



**Minutes**

Emergency Board Meeting

**Time and venue**

08.00am by Microsoft Teams

**Date**

Wednesday, 24 June 2020

**Attendees**

Board

Susan Barratt

Ian Bauckham

Delroy Beverley

Sally Collier

Chief Regulator

Mike Cresswell

(from item 52/20)

Lesley Davies

(from item 51/20)

Hywel Jones

Catherine McClellan

Dame Christine Ryan

Roger Taylor

Chair

Matt Tee

Mike Thompson

(until item 54/20)

Frances Wadsworth

Ofqual

Pete Arnold

Deputy Security Advisor (until item 52/20)

Phil Beach

Executive Director, Vocational and Technical Qualifications

Niamh Field

Board Secretary

Michael Hanton

Director of Strategy and Markets

Janet Holloway

Associate Director, Standards for Design, Development and Evaluation (items 54/20 and 55/20)

Matthew Humphrey

Director of Legal Moderation and Enforcement

Cath Jadhav

Director of Standards and Comparability (Items 52/20 and 53/20)

Kate Keating

Director of Communications

Emma Leary

Associate Director VTQ Policy (items 52/20 and 53/20)

Andy Lester

Senior Strategy Manager (until item 51/20)

Michelle Meadows

Executive Director, Strategy, Risk and Research

Dennis Opposs

Standards Chair (items 52/20 and 53/20)

Sean Pearce

Chief Operating Officer

Natalie Prosser

Director of Operations VTQ (items 52/20 and 53/20)

Julie Swan

Executive Director, General Qualifications

Anona White

Private Secretary to the Chief Regulator

**48/20 Welcome and apologies for absence**

There were no apologies.

**49/20 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**50/20 Corporate Plan 2020/21 Update**

The draft three-year corporate plan (2020-23) that had been considered by the Board at its strategy day in February 2020 was no longer appropriate given the uncertainty around the duration and impact of COVID-19 on Ofqual's priorities and planned work programmes. All four directorates had revised their business plans and produced a one-year plan which focused on four specific priorities for 2020/21:

- i. Regulating in response to Covid-19 in GCSE, AS and A levels.
- ii. Regulating in response to Covid-19 in vocational and technical qualifications.
- iii. Supporting quality in regulated qualifications and assessments.
- iv. Managing our people, systems and resources.

The Executive Director for Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs) indicated that work continued on the evaluation of the extraordinary regulatory framework for awarding vocational, technical and other general qualifications in 2020, including the impact on students with particular protected and other characteristics. Once all the calculated grades had been received, the evaluation could be completed. The approach for awarding VTQs and General Qualifications (GQ) in 2021 needed to align and, if it differed, the rationale would need to be explained in the Corporate Plan.

It was anticipated that the Corporate Plan 2020/21 would be published on 14 July 2020 alongside Ofqual's Annual Report and Accounts 2019/2020.

The Board thanked Andy Lester, Senior Strategy Manager for his work.

**RESOLVED:**

Subject to the comments made above, the Board resolved to approve the Corporate Plan 2020/21 and that final sign off would be delegated to the Chief Regulator in consultation with the Chair.

**51/20 Board Security Recommendations**

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

**RESOLVED:**

The Board agreed a number of steps to mitigate the cyber security risk, including the exclusive use of BoardPacks, and further re-training for new and existing Board members.

**52/20 An approach to maintaining standards in VTQs in summer 2021**

Dennis Opposs, Standards Chair and Cath Jadhav, Director of Standards and Comparability, delivered a presentation on Ofqual's approach to maintaining standards in summer 2021 in VTQs.

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

The Board supported the proposed approach.

**53/20 Vocational and Technical Qualifications Approach to 2021**

The Secretary of State (SoS) for Education had sought advice and proposals on the measures that Ofqual and AOs could take in relation to VTQs to mitigate the impact of disruption in vocational and technical education. The report outlined the proposed VTQ strategy for assessments and qualifications in 2021 and identified a range of measures that Ofqual was exploring with AOs to mitigate the impact of lost teaching and learning. Some VTQs were aligned with GQ equivalents which posed further challenges.

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

**RESOLVED:**

The Board resolved to agree:

- i. The guiding principles that would underpin Ofqual’s approach to VTQ awarding in 2021.
- ii. The need to develop Ofqual’s strategy based on ‘groupings’ of qualifications.
- iii. That further recommendations would be brought back to the Board on how to minimise any unfairness for those qualifications with a ‘mixed purpose’ of competency and educational progression.
- iv. To endorse the mitigation measures at paras 20 to 23 and to support joint exploration with the sector of ways to reduce the impact of lost teaching and learning. Implementation of some approached may require new conditions or targeted guidance.

