

Minutes of the Board meeting, 26-27 November 2018, 9.00 am to 17.30 pm

In attendance: Andrée Sursock (AS), chair, Barbara Brittingham (BB), Ellen Hazelkorn (EH), Frank Quinault (FQ), Norman Sharp (NS), Philip Winn (PW), Áslaug Helgadóttir (ÁH) until 11.15 on November 26, Erna Sigurðardóttir (ES) and Sigurður Óli Sigurðsson (SÓS).

Apologies received: Robert Henthorn (RH)

1. Minutes from QB September 2018 meeting were adopted without amendments.
2. Update on sector matters. SÓS noted that RU has been listed in the top 100 young universities in the Times Higher Education Ranking and that the consultation about the new QA regulation received comments from QB and QC and should be passed by 1 January 2019.
3. Discussion of a first set of documents circulated electronically, prior to the meeting:
 - a) Flyer explaining ENQA review, to be distributed to relevant Board stakeholders prior to review team visit.
 - b) Flyer explaining Board-led Institution-Wide Reviews.
 - c) Surveys administered following Institution-Wide Review to Review Team, university administration, and students. The surveys will be piloted for the review of Reykjavík University, and amended if needed.
 - d) Guidance note on advice to universities for producing Reflective Analysis as part of Institution-Wide Review.
 - e) Guidance note on clarifying the meeting of Board with Rector for purposes of discussing the Institution-Wide Review Report draft prior to publication.
 - f) Board Handbook. AS will review text in bold and make it consistent across the document.
 - g) Board Constitution. FQ will read and give feedback.

Board agrees that, in general, guidance notes should have the same preamble, emphasising the dominance of the QEF2 *Handbook* and following a standard format. AS will review the various documents that contain descriptions of the Institution-Wide Review process for consistency. SÓS will add the following mention on the final versions of all documents: “Approved by Quality Board on DATE”.

Board agreed that all meetings should start with an announcement of absence of conflict of interest, and that all members should sign a document declaring interests in the March 2019 meeting.

4. Discussion about student member of Board, and possible succession planning: The Board discussed the option of training systematically the student observer to eventually become the member Board. It was noted that, to the extent possible, student membership be representative of the seven Icelandic universities. LÍS, the Quality Board, and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (MESC) also need to arrive at a common understanding of whether student representatives (whether member or observer) should be studying at an Icelandic university or come from an international institution.
5. SÓS tabled an excel document from MESC titled "University Key Statistics 2017". The table headings in the document are "students," "disciplines," "graduations," "staff," "finances" and "research". There were some values missing for some of the universities, and it appears that universities are applying different definitions for some of the variables. The Board will suggest that MESC publish these data once their reliability has been assured.
6. AS and NS provided an update on their meeting with Ari, Rector of Reykjavík University, on RU's upcoming Institution-Wide Review.
7. Discussion of arrangements for Institution-Wide Review of Hólar, including possible Review Chairs and Team Members.
8. Meeting adjourned at 17:30 on Nov 26 and re-convened at 9:00 on Nov 27. A working group on Quality Enhancement of Greenlandic Higher Education joined the meeting on Nov 27 as observers.
9. The Greenlandic delegation included Carl Egede Bögild (Head of Section, Greenlandic Ministry of Education and Science), Helle Mellemsgaard Sørensen (Lawyer, Greenlandic Ministry of Education and Science), Suzanne Møller (Pro-rector & Head of institute, Institute of Nursing & Health Science, University of Greenland), Aage Rydstrøm-Poulsen (Head of institute, head of department, dr. theol., Institute of Culture, Language & History. Department of Theology, University of Greenland), Christel Lund Bøjler (Head of Niuernermik Ilinniarfik in Nuuk, a vocational school with authority to grant Bachelor degrees), Qivioq Nivi Løvstrøm (Ililli: Greenlandic Student Union), and Ivana Heilmann (Ililli: Greenlandic Student Union).
10. Bögild provided a presentation on Greenland and Greenlandic higher education and expressed an interest in further collaboration between Iceland and Greenland in the area of quality enhancement in higher education.
11. Discussion of possible additional documentation on the model of guidance notes: One possible document could focus on the necessary background of experts for review teams, and consideration of how to compose these teams to ensure a variety of perspectives and backgrounds. The Board decided that such a document should be in the future internal quality manual, rather than a guidance note.
12. Discussion of the Board's inclusion of external stakeholders in its work: The Board discussed the possibility of including community representatives on review teams, and whether this was an ENQA requirement. Board members reported mixed experiences with community representatives on review teams. On the positive side, the Commission

on Institutions of Higher Education, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, includes a community representative on all review teams. However, it would be difficult to get independent community representatives who meet the criteria listed in the QEF2 Handbook; in addition, given the size of Iceland, it would be also difficult to avoid conflict of interest. Board members agreed that increased involvement of community representatives in Board operations should be a goal, and that it would be important to ensure effective participation rather than tokenistic representation. The option of a community member of an institutional review team should be revisited when the next cycle of the QEF is developed. The evaluation of research impact could lead to better intelligence regarding community engagement at the conclusion of QEF2.

13. Discussion of a second set of documents circulated prior to the meeting:

- a) Conflict of interest declaration for members of review teams.
- b) Consent to processing personal data, for purposes of establishing a database of experts for review teams.
- c) REAC guidance note on reporting research management in Subject-Level Review. Some of the possible considerations for the note concern issues such as impact on local employers/SMEs, the degree to which actual management of research is represented in the document, the impact of scholarship (more broadly defined than “research”), and critical mass (of number of researchers, number of outputs, etc.). Quality Council will also be consulted on a draft of this note.
- d) Other documents not discussed will be sent by email for electronic consultation in December, with a deadline for comments in mid-January 2019.

