



**QQI**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

## **Programmes and Awards Oversight Committee (PAOC)**

### **Notes of meeting of 10 November 2020**

Present: Barbara Brittingham (Chair); Ken Carroll; Paul Lyons; Gina Quin; Gerard Morgan; Carmel Kelly (Key Executive)

Apologies: Mary Danagher

In attendance: Michelle Gallagher (QQI), Mairead Boland (QQI)

1. **Minutes of meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020** (PAOC/A2-2020/1)

The minutes of the PAOC meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020 were AGREED.

2. **Conflict of Interest**

No Conflict of Interest were noted.

3. **Negative Decisions taken by the PAEC on Programme Validation for confirmation or referral back to the PAEC**

3.1 Validation Refusals

3.1.1 **Dorset College**

PG24057, Certificate in International Foundation Studies, Level 5, Special Purpose Award, 120 FET Credits (PAOC/A2-2020/3.1.1)

The item was introduced by members of the Committee, and the issues that informed the PAEC decision were discussed. The PAEC's decision to refuse validation of this programme was considered and CONFIRMED.

3.1.2 **Athlone Institute of Technology**

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Nursing and Health Science, Level 10, Major Award (PAOC/A2-2020/3.1.2)

*(Mairead Boland, QQI, joined for this item)*

The item was introduced by members of the Committee, and the issues that informed the PAEC decision were discussed. The PAEC's decision to refuse validation of this programme was considered and CONFIRMED.

#### 4. **Oral Report of PAOC representations at PAEC meetings**

Barbara Brittingham represented the PAOC at the PAEC meeting of 10 October 2020.

Specific points that Barbara noted:

- Positive experience
- The meeting was well-chaired and effectively run
- Impressed by the professionalism, order and organisation shown in the meeting.
- Through discussions of items by exception
- Level of discussion around topics such as transnational delivery of programmes
- A similar method of discussion and decision is employed by the *New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)*
- Found value in observing the PAEC as a PAOC observer

The committee discussed the value of attending the PAEC as observers. Overall, it was deemed useful and beneficial to attend as it helped inform the PAOC members regarding the role and work of the PAEC. It was requested that the Executive collate the feedback provided by PAOC members at PAOC meetings and present the feedback at the next PAEC meeting. It was noted that the PAOC has a role in making recommendations on the strategic direction of the activities of the PAEC. The Executive will further consider how this role might be fulfilled. PAOC members are happy to continue to attend PAEC meetings as observers, subject to their availability.

#### 5. **Statistical Overview of Validation Process in 2019** (PAOC/A1-2020/5)

The Key Executive introduced the item and gave a brief overview of the paper. The paper was briefly discussed. PAOC members noted the volume of validation applications processed by QQI during 2019. The implications of Covid-19 and the move to virtual panel site-visits on the validation process was discussed. The Key Executive explained that QQI has recently issued a survey to both providers and panel members who have participated in virtual site visits over the past 5 months to monitor and improve the validation process. The Committee expressed an interest in seeing the survey feedback when collated.

The Committee requested that a short analysis of the Statistical Overview of Validation Processes for the past three years be provided by the executive at the next PAOC meeting.

**6. Matters Arising from the Minutes –**

**6.1 Draft guidelines for PAOC regarding how best to consider and evaluate negative decisions regarding programme validation (*for discussion*)**

*(PAOC/A1-2020/6.1)*

As agreed at the PAOC meeting of the 26 June 2020, the Executive provided an executive summary of the validation process, an overview of the programme validation process, and guidelines for how best to consider and evaluate negative programme validation decisions. The committee discussed these documents briefly. The Committee found that, in general, the documents are beneficial and welcomed the guidance provided. The Committee provided some feedback and commentary on the documents.

The documents will be amended as discussed and will be provided to the PAOC in advance of its next meeting.

**7. Any Other Business**

As there was no other business, the meeting ended.