AAG

## Minutes of Meeting

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| **Date** | **06/03/2024** |
| **Time** | **10:00am-12:00pm** |
| **Location** | **MS Teams Call** |
| **Present** | Ruth Jennings – Chair, George Brown (Vice-Chair) – SQA Accreditation, , Catherine Ferry– Scottish Government, Diane Mitchell – Colleges Scotland , Sheila Dunn - SCQF, Alison Eales – QAA, Stuart McKenna – STF, James McDonald – RBS, Klaus Meyer – Education Scotland, Tommy Breslin - STUC, Alison Bucknell – FISSS, Jennifer Davies – SP Energy (Co-Chair), Rohaise Rose-Bristow – The Torridon (Co-Chair), Terry Dillon – SDS, Maxine McLintock – SDS, Callum Boag - SDS  |

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|  | Action |
| **1.** | **Apologies & Guests** |  |
|  | ApologiesMatthew Barr – Universities Scotland **Guest**Keith Spalding – SDS  |  |
| **2.** | **Welcome & Previous Minutes** |  |
|  | **Welcome** AAG members extended their congratulations to GB on his new role as Interim Chair Executive, this reflects GB’s extensive knowledge and expertise. The group also welcomed CB who will be supporting AAG as interim secretariat until Nicola’s position has been backfilled. RJ will be attending the next few AAG meetings to support JD and RR-B as co-chairs and to ensure there is a smooth and seamless transition for AAG. RJ is also now vice chair of SAAB Standards and Frameworks Group and will ensure SAAB and AAG are closely linked. **Previous Minutes and Actions – comments** * The AAG date in last month’s minutes (6th February 2025) is wrong. **This minute has been updated with the correct date.**
* Custodial Care and Practice: TB requested an update to this section of the minute.

**Action:** Custodial Care and Practice MA – TB to email changes for this section to TD/ CB. This will be updated and sent back across to TB to ensure this is accurate. * Members queried if the slides on collaboration work with SQA, as per an action from the last meeting has been shared. **This has been uploaded to February’s meeting folder on glasscubes.**
* Members asked if there has been an update on the Continuous Improvement activity. **No update received on this activity yet but SDS to seek an update.**
* In terms of the previous action around AAG members having the opportunity to attend TEGs, members of the group queried the plan for this. This is a standing action, and if AAG members want to attend a TEG, they are more than welcome to.
* TD suggested it may be beneficial to come back to a future AAG with a short presentation outlining the different elements the TEG look at. AAG members agreed this would be a useful approach as it would allow members with a particular interest in a certain element of the process, to join a TEG for that reason.

**Action:** TD to come back to a future AAG with a short presentation outlining the different elements a Technical Expert Group. This will enable AAG members to join a specific TEG, relevant to their area of interest. **TD Response:** Currently finalising 25/26 priorities, once we have these we will provide list of developmental areas and opportunities for attendance. * AAG members would prefer if individual group members were not identified, unless members particularly want to be. This was opened up to the group and collective agreement was reached.

**Previous minutes have been signed off subject to changes to the Custodial Care and Practice section, as above.**  |  |
| **3.** | **Core Skills Paper**  |  |
|  | **Background*** At AAG in January, core skills within the Dental Nursing apprenticeship (in development) were discussed. As the new framework is being built, the TEG wanted to highlight to AAG their consideration regarding the treatment core skills within the apprenticeship. The paper produced covered the groups consideration and proposed a cores skills profile, the reasons and rationale behind this, as well as policy and opportunities. This was all discussed at AAG last month.
* For February’s AAG the SDS team sought to curate all available guidance – seeking input from SQA and SG – to provide members with an overview of current policy and guidance relating to core skills within apprenticeships. There was detailed discussion amongst members, and it was highlighted that additional content had been found which should be included for completeness and to ensure members had all relevant detail. The paper was updated to support AAG member decision making and a shorter-term solution is required for Dental Nursing today, due to the pressing timeline. There will be a longer-term decision required on the wider core skills approach.

**Dental Nursing Challenge** * The work on the Universal Skills framework is likely to be the longer-term approach for core skills. Whilst approval for the core skills treatment is not being sought today the Dental Nursing TEG are keen to understand AAG’s view so that they can progress with confidence – that what is being developed is acceptable - due to the strict timeline for this development.

