lost around £132m in fees during the pandemic, Scottish institutions would lose international students; the Scottish Government had offered a further £30m funding.
33. VS reported that early discussions with Welsh Government were promising and suggested the Welsh Government was keen to fund QAA work directly. The Board noted that student complaints had not risen significantly in Wales which was likely due to the initiatives put in place there.
34. Initiatives in Northern Ireland included provision of a grant of £500 to students; this was controversial because part-time and overseas students were excluded.
35. VS reported that QAAS and QAAW would hold a joint discussion on 17 March; a future review of methodology in Wales looked likely to move the Welsh approach closer to the Scottish one.
36. In England, QAA's response to the OfS consultation had not been well received; OfS felt that QAA had misinterpreted HERA and would be writing to QAA following a full review of responses. Board members agreed that QAA's response was a matter for QAA.
37. The next DQB Committee meeting would take place on 7 April, and the Committee would receive the draft Annual Report to the OfS. The report would then need to be reviewed by the Board and this might need to be done by correspondence. SG commented that this was QAA's report, and while Board approval was important, it was not for OfS to say what should be included.
38. The Board noted that the triennial review of the DQB was being postponed until 2022 as there was not enough activity to consider this year.
39. The Board thanked VS for the report; it was **agreed** that a written report would normally be provided at future meetings.

Annual Review of the Risk Register and Tolerance Thresholds (item 8, BD-20/21-30)

40. Tom Yates reported that the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) had received the Annual Review of the Risk Register and Tolerance Thresholds at the January meeting. The Committee had agreed to recommend the changes set out in this paper to the definitions of 'probable', 'possible' and 'remote' risk likelihoods. The Board noted some inconsistency in terminology, which would be rectified; no other changes were proposed this year.

41. The Board **approved** the updated version of QAA's Risk Appetite and Thresholds framework.

QAA Strategic Risk Register Review (item 9, BD-20/21-31)

42. Tom Yates presented the newly populated QAA risk register which was provided in the new format as approved by the Board at the last meeting. Craig Watkins reported that the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) had undertaken a thorough review at its last meeting in January. ARC's suggestions and comments had been considered and incorporated.
43. The Board discussed the risk register and noted the risk around loss of members at 50% likelihood before mitigation. It was noted that mitigation did reduce this risk and TY reported that this had been discussed extensively at ARC. SG felt that it was right for this risk to be highlighted to the Board; DB reported that disruption to the recruitment of international students, which had been discussed at Universities UK (UUK) the previous week, would affect some institutions and it was important that QAA was alive to the financial issues facing some institutions.
44. There was some discussion of whether there were now too many risks appearing to need urgent attention; the opposite (in which all risks appeared to be satisfactorily mitigated) was not desirable either. TY rehearsed the theory behind the risk tolerance thresholds and risk appetite; Board members pointed out that after a difficult year many organisations would see more red on their risk registers now.
45. TY reported that the risk register continued to be considered at monthly meetings of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT); mitigations were having some effect and it was reasonable to hope that residual risk levels would improve over time in some areas.
46. SG commented that the risk register in this format was doing its job, which was a welcome step forward; it would continue to evolve through use.
47. The Board **approved** the updates to the current risk register.

Quarter 2 Monitoring and Performance Report on Annual Plan and Finances (item 10, BD-20/21-32)

48. The Board noted that the 2020-21 Annual Plan and Budget, having been developed some months in advance of delivery, did not always reflect the latest position of the organisation. Monitoring and reporting of the Annual Plan and finances to the Board therefore 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.
49. Vicki Stott updated the Board on the annual priorities and KPMs agreed at the Board meeting in June 2020, for the first year of the new strategy. It was **agreed** that a key to the colours for the KPM rag ratings would be provided at the next meeting.
50. VS reported that for Membership, Quality Enhancement and Standards, concerns remained regarding take up of additional services and the current economic climate. However, some services had been very well received and membership revenue was 11% better than budget. Recruitment was ongoing and the new year's Membership Offer would be launched at QAA's Annual Conference. The Board noted that International and Professional Services (I&PS) was doing well although concerns had been raised around capacity; new staff members would be starting this quarter. Quality Assessment England and Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland would be discussed elsewhere in the meeting.

