



Minutes

Board Meeting

Date

Wednesday, 27 November 2019

Attendees

Board

Ian Bauckham

Delroy Beverley

Sally Collier

Mike Cresswell

Lesley Davies

Hywel Jones

Dame Christine Ryan

Skype Items 57/19 – 63/19

Jo Saxton

Roger Taylor

Chair

Matt Tee

Mike Thompson

David Wakefield

Susan Barratt

Ofqual

Varinder Bassan

Acting Board Secretary

Phil Beach

Executive Director, Vocational and Technical Qualifications

Richard Garrett

Director of Policy and Strategic Relationships for GQ (CPD Session)

Michael Hanton

Director of Strategy and Markets

Katy Harding

Associate Director, Finance and Commercial (Item 61/19)

Daniel Gutteridge

Director of Legal

Chris Shadforth

Director of Communications

Michelle Meadows

Executive Director, Strategy, Risk and Research

Sean Pearce

Chief Operating Officer

Julie Swan

Executive Director, General Qualifications

Anona White

Private Secretary to the Chief Regulator

Phil Carr

Associate Director VTQ Design and Development (Item 58/19)

Steve Walker

Associate Director Apprenticeships EQA (Item 59/19)

Observers

Dawn Cleaver

For item 57/19

Lucy Sydney

For items 58/19 and 59/19



52/19 Welcome and apologies

There were no apologies for the meeting.

53/19 Declarations of interest

Jo Saxton advised she had been made an Honorary Professor at the University of Buckingham.

The Board agreed the declarations of interest subject to the above addition.

54/19 Minutes and Matters arising

The Board agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2019.

Matters Arising

Minute 42/19, 25 September 2019, GCSE Photography - The Board remained concerned that some schools might seek inappropriately to prepare and enter students for GCSE photography, perceiving the qualification as an easy way to boost Progress 8 measures. The Board asked for a plan setting out how the potential risks and mitigations could be determined to be considered at its next meeting.

The matters arising report was agreed subject to the above comments.

Action

To present a plan at the next Board meeting, setting out how potential risks and mitigations could be determined regarding schools entering students for GCSE photography, perceiving the qualification as an easy way to boost Progress 8 measures.

55/19 Chair's update

The Chair acknowledged the resignation of Chris Shadforth, Director of Communication, and thanked Chris on behalf of the Board for his work and the quality of communications over the past five years. The Board noted that Kate Keating, currently the Associate Director of Communications, had been appointed as his successor and congratulated her on her appointment.

The Chair congratulated Daniel Gutteridge on his appointment to the Director of Legal.

Since the last meeting the Chair had met with the Chair of UCAS, Professor Koen Lamberts, regarding the post results admission process. Professor Lamberts had outlined how UCAS was exploring the possibility of moving the university admissions window to later in the year.

The Chair had also visited Sparx, a company specialising in AI maths programmes.

56/19 Chief Regulator’s report

The Board considered and noted a paper by the Chief Regulator that provided an overview of those areas of significant activity with the organisation since the last meeting.

GQ -Malpractice

The Board was advised that a summit had been held recently with the exam boards at which their plans to enhance exam paper security had been discussed. It noted a number of measures being adopted or trialled by the exam boards, including moving the A level maths exam to the afternoon to enable the papers to be delivered to centres on the morning of the exam and the piloting of electronic tracking and tamper-proof technology.

The Board asked what contingency arrangements would be put in place if the papers were not delivered on time. It was advised that centres would be sent electronic copies which they would be required to print. Candidates could be held in quarantine while any paper was being printed. A limited pilot of morning deliveries was to be undertaken before the summer 2020 series.

The Board noted the exam boards’ longer term interests in delivering exam papers electronically, negating the need for paper copies to be delivered in bulk in advance of the exams.

Consultation on changes to the General Conditions of Recognition

Lesley Davies declared a conflict of interest as the Chair of the UK Skills Partnership Board.

The Board was advised that two awarding organisations had raised concerns in response to the consultation on amending the General Conditions of Recognition to provide for improved price transparency. They were concerned that if they had to publish their fees for each country in which their qualifications were taken, they would be disadvantaged in those markets.

The Board considered three possible options. It agreed that awarding organisations should not be required to publish country-specific price information and wished to consider further the options available to permit this whilst also improving price transparency in the market in England.

Action

The Board requested further details of the benefits and drawbacks of the options available to secure price transparency in England without requiring awarding organisations to publish fees for the international markets in which they operate, to be circulated by correspondence after the meeting in order to address the three recommendations outlined in the paper.

A level maths

The Board was given an update on Ofqual's investigation into the reasons for the wide disparity in grade boundaries set by the exam boards for reformed A level maths between 2018 and 2019. The report would be published in December.

The Board noted that there had been a difference in performance standards set in 2018 and 2019. This was in part due to the removal of opportunities to resit in the reformed qualification.

