

Fifty sixth meeting of the Ofqual Board

**Minutes of the meeting held at 10:00 on
Wednesday 18 November 2015 at Ofqual, Spring Place, Coventry**

Present: Board Members

Tim Balcon (for items 45 to 49/15 only)
Mike Cresswell
Philip Fletcher
Maggie Galliers
Anne Heal (for items 45 to 52/15 only)
Barnaby Lenon
Dana Ross-Wawrzynski
Amanda Spielman (Chair)
Glenys Stacey
Roger Taylor
Neil Watts (for items 45 to 51 only)
Julius Weinberg

Ofqual

Marc Baker Chief Operating Officer
Jeremy Benson Executive Director for Vocational Qualifications
Michelle Meadows Executive Director for Strategy, Risk & Research
Dennis Opposs Standards Chair (for item 52/15 only)
Natalie Prosser Director of Legal
Ian Stockford Executive Director for General Qualifications
Alison Townsend Board Secretary

Observers

Susan Ali-Shah Interim Associate Director Finance (for item 49/15 only)
Susie Drummond Senior Manager Strategic Policy (for item 50/15 only)
Diane Francis PA to the Chief Executive (for item 48/15 only)
Daniel Gutteridge Associate Director, Legal Establishment (for items 52 to 59/15 only)
Tim Hamson Manager, Strategy and Risk (for item 50/15 only)
Michael Hanton Associate Director, Strategic Policy and Risk (for items 48/15 only)

James Lawrence Manager, Systemic Analysis (for item 48/15 only)
Steve Walker Senior Manager, Vocational Qualifications (for item
50/15 only)

45/15 **Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Terri Scott and Tom Taylor.

46/15 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

47/15 **Minutes**

The Board agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 23 September as a true record.

Matters Arising

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

115/14, 25 March 2015 – the consultation on resit arrangements for outgoing GCSE, AS and A level specifications was nearing completion and would start towards the end of November 2015.

25/15, 29 July 2015 – an update on the functional skills reform programme was included in item 50/15 on the agenda.

40/15, 23 September 2015 – decisions on the incorporation of the assessment arrangements for reformed design and technology GCSEs into Ofqual's regulatory framework had been taken by electronic business on 28 October 2015.

40/15, 23 September 2015 – decisions on the subject content for new short course GCSEs in physical education, AS and A level politics and AS and A level geology had been taken on 28 October 2015 by electronic business.

All other matters arising were picked up on the agenda.

48/15 **Chief Executive's Report**

The Board considered and noted the Chief Executive's report. The Board discussed aspects of the report and associated verbal update including:-

- the potential impact of changes of new EBacc expectations for schools on subject entry patterns and how this might affect awarding; and
- public perceptions about marking, how the process might be made more transparent and myths tackled.

The Board discussed changes to National Assessments being developed by DfE and received a brief overview of Ofqual's involvement in this work to date. There was an expectation that Ofqual would be consulted on this and the Board discussed the approach to the response as well as Ofqual's role in relation to National Assessments. A small sub group made up of Mike Cresswell, Dana Ross-Wawrzynski, Neil Watts and Julius Weinberg would provide a sounding board as the response to the consultation was developed.

49/15 **Chief Operating Officer's Report**

The Board considered the COO report and an update on work on the 2016-21 comprehensive spending review and discussions with DfE on savings. The Board noted that after negotiation it had been agreed that Ofqual would make savings of £1.1m (approximately 7%) over a 5 year period. Ofqual had agreed to realise the savings equally over the 5 year period (i.e. £200k less in year 1, an additional £200k in year 2 etc). Work was now taking place to look at how this saving could be achieved and the impact it would have on Ofqual's work.

The Board then considered 2015/16 financial performance to date and noted the forecast underspend for the year of £368k or 2% of budget. The Board heard how the Star Chamber process had identified budgets that could be surrendered and transferred to other areas of the business. The Board heard that the Finance Committee was pleased with the procedures now in place to manage Ofqual's finances, which enabled robust discussion and strategic management of funds.

