

HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY COUNCIL OF ONTARIO

MINUTES BOARD MEETING BY TELECONFERENCE June 13, 2019 1 pm – 4 pm

Council members present:

Robinson, Nobina, Chair
Carson, A. Scott
Herbert, Sue
Lang, Pat
Mayer, Denis
Zegarac, George

Guest:

Susan Sheremeta, RSM Canada LLP

President and Secretary to the Board:

Weingarten, Harvey P.

Staff supporting the Council:

Deller, Fiona, Executive Director, Research & Policy
Hicks, Martin, Executive Director, Data & Statistics
Macri, Diana, Chief Administrative Officer
Permato, Ellen, Executive Assistant and Recording Secretary

1. Call to order

Nobina Robinson, incoming chair, called the meeting to order at 1 pm and established that a quorum of council members was present.

She welcomed the members and asked the people around the table to introduce themselves.

She proposed an additional item for the agenda called “Other Business” where other unanticipated action items for the board could be discussed.

2. The amended meeting agenda was approved unanimously.

3. Minutes of the meeting of April 2, 2019

Motion:

1. That the board approve the minutes of board meeting of April 2, 2019.

Moved by Pat Lang; seconded by Denis Mayer
Approved unanimously
June 2019/Motion 1

4. **Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities update**

George Zegarac reported as part of system-wide legislative review of all government agencies, we should expect that MTCU will be required to contribute to a review of HEQCO's governing documents.

The deputy minister undertook to work with the president to develop HEQCO's next mandate priorities for this fiscal year.

Mr. Zegarac noted that the ministry continues to have a good relationship with HEQCO, and values HEQCO's input to the ministry's goals and its essential role as a third-party monitoring body.

4.2 **Chair's update:**

Nobina Robinson commended Denis Mayer for his contributions as a board member and for taking on the responsibilities as interim chair of the board. She turned to him to report on some matters taken up since the last board meeting.

Denis Mayer welcomed Nobina Robinson and A. Scott Carson to the board and gave his assurance that he would continue to support them throughout the remainder of his term.

He reported that the search process for a new CEO can proceed now that a new chair is in place and HEQCO's 2019/2020 fiscal year budget has been determined. Denis Mayer asked management to extend to the former staff (who were terminated earlier this spring as a result of the budget reduction) the board's appreciation for their efforts and contributions to HEQCO.

4.3 **President's update**

Harvey Weingarten reported that HEQCO was prepared for the anticipated budget reduction in the April 2019 provincial budget. Research contractors were given advance warning of possible contract termination under certain provisions of the contract. Staff who were dismissed finished their work before the termination date. In spite of budget reduction, HEQCO has maintained its ability to follow through on its projects and has preserved the confidence of the ministry.

He reported two new projects:

- *Upgrading numeracy skills of PSE students*, in collaboration with the Fields Institute. A workshop is planned for December 5, 2019 co-organized with University of Toronto and McMaster University.
- *Digital learning programs in Ontario*. HEQCO has responded to an in-year request from MTCU for advice on research, analysis and evaluation of digital learning programs in Ontario. HEQCO's evaluation and recommendation will be submitted to the ministry by the end of October 2019.

Denis Mayer noted that he may recuse himself from discussions of digital learning because of a personal conflict of interest. Sue Herbert reiterated her view that

HEQCO should develop a principled approach to individual requests that arise outside the annual MTCU mandate letter.

On a question of how HEQCO publishes its reports, Harvey Weingarten said that HEQCO has guidelines on publishing its reports and follows the communications protocols in place, agreed to by HEQCO and the ministry.

5.1 External audit report and financial statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019

Susan Sheremeta, RSM Canada LLP, reported that the audit completed for fiscal year 2018–19 has no subsequent events to be reflected, no fraud was found and no procedural recommendations were made. There were no disagreements with management during the auditing process.

Motions:

1. That the board approve the external audit report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019;
2. That the board approve the audited financial statements for fiscal year 2018–19 for inclusion in the 2018–19 Annual Report and for submission to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Moved by Denis Mayer; seconded by Sue Herbert
Approved unanimously
June 2019/Motion 2

Motion:

1. To appoint Sue Herbert as chair of the audit committee and A. Scott Carson as member of the same committee.

Moved by Nobina Robinson; seconded by Denis Mayer
Approved unanimously
June 2019/Motion 3

5.2 Budget for Fiscal Year 2019-20

Diana Macri reported that the budget reflects the reduction of staff and research contracts. The bulk of the budget is still concentrated on research projects, including those prioritized by the ministry. She emphasized the following:

- HEQCO has never overspent and whatever money is left goes back to the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the government.
- The reporting format follows the template required by the internal auditors.

The chair expressed an interest to see how resources are being allocated across the portfolio of ongoing projects.

Motion:

1. That the board approve the budget for fiscal year 2019–20.

Moved by Denis Mayer; seconded by A. Scott Carson
June 2019/Motion 4
Approved unanimously

6. Annual Report 2018–19

Motion:

1. That the board approve the Annual Report 2018–19 as presented, and authorize the president & CEO to submit the finalized report to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on behalf of the board no later than the end of July 2019.

Moved by Nobina Robinson; seconded by A. Scott Carson
June 2019/Motion 5
Approved unanimously

7 In-camera session

8. Other Business:

Board members shared their early thinking about CEO succession and discussed considerations around how to action search processes.

The chair proposed that board members commit a full day of their time to meet as soon as feasible in a “retreat” format to consider the several strategic issues arising from change in leadership at HEQCO.

The chair solicited board members’ input for names of competent and qualified candidates to fill current and future board vacancies.

The chair asked all board members to review the 2016 Mandate Review of the agency to consider recommendations that still have relevance for governance and mandate considerations. A copy of the mandate review document was distributed to all board members.

The board committed to reviewing calendar commitments for the year ahead, and to working with HEQCO staff to establish a more active roster of board meeting dates, for meetings in person and via teleconference.

9. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4 pm.