

Minutes

Paper 109/18

Date

Wednesday 30 January 2019

Venue

Room 6016/17, Earlsdon Park, Coventry

Attendees

Board

Ian Bauckham
Delroy Beverley
Sally Collier
Mike Cresswell
Lesley Davies
Hywel Jones
Christine Ryan
Jo Saxton
Roger Taylor (Chair)
Frances Wadsworth

Ofqual

Varinder Bassan	Acting Board Secretary
Phil Beach	Executive Director, Vocational and Technical Qualifications
Daniel Gutteridge	Associate Director Legal
Michael Hanton	Associate Director, Strategic Policy and Risk
Katy Harding	Associate Director, Finance and Commercial
Matt Humphrey	Director, Legal Moderation and Enforcement (item 97/18)
Cath Jadhav	Director, Standards and Comparability (Item 98/18)
Emma Leary	Associate Director, VTQ (item 97/18)
Andy Lester	Senior Manager, Strategic Policy (item 100/18)
Michelle Meadows	Executive Director, Strategy, Risk and Research
Sean Pearce	Chief Operating Officer
Mark Snow	Senior Manager Policy and Strategic Relationships (item 99/18)
Julie Swan	Executive Director, General Qualifications
Rachael Taylor	Research Fellow (item 98/18)
Anona White	Private Secretary to the Chief Regulator

Observers

Eva Beazley	Consultant, Board Effectiveness Review
Adam Cherrington	VTQ Manager
Catherine Large	Director, Vocational and Technical Qualifications
Steve Hickmott	Senior Manager VTQ

92/18 Welcome and apologies

Apologies were noted from David Wakefield.

The Chair welcomed Sean Pearce to his first Board Meeting as Chief Operating Officer; Varinder Bassan as Acting Board Secretary; and Eva Beazley who is carrying out a Board Effectiveness Review.

93/18 Declarations of interest

The Board considered the Register of Board Members' Interests, and noted its contents. It noted two minor amendments.

Hywel Jones declared he was now on the Board of Astrea Academy Trust.

94/18 Minutes and Matters arising

The Board agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2018 were a true and accurate record.

The Board considered the matters arising from past meetings and noted that an update on the trialling of the Reception Baseline Assessment items would be brought back to the Board at its March meeting.

95/18 Chair's update

The Chair noted that the publication of reports before Christmas had gone very smoothly. He reported back on the VTQ Grading Conference which had taken place in December, and the sensible discussion which had taken place to look at approaches to ensure that grading is more consistent and robust.

The Chair informed the Board that both he and the Chief Regulator were preparing for an accountability hearing of the Education Select Committee in March.

96/18 Chief Regulator's report

The Chief Regulator provided a report on the work of the organisation since the last meeting of the Board.

The official statistics on malpractice and on reviews of marking and moderation; a report on grade outcomes in extended project qualifications; and our 2018 summer exams series report were all published in December.

Over the Christmas period there had been coverage of the relative difficulty of GCSEs and International GCSEs, the latter of which are no longer taken in maintained schools. The Board reflected that this issue had received coverage beyond the mainstream media, including on websites for parents. The Chief Regulator reminded the Board of the difficulties of distinguishing between GCSEs and International GCSEs, as considered by the Board at its meeting in July 2018. Ofqual continued to consider possible options.

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

The Board noted the progress that had been made on T Levels and that work remained on track, and that procurement for Wave 2 T Level routes would start in April. The Board discussed the ongoing work relating to the DfE's qualification reviews and our work on potential 'strengthening' of controls around vocational qualifications which sit on school performance tables. The ED VTQ informed The Board that procurement for the organisations to deliver the first wave of T Levels had reached decision stage and contracts would be awarded in February.

The Board noted that the combined policy and technical consultation on our proposed Conditions and Guidance for the new Basic Digital Skills qualifications closed on 11 January 2019, and

DECISION: The Board agreed to delegate the decision on the final wording of the Conditions and Guidance to the Reform Committee.

The Board was informed of a letter received from Minister Milton providing a steer on an increase in the overall number of Guided Learning Hours (GLH) for the new Functional Skills qualifications.

ACTION: GLH letter to be circulated to the Board following the meeting along with an explanation of the policy behind it.

DECISION: The Board agreed a decision in principle to delegate to the Chief Regulator authority to amend the conditions, subject to receiving the further information.

The Board noted the plans to require further information from AOs on whether their qualifications are offered internationally, following some work with the Department for International Trade (DIT) on understanding the export value of regulated qualifications. Intelligence on an AO having a small presence in England and a much larger presence overseas might also flag potential issues to us.

ACTION: The Board requested that an analysis of the data on the international offering of regulated qualifications be brought back to the Board in due course.

The Board noted Ofqual's results in the 2018 Civil Service People Survey and congratulated the Executive on the excellent staff engagement scores. The Board noted that the scores on learning and development had decreased very slightly, and that the Executive were taking action on this. The Board reflected on the new organisational focus on performance management and the impact this may have on bullying and harassment figures, and sickness absence. The Board noted that individual directorate plans to address the issues raised in the survey were in development.

97/18 Accountability for Awards

The Associate Director Policy for VTQ and Director of Legal, Moderation and Enforcement presented a paper on Accountability for Awards.

The Board noted that, in some circumstances, AOs might issue a qualification certificate to a learner on the basis of assurance from the centre that the learner had a valid entitlement to such a certificate without conducting any intervening quality assurance activity. Where such delegation occurred the centre is commonly described as having attained Direct Claim(s) Status (DCS).

The Board noted the preferred option to address this issue, to define verification and adjust the definition of moderation, and to regulate so as to require that all centre marked assessment is subject to either verification or moderation.

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98/18 [Closed]

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100/18 [Closed]

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101/18 [Closed]

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102/18 [Closed]

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103/18 Publication of papers

DECISION: The Board agreed for all open items to be published.

104/18 Other Business

The Board heard that the Executive Director for Strategy Risk and Research had attended further meetings of the JCQ's independent malpractice commission as an observer. It noted that the commission had been gathering evidence from students, exams officers and Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs), and that work was due to be completed ahead of the summer, but published after results.

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105/18 Date of the next meeting

The next Board meeting will be on Wednesday 27 March 2019.