The Board received an update on the Information Management Transformation Project, and in particular a request to increase the funding for the RITS replacement project from £815k to £1.206m. The Board noted that the initial project budget had been an estimate based on technical design work and was intended to be further informed by the project discovery work to update functionality, timescales and costs; this was the usual approach for an agile development project. The Board heard that during the first twelve 'sprints' further requirements had been identified including a sprint to deliver a data feed from new RITS to CCEA that would be fully funded by them. The Board discussed the proposal and emphasised the need to be able to demonstrate value for money. The Board noted that that the project's development had been driven by the business particularly those areas that engage with stakeholders and that the changes would reduce burden on awarding organisations.

The Board considered a request to retain the services of a contractor in the data services team until 31 March 2016 to support the work to create a data warehouse. The Board noted that the contractor had been in place for just over two years and that the extension of the contract would take total spend above the £250k threshold that required Board approval.

The Board went on to review the initial analysis from the recent staff survey and noted that further analysis at directorate level and of the free text

comments would be done. The Board was pleased with the improvement in results from the previous year and noted the areas where further improvement could be made.

The Board agreed:-

- (i) the extension of the contract for a contractor in the Data services team to 31 March 2016 at an additional cost of £48.9k; and**
- (ii) an increase in the budget for the RITS replacement project to £1.206m including a £45k contribution from CCEA.**

50/15 Vocational Qualifications Update

The Board considered and noted a VQ Directorate update. The Board discussed key issues including:-

- the announcement of an independent expert panel to advise government on the proposal for up to 20 specific new professional and technical 'routes' into jobs post 16. The Board explored the potential implications of this for qualifications;
- the outputs from Ofqual's annual statement of compliance process. The Board heard that a more robust approach to the review of non-compliances had been taken this year and the process for acting on noncompliance reports was briefly outlined. The Board received a short overview of themes arising from the process and noted that it was likely that a number of these matters could be closed down soon; and
- a dashboard to provide high level data on the regulation of vocational qualifications that was being developed. Board members were asked to feedback any comments on this by e-mail.

51/15 General Qualifications Update

The Board considered and noted a GQ Directorate update paper. The Board discussed key issues:-

- 16 specifications had now been accredited for first teaching in September 2017. The Board heard that January would be a busy period for the consideration of resubmitted specifications. The Board received an update on work taking place to address the risk that no specifications were accredited for a subject in sufficient time for teachers to prepare for first teaching in September 2016;
- the Board heard that Ofqual had met with exam boards to discuss its regulatory approach to new qualifications in lesser taught languages. The Board would be kept updated on developments in this area;
- the Board had previously discussed research on the marking of Enquiries After Results (minute 10/15 refers) and since then work had been taking place to develop proposals for consultation. The Board received a short overview of the proposals and noted that it was hoped the consultation would start in December;

- the board discussed the award of the new AS in 2016 given the level of change to the qualification. The Board noted the approach that was planned and noted that while it would not be possible to use the usual statistical approach, consideration was being given to other indicators that might be relevant; and
- the Board noted that it would shortly be asked to take decisions on final proposals for assessment arrangements for GCSEs in astronomy, business, economics, engineering, geology, psychology and sociology and AS and A level design and technology, environmental science, history of art, music technology and philosophy by electronic business.

52/15 **Awarding new GCSEs**

In August 2014 the Board had taken decisions on the awarding of the first three new GCSEs in summer 2017 (minute 39/14 refers). The Board was now asked to consider a paper that looked at how the remaining new GCSEs should be awarded. The Board noted that proposals would be subject to an initial informal consultation with key stakeholders within Government and from the schools sector to test the proposals ahead of formal consultation.

The paper set out proposals for the award of reformed qualifications generally and particular proposals for the award of grades 8 and 9. The Board reviewed the outputs of modelling to understand the potential implications of the proposals on the award of grades 8 and 9.

The Board suggested the introduction of a further rule that would apply to subjects that fit a criteria that might solve some of the problems seen in small entry subjects in a principled way.

The Board agreed the proposals set out in the paper for informal consultation with key stakeholders within Government and from the school sector followed by a wider group of stakeholders before formal consultation. This decision was subject to further consideration to a further rule that would allow adjustments to be made, to subjects falling within a defined criteria, in a principled way.

53/15 **Strategy Risk and Research Update**

The Board considered and noted an SRR Directorate update paper.