**Discussion** AAG members recognise the existing guidance on the application of Workplace Core skills within apprenticeships can be broadly summarised as 1. *All Scottish MA Frameworks must contain all 5 Workplace Core Skills*
2. *Workplace Core Skills must either be embedded or separately certificated*
3. Workplace Core skills should be applied at the appropriate level to the apprenticeship
* SCQF Level 4 would be the minimum level of Workplace Core skills acceptable unless evidence in provided by the SSO/Industry that the inclusion of Workplace core skills at or above this level would create challenges for industry and/or apprentices
* Members discussed that Workplace Core skills have not been significantly updated in 17 years and in this time, the workplace has moved on drastically with no updates to core skills guidance. Therefore, AAG members agreed a pragmatic approach would be beneficial, and most members confirmed they have no issue with the Numeracy core skill being SCQF Level 3 for Dental Nursing, as substantive evidence has been provided by industry to support this. AAG members agreed with this.
* AAG members agreed that Workplace core skills require updating. Workplace Core skills are supposed to be relevant to a work and therefore, the majority of AAG members would rather core skills were at a lower level if that meets the needs of the sector as opting for a higher level, at times, can create barriers.
* The long-term replacement for Workplace Core Skills, the Universal Skills framework are unlikely to be available for approx. 18 months. AAG members agreed there needs to be an interim solution due to Workplace core skills framework and guidance being outdated.
* The learner needs to remain at the centre of all considerations, and progression must not be halted due to issues relating to currency of existing (Workplace Core Skills) framework
* AAG members can see why Numeracy would be SCQF Level 3 in Dental Nursing, looking at the unit specifications it would be difficult to gather evidence and examples naturally. Numeracy at SCQF Level 3 makes it easier for the apprentice to gain evidence naturally and move through the apprenticeship. The concern would be that Numeracy at SQCF Level 4 for Dental Nursing is not contextualised or relevant, and apprentices may be required to undertake learning which is beyond the level naturally occurring in the role and may prevent a barrier to completion for those that may be able to competently undertake all aspects of the role but not achieve the core skills at the level set.
* If core skills came out below SCQF Level 4, this would require substantial evidence, this will be key and ensuring there is a robust TEG to support the decision is critical. This approach could be applied to all sectors, and AAG will continue to look at submissions on an individual basis. This is not about making things easier, the apprentice must remain at the forefront of considerations so for example, if something hard to teach but relevant to apprentices, this cannot be a blocker.
* Queries on if there is an opportunity to have a minimum level but some apprentices could potentially achieve the core skill at one or two levels higher should this be relevant and beneficial to the apprentice? These are minimum levels, and this has always been the intention, all candidates should be encouraged to achieve a higher level if relevant. These levels should be viewed as the absolute minimum. If an employer asked for a higher core skill a training provider would likely support this.
* In terms of the governance process for developments, a Core Skills Profile could be brought forward at Stage Gate 2. This would provide AAG with an earlier indication of the level core skills are likely to be and the justification for this. Stage Gate 2 is the best time to bring this to AAG as Stage Gate 3 could potentially delay the development should there be any issues/ feedback to address.
* The development team in SDS will look at this for AAG prior to submissions to ensure AAG members to clearly understand and review each submission.
* Core skills pack to support apprentices – These would need to be relevant to the sector and not just a development of generic packs. If this was the approach, these packs would not be relevant to the sector, but there is a support pack already for core skills. There is currently consideration around Dental Nursing, if this is what the sector decides to do.
* Further consideration required on approach to core skills moving forward, AAG members will play into this.