51. Caroline Blackburn updated the Board on financial results for the six months ended 31 January 2021. The Board noted that overall operating surplus for the half year was £355k, an improvement against the budget of £398k and Q1F of £124k. The majority of the variance was being 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 across all areas related to a phasing of spend (particularly in Scotland on Enhancement Themes), and were not in the majority of cases expected to lead to any permanent decrease.
52. CB reported that the forecast surplus for the full year was £37k, an improvement from the budgeted deficit of £99k. This was due to a combination of small improvements in contribution across all business streams, and a small reduction in business support costs. CB reported that the estimation of the full DQB year costs (April 20-March 21) indicated that it was highly likely to be lower than fees invoiced in May 2020, which would lead to a refund being paid. SG asked how such refunds would be made; CB confirmed that it would be through a discount on the subsequent year's fees. A strong pipeline for I&PS was noted.

Report on Financial Matters (item 11, BD-20/21-33)

53. Caroline Blackburn provided the Board with an update on the Rathbones Investments, the annual review of the Treasury Management Policy, purchasing regulations and the USS pension scheme.
54. The Board noted that as reported previously, after the sharp reduction in the All World Index in March, equities had begun to recover. Since November, the positive news of the rollout of the vaccines, the US election result and the signing of the Brexit deal had resulted in markets across the world rising again. The Rathbones fund had followed this pattern, and comparative data for the year ended December 2020 showed the growth of 5.02% was slightly ahead of both similar available funds and CPI+4%. The impact on QAA investments was noted and CB confirmed that QAA investments were performing well.
55. CB reported that the annual review of the Treasury Management Policy had been undertaken with the Honorary Treasurer. Following the extensive changes made in March 2020, it was agreed that no further changes were required. The Board **approved** the policy.
56. The rent review of the Glasgow office had been completed in January and the Board noted that the Chair had approved an increase as set out in the appendix to this report. CB reported that although some negotiation had taken place, this was a compulsory scheduled review included as part of the original lease. SG reported that research had found that the rent was broadly in line with the market, but when the lease expired consideration should be given to whether that amount of space was needed in the area.
57. CB updated the Board on the current position of the USS pension scheme. An update on the valuation had been received the previous week which estimated that combined contributions would need to rise to 56.2% (which could equate to an £82k annual increase for QAA) in order to retain current benefits, or 49.6% if scheme members agreed to extensive covenant support measures. The rise was higher than UUK had anticipated, and UUK had written to USS, which was now awaiting an opinion from the pension regulator. SG commented that QAA's exposure was relatively limited, but as the cost of the scheme increased for QAA's members it would create pressure which could affect QAA.

Policy Reviews (item 12)

- Matters Reserved for the Board (BD-20/21-34)
58. Tom Yates presented the updated version of the Matters Reserved for the Board. The Board noted that the document had been through a scheduled review and only very minor amendments had been made.
- Health and Safety Policy (BD-20/21-35)
59. Caroline Blackburn presented the updated Health and Safety Policy which had also been through a scheduled review. The Board noted that the policy had been updated to include home working, travel and work at other locations
60. The Board **approved** the Matters Reserved for the Board and the Health and Safety Policy.

Review of the Scheme of Delegated Authority, Financial Regulations and Compliance Framework (item 13, BD-20/21-36)

61. Tom Yates and Caroline Blackburn presented the updated Scheme of Delegated Authority, the Financial Regulations and the Compliance Framework. TY commented that all three documents performed important roles in QAA's internal governance.
62. The Board noted that these documents had been reviewed and, subject to minor updates, found to be accurate and relevant. They had been considered at the January meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee, and the Committee had agreed to recommend all three documents to the Board for approval.
63. The Board **approved** the Schedule of Delegated Authority, the Financial Regulations and the Compliance Framework.

Angela Joyce left the meeting

International and EU Policy Developments – Presentation (Item 14)

64. The Board received a presentation from Stephanie Sandford, Director of International and Professional Services and Alastair Delaney, Director for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Europe on international and EU policy development.
65. SSa reported on the increasing Internationalisation of Quality Assurance, which included:
- Convergence of global HE QA approaches
 - International quality networks advocating external QA
 - Growth in risk-based & enhancement approaches
 - International mis-conceptions about UK QA
66. SSa reported that QAA had been one of the most vocal advocates for the reform of quality assurance, promoting both risk-based and enhancement-focused approaches as alternatives to cyclical review. The Board noted that there was limited understanding internationally, and indeed some misconception, about regulatory reform in the UK and the respective roles of various UK bodies, which QAA's competitors had sought to exploit. To address this, over the last year QAA had stepped up its international engagement, using established relationships to present to global and regional networks on regulation and quality assessment across and within the nations of

the UK, including the proposals for Quality Evaluation of Transnational Education (QE-TNE).

