

Minutes of the forty-seventh meeting of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council which took place on Monday, 15 June 2009 in the Institute of Technology, Carlow, Kilkenny Road, Carlow at 9:30 a.m.

**PRESENT:**

Chairperson:	Professor Séamus Smyth
Chief Executive:	Gearóid Ó Conluain
Secretary:	Tadhg Ó hÉalaithe
Members:	Dr. Barbara Brittingham Mr. Michael Carmody Ms. Marion Coy Dr. Finola Doyle-O'Neill Mr. Stan McHugh Mr. Paddy Murray Ms. Mary McGlynn Ms. Marion Palmer

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Dr. Bryan Maguire
Ms. Karena Maguire
Ms. Caitriona Lawless

**APOLOGIES:**

Mr. Diarmuid Hegarty
Ms. Margaret Duignan
Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan
Mr. Bartley Rock
Mr. Norman Sharp OBE

The Chairperson, on behalf of Council, OFFERED the condolences of the Council to Norman Sharp following the recent death of his father and it was AGREED that the Chairperson would write to Norman conveying Council's condolences.

**1. Minutes of the Meeting of 27 April 2009**

The Minutes of the Meeting of 27 April 2009 circulated as C/M46 were confirmed and signed subject to an amendment to the last paragraph in Item 6.2. which now reads:

“Council NOTED that this provider had applied and had been assessed under the previous HETAC new provider policy but NOTED that learner protection arrangements had yet to be put in place. This provider has now completed the final stage of its Quality Assurance assessment and Council AGREED its quality assurance procedures subject to putting in place its learner protection arrangements.”

## **2. Matters Arising from Minutes**

### Item 5 – C/M46

Council NOTED that the Amalgamation of Agencies working in Quality Assurance in Education and Training would be dealt with under item 5 of today's Agenda.

### Item 6 – C/M46

Council NOTED that the Report of the Expert Panel on the Institutional Review of Institute of Technology, Sligo had been published on the HETAC website.

### Item 7 – C/M46

Council NOTED that the HETAC Assessment and Standards 2009 document had been published on the HETAC website.

### Item 8 – C/M46

Council NOTED that the Chairperson hoped to speak with members of the Audit Committee shortly to discuss the appointment/selection of an external person to serve as an additional member of the Committee.

## **3. Correspondence**

3.1. No business.

## **4. Chief Executive's Report**

4.1. Council NOTED the Chief Executive's Report circulated as C/A47/4.1. The Executive BRIEFED Council on recent developments regarding Section 26 Reviews. Council NOTED that this was the first time such reviews had taken place. Council further NOTED that in the case of a recently validated programme, a Section 26 Review had taken place and the review panel's report had been sent to the provider with a deadline of a month to respond. Council NOTED that the panel had found that there had been a breach of formal conditions relating to the provider's Quality Assurance and as a result, had recommended the withdrawal of validation. Council NOTED that learners who were still enrolled on the programme at the end of the academic year would receive credit for the modules completed and REQUESTED the Executive to seek legal advice, if necessary, in relation to possible outcomes in regard to this. Council NOTED that the Executive intended to revise the procedure on the withdrawal of validation and would bring this to Council's attention at a future meeting. Council NOTED that the Executive had written to the NQAI notifying it of these developments, in light of a provider's option to appeal the outcome of a review to the NQAI. Council NOTED the full report of the Review Panel would be presented to the Academic Committee for its consideration at its meeting scheduled for 6 July 2009 and would also be on the Agenda for the Council's next meeting, scheduled for 14 September 2009.

Council NOTED that advertisements for prospective applicants willing to serve as panel members for Institutional Reviews, Provider Monitoring and Programme Accreditation, had recently been published in two national newspapers and in the Times Higher Education Supplement. Council NOTED that the Executive was currently processing the large number of applications which had been received to date.