14. Discussion of Board annual conference: MESC has been tasked with hosting a conference of the Nordic Council of Ministers in Summer 2019 and proposes to combine that conference with the Board’s and Council’s annual conference. This proposal was accepted by the Board. There will most likely be two themes: community engagement of universities, and quality assurance of work placements. SÓS and a MESC representative will form a planning committee and report to the Board.

15. Joint meeting with the Quality Council: Joining the meeting at 14:00 were the following representatives of the Quality Council: Áslaug Helgadóttir (ÁH/University of Iceland) Signý Óskarsdóttir (SÓS/Bifröst University), Einar Hreinsson (EH/ Reykjavík University), Skúli Skúlason (SS/Hólar University College), Brita Berglund (BB/Agricultural University of Iceland) and Aldís Mjöll Geirsdóttir (AMG/LÍS).

16. ÁH reported on two workshops held in Autumn 2018: The Quality Council hosted a workshop on quality assurance of distance education, and LÍS hosted a workshop on student engagement in quality assurance. The two workshops included international and Icelandic presenters and were well attended. AMG noted that the international presenters for the LÍS conference had presented a model for a “Student Partnership Policy” that stipulates the rights and responsibilities of students participating in internal quality assurance and university governance. LÍS will draft a template Partnership Policy

to share with the individual student unions, with the goal to get all seven Rectors to sign Student Partnership Policies with their respective student unions.

17. Discussion of 2018 annual meetings between Board representative and university management teams (May and September): Board and Council agreed that too much time was spent on presentations at the beginning of the meetings that dealt with recent developments in quality enhancement. That left too little time to discuss Subject-Level Reviews (when applicable), strategic planning, etc. Best option would probably be for universities to share bullet points on developments in quality enhancement before the meeting that can be used to guide the dialogue. Council members noted that two hours is the absolute minimum for an annual meeting, and ideally would be longer. EH noted that meeting student representatives on the margins of annual meetings would also be ideal. Some other ideas suggested for further consideration included rotating Board members across the universities and holding Board meetings at different universities.
18. Discussion of progress with Subject-Level Reviews (SLRs) and Reflective Analyses for Institution-Wide Reviews. In general, SLRs are progressing well, and Annex 11 of the Handbook is helping institutions frame their Reflective Analyses. One option that University of Iceland is considering for reporting on research strategy is to focus on the school level, rather than subject-level. When all faculties have done it for a given school, then the school will be responsible for writing a self-review for management of research. AS noted that this sounded like a promising idea, but would like more Board discussion before the university moves forward. ÁH also noted that, for the SLRs, UI creates teams of external experts that visit more than one department within the same school and work across subjects. That means that each unit gets an external expert review that is signed by more than one expert.
19. Discussion of REAC's Guidance Note on reporting management of research in SLR: ÁH noted that it is sometimes difficult to cover research strategy at the subject/unit level, and that it may make more sense to talk of research strategies of schools or entire universities.
20. AS noted that the Board will seek input from the Quality Council on a number of documents that the Board is preparing, and that the Council's feedback would be sought before the Board's March 2019 meeting. These are guidance notes, mission statement, Board Handbook, and training materials for Chairs and Members of Institution-Wide Review teams. When finalised, the guidance notes would go to all members of the Quality Council and all Rectors, be posted on the QEF website, and added to the copy of the Handbook online in specially marked sections. The Board would also urge the Quality Council to consider what statistics its members would like to see reported in public summaries of SLRs and share them with the Board before the March meeting.
21. AS provided an update on the Board's annual conference (see item #12, above, for detail).
22. The Quality Council members were asked how they felt that the university communities were responding to QEF2, and whether review fatigue was setting in. ÁH noted that there was some scepticism in the beginning, but that units that have gone through SLR have

found them to be very valuable. Some of the business departments are probably experiencing more fatigue than others, as they also undertake international accreditations.

23. Carl Egede Bögild asked Quality Council members if students felt that teaching had improved in the wake of QEF1. SS answered that the universities are clearly influenced by the QEF in their work. It has improved how people are working together and communicating, but it is more difficult to provide evidence that education is actually getting better. Bögild also asked if having a Quality Board with members mainly from Anglo-Saxon countries was a challenge for Iceland as a Nordic country. Council members generally did not believe so and the Board noted that efforts are made to include Nordic experts on all panels as a matter of policy.

24. All non-Board members were excused at 16:00, and Aldís Mjöll Geirsdóttir (LÍS) met with the Board from 16:00-17:30. LÍS is negotiating with MESC about a funding contract, and a five-year option with funding increasing incrementally over that period. Student housing and student loans are two hot issues for students. Housing is still difficult, particularly in Reykjavík where 9-10% of students have student housing. LÍS kicked off a mental health campaign, which linked student loans, housing and mental health. In general, LÍS believes that there are not enough student support services for mental health in the universities and has historically lobbied for one psychologist per university. There are now Master's level psychology students at UI and RU that offer clinics. Some Rectors think these services should be delivered outside the universities, but LÍS disagrees very much. LÍS has finalised its guide for students participating in quality enhancement online, which is being printed. LÍS has launched a podcast on quality as well. The goal of these initiatives is to make quality accessible to students. AMG noted that the Quality Council is interested in student partnership policies and making them formal. LÍS has learned a great deal from international bodies like ESU, as well as national student bodies, on the importance of having proper internal structure and becoming an organisation with a stable foundation. A West-Nordic Network of students is being developed with participation from Iceland (LÍS), Greenland and Faroe Islands. Finally, LÍS is leading a project on student refugees that will result, for example, in a website for refugees to assist them in applying to Icelandic universities.

Meeting adjourned at 17:30.