

Ofqual Board

Paper 4/16

Date:

18 May 2016

Title:

Chief Executive Officer's Report

Report by:

Sally Collier, Chief Executive Officer

Paper for discussion

Open paper (Annex A closed)



Issue

1. This short report updates the Board on strategy and progress. It updates the Board on key issues and risks for their consideration in this and other papers to follow.

Recommendation

2. The Board is asked to note progress against the Corporate Plan, and the issues raised below for their attention.

Considerations

Policy Developments

3. National Assessments have attracted significant media attention – both in light of accidental publishing of live KS1 and KS2 tests, and parental concerns about the new tests. We continue to develop our role in evaluating the validity of National Assessments. An interim has now started with us provide senior level resource to lead our work. The Board will note that a new standard is being set this summer for KS2. We continue to monitor the associated risks, particularly to validity, with the changes being implemented this year and have provided advice to STA, submitted to the Secretary of State. Further detail is provided in the General Qualifications Update report

4. Board members are invited to note policy developments in the Vocational Qualifications Update (8/16). In particular, we expect the report to be published soon of the independent review panel chaired by Lord Sainsbury which has considered routes through technical education. The report is likely to have some significant implications for Ofqual. We will provide Board members with the latest intelligence at the meeting.
5. In the same paper, we update on work we are doing to address recent concerns about the amount of time it takes to teach certain qualifications, used in performance tables. The issue, and our response, has attracted some, limited media attention. We also update on current VQ regulatory activity.
6. David Russell, Chief Executive of the Education & Training Foundation, will attend the Board for a session to discuss the Foundation's work on functional skills reform.
7. I am due to meet with the Secretary of State for Education and the Minister of State for Schools in due course.
8. Board members are invited in paper 7/16 to consider proposals for our policy position on Inter Subject Comparability, in response to our recent consultation.
9. As anticipated, our regulatory function in Northern Ireland has ended, with legislative amendments to our remit coming into effect. The Belfast office is likely to have closed by the time of the meeting.

Strategy

10. We published our Corporate Plan for 2016-19 on the 1st April.
11. The Board will note in the Strategy, Risk and Research Update paper that we continue to review our regulatory strategy. We will publish an updated statement to reflect this later in the year. The Board will be invited to discuss particularly the role of enforcement, guidance and influence in our strategy, at the July meeting.

Progress in delivery

12. GQ accreditation remains our number one priority. We continue to make positive progress with 125 qualifications accredited (at 11th May) – a further 46 since the previous GQ Update paper to the Board. However, there are signs that the exam boards need more time than they originally expected to prepare for resubmission some of the specifications yet to be accredited. Notably, OCR's GCSE, AS and A level MFL resubmissions are due to be received on the 23rd May. We await confirmation from both Pearson and WJEC on their planned dates for submission for their GCSE

Religious Studies qualifications. I receive daily progress reports. Accreditation panels for subjects to be taught from 2017 begin to meet in June. The General Qualifications Update report addresses this further.

13. In response to the recommendations of the advising Board Committee, the Interim Chief Regulator has taken decisions to remove the Code of Practice with effect from summer 2016 (although not the Principal Learning and Project Qualifications), along with a range of other changes to the marking and appeals process. These are set out in the General Qualifications Update. Before we announce these decisions, we will work closely with key stakeholders to ensure they are fully briefed – recognising significant interest.
 14. Our Report to Parliament for 2015 was laid before Parliament in April.
 15. The updated Strategic Risk Register, previously appended to the CEO report, is now found in the Strategy Risk & Research Update paper (6/16). The direction of travel across all risks is neutral, other than funding pressures on Ofqual, where the direction of travel is positive. Accreditation remains our highest rated risk.
 16. The Chief Operating Officer's report (5/16) sets out the detail of our expected outturn position for 2015-16 – an underspend in the region of £207k.
 17. Addressed in the same paper - we raised with the Board at the March meeting an issue with the planned switch to our new Regulatory Information Technology System (RITS). This issue is close to resolution, and we have re-planned implementation, beginning mid-June to minimise the impact on accreditation.
 18. The Corporate Plan Tracker in annex A sets out progress so far in the commitments we made in our 2016-19 Corporate Plan.
- Capacity and capability
19. We continue to undertake a steady stream of recruitment to 12 vacant posts, largely in response to natural attrition. We continue to hold 9 vacancies for posts that have proven difficult to recruit to in our new operating model.
 20. We have completed our end of year appraisal process, with almost 100% complete on time – a significant improvement on previous years.
 21. A detailed people update can be found in the Chief Operating Officer's report.