Council NOTED that work on a revised Business Plan for the second half of 2009 and all of 2010 was nearing completion and that plan would take account of high level objectives extrapolated from multiple documentary sources including the HETAC strategic plan 2006-2010, the Qualifications Act, the

consultation document published by the Department of Education and Science on the amalgamation of the Agencies working in Quality Assurance in Education and Training and other recent developments. Council NOTED the Executive's intention to bring the new Plan to Council for consideration at its meeting scheduled for 14 September 2009.

Council NOTED that a meeting was held with SIPTU officials in April to update the Union on progress relating to matters raised in the Labour Relations Commission report of March 2008 and EXPRESSED satisfaction with the progress made on this issue to date.

- 4.2. Council NOTED the Draft Minutes of the Tripartite Meeting (Chief Executives and Directors of NQAI, FETAC and HETAC) held on 8 April 2009, circulated as C/A47/4.2.

## **5. Amalgamation of Agencies (HETAC/FETAC/NQAI/IUQB) working in Quality Assurance in Education and Training**

Council NOTED the Department of Education and Science Consultation Paper on Implementation which had been published by the Department on 21 May 2009, circulated electronically to members at that time, and NOTED the main differences between the final version and the earlier draft document which had been considered by Council at its meeting on 27 April 2009. Council NOTED that amongst those differences were the proposal for a governing body membership of six and the inclusion of a section dealing with the National University of Ireland. Council NOTED the recommendation that the new Agency would take responsibility for the Quality Assurance of Recognised Colleges of the NUI. The Executive NOTED Council's opinion that such membership may be restrictive as there would be a need for policy expertise or alternatively, this expertise would need to feed through from a sub-committee structure. The proposed number of members would be insufficient to cover the entire sector of further and higher education and training. Council SUGGESTED that the new Agency should be able to set and regulate its own fee structure without recourse to the Minister for Education and Science. Council NOTED the reference relating to the establishment of an interim board and SUGGESTED that a defined time frame for the existence of such an arrangement should be specified.

Council NOTED and DISCUSSED the Revised HETAC Response to the Consultation Paper drafted by the Executive and circulated as C/A47/5.2. and REQUESTED the Executive to amend the response document to incorporate points raised during the course of its discussion on the matter. Council Members were ADVISED that they were as individuals, free to submit their own response/comments to the Consultation Paper and ADVISED Members that the deadline for receipt of such responses by the Department of Education and Science was 26 June 2009.

## **6. Academic Committee of Council**

- 6.1. Council NOTED the draft minutes of the tenth meeting of the Academic Committee held on 25 May 2009, circulated as C/A47/6.1. Council NOTED the Executive's briefing on matters arising in relation to Provider Monitoring and Section 26 Reviews (previously mentioned under Item 4.1.) and NOTED that reports relating to those matters would be referred for Council's consideration (at its September Meeting) by the Academic Committee following its July meeting. Council NOTED that under the transitional period following the implementation of the new Registration of Providers Policy which has seen several providers move through stage 1 and on to stage 2, there were still some applications in the pipeline which were submitted under the previous policy.

- 6.2. Council NOTED the information note tabled as C/A47/6.2.1., relating to the following new provider which had its first programme validation recommended for approval by the Academic Committee at its meeting held on 25 May 2009:

- College of Computer Training

Council NOTED that this provider had applied and had been assessed under the previous HETAC new provider policy but NOTED that learner protection arrangements had yet to be put in place. This provider has now completed the final stage of its Quality Assurance assessment and Council AGREED its quality assurance procedures subject to putting in place its learner protection arrangements.

- 6.3. Council NOTED the Explanatory Memorandum (C/A47/6.3.1.) together with the Reports of the Expert Panels and Responses of the Institutes to the Report of the Expert Panels on the following Institutional Reviews:

Letterkenny Institute of Technology (C/A47/6.3.2.(a-b)),  
Open Training College (C/A47/6.3.3.(a-b)) and  
Institute of Technology, Tallaght (C/A47/6.3.4.(a-b))

Council NOTED that due to the timing of the reviews (Letterkenny Institute of Technology – January 2009, Open Training College and Institute of Technology, Tallaght – both February 2009), responses to the Reports of the Expert Panels were not received by the Executive in time for the Academic Committee to consider the Reports of the Expert Panels at its meeting of 25 May 2009 and the Committee had requested Council to consider the Panel Reports for adoption and to refer any responses received, back to the Committee for consideration at its next meeting in July. Council NOTED that some of the Response documents contained quite detailed implementation plans and REQUESTED the Executive to contact the providers involved offering to remove them from the documents to be published, for commercially sensitive reasons. Council ADOPTED the three Expert Panel Reports and REFERRED the Response Documents to the Academic Committee for consideration.

