

Minutes of the 71st Ofqual Board meeting held on Wednesday 15 November 2017 at 10:00am in room 4, Spring Place, Herald Avenue, Coventry, CV5 6U

Present:

Ofqual Board

Sally Collier

Anne Heal

Hywel Jones

Barnaby Lenon

Christine Ryan

Terri Scott

Roger Taylor (Chair)

Tom Taylor

Frances Wadsworth

David Wakefield

Neil Watts

Ofqual

Marc Baker Chief Operating Officer

Phil Beach Executive Director for Vocational and Technical Qualifications

Michelle Meadows Executive Director – Strategy, Risk and Research

Julie Swan Executive Director for General Qualifications

Salma Ahmed Board Secretary

Paul Bird Associate Director, Finance – **For item 56/17 only**

Jim Busher Senior Manager, Strategic Policy – **For item 54/17(i) only**

Daniel Gutteridge Associate Director Legal Establishment

Observers

Janet Holloway Associate Director Standards for Design, Development and Evaluation of General Qualifications

Lucy Sydney Director of Strategic Relationships for VTQ

Anona White PA to the Chief Regulator and Chair of Ofqual

48/17 Closed Board Session

49/17 Welcome and Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Natalie Prosser and Mike Cresswell.

50/17 Declarations of interest

Hywel Jones notified the Board of a potential conflict of interest as students at his schools were taking GCSE Computer Science. The Board agreed that the declaration should be noted and he was not required to abstain from discussions on the item.

51/17 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2017

The Board agreed the minutes of the 20th September Ofqual Board meeting and the matters arising as a true and accurate record.

Matters Arising

26/17, 20 September – The Board was notified that Ofqual was working with other EQAs to establish MoUs, which would describe our regulatory role where requested. The MoU approach would supersede the ‘partnerships’ description that had previously been reported.

40/17, 20 September – An update on the use of extra time and how students are assessed as qualifying for any reasonable adjustment was provided to the Board within the GQ update paper.

52/17 Chief Regulator's Report

This section has been redacted, as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.

53/17 General Qualifications Update

The Executive Director for General Qualifications updated the Board on the work of the General Qualifications Directorate.

This section has been redacted, as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.

The call for evidence in relation to the review of the involvement of teachers in developing exam papers had closed at the end of October, by which time 149 contributions had been made. Most contributions indicated strong support for the continued involvement of teachers writing exam papers with enhanced safeguards.

The Board suggested a range of safeguards that could be put in place and stressed the need to consider the nature of the safeguards required to restore public confidence following the summer's events. It was noted the Board would consider the options in full at its January meeting, ahead of consultation.

At its previous meeting the Board had delegated to the Chief Regulator authority to decide, in consultation with the Chair, how to respond to growing evidence of malpractice in the non-exam assessment (NEA) element of GCSE Computer Science. While no final decision had been taken, a number of options were being considered for the short term:

- No change to the assessment or grading of the qualification, with additional efforts by the exam boards to detect and address malpractice.
- Basing the grade on exam performance only, with centres being required to make a statement confirming all students had been given the opportunity to complete the task and that 20 hours had been set aside in the timetable for this.
- Reporting students' performance in the NEA separately to the exam grade.

The Board confirmed its view that action was needed. It acknowledged no option would be welcomed by all or would be regarded as fair for all. The priority should be to find an approach that was as fair as possible and that would protect the validity of the qualification and public confidence in it. It appeared that removing the non-exam assessment from the grade, while making sure all centres set aside the time for the task to be completed by students, was the best of the options. The Board asked for legal advice in

relation to Ofqual's statutory objectives and duties with respect to qualifications standards and public confidence in this context and noted no final decision would be taken ahead of a public consultation.

This section has been redacted, as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.

54/17 Strategy, Risk and Research Update

The Executive Director for Strategy, Risk and Research provided the Board with a brief update on the work of the Strategy, Risk and Research directorate since the last Board meeting.

This section has been redacted, as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.

National Assessments

The Board welcomed the work on the quality of national assessments, particularly the research into the reading test and into moderation.

55/17 Vocational and Technical Qualifications Update

The Executive Director for Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQ) provided the Board with an update on the work of the VTQ Directorate. This included the following;

A T level consultation was planned to be launched by the Department on 30 November. In addition to consulting on a number of issues relating to T Levels, the Department was also expected to signal a wider review. Specifically, we might expect the consultation to include proposals for a review of Applied Generals, and consideration of level 2, 4 and 5 qualifications. The overall aspiration is to simplify the qualification landscape and increase coherence.

[Action] The Board was notified that further information on issues relating to Applied General transition would be brought to the January Board.

The first Functional Skills Oversight Board had met on the 30 October. The event was well attended and well received. In relation to Apprenticeships an employer engagement event had been organised for the 21 November with approximately 70 confirmed attendees. Positive progress was being made to develop our regulatory approach to Apprenticeships with the aim of publishing a set of documents later in the month in relation to our approach to external quality assurance and our findings from reviewing Assessment Plans. Ofqual continues to work with other EQAs to establish MoUs, which would describe our regulatory role where requested. This MoU approach supersedes the 'partnerships' description previously reported.

This section has been redacted, as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.

56/17 Chief Operating Officer's Report

The Board was provided with an update on the Chief Operating Officer's areas of responsibility.

The year to date (YTD) expenditure as at the end of October 2017 stood at £9.3m against a budget of £9.65m, the variance explained by a £214k reduction in spend from one off non-repeating items along with £191k targeted savings, including £78k of directorate spending variances, project changes and timing differences against the budget. The current full year forecast is estimated as £426k underspend, however, business cases are in train that will significantly reduce this by the year end.

The Chair of the Finance Committee acknowledged that the individual directorates were more informed on budgets and finance matters in comparison to past years and the Executive team was commended for its efforts in improving the accuracy of forecasting.

Staff headcount currently stood at 180. Business planning activity has identified a need for additional resources in particular within the Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQ) and Strategy, Risk and Research (SRR) Directorates in order to successfully deliver the 2018/19 planned programmes. The Board acknowledged the need for additional technical expertise within the two directorates.

[Action] A full analysis of the Staff Survey results would be brought to the Board at the January meeting.

The new HR and Finance System was planned to go live at the end of January 2018 with the first payroll run to take place on the 1st of February 2018. The Grant Thornton audit had provided a rating of 'Substantial Assurance' for the development phase.

57/17 Report on the work of the Board committees

The Chairs for the following Committees provided the Board with a brief verbal update on the work of their Committees and the Board considered and noted the minutes of each Committee.

Tom Taylor - Finance Committee meeting held on 30 August 2018.

Anne Heal - Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting held on 6 September 2017.

Roger Taylor - Standards Advisory Group meeting held on 27 October 2017.

The Chairs of the Committees notified members of the Board that their appointment terms would be coming to an end in March 2018, as such there was a risk that Committee meetings from this date onwards may not be quorate.

The Chair agreed to nominate individual Board members to take up the positions of Chairs for both of the Committees at the 28 March 2018 Board.

58/17 Publication of Papers

The Board agreed that all open papers for this meeting would be published.

59/17 Other Business

There was no other business to note.

60/17 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for 10.00am on Wednesday 31 January 2018.