The Board noted that good progress was being made in strengthening the directorate and heard about some recent appointments. The Board went on to discuss aspects of the report including:-

- if Ofqual should publish research looking at issues around the award of marks rather than grades; and
- the work to look at the extent to which native speaker candidates affect the statistical predictors used in the award of MFL qualifications.

54/15 **Annual Review of the Board Governance Framework**
The Board considered a paper on the annual review of the Governance Framework. The Board discussed the proposed adjustments and suggested a further adjustment to paragraph 35 so that both the Chair and Deputy are invited to meetings of Committee Chairs.

The Board agreed the proposed changes to Governance Framework subject to the agreement of the final wording of paragraph 35 by the Chair.

55/15 **Report on the work of Board Committees**
The Board considered and noted an update paper on the work of those Committees that had met since its last meeting:-

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

The Board noted that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee would be receiving cyber security training at its next meeting. A further training session on finance and public sector accounting was scheduled for the afternoon before the Board strategy session in February 2016; all Board members were invited to attend.

Finance Committee

The Board heard that the last Finance Committee meeting had been good. Clear papers had been presented that had facilitated comprehensive discussion particularly in relation to the management accounts and on financial governance.

Standards Advisory Group

The Board noted that the Standards Advisory Group had received updates on a number of pieces of research work. The group had also reviewed a number of working papers on inter subject comparability that were due to be published shortly.

56/15 **Dates for board and committee meetings in 2016/17**
The Board considered a paper that presented dates for meetings of the Board and its Committees in 2016/17.

The Board approved the dates for meetings of the Board and its Committees as set out in the paper presented.

57/15 **Publication of Papers**

The Board agreed that, subject to some minor redactions, all papers for this meeting would be published.

58/15 **Other Business**

There was no other business.

59/15 **Date of Next Meeting**

The next Board meeting would be on Wednesday 20 January 2016. There would be a Board strategy day on Friday 26 February 2016.

Ofqual Board

Paper 62/15

Date:

20 January 2016

Title:

Matters arising from past Board meetings

Report by:

Alison Townsend, Board Secretariat Manager

Responsible Director:

Jeremy Benson, Executive Director for Vocational Qualifications

Paper for information

open paper



Issue

1. To update the Board on progress with actions/matters arising from past Board meetings.

Recommendation

2. The Board is recommended to note the position on past actions.

Background

3. The table below sets out actions agreed at past meetings of the Ofqual Board and progress/plans to achieve these:-

Date/Minute	Action	Update
115/14 25 March 2015	<u>General Qualifications</u> <u>Update: resit arrangements</u> <u>for outgoing GCSE, AS and A</u> <u>level specifications</u> Proposals were agreed for consultation in May 2015.	The consultation had started on 15 December 2015 and is due to close on 2 February 2016.

Date/Minute	Action	Update
27/15 29 July 2015	<u>Reasonable adjustments and Ofqual's specifications under Section 96 of the Equality Act 2010</u> Ofqual should consult in September 2015 on the retention of existing specifications made under section 96 of the Equality Act 2010.	Work is under way to prepare the consultation and it is hoped to publish end January/early February 2016.
48/15 18 Nov 2015	<u>Chief Executive's Report: National Assessments</u> A small sub group would provide a sounding board as the response to the consultation on changes to National Assessments was developed.	Discussions had taken place with the sub group and Ofqual's feedback on draft advice to Ministers finalised. A further update on this work is included at item 63/15 on the agenda.
51/15 18 Nov 2015	<u>General Qualifications Update</u> Board to take decisions on final proposals for assessment arrangements for GCSEs in astronomy, business, economics, engineering, geology, psychology and sociology and AS and A level design and technology, environmental science, history of art, music technology and philosophy by electronic business shortly.	decisions on the assessment arrangements for these subjects had been taken on 10 December 2015 by electronic business
52/15 18 Nov 2015	<u>Awarding new GCSEs</u> Give consideration to the introduction of criteria that would allow adjustments to be made, for example in small entry subjects, in a principled way.	An update on this is included in the Chief Executive's Report at item 63/15 on the agenda.
54/15 18 Nov 2015	<u>Annual Review of Board Governance Framework</u> Proposals agreed subject to the agreement of revised wording for paragraph 35 by the Chair.	Updated paragraph 35 has been agreed by the Chair and the updated framework will be published shortly.

Paper to be published	YES – after the meeting
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ANNEXES: NONE