Council NOTED that a Debriefing Session for the Secretaries and Chairpersons of the initial eight Institutional Reviews had been held on 9 June 2009 and NOTED that the Executive would place a report on this session and other developments following the first round of engagement before Council at its next meeting. Council NOTED that extensive and helpful feedback had been received from Panel Members involved to date as well as from the Institutions reviewed.

## **7. Academic Matters**

### **7.1. Policy for Professional Doctorate Programmes**

Council NOTED the Explanatory Memorandum and Draft Policy for Professional Doctorate Programmes, circulated as C/A47/7.1.1 – 7.1.2. Council NOTED that it had adopted a broad policy on Professional Doctorates at its Meeting on 19 September 2005 and as a result of growing interest and activity in this area, the Executive had seen a need to revisit this policy area with a view to bringing it up to date. Council NOTED that the draft document had been considered by the Academic Committee at its meeting on 25 May 2009 and it had recommended it for a consultation process with a narrow group of stakeholders. Council NOTED that the result of the consultation process had

been incorporated into the latest draft of the Policy document. Council ADOPTED the Policy for Professional Doctorate Programmes.

## **8. Financial Matters**

- 8.1. Council NOTED the Financial out-turn for the 5 month period to 31 May 2009, circulated as C/A47/8.1. Council NOTED that no expenditure had taken place to date under the heading of Training of Assessors and NOTED the Executive's briefing earlier in the meeting regarding the recent advertisements seeking applications for Panel Members and the development of training for those recruited.
- 8.2. Council NOTED the HETAC Draft Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2008 and AUTHORISED the Chairperson and the Chief Executive to sign the Financial Statements on Council's behalf following the completion of the audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General's Office.
- 8.3. Council NOTED that the Executive had notified private providers of the revised fees schedule relating to accreditation, award and other related fees which had been approved in April 2009 by the Department of Education and Science and which were effective from September 2009. Council NOTED that the Executive was awaiting final notification from the Department of Education and Science relating to the arrangements for the fees to be charged by HETAC in the Institute of Technology sector following the recent decision on same by the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Finance.

## **9. Chairperson's Business**

- 9.1. The Chairperson OUTLINED the background to the conferring of the MSc. in Innovation Management in the Public Service, jointly provided by Letterkenny Institute of Technology and University of Ulster and awarded by HETAC and the University of Ulster and INFORMED Council that the next cohort is scheduled to be conferred in Hillsborough Castle on 16 September 2009. Council NOTED that the matter of the conferral of an Honorary Doctorate at the ceremony had been raised by the University of Ulster. As the next meeting of Council is scheduled for 14 September 2009, Council AUTHORISED the Chairperson, in consultation with the Executive, to consider any proposed candidates and to agree the recipient with University of Ulster should the need arise and to CIRCULATE the outcome to Council Members.

## **10. Any Other Business**

No business.

The Chairperson THANKED Council Members for their attendance at the meeting and THANKED Dr. Ruaidhrí Neavyn, President of Institute of Technology, Carlow and his staff, for the tour of the Institute, use of the meeting facilities and their assistance with the arrangements for this meeting.

Council NOTED that this was the final meeting as a Member of Council for the USI Education Officer, Bartley Rock before the end of his term on 30 June and in his absence, EXPRESSED best wishes for his future endeavours.

The next meeting of Council will take place on Monday, 14 September 2009 at 10:30 a.m., in HETAC Offices, 26/27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2.

**THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.**

**Chairperson:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_