

## **Fifty first meeting of the Ofqual Board**

**Public minutes of the meeting held at 10:00 on  
Wednesday 25 March 2015 at Ofqual, Spring Place, Coventry**

**Present: Board Members**

Tim Balcon  
Ray Coughlin  
Mike Cresswell  
Philip Fletcher  
Maggie Galliers  
Anne Heal  
Barnaby Lenon  
Dana Ross-Wawrzynski  
Amanda Spielman (Chair)  
Glenys Stacey  
Roger Taylor  
Tom Taylor  
Neil Watts  
Julius Weinberg

**Ofqual**

Marc Baker	Chief Operating Officer
Jeremy Benson	Executive Director for Vocational Qualifications
Michael Hanton	Executive Manager to CEO (for items 108 to 111/14 below only)
Michelle Meadows	Executive Director for Strategy, Risk & Research
Natalie Prosser	Director of Legal
Ian Stockford	Acting Executive Director for General Qualifications
Julie Swan	Associate Director Regulatory Policy & Vocational Qualification Policy (for item 114/14 below only)
Alison Townsend	Board Secretariat Manager

**Observer**

Terri Scott incoming Board Member from 1 April 2015

108/14 **Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence. The Chair welcomed Terri Scott to the meeting. Terri was observing the meeting in preparation for joining the Board as the new Northern Ireland Member from 1 April 2015.

109/14 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest relevant to the public minutes below.

110/14 **Minutes**

The Board agreed the minutes of its meetings held on 18 January and 27 February 2015 as a true record subject to the minor adjustment of minute 102/14.

Matters Arising

The Board considered and noted a paper on matters arising from previous meetings:-

11/12, 16 May 2012 – the report to Parliament for the period 1 April 2011 to 31 December 2014 had been laid before Parliament on 12 February 2015. The Board enquired on the position on the report to the Northern Ireland Assembly; this would be clarified.

70/14, 3 December 2014 – the outcomes from the trial on the conduct, marking and grading of spoken language skills in GCSE English Language were awaited before final recommendations were made to the Chief Regulator for final sign off.

91/14, 28 January 2015 – the consultation on proposals for a new qualifications framework and post-QCF conditions and guidance was due to be published later that day.

92/14, 28 January 2015 – the consultation on the new criteria and changes to the conditions associated with raising the participation age that would support the decisions on Guided Learning Hours was due to be published later that day.

102/14, 27 February 2015 – a technical consultation on the conditions and guidance to be put in place for the new Science GCSEs would be published shortly and would include arrangements for practical work.

103/14, 27 February 2015 – an update on the award of the contract for the design, development and delivery of the National Reference Test was considered as part of item 112/14 below.

All other matters arising were picked up in the agenda.

#### 111/14 **Chief Executive's Report**

The Board considered and noted a paper that updated it on significant issues since the last meeting and presented the latest draft Corporate Plan.

The Board reviewed the Corporate Plan that it had looked at informally at its strategy day in February 2015. The earlier feedback had been reflected in the draft presented and the Board recognised the work that had been completed. The Board went on to suggest a number of further adjustments and emphasised that the plan should not over commit Ofqual.

The Board went on to consider aspects of the substantive paper presented including:-

- the draft regulatory burden statement. The Board noted that while Ofqual had not published such a statement in the past there was an expectation that it would. The Board enquired if Ofqual had any information on those aspects of regulation awarding organisations considered burdensome. The Board noted that work was underway to understand this, however, changes made in the past year, for example the removal of the accreditation requirement, had already reduced regulatory burden. The Board recognised that awarding organisations were subject to regulation by a number of different organisations and that, while regulations may not be burdensome in isolation, the cumulative effect could be significant;
- the Board noted that it was also intended to publish a regulatory strategy statement that would set out what Ofqual does and why;
- the strategic risk register and strategic issues log. The Board asked the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to review the process through which the strategic issues are identified; and
- updated executive level governance arrangements that were noted by the Board.

**The Board:-**

- (i) agreed the 2015/18 corporate plan subject to final update to take on board final comments from the Board and a cross check of the objectives and outcomes in the plan;**
- (ii) agreed the regulatory burden statement subject to final update to take on board comments made at the Board meeting; and**
- (iii) delegated the authority to sign off the Regulatory Strategy Statement to the Chief Regulator in consultation with the Chair.**

#### 113/15 **Business and Financial Plan 2015/16**

The Board considered a paper that presented the draft budget and resource plan for 2015/16 and received a brief update on the process used to draw up the plan.

