

**Annex 2:** Minutes, Board meeting, 18-19 November 2019  
Minutes of Board conference call on 13 January 2020

**Action:** For adoption

### **Minutes, Board meeting, 18-19 November 2019**

#### **In attendance:**

- Andrée Sursock (AS), chair, Barbara Brittingham (BB), Ellen Hazelkorn (EH), Oisín Hassan (OH), Norman Sharp (NS), Riitta Pyykkö (RP) and Philip Winn (PW).
- Erna Sigurðardóttir (ES), Áslaug Helgadóttir (ÁH) and Carl Egede Bögild (CEB) on 19 November for part of the meeting.
- Dóra Stefánsdóttir and Rúna Vigdís Guðmarsdóttir for the minutes.

**Excused:** Sigurður Óli Sigurðsson (SÓS)

1. The **agenda** was adopted without modification.
2. The **minutes** from the last meeting were approved without modification.
3. The Board discussed three documents electronically prior to this meeting, as follows:
  - **Guidance note Paragraph 25:** Approved with no further comments.
  - **IWRs in QEF1:** The Board advised to develop further the introduction and the conclusion.
  - **IQA Guidebook:** A number of comments were offered that will be integrated in the next version.
4. **Debriefing of annual meetings:** The Board discussed the annual meetings at Reykjavík University (RU) and Bifröst University (BU).
5. **Preparation of the meeting with the Rectors' conference in March 2020**

The conclusion of the draft Annual Report for 2019 (p. 10) identifies Iceland-wide issues that could be the focus of discussion with the rectors' conference. In addition to the issues stated in the draft report, other issues include:

1. Demographic trends
2. Distance learning
3. Risk plan
4. Interdisciplinarity – what does that mean?
5. Issues around the third pillar (i.e. civic engagement).
6. Professional development of staff

## 7. Governing boards

The Board agreed to propose the following agenda:

- Maximising research capacity or REAC
- Learning and teaching, particularly at Masters' level and online
- One topic to be added by the rectors

## 6. The ENQA Self-Assessment Report and news from ENQA

The QA agencies are dissatisfied with the ESG, particularly those that have been evaluated several times already. There are several proposals on the table that need to be discussed further.

AS suggested that the QB request integrating the group of agencies that conduct institutional reviews, which will give a forum for QEF and enable benchmarking with other agencies.

NS presented the self-assessment report (SAR) and noted that the process helped the SAR group to think more systematically about pieces that had grown organically. He commented that we are effective in serving a small nation and different types of institutions and achieving the same goals as agencies working in larger systems. This needs to be emphasised. Demonstrating our independence can be done but there is a concern about our lack of resources. Relying on one person, however good, makes the whole process fragile. Ideally there should be another full-time person. The draft has been thoroughly discussed, both electronically and face-to-face. There is still a bit of tidying-up to do. After that, it will be sent out for comments, tidied-up again and the final report will be published in May.

AS praised the quality of the report and thanked everyone who contributed. Comments were received as follows:

- Chapters 9 and 10 should contain the bulk of the information rather than Chapter 6. It would be best not to cross reference but to repeat the same information in those three chapters.
- A summary table on the use of ESG should be added (new table in Annex 11).
- The tone of the report is sometimes apologetic. There are a few sections (e.g. 9.5) which start with an apology. It should start by describing how we do things and then add "there are shortcomings".
- Scope of the report: Should the ministerial accreditation be included in the scope? If it is, it needs to be further explained and it could be included under commissioned work. The chapter on research could be shortened.
- Clarifications are needed:
  - To distinguish between consultation and evaluation.
  - To emphasise that the IWR report is finalised by the time QB meets with the rectors (p. 25).
  - To mention that results of the surveys are a standing item on the agenda of QB meetings.
  - To define better who are the stakeholders. The term is currently used loosely.
  - To clarify the legal entity of the Board.
  - To review the section on independence and ensure that it is evidenced-based.

- To include mention of the PPT developed by SÓS on QEF1 as examples of system-wide analyses.
- To clarify on p. 38 a reference to the QB, which is difficult to understand and needs to be systematised.
- To change the title of the section on p. 18 “link between research and teaching”, which is not really addressed.

