

Ofqual Board

Paper 63/15

Date:

20 January 2016

Title:

Chief Executive's Report

Report by:

Dame Glenys Stacey, Chief Regulator

Paper for discussion

Open paper (appendices 1-4 closed)



Issue

1. This short report updates the Board on strategy and progress. It updates the Board on known and relevant Government policy priorities and sets out known strategic risks. It deals specifically with a new proposal for the awarding of reformed GCSEs.

Recommendation

2. The Board is asked to note progress, to review the organisation's strategic risk register, and to consider and agree our proposals for the awarding of grade nine in new GCSEs.

Considerations

Policy Developments

3. Developments relating to vocational qualifications are set out in the Vocational Qualifications Update (open paper 66/15). We are continuing to engage with Government on reform of apprenticeships and vocational qualifications 'routes'. There are no significant developments to report in relation to General Qualifications.

4. On National Assessments, we anticipate being consulted by Government imminently on its policy proposals. The Government has already announced the proposed introduction of KS2 multiplication tests.
5. On 30 November the Select Committee for Education announced an inquiry into the purpose and quality of education in England. The Committee has invited written evidence on a number of points, and we will be submitting evidence on those matters of relevance to Ofqual.
6. On 1 December the Chief Regulator met with Shabaz Sharif, the Chief Minister of Punjab on his visit to the UK. The Chief Minister is interested in the UK approach to quality, certification and the governance systems that exist within the UK to coordinate, manage and provide oversight to the skills sector. Following the meeting, Ofqual agreed to speak further with the Chief Minister and his team about their ambitions for development of arrangements in the Punjab. Under the urgency procedure and with the Chair's agreement, Ofqual entered into a memorandum of understanding reflecting that commitment.
7. There are a series of external reviews being undertaken that are relevant to Ofqual, the most immediate being a review of regulators chaired by Amanda Spielman. The review is considering regulators' ways of working, looking for best practice and efficiencies. Ofqual is participating fully in the review. It is anticipated that the review will come to provisional recommendations in the summer of 2016.

Strategy

8. The Board is asked to note and comment on the revised overall strategy document (Level 0) and two subsidiary strategy documents (Level 1) for General qualifications and Vocational Qualifications, attached at appendix one. Board members will note that the documents are internal documents, not for publication. They are being used to inform corporate and business planning for the period starting April 2016.
9. Board members will note developments in reporting metrics for the Vocational Qualifications Directorate (paper 66/15). We intend to develop similar reporting for other areas of business.
10. The Board will be considering outline strategies and plans for April 2016 and beyond at its away day on 26 February 2016.

Progress in delivery

11. The Board is asked to note progress against planned activity during the 2015/16 business year, as shown at appendix two. We continue to make good progress delivering our corporate plan for 2015-18, and

anticipate ending the business year having achieved much that we set out to achieve.

12. Board members are provided with a periodic update on Communications in open paper 65/15. Although much welcome progress has been made in recent months, there remains much still to do. Our teacher secondee recently started work with us, and we will be using her experience and understanding to inform our school communications and our priorities.
 13. Our first annual conference for awarding organisations went to plan in December. Board members will be provided with a summary report of attendee feedback at the meeting: feedback is extremely positive. The executive team is now considering options for future conferences.
 14. We anticipate ending the year close to budget, as planned. Board members are referred to the Chief Operating Officer's report (paper 6415) for the detail.
 15. The first pilot of the National Reference Test went to plan late last year, and we are now on course for the full pilot in the spring. NFER has struggled to entice schools to participate in the pilot in the numbers we had hoped, albeit that seems no reflection of any lack of support for the concept of the test itself. Although school numbers are likely to be a little lower than anticipated, we are nevertheless able to proceed to full pilot. Board members are referred to closed paper 68/15 for more detail about the National Reference Test programme. The next milestone for the Board will be in July 2016: at that stage the Board will be able to see full pilot outcomes and consider the future.
 16. Accreditation progress remains our most significant concern, and our biggest priority. Board members will note that progress has improved of late (see the General Qualifications Update, Board paper 67/15).
- Grading and awarding new GCSEs.
17. Board members will recollect considering proposals for awarding grades 8 and 9 in new GCSEs due for first awards in 2018 and 2019. Our earlier proposals challenged the distribution of top grades in some subjects, and had a bigger impact in some subjects than others – with the most noticeable impact on the classics.
 18. We have considered with exam boards what other ways could be adopted for awarding top grades, and are grateful to Tom Benson at Cambridge Assessment for a new approach. The details are attached at appendix three (where the new approach is referred to as the 'modified 20% rule').
 19. The new approach appears technically sound and deliverable. What is more, it has a more measured impact across all subjects. We therefore ask the Board to agree that we consult on this and on the 20% and 50%