The Board discussed aspects of the paper and plan including the decision by DfE to treat the £5.46M funding allocation for qualifications reform and the National Reference Test as income rather than resource. The reasons for the change in approach and the potential implications were discussed by the Board. The Board emphasised the need to monitor spend closely as an overspend of the resource control total would lead to the qualification of Ofqual's accounts and a call to appear before the Public Accounts Committee. The Board noted that DfE had advised that this funding should have been treated as income previously. Confirmation had been received from Treasury that the change in approach would not affect Ofqual's CSR negotiating position.

The Board noted that confirmation had been received from DfE that £500k of funding for the Information Management Transition Programme had been awarded to Ofqual, minute 112/14 above also refers.

**The Board approved the 2015/16 budget of £22.463m made up of £16.503m (resource), £5.46m (reform and National Reference Test in the form of income) and the additional £500k awarded for the Information Management Transition Programme.**

#### 116/14 **New approach to the regulation of National Assessments**

The Board considered a paper that presented a revised approach to the regulation of National Assessments. The Board received a short update on the proposals including discussions with the Standards and Testing Agency (STA). Ofqual had sought to assure the STA that the new arrangements would not be burdensome but were intended to be more targeted and coherent. The new approach would reduce the current focus on operational matters and move this to the validity of assessment procedures. The change would allow Ofqual to identify and expose risks of significant failure.

The Board discussed aspects of the paper and the new approach including how the move to progress 8 measures might put different pressures on the tests and the move to focus on the validity of the assessment procedures.

#### **The Board:-**

- (i) agreed the proposed new approach to the regulation of National Assessments;**
- (ii) agreed that the Framework for the regulation of National Assessments should be substantially revised to reflect the new approach;**
- (iii) that Ofqual should consult publicly on the proposed changes; and**
- (iv) that the form and content of a draft Framework and associated consultation document giving effect to these decisions to be signed off by the Chief Regulator.**

**117/14 Report on the work of board committees**

The Board considered and noted a paper that provided an update on the work of the Standards Advisory Group, Finance Committee, Reform Committee, Vocational Advisory Group and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee that had all met since the last board meeting. The Chair of the each Committee gave a short oral update on the matters considered at each meeting.

**118/14 Appointment of the Deputy Chair**

The Board considered a paper that proposed the reappointment of Julius Weinberg to the position of Deputy Chair of Ofqual.

**The Board agreed to reappoint Julius Weinberg to the position of Deputy Chair for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2018.**

**119/14 Annual Review of the membership of the Standards Advisory Group and Vocational Advisory Group**

The Board considered a paper that presented the outcome of a review of the membership of Board Committees. The paper recommended the reappointment of all independent members of the Vocational Advisory Group and Standards Advisory Group. The Board also considered the reappointment of Board members to Committees and Advisory Groups particularly those who had been reappointed to the Board from 1 April 2015 by the Secretary of State.

**The Board agreed:-**

- (i) that the independent members of the Standards Advisory Group, set out at Annex A to the paper, are reappointed to the group for the twelve month period to 31 March 2016;**
- (ii) that the independent members of the Vocational Advisory Group, set out at Annex B to the paper, are reappointed to the group for the twelve month period to 31 March 2016;**
- (iii) that authority to appoint a further two members to each Advisory Group is delegated to the Chair; and**
- (iv) that the Board members highlighted in the table at Annex C are reappointed to the Board Committees identified until their appointment to the Board expires on 31 March 2018.**

**120/14 Publication of Papers**

**The Board agreed, that those papers indicated as open should be published with the exception of some minor redactions agreed during the meeting.**

**121/14 Other Business**

The Chair drew the Board's attention to the fact that it would shortly be five years since Ofqual vested and became an independent organisation. Ray Coughlin had been appointed to the Board on vesting and had served for five years until his upcoming retirement from the Board on 31 March 2015. The Chair thanked Ray for his work with, and wise advice to, the Board since Ofqual's establishment and particularly thanked Ray for Chairing the Board's Northern Ireland Committee when it was in place.

**122/14 Date of Next Meeting**

The next Board meeting would be on Wednesday 20 May 2015.