67. The Board noted that overseas regulators and quality bodies were familiar with the UK higher education system both from the perspective of sending students to the UK and TNE. They were aware that TNE activity could carry increased quality and financial risk both to providers and to the students involved. SSa reported that as part of the TNE consultation and related engagements with international partners, efforts were made to address any confusion arising from changes in the quality landscape in the UK.
68. SSa updated the Board on the new QE-TNE scheme which would be conducted in partnership with host country agencies. This would help provide visibility of UK quality enhancement, with published reports and would help to maintain trust in UK provision.
69. Alastair Delaney updated the Board on engagement post Brexit. There was strong support including from UK for the Rome Ministerial communiqué of EHEA (European Higher Education Area), which agreed:
 - that 20% of those graduating in the EHEA should have experienced a study or training period abroad;
 - automatic recognition of academic qualifications and periods of study within the EHEA so that students, staff and graduates were able to move freely to study, teach and undertake research;
 - that external quality assurance arrangements should cover transnational higher education;
 - the development of quality assurance systems aligned with the ESG (European Standards and Guidelines)
 - an enhancement-oriented use of the ESG to support innovation in higher education and its quality assurance.
70. AD reported that QAA was represented on several of the Bologna working groups. AD also provided an update on the work of the European agencies, ENQA and EQAR; in August 2020 the E4 group (ENQA, EUA, EURASHE and ESU) had published a statement on the use of the ESG in the changing landscape of higher education.
71. The Board thanked SSa and AD for an informative presentation. SG asked what scope there was for forming partnerships with other agencies. SSa reported that she felt there was merit in that and this was already happening in some countries. SSa reported that Steve Smith was now the Education Champion and there may be some benefit in establishing a dialogue. AD reported that the UK was still a member of the EHEA and the Bologna process, and was committed to the Rome Communiqué. The Board was pleased to note that DB had been appointed to the ENQA Board and AD had been asked to join the ENQA Reviews Committee.
72. DB reported that he and AD had discussed the EQAR substantive change report and potential areas of non-compliance. A statement of their expectations was expected very soon.
73. Vanessa Davies noted that the UK had withdrawn from Erasmus and had set up the Turing Scheme as a replacement, she asked if QAA had any influence in this regard. DB advised that we did not, many groups had lobbied the Government but it appeared that the decision was set. SG added that he understood that there was no UK reciprocity for movement of students, just funding for UK students to study abroad; both Scotland and Wales were seeking access to Erasmus.

74. Linda Duncan noted that the ENQA review of QAA would take place by end of March 2023. She asked if it would be helpful for Board members to participate. AD advised that the performance review was voluntary and no agenda was set; he added that if a Board member wanted to be involved they would be welcome to. SG said that Board members were willing to help if it was considered useful.

Board and Committee Business

Appointments and Retirements to the Board and Board Committees (item 15, BD-20/21-37)

75. The Board received a report which set out a series of appointments and reappointments to the Board and its sub-committees; these were presented at the Nomination and Remuneration Committee on 17 February 2021. The Committee had considered these appointments and reappointments and recommended them to the Board for approval.
76. The Board considered and **approved** the appointments to the following Committee vacancies:
- a) to the Advisory Committee for Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP)
 - Dr Vanessa Davies, for a second and final term from 22 June 2021 to 12 December 2023 (the end of her term as a Board member)
 - Professor Philip Wilson, for a second and final term from 15 March 2021 to 21 June 2023 (the end of his term on the Board)
 - Ms Anne Lambert, for a second and final term from 15 March 2021 to 14 March 2022
 - Ms Jenny Taylor will finish her term on the Committee on 14 March 2021 and recruitment to this vacancy will take place in the Spring.
 - b) to Access Recognition and Licensing Committee (ARLC)
 - Professor David Jones, for an initial three-year term, from 10 March 2021 to 10 March 2024
 - Mr Romit Laud, for an initial one-year term as a student member, from 10 March 2021
 - c) to the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)
 - Ms Eve Alcock, for a second and final one-year term, from 21 June 2021 until 21 June 2022
 - Ms Sara Drake, for a second and final three-year term, 21 June 2021 until 23 January 2024 (the end of her term as a Board member)
 - d) to the Nominations and Recruitment Committee (NRC)
 - Mr Oliver Johnson, for a second and final three-year term with immediate effect until 18 December 2022 (the end of his term as a Board member)
 - Professor Susan Rigby, to extend the end date of the first term to three years, i.e. to 17 February 2022
 - e) to the QAA Scotland Strategic Advisory Committee
 - Ms Kathryn O'Loan, for an initial three-year term, from 9 March 2021 until 9 March 2024
 - f) to the QAA Wales Strategic Advisory Committee
 - Professor Richard Tong, nominated as a senior representative of HE in FE, by the HE in FE Network, for an initial 3-year term with immediate effect