**Decisions and Actions** Dental Nursing* AAG members confirmed they are comfortable for the Numeracy core skill for Dental Nursing to be SCQF Level 3 given substantive evidence has already been provided by the sector.
* This decision will be communicated to the TEG by the AAG Chair to enable them to continue to progress

Supporting SSO’s and development groups (TEG’s)* In the medium-term, AAG members agreed that clarity on the consideration/application of workplace Core Skills within Apprenticeships need communicated to other sectors/developers.
* Core Skills Working Group to be set up to look at the development of AAG’s approach to support core skills, providing interim guidance for developers pending the outcome of the long-term review and progression of universal skills.
* There will be no substantive change to the governance process. A proposed Core Skills Profile will be submitted alongside Stage Gate 2. This will provide AAG with an earlier indication of the level core skills are being considered at for each development and the justification for this.
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| **4.**  | **Development Manager Update – by exception**  |  |
|  | KS attended to provide the Development update by exception and answer any questions on this.Land-based * Land & Nature: SQA Awarding Body have agreed to develop both L5 and L6 qualifications at the same time.
* Horticultural QPs are in train and await ACG approval in March.
* Any developments complete will be picked up with NTP colleagues in April to pick up on delivery aspects.

Members highlighted the lapsing times required to ensure providers are ready for the launch of new frameworks. Plumbing & Heating and Accounting for example, will require longer lapsing times. In terms of when to pre-empt providers to prepare for launch, this is the type of conversation which will be picked up in the four-way SDS/ Training Provider Engagement meetings, to ensure there is a reasonable and fair timeframe. The next meeting is scheduled for 1st April 2025. Accounting * AAG Sub-Group submission March 2025, looking to come to AAG for Approval in Principle May 2025.
* Discussions on exemptions ongoing – working with SDS colleagues and exception partners to finalise details on this, including support guidance and associated fees to support apprenticeship contribution calculations.

Construction Developments * There is significant work going on from CITB on the competence frameworks across the sector, which will likely impact on developments coming through. There has been a change to process within CITB which outlines baseline competency across the sector. Given the change in process, there has been some challenges regarding the implementation of this, causing delays in NOS expected to receive. This is being picked up at the NOS Governance Group and an update may be required at SAAB Standards & Frameworks Group, so that they are aware of this.
* Design and Contracting: Despite the above, this development is still progressing.
* Carpentry & Joinery: Work on the Scottish apprenticeship standards is being incorporated into the CITB competence framework development and subsequent NOS review.

Equine and Archaeology* Delays in these developments due to the NOS Business Case. This is being discussed at the NOS Governance Group and various other parties.
* Archology also behind slightly due to sickness in CiFA.

Health and Social Care * NOS review ongoing. Already picked up with all key partners and there is an acceptance that they want to develop the apprenticeship.
* Stage Gate 0 will likely come to AAG soon (target date for submission in May 25).

Further Discussion * Query from Lantra if there is a plan to look at Aquaculture Management at SCQF Level 9? There is currently no plan but there is an element of looking at pan and multi-sector NOS. This will essentially cover roles that span across almost every sector and Management and Leadership comes into this.
* There is consideration ongoing on how pan and multi-sector NOS would be developed, but there are currently no plans to take this forward.
* Query from Lantra regarding private organisations being able to update NOS. This was discussed at the NOS Governance Group and a response to Lantra was sent last week. The S&F Panel have also been approached by a few other organisations regarding updating NOS. Discussions ongoing on how private organisations can go down the self-funding route without lowering quality of NOS.
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| **5.**  | **AOB**  |  |
|  | * No other business was raised.
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| **Outstanding Actions from Previous Meetings** |
| **Action** | **Owner** |
| AAG Members to attend TEGs in an observatory role – follow up action for TD to come back to a future AAG with a short presentation outlining the different elements of Technical Expert Group. Currently finalising 25/26 priorities, once we have these we will provide list of developmental areas and opportunities for attendance. | MG/ TD |
| Continuous Improvement Activity Update **September 2024** | TD |
| Custodial Care and Practice MA - TB to email changes for this section in Feb AAG minute to TD/ CB. This will be updated and sent back across to TB to ensure this is accurate. | TB/ TD/ CB |

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| **Apprenticeships Approved for Delivery (Stage Gate 4)** |
| **Name of Apprenticeship**  | **Date Approved**  |
| Services (Customer Service, Retail and Travel) at SCQF Level 5  | 05/09/2024 |
| Services (Customer Service, Retail and Travel) at SCQF Level 6 | 05/09/2024 |
| Hospitality at SCQF Level 5 | 14/11/2024 |
| Professional Cookery at SCQF Level 5 | 14/11/2024 |
| Professional Cookery at SCQF Level 6 | 14/11/2024 |