

Date

28 November 2018

Title

Chief Regulator's update

Report by

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Paper for information

Open paper

Recommendation

1. The Board is asked to note the matters reported.

Overview

2. In early November, we published on time three consultations: on the future assessment arrangements for GCSE computer science; reviewing our subject-level conditions for GCSE and A Level music and dance; and on regulating the new Basic Digital Skills (BDS) qualifications. The response has been considerable, with over 300 responses respectively on music and dance and on computer science in the first week.
3. Since the Board strategy day we have held meetings with a number of key stakeholders. I have met with Geoff Barton (General Secretary of ASCL), the NASUWT, Neil Bentley (CEO of World Skills), the Wellcome Trust and HMC, and I have observed an EPRS hearing. I and a number of colleagues have also met with Michelle Dyson, the new Director for Qualifications, Curriculum and Extra-Curricular in the Department for Education, whose team owns the Department's relationship with Ofqual. We are also looking forward to welcoming Michelle to Coventry when she visits Ofqual in the next fortnight.
4. Following a competitive and innovative recruitment process, I am pleased to inform the Board that we have appointed Sean Pearce as our new Chief Operating Officer. Sean joins us from his current role as the Director of Finance and Corporate Services at the West Midlands Combined Authority,

and immediately before that he was Chief Financial Officer at Worcestershire County Council. He has a keen interest in education and was a Governor and Chair of the audit committee at a number of FE colleges in the West Midlands. Sean will be joining us in early January; Stephen Park will continue as Interim COO in the meantime.

5. Our office move in early October went smoothly and we were successfully set up in our new office by our target move date. Feedback on the move itself was very positive, with 96% of respondents satisfied with their overall move experience.

General Qualifications

Accessibility of assessments

6. In October, we arranged a special meeting of our Access Consultation Forum (ACF), which brings together awarding organisations (including all of the exam boards), groups representing the interests of disabled learners and the UK qualifications regulators to consider issues affecting disabled learners as they take regulated qualifications. The meeting considered the accessibility of assessments for students whose language development has been affected by their disability and for students who are colour blind and the use by students in their assessments of assistive technology
7. We used the meeting to reflect on the findings of some work we had undertaken to determine the accessibility of the first reformed GCSE maths and English language GCSE exam papers, taken in summer 2017. We commissioned expert language modifiers who are members of the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD) to review the questions in the papers. While they identified room for improvement, overall the questions were generally found to be accessible to students whose language development was impaired. We have shared the feedback on their questions with the individual exam boards.
8. The Autism Education Trust had also independently, with support from the DfE, evaluated the accessibility of GCSE English and maths questions for autistic students. There was much in common between their views and those of the BATOD on the features of accessible questions, eg avoiding ambiguous language and consistent use of terminology. Both pieces of work will inform our development of guidance on the accessibility of assessments.
9. The founder of Colour-blind Awareness demonstrated to the Forum how an exam question that is presented in colour can be inaccessible to a colour-blind student and how to make such questions accessible.

ASCL ethical framework

10. At a recent regular meeting with the exam boards, we invited the chair of ASCL's Ethical Leadership Commission to provide an overview of the commission's work and its planned next steps.

11. ASCL set up its ethical leadership commission to provide an ethical framework for school leaders. The commission has developed a set of principles and virtues against which decision-making in education leadership can be tested. The commission published a [draft ethical leadership framework](#) in March 2018 and the findings of the commission will be launched in January 2019. The commission is considering how to continue and widen discussions about ethical educational leadership in the longer term. Ethical practice in qualification and assessment delivery will be within the scope of these discussion – and are within the scope of the principles developed so far and so the work clearly aligns with our interest in preventing malpractice.

Vocational and Technical Qualifications

Functional Skills.

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

12. Our programme of technical evaluation continues as planned with a view to getting qualifications to centres next Spring ahead of first teaching in September 2019. The Reform committee requested further information about how the technical evaluation works in both Basic Digital and Functional Skills qualifications – particularly with regard to standard setting; this is being followed up with the committee.
13. **Apprenticeships.** We are confirmed as EQA for 56 Apprenticeship Standards, and there are now 44 Apprenticeship End-Point Assessments available on our Register. We have completed the first tranche of audits into the availability and capability of End Point Assessors and the preliminary findings from these will be available before Christmas. Our technical evaluation of End Point Assessments continues, with our focus shifting to customer service and healthcare. We have fed back findings from the first three tranches to both the Awarding Organisations and the Institute for Apprenticeships.
14. **Basic Digital Skills.** Following the Reform Committee’s approval of our approach, we launched a combined policy and technical consultation on our proposed Conditions and Guidance for Basic Digital Skills qualifications on 5 November. This will run until 11 January 2019.
15. **Engagement Activity.** We made a substantial and well-received input to FAB’s annual conference in October, contributing to four seminars as well as a keynote speech by Phil Beach. Plans for our own AO conference at the University of Warwick on 26 March are shaping up well. We are also maintaining our active engagement with Awarding Organisations, including a range of events including: TQ consultation discussions; our first forum for Apprenticeship End Point Assessment Organisations; and a post-summer awarding discussion on Applied General and Technical Qualifications.
16. Our new recognition process includes early engagement discussions for applicants prior to submitting their applications. This is proving exceptionally popular, with 91 organisations already having made contact. Early feedback suggest that the quality of recognition submissions is picking up.

National Assessments

17. On 25 October, we published our annual report on National Assessments regulation, covering summer 2018's assessments. We were pleased to be able to provide assurance on key aspects of test validity, in particular in relation to marking consistency, test development and standards maintenance.
18. We also reported on feedback provided to the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) in areas where validity could be strengthened, particularly in relation to the prevention and detection of malpractice and to the consistency of interpretation of KS2 writing teacher assessment frameworks. This included a suggestion that STA consider strengthening their current recommendation, that schools should arrange for KS2 tests to be independently observed, into more of an expectation or requirement. STA have considered and responded to our feedback on teacher assessment and malpractice and we expect to continue to monitor and report on these areas.
19. Our report also summarised emerging findings of research into international approaches to the assessment of writing at the end of the primary phase. The full research report is due to be published in early 2019.
20. Our annual report was received positively by stakeholders. It attracted limited media attention, with education sector press reporting on our suggestion relating to the independent observation of KS2 tests, and the emerging finding from our research that the majority of jurisdictions identified chose to assess writing using a test rather than teacher assessment (as is the case in England).

Forward Look

21. We are working to publish four sets of official statistics, as well as our report on Summer 2018 and on this year's National Reference Test, in mid-December.
22. We have two key events lined up for the final part of the year. On 27 November we will be holding our roundtable event on marking, looking at research into marking consistency and reliability, which will be chaired by David Laws, former minister and now Executive Chairman at the Education Policy Institute.
23. On 11 December we are looking forward to holding our conference on grading in vocational and technical qualifications, showcasing work by our Research Chair, Paul Newton, which will look at recent policy and current practice in grading VTQs.

Paper to be published	Yes
Publication date (if relevant)	
If it is proposed not to publish the paper or to not publish in full please outline the reasons why with reference to the exemptions available under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), please include references to specific paragraphs	

ANNEXES LIST

ANNEX A CLOSED ANNEX

ANNEX B SETTING CORPORATE STRATEGY (CLOSED)