rule approaches, making it clear that the new approach is our preferred approach. In consulting, we will seek views on whether consultees are of the view that the new approach should apply to all GCSE subjects including the 2017 awards in English language, English literature and mathematics.

Capacity and capability

20. Recruitment and selection for the next Chief Regulator remains on track. Board members will be updated at the meeting. Board members are aware that Dr Ian Stockford left Ofqual late last year to take up employment with AQA. Appropriate controls and constraints are in place, so as to manage perceived and potential conflicts of interest, and recruitment and selection for a successor is underway. Julie Swan is our acting Executive Director for General Qualifications.
21. We will update the Board at the meeting on our discussions with the Department of Employment and Learning about their plans to end our regulatory role in Northern Ireland in April.

Strategic Risks and Issues

22. Board members are asked to review and comment on Ofqual's strategic risks and mitigations, as shown in the register attached at appendix four. Progress on established risks is moderate or good, and the direction of travel is generally neutral. There is one new risk relating to the quality of marking. Board members are referred to the risk register for the detail.

Future Look

23. The forward planner for the Board is attached at appendix four. We will continue to deliver the plans and actions agreed.
24. Following our December publications, we plan a conference on inter-subject comparability in early February 2016, to give interested parties the opportunity to discuss the issues with us and with each other.
25. The recruitment and selection for senior positions (Chief Regulator and Executive Director (General qualifications)) is underway.
26. Our next annual report to standards is in draft form and will be sent to Board members shortly for comment.'

Internal stakeholders

27. Relations with the PCS union remain positive. Our proposals for establishing a staff forum are progressing. The positive annual staff survey outcomes have been well-received by staff.

External stakeholders

28. Relationships with external stakeholders remain positive. Our proposals on the development of EAR management have generally

been well-received, although we have received few formal responses to the consultation as yet.

29. We are meeting with representatives of linguists shortly to discuss a number of concerns about modern foreign language qualifications.

Paper to be published	YES
Publication date (if relevant)	After the meeting

Appendices list:

- Appendix one: Strategy documents
Appendix two: Corporate Plan tracker
Appendix three: Awarding grades 8 and 9 in new GCSEs after summer 2017
Appendix four: Strategic Risk register
Appendix five: Forward Planner

Forward Planner - Ofqual Board

Subject	20 Jan 16	23 Mar 16	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	x	x	
COO Report	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	Jan report to include H&S update
Strategy, Risk and Research Directorate Update			x				x			
Strategy		x						x		
Business and Financial Plan		x						x		
Annual review of Governance Framework							x			
Review of Advisory Group Membership		x							x	
Report on the work of Board Committees	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	
2014/15 Annual Report and Accounts				x						teleconference
2015 Annual Report to Parliament	x							x		early draft in November
Dates for Board & Committee meetings in 2015/16							x			
Regulatory Business										
General Qualifications Directorate Update	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	
Vocational Qualifications Directorate Update	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	
National reference test	x				x			x		
Subjects for 2017 reform - post consultation decisions	x									by electronic business
Monitoring Financial Risk		x								
S96 Equality Act post consultation proposals		x								
agreeing policy on inter-subject comparability			x							