



Minutes

Emergency Board Meeting

Time and venue

08.30am by Microsoft Teams

Date

Thursday, 09 July 2020

Attendees

Board

Susan Barratt

Ian Bauckham

Delroy Beverley (from item 65/20)

Sally Collier Chief Regulator

Mike Cresswell (until item 67/20)

Lesley Davies

Hywel Jones

Catherine McClellan

Dame Christine Ryan

Roger Taylor Chair

Matt Tee (until item 67/20)

Mike Thompson (until item 67/20)

Frances Wadsworth

Ofqual

Phil Beach Executive Director, Vocational and Technical Qualifications

Niamh Field Board Secretary

Richard Garrett Director of Policy and Strategic Relationships, General Qualifications

Daniel Gutteridge Director of Legal

Matthew Humphrey Director of Legal Moderation and Enforcement

Cath Jadhav Director of Standards and Comparability

Kate Keating Director of Communications

Michelle Meadows Executive Director, Strategy, Risk and Research

Catherine Oakes Associate Director, Media and Campaigns

Sean Pearce Chief Operating Officer

Ian Stockford Director of Strategic Projects

Julie Swan Executive Director for General Qualifications

Anona White Private Secretary to the Chief Regulator

63/20 Welcome and apologies for absence

There were no apologies.

64/20 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

65/20 Decisions taken regarding the standardisation of grades in summer 2020

The Chief Regulator reported that she would be meeting with the Secretary of State (SoS) for Education and the Minister for Schools Standards later that day with the Executive Director for Strategy, Risk and Research. It was the intention to share a high-level preliminary overview of the summer 2020 results to date. This is an unusual step, but judged as appropriate in the exceptional circumstances of summer 2020.

Awarding had commenced and exam boards had collected 5.3m grades on time. Moderation and grading were underway and the final results were anticipated to be published on time. All relevant decisions in the development of the standardisation model had given upward benefit of the doubt to students meaning that collectively, the national results would be between 1% and 2% higher.

It was noted that not all stakeholders agreed with the model and some feedback had suggested that there should have been more weight placed on teacher grades. Ofqual maintained the position that the fairest (and agreed) approach to awarding in 2020 was via the model adopted.

An overview of provisional results was provided to the Board based on 75% of data being received. Two papers were presented to the Board relating to decisions taken regarding standardisation of grades in summer 2020 (paper 65/20) and communications (paper 66/20)

The Board noted aspects of the presentation and Board papers received, including:

- i. The difference in results when compared to summer 2019 in centre assessment grades (CAGs) of 8 – 9% at GCSE and 12% at A levels.
- ii. Where CAGs and calculated grades differed, the difference was generally one grade, but a small proportion of grades would be reduced by more than one grade.
- iii. There was less impact on lower grades at GCSE.
- iv. The data to enable direct comparisons between A levels and the International Baccalaureate (IB) had not yet been received.

In discussion, the Board recognised that these outcomes would inevitably be unwelcome and challenging for some stakeholders, and that the organisation could expect some challenge. It was agreed that the organisation should work to provide information on any apparent inconsistencies across centre types, to assist understanding.

It is likely that the process for determining grades will come under intense scrutiny, and the Board stressed the importance of highlighting the role of prior

attainment in the process – given the reliance placed on it in the usual awarding process – to explain variations in distribution across centres and centre types.

The Chief Regulator reported that all four nations were facing similar challenges.

66/20 Communicating our work to standardise GCSE, AS and A level results this summer

The Board received a presentation on how Ofqual would communicate the standardisation of GCSE, AS and A level results in summer 2020. Following the initial rounds of focus groups, which had been facilitated by *Public First*, it had become evident that there was little public awareness of the principles of the standardisation model, and in particular, teacher awareness.

The communication approach for different groups of stakeholders was considered. For students and parents, high level messages of reassurance that 2020 results were fair across schools/colleges and would carry currency with universities, colleges and employers were planned. Teachers would need reassurance that standardisation would bring consistency across professional judgements so their students would not be disadvantaged. The importance of building confidence with proxy stakeholders in the sector was noted, in particular with regard to the operation of the standardisation model and the decisions Ofqual had made to ensure there was consistency across all schools and colleges. Five key messages were identified:

- i. Giving learners the opportunity to progress.
- ii. Consistent judgements across all schools and colleges.
- iii. National results broadly in line with previous years.
- iv. Adjustments would only take place where they were supported by evidence.
- v. The 2020 results would carry the same currency as previous and future years.

The Board noted that engagement with key stakeholders would begin in the week commencing 13 July 2020. The Summer Symposium would take place in the week commencing 20 July 2020. Engagement would be more consumer-focused in the week commencing 27 July 2020.

The Board noted that careful consideration would need to be given to the language of Ofqual's messaging and the professionalism of the teaching profession would need to be highlighted.

When the results were final, relevant organisations with an interest in this area would be briefed on the performance of disadvantaged groups.

The Board commended the Executive Director for Strategy, Risk and Research and the team for their work.

67/20 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 10.06am.