22. We will update the Board on progress in recruitment and selection for the permanent Executive Director for General Qualifications at the meeting.

Future Look

23. The forward planner for the Board is attached at annex B. We will continue to deliver the plans and actions agreed.
24. Preparations for monitoring both delivery and awarding of the summer exam series for GCSE, AS and A level are in place. The Board are referred to the both the General Qualifications, and Strategy, Risk and Research updates, respectively.
25. Our particular focus will be on the awarding of the new AS, where we expect more year-on-year school level variability in results. We will pay close attention to IGCSE® English¹ also in light of stakeholder concern in 2015.

Internal stakeholders

26. I have enjoyed greatly the opportunity to get to know many colleagues in the organisation already – both in an all staff event on my arrival and walking around the building to meet our people. I have been impressed by the calibre.
27. The new Employee Forum met at the end of March for the first time. We look forward to working with this new group.

External stakeholders and communications

28. In my first week, I took the opportunity to visit a primary school, an 11 to 16 comprehensive school and a secondary school with 6th form to hear first-hand the issues and interests they have.
29. My stakeholder engagements are underway, having met with the Exams Stakeholder Engagement Group at their regular meeting. This event provided a useful opportunity to engage with current issues and meet with individuals from across the sector.
30. It was clear from this meeting that relationships with external stakeholders remain broadly positive, but that HMC has continuing concerns regarding IGCSE® English results in summer 2015. They also reiterated opposition to our proposed changes to the enquiries system and associated concerns about quality of marking. We have addressed these concerns with stakeholders directly and in our communications but should expect them to run on through this summer series.
31. Given the expected continued public commentary on quality of marking and the enquiries and appeals processes, will be hosting a

¹ IGCSE is the registered trade mark of Cambridge International Examinations

conference to address these prior to summer results. In June we will publish our annual Perceptions Survey, which will include vies of quality of marking. The timing of this is not preferable, but is set by Official Statistics requirements.

Paper to be published	YES (except Annex A)
Publication date (if relevant)	After the meeting
If it is proposed not to publish the paper or to not publish in full please outline the reasons why with reference to the exemptions available under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), please include references to specific paragraph	publication of Annex A would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs

ANNEXES LIST:-

- ANNEX A** Corporate Plan tracker (closed)
- ANNEX B** Board forward planner

Forward Planner - Ofqual Board

Annex B

Subject	18 May 16	22 June 16	27 July 16	28 Sept 16	30 Nov 16	25 Jan 17	29 Mar 17	Note
Reporting/Governance								
CEO Report	x		x	x	x	x	x	
COO Report	x		x	x	x	x	x	Jan report to include H&S update
Strategy, Risk and Research Directorate Update	x		x	x	x	x	x	
17/18 Corporate Plan							x	
17/18 Audit Plan							x	
17/18 Business and Financial Plan							x	
Annual review of Governance Framework					x			
Annual Audit Committee Report to the Board							x	
Review of Advisory Group Membership							x	
Report on the work of Board Committees	x		x	x	x	x	x	
2015/16 Annual Report and Accounts		x						teleconference
2016 Annual Report to Parliament						x		early draft in November
Dates for Board & Committee meetings in 2017/18					x			
Regulatory Business								
General Qualifications Directorate Update	x		x	x	x	x	x	
Vocational Qualifications Directorate Update	x		x	x	x	x	x	
National reference test			x			x		
Managng Enforcement Issues			x					
GCSE Grading consultation outcomes			x					
Policy on inter-subject comparability	x							