



**Notes**

Board Briefing

**Time and venue**

20.45pm by Microsoft Teams

**Date**

Tuesday, 11 August 2020

**Attendees**

Board

Susan Barratt

Ian Bauckham

Delroy Beverley

Sally Collier

Chief Regulator

Mike Cresswell

Lesley Davies

Hywel Jones

Dame Christine Ryan

Roger Taylor

Chair

Mike Thompson

Matt Tee

Frances Wadsworth

Ofqual

Phil Beach

Executive Director, Vocational and Technical Qualifications

Niamh Field

Board Secretary

Richard Garrett

Director of Policy and Strategic Relationships General Qualifications

Daniel Gutteridge

Director of Legal

Michael Hanton

Director of Strategy and Markets

Matthew Humphrey

Director of Legal Moderation and Enforcement

Cath Jadhav

Director of Standards and Comparability

Kate Keating

Director of Communications

Michelle Meadows

Executive Director, Strategy, Risk and Research

Sean Pearce

Chief Operating Officer

Julie Swan

Executive Director for General Qualifications

Anona White

Private Secretary to the Chief Regulator

**1 Welcome and apologies for absence**

There were no apologies.

**2 Update on Summer awarding**

The meeting had been convened to provide the Board with an update on discussions with the Department for Education (DfE) (which had involved Number 10) which had taken place throughout that afternoon. Following the announcement by the First Minister of Scotland to award the calculated grades to students earlier that day, DfE had been considering whether adjustments should be made for students in England.

The Chief Regulator reported that she had put forward the feedback on the mock-based ground of appeal which the Board had been informed about earlier that day. She confirmed that the option of unregulated qualifications had been presented to the SoS but this had been rejected.

The DfE had sent a draft press statement to Ofqual that referenced a ‘triple lock’ process which was a new development.

The draft press statement described the triple lock process put forward by the DfE for both A level and GCSE students. Students would be able accept their calculated grade, appeal to receive their mock results