**54/20 Consultation on proposals to modify the assessment requirements for some GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2021 in response to disruption to teaching and learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic**

The Executive Director for GQs presented the draft consultation document which outlined the proposals on how GCSE, AS and A level exams and assessments and the exam timetable could change in 2021 in response to the disruption to teaching and learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

**RESOLVED:**

Subject to the comments made above and further discussion with DfE on content, the Board resolved to approve the draft consultation document for publication.

The final sign-off of the consultation document was delegated to the Chief Regulator in consultation with the Chair.

**55/20 Decisions on the additional autumn exam series 2020 for GCSEs, AS and A levels**

Exam boards were not currently permitted to offer GCSE, AS or A level exams in the autumn, other than for GCSE English language and maths. Ofqual, therefore, was required to consult on how it should change its regulatory framework so that exams could take place in the autumn. A decision was also required on whether to require – or just permit – the exam boards to offer exams in the autumn and whether qualification grades should be based on students' exam performance alone or whether non-exam assessment outcomes should also be considered for subjects that normally had a non-exam assessment requirement.

It was unknown how many students would wish to avail themselves of the autumn exam series therefore there were significant manageability issues with this. DfE would consider what support it could give to centres to enable this to happen.

Some students had started or partially finished non-exam assessment prior to the closure of schools and the cancellation of exams. These assessments would have been marked but not moderated and some students would be unhappy if this contributed to the autumn grade.

Art and Design had generated a lot of concern in the sector. *This section has been redacted, as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.*

The Board noted that if social distancing continued in the autumn, some FE colleges would potentially struggle with the number of students entering for GCSE English and maths. There were additional concerns that students would be unprepared to take exams in November following the disruption to teaching and learning and it was suggested that an additional sitting in January 2021 could help with the manageability issues and help students who had received more teaching. It was unknown at this stage how many entries there could be for the autumn series and student appetite to sit them.

The results from the A level autumn exams would be released before Christmas and GCSE English and maths in mid-January. The Board determined that exam boards should be required to issue replacement certificates otherwise there would be claims of inequity. Certificates could be issued electronically and there could be a charge if students wanted a paper copy. There was nothing in the rules to say that exam boards could not issue or charge for replacement certificates.

The Board noted that there needed to be a consistent approach to non-exam assessment and other qualifications in both GQs and VTQs. This could create further burden for teachers who would have to moderate non-exam assessments. It was reported that the majority of subject associations had recognised the challenges this year and were broadly in agreement with the proposals. PE A level would be exam only in the autumn. *This section has been redacted, as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.*

The entry deadline for the autumn exams was not yet known but it was anticipated that it could be mid to late September to enable students to go back to school or college to seek advice on next steps.

The Board thanked the GQ team for their work.

**RESOLVED:**

The Board resolved to agree that Ofqual:

- i. Requires exams boards to run a full exam series in the autumn and allow the exam boards to withdraw an exam for which there have been no entries by the closing date.
- ii. Agree that the exams in the autumn series should be of the same number in each subject and in the same format as the summer 2020 exams would have been had they not been cancelled.
- iii. Agree that (with the exception of art and design), the autumn results should be based on students' exam performance alone.
- iv. Agree that students should be able to enter for GCSE, AS and A level art qualifications in the autumn, and that their grades should be based on their performance in a new task set and marked by the exam board and taken under the normal supervised conditions.
- v. Agree that students should be able to carry forward their A level practical science and geology and GCSE English language endorsements to the autumn series.
- vi. Should provide in its rules for the exam boards to run the autumn series from October and that it should provide for flexibility on the exact timing in its rules and also allow for GCSEs in English language and maths to run in early 2021 for students who would be eligible to take exams in these subjects in November.
- vii. Agree that the normal review of marking and appeal arrangements should apply to the autumn series.
- viii. Require exam boards to issue replacement certificates to students to show the higher of their summer and autumn grades.
- ix. Should not impose any new requirements in respect of an autumn series on the exam boards that offer the Extended Project Qualification or the Advanced Extension Award.

The Board also agreed to delegate sign-off of the decisions document and the regulatory documents to the Chief Regulator.

**55/20 Any Other Business**

*This section has been redacted on the basis that it contains legally privileged information.*

The Board would be updated regularly on progress.

**ACTION: SC**

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 10.51am.