A number of questions were raised:

- Whether annual meetings should be called follow-up meetings?
  - Whether employers are involved in review panels? No because of potential conflicts of interest given the size of Iceland.
  - Whether anything linked to IWR was published in Icelandic? It was suggested that the summary should be made available in Icelandic because it was symbolically important.
  - Whether universities were allowed to turn to an international QA agency? This is not formalised but there does not seem to be a problem.
  - Whether the enhancement-led approach to research outcomes (p. 67) should be included in this report since it has not been discussed yet?
  - Whether the ESG are adapted to micro nations? It is clear from the map of ENQA members that there are missing.
7. **Annual conference:** Following a discussion, the Board agreed to suggest to the Quality Council the following topics: Digitalisation (as applicable to governance/management, teaching and learning, and research) or Postgraduate studies.
8. **REAC:** REAC is currently discussing data definition, including their applicability to the disciplines in the arts. It will be important to map out PURE’s next steps, particularly the training of all the users of the new system. REAC cannot do it but it can facilitate it. The National Library and the company providing PURE are expected at REAC’s meeting on 20 November.

## 9. The SLR and IWR schedule

All SLR are on track.

The University of Iceland decided to add a review of its central services.

### Planning future annual meetings

- University of Iceland, with PW: 9 September
- Reykjavik University, with RP: 9 September. 4 May would be ok, but it might be too early.
- Bifröst University with EH: 3 March (EH would miss the Board meeting) or 4 May.
- University of the Arts with PW and OH: 4 May
- Agricultural University with EH: 4 May
- UNAK with NS: 9 September

- Hólar University with BB: 9 September (imperatively not in November)

Meeting adjourned at 14.00

## 10. Meeting with the Quality Council

### In attendance:

**QB:** Andrée Sursock, chair, Ellen Hazelkorn, Oisín Hassan, Rita Pyykkö, Norman Sharp, Philip Winn, and Erna Sigurðardóttir

**QC:** Áslaug Helgadóttir (University of Iceland), chair, Vaka Óttarsdóttir (UNAK), Stefán Kalmannsson (Bifröst University), Ása Björk Stefánsdóttir (Reykjavík University)

**LÍS:** Sigrún Jónsdóttir, chair, and Eygló María Björnsdóttir

**Guest:** Carl Egede Bøggild, Greenland

Dóra Stefánsdóttir for the minutes

### **QC update**

QC have been developing a common set of performance indicators, but this has been put on hold, in expectation of a Nordic report on the topic. They are also working on an English/Icelandic quality assurance glossary to address the current discrepancy in the use of different terms.

A student partnership policy is under development, based on the model provided by the University of Aberdeen. Students need to be empowered in getting more involved in quality work. It is not enough that they have the right to participate, they need to be able to contribute like all other partners. This is expected to be a two-year project. LÍS representatives noted that progress varied across universities.

QC usually offer a seminar in November. This year, however, it has been pushed to 23 January; it will focus on the international students' learning experience.

Most of QC time goes into sharing experiences. Asked about the SLRs, the QC chair noted that there are initial complaints about the large amount of work required but staff admit that they find it worthwhile. Some academic staff complain about not being paid for this work. This is not linked to sessional staff who are not involved in non-teaching activities. The solution found at UNAK is to reduce the teaching workload of those working on quality while at RU the stress is on making quality assurance an integral part of everyday work.

The students at UNAK also like to participate but they point out that this is an additional task, so maybe they should be able to get ECTS. There is also a need to involve students in the follow-up of the IWRs. There used to be a post-evaluation seminar after each review, creating a lot of interest. Maybe this idea can be re-introduced, making it a broader seminar than the focus on technical issues it had in QEF1. This would interest a broader set of people. The annual meeting after the IWR could also be used for such an event. This requires further discussion.

At the University of Iceland, they are requiring action plans for each department, to evaluate yearly what has happened and what needs to be changed. A discussion ensued on the importance of embedding quality assurance results in governance and decision-making processes.

### **QB Update**

- A strategic plan was adopted after consultation with QC, Rectors' conference and LÍS.
- A number of documents have been created to enhance the work of the QB, such as Guidelines for the experts and chairs of IWR panels, for Board members, etc. QB have developed a number of guidance notes that are compiled into a guidebook. QC are aware of these notes. However, new members need a welcome orientation package. SÓS has developed a table based on Annex 11 of the QEF 2 *Handbook* to show how Part 1 of the ESG maps out against the two targets of the QEF review: quality of standards and quality of learning experience. This table will be shared with QC.
- QB have extended links to external stakeholders and invite QC members to join these discussions.
- QB aim to increase its international presence: it is preparing for a full membership of ENQA. SÓS has participated actively in a number of ENQA events (presenting posters) and has been active in NOQA.
- REAC: Iceland has bought PURE, a system to manage research output. They are trying to develop standards for data collection. Some training is going to be needed in the use of the system.
- The next annual conference will be held in May. Two topics have been discussed: Digitalisation (in a broad way) or Postgraduate studies. QC will discuss this choice at its next meeting and make a proposal to QB.
- QB discussed the notion of publishing a summary of IWRs in Icelandic. Further discussion is required to decide who should write it (QB or the team) and how to deal with RU and Hólar who would have gone through the IWR process before the decision was taken.
- The QB's web page needs to be redesigned.