The Board was advised that officers would be shortly meeting with the exam boards to share the findings but that they were not minded to require the boards to change boundaries. This was because in 2018 there were 17 year old students sitting the legacy qualification as well as students sitting the reformed qualification. If standards were adjusted for the reformed qualification then this would drive a difference in standards between two 17 year old cohorts within the same year.

The Board questioned the understanding of parents and if Ofqual could be challenged legally. The Board was advised that staff had considered these issues, and recognised that given the circumstances no outcome could be completely fair. It agreed that in this instance it was more important to obtain fairness within a year than fairness over time.

Regulatory action

The Board discussed the recent coverage by the BBC's Panorama programme about fraud in some qualifications used to obtain private vehicle hire licences. It noted that staff had been working with Pearson, which offers the qualification, and had written to awarding organisations which offer similar qualifications.

The Board noted that the issue had arisen in part due to subcontracting by centres and awarding organisations having insufficient controls as a result. In this respect the high profile of the issue had been helpful to illustrate to some awarding organisations the benefits of tightened centre controls.

Tailored Review

The Board was advised that the Tailored Review due to start in November had been postponed owing to the fact that terms of reference had not been signed off by Ministers before the pre-election period. Further information would be provided to the Board if the review was rescheduled.

Corporate Plan commitments

The Board noted that, owing to a series of factors including unforeseen additional work resulting from the summer series and decisions to reprioritise resource, six commitments outlined in the Corporate Plan were showing as at risk of delivery as originally intended. Two commitments were at risk owing to delays in preceding policy development by the Department of Education. Two commitments were subject to changed work programmes to ensure they were delivered effectively in the light of new evidence; two commitments from Goal 5 had been streamlined to meet the

published corporate plan commitments. In each instance a work programme continues with some progress made against each commitment by year end. It was noted that there remains risk in areas of the plan and the outcome of the general election may further affect the work plan.

Strategic Risk Register

The Board was advised that the Register would now form an annex as part of the Chief Regulator's report and that Board papers would now have the relevant risks attached to them.

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

57/19 Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

The Board noted that Ofqual had accomplished a lot of activity which could be classified as diversity and inclusion but that it had not previously been linked to the Corporate Plan. The Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) strategy was able to bridge this gap.

The Board was advised of Ofqual's intention to launch the Strategy in January with a week of activities celebrating D&I. It agreed that the strategy should be embedded throughout Ofqual's work. A work plan had been developed alongside the strategy to allow progress to be reported back to both the D&I working group and to SMG.

The Board asked for resource to be set aside to allow implementation of the strategy.

The Board questioned the BAME target and was advised that although Ofqual did not set any arbitrary targets, there were some Civil Service targets.

The Board observed that the Strategy did not touch on the Board itself. It was advised that diversity analysis of the Board did exist but had not been included in the Strategy.

The Board congratulated the authors and contributors of the strategy and subject to the suggested changes, agreed the Strategy.

Decision

The Board agreed the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and supported the publication and launch of the strategy internally and externally to coincide with the Equalities Report.

58/19 T-levels

The Board was provided with an update on Ofqual's progress on T level Technical Qualification (TQ) Accreditation including the potential risks to Ofqual accreditation and approval by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute), together with mitigation options.

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

Decision

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

59/19 Apprenticeships

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

Decision

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

60/19 Equalities Report

The Board was advised of the duty the Equality Act 2010 placed on Ofqual to publish one or more equality objectives at least every four years. The Board considered the draft Equalities Report and the proposed objectives for 2019-2023.

Decision

The Board agreed the planned objectives for 2019-2023 and the draft equalities report subject to some clearer wording of one of the draft objectives.

61/19 Governance Framework update

The Board was presented with an update to the Governance Framework outlining changes to the structure of Board committees and the frequency of Board meetings.

Decision

The Board agreed the amendments to the Governance Framework subject to some minor changes in wording.

62/19 Finance Update

The Board was presented with figures agreed by the Finance Committee in November 2019.

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

63/19 Board and Committee dates 2020/21

Decision

The Board agreed the dates for 2020/21 subject to a change in date for July Finance Committee and October SAG meeting.

64/19 Update to Board and Committee Memberships

Decision

The Board agreed the changes to the Committee Memberships as per the paper and agreed Jo Saxton’s membership onto the Technical Committee as proposed by the Chair.

65/19 Publication of papers

The Board agreed for all open items to be published.

66/19 Other Business

Members were updated on a change to the way in which Ofqual would pay expenses in the future.

The Board agreed to a proposed amendment to the March Board minutes pertaining to paper 112/18, amending the text from ‘The Board asked if the amount of information which will be given back to schools had changed and was advised it had; *‘qualitative statements about individual pupils ability would now be provided to schools’ to*’ The Board asked if the amount of information which will be given back to schools had changed and was advised it had; *narrative statements setting out what the child had been able to do in the assessment would be provided to schools’.*

The Board agreed this change.

67/19 Date of the next meeting

The Board agreed in principle to move the next Board meeting from Wednesday 29 January 2020 to Thursday 30 January 2020.

Action

The Board Secretary to confirm the date for the January meeting by correspondence.