77. The Chair reported that he had held conversations with the following Board members who had agreed that they would be happy to continue on the Board for a further term. The Board **approved** the following reappointments:
- Eve Alcock, for a second and final 1-year term from 21 June 2021 until 21 June 2022
 - Hillary Gyebi-Ababio, for a second and final 1-year term from 1 July 2021 until 1 July 2022
 - Professor Oliver Turnbull, for a second and final 3-year term from 4 September 2021
78. The Board noted that Professor Andrew Wathey would reach the end of his second and final term on 1 September 2021. The nominating bodies would be contacted to provide a nominee for the Board to consider at the next meeting.

Committee Reporting (item 16, BD-20/21-38)

79. The Board received and noted the summary reports of recent meetings of the Board Committees.
80. The Board noted that the ACDAP Terms of Reference had been reviewed and amended; changes included the appointment of a Vice Chair of the Committee. The Terms were **approved** by the Board. Vanessa Davies reported that OfS had made some comments on the scope of ACDAP and it may be necessary to have an internal discussion. If further changes to the terms were found to be necessary they would be brought back to the Board to consider.
81. Eve Alcock reported that SSAC were hoping to provide more input in strategic Board issues and work was taking place to get the meetings dates lined up appropriately. SG reported that EA and Hillary Gyebi-Ababio should feel free to provide opinion at Board on behalf of SSAC; he offered to attend a meeting of the SSAC if it would be considered helpful.

Any Other Business

82. Douglas Blackstock reported that Ian Welch had been appointed as the Chair of the Ukraine quality assurance agency. The Board congratulated Ian Welch, and also Alastair Delaney on his appointment to the ENQA Reviews Committee.

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

Appointment of the new Chief Executive (item 17, BD-20/21-39)

83. The Chair updated the Board on progress to date, and next steps in the process of recruitment of the next Chief Executive. SG reminded members that NRC was delegated by the Board to select a preferred search firm to assist with the selection of QAA's next chief executive. Following a thorough selection process, Minerva had been appointed to support the recruitment. The proposed timetable was noted.
84. SG reported that an impressive list of individuals had expressed a preliminary serious interest. NRC would continue to oversee the process including the drawing up of a longlist of candidates. A panel of around 7 or 8 Board members would conduct the shortlisting, and from that group an interview/selection panel would be formed; in both cases the intention was to look for a balance of backgrounds in various respects.

85. There would also be broader consideration of shortlisted candidates, through discussion forums which each shortlisted candidate would chair, attended by a Board member in each case along with a selection of staff members. These forums would not have a role in ranking or recommending candidates but would provide feedback to inform the interview panel.
86. Eve Alcock asked about student input. SG agreed that EA and Hillary Gyebi-Ababio should be involved if available; he reminded all Board members to contact Millie Crook with availability.
87. One Board member suggested that the final interviews be held face-to-face if possible. SG agreed that in-person interviews would be preferable; they might be worth a short delay to the process, but interviews by video call might be necessary and would have to be allowed for.

Date of next meeting

88. The Chair confirmed that the next Board meeting would take place on Wednesday 16 June 2021 at the Jisc offices in London if circumstances permitted, or by Zoom. The meeting was closed at **15.00**

Board of Directors Action List				
Minute:	Action:	Owner:	Due Date:	Update:
10/03/21 11	Notes of Consultative Board meetings to be shared with the Board, either in Board papers or, where there was no approaching Board meeting, via a link in the weekly Board update.	Tom Yates	Ongoing	Consultative Board notes are made available on the Board site here: https://gaaacuk.sharepoint.com/sites/Committee/consultative/SitePages/Home.aspx and are on the agenda for this meeting.
39	A written report on Interactions with Funders and Regulators to be provided at future meetings.	Vicki Stott	June	Complete, on the agenda for this meeting.
49	It was agreed that a key to the key to colours for the KPM rag ratings in the Quarterly Monitoring and Performance Report would be provided at the next meeting.	Caroline Blackburn	June	Complete, included in the Quarterly report for this meeting.