

Ofqual Board

Paper 70/17a

Date:

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Title:

Vocational and Technical Qualifications Update

Report by:

Phil Beach CBE

Executive Director, Vocational and Technical Qualifications

Paper for information

Open paper (some paragraphs closed)



Issue

1. This report provides an update on the work of the Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQ) Directorate since the last Board meeting.

Recommendation

2. To note the issues raised in the report and agree:
 - a) Our response to the Department's T Level consultation (Annex)
 - b) To delegate to the Reform Committee, if required, approval of our Functional Skills technical consultation (paragraphs 6 and 7).
 - c) Our consultation on Apprenticeships Conditions and Guidance (separate paper).
 - d) Our regulatory approach to Applied General Qualifications (Paragraphs 14-20)

Reform

3. **Overview (Open).** The Government's T Level consultation and recent conversations with the Department combine to give an overall sense of the scale and scope of the reform challenge we face. We have already begun a recruitment campaign to increase VTQ directorate numbers to meet the current challenge. However, proposals in the current Government T Level consultation could increase the reform challenge markedly. **These are set out in paras 11-14 below.**

4. We have benefited from the advice of the Reform Committee twice since the last Board meeting; once in relation to apprenticeship conditions and guidance and more recently to inform our response to the Government's T Level consultation. Discussions and decisions of the Reform Committee will be reported separately, with a verbal update provided by the Chair.

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

6. **Other Qualification Reviews (Open).** The Government's T Level consultation signalled the intent to review the wider funded qualification landscape including Applied General and 'Level 2 and below' qualifications. The Department is likely to run one review programme, which considers all of these funded qualifications, with an aim of rationalising and simplifying the market. We have been approached to support the review, which could begin as early as February.

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Strategic Relationships (open)

6. Our employer event on 21 November enabled very positive engagement from the delegates and received good feedback. We provided a comprehensive update on the qualifications landscape and progress with each of the VTQ reform areas, which emphasised our role and our desire to engage with employers to ensure they get what they need from VTQ. Presentations explained the value of our assessment expertise and the findings of our work on Apprenticeship Assessment Plans to date. In facilitated table discussions, delegates articulated strongly-held views about the need for simplicity and join-up between various Government bodies. They welcome our direct engagement and support, and encouraged us to be more visible, through their channels, partnerships and representative bodies, with clear, concise information and continuing dialogue.
7. In parallel with this event, we published a range of material: a report on user perceptions of Applied Generals; research findings on the functioning of performance table qualifications; findings from our review of Assessment Plans and guidance on our approach to EQA and a blog on the qualifications landscape. This set of publications was designed to support users of qualifications and demonstrate the value we add in vocational and technical qualifications.
8. Plans for the AO Conference on 27 February are firming up, and attendance is projected to be good. Themes of the day include centre controls and DCS; regulating VTQs; T levels; Apprenticeships; and cross-border regulation (jointly with regulators from Wales and Northern Ireland).

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Equality Analysis

No specific issues.

Risk Assessment

Our risk assessment will be informed by the strategic approach that we take.

Regulatory Impact Assessment

No specific issues.

Timescale

32. Timescales for each area of work are set out above.

Communications

33. Nil.

Internal Stakeholders

34. All other Directorates have an interest in the work set out in this report.

External Stakeholders

35. Engagement is as detailed in the body of the paper.

Paper to be published	Yes (with some closed sections)
Publication date (if relevant)	N/A

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