## 11. Meeting with LÍS

### In attendance:

**QB:** Andrée Sursock, chair, Ellen Hazelkorn, Oisin Hassan, Rita Pyykkö, Norman Sharp, Philip Winn and Erna Sigurðardóttir

**LÍS:** Sigrún Jónsdóttir, chair, and Eygló María Björnsdóttir

**Guest:** Carl Egede Bøggild, Greenland

Dóra Stefánsdóttir for the minutes

Sigrún is the new chair of LÍS. She is studying medicine at the University of Iceland (5<sup>th</sup> year) and has worked for some years for LÍS. Eygló is completing her Bachelor in RU, in both business and computer science. Their term at LÍS finishes in May, when a new board will be elected.

LÍS are trying in every way possible to guard the rights of the students. They also work with the association of students in upper secondary education. LÍS has paid specific attention to international students and refugees, who find it difficult to enter Icelandic universities, due to both financial issues and the demands for the minimum number of ECTS they need to take each year.

LÍS are trying to get together a student QA pool, hoping to engage students further in the quality work. QB are not making too many demands on LÍS, but their main challenge is reaching the small universities, which do not always have a formal student union, and the universities outside Reykjavík. They try to visit once a year. The Irish experience of online cooperation might be useful. LÍS is creating a series of weekly podcasts on different aspects of quality assurance. QB offered to help if needed.

There is some concern about the imbalance between men and women at university, due to young men dropping out of education because are able to get well-paid jobs early on and VET has a negative image. The higher number of women in higher education may be affecting the fertility rate, which has been rising gradually. Icelandic students tend to be older and are more likely to have children (33%), as compared to their European counterparts (10%). Mental illness (depression) among males is an important issue.

LÍS receives some funding from the Ministry. They have tried to work with the Ministry on several issues, but the Ministry is very focused on the Financial Act at the moment. LÍS would like to discuss access requirements, notably whether access should be open or based on tests.

Concerning the services offered to students, while QEF1 revealed that students were generally satisfied with the services they were getting, LÍS noted that this varies across universities and they have been pressing for better services.

Erna Sigurðardóttir will be leaving the QB and was thanked warmly for her many contributions. LÍS presented her with a cake as a thank you. LÍS will advertise for the post at its next meeting.

## Minutes of Board conference call on 13 January 2020

**In attendance:** Andrée Sursock (AS), chair, Barbara Brittingham (BB), Oisín Hassan (OH), Ellen Hazelkorn (EH), Riitta Pyykkö (RP), Norman Sharp (NS), Philip Winn, (PW), and Sigurður Óli Sigurðsson (SÓS).

1. The agenda was adopted without modification.
2. Discussion about future housing of the Board. AS and SÓS prepared tender for bids to host the Board. The tender will be sent to government agencies that rent space out to non-affiliated parties. So far, SÓS has received assurances from Rannís and Umbra (a government agency that provides central support services to the ministries) that they have space to rent and will submit a bid. SÓS will send the tender to all QB members for feedback before it is formally submitted to the identified agencies.
3. Discussion about the Quality Board annual conference, to be held around the May 2-3 Board meeting. A draft programme was discussed that focused on two themes: enhancing Masters degrees in Iceland, and good practice and opportunities related to sharing of resources in Higher Education. The draft programme had been developed in consultation with the Quality Council. The conclusion of discussions was that incorporating two themes into a half-day conference would be overambitious. AS will develop a revised draft programme with a sole focus on enhancement of MA studies. Ideally, there will be case studies from Iceland and input from Icelandic students and working life stakeholders. One possible international contributor is Sue Rigby, Vice-Chancellor of Bath Spa University. She ran a programme for the Scottish Funding Council called *Making the Most of Masters* and could speak from experiences about that programme. Some Board members will be invited to contribute as chairs of sessions or speakers.
4. Discussion about meetings with working life stakeholders around the March meeting. Ideally, this would involve meetings with two groups on March Monday 2, 17:00-18:00. SÓS will identify industry/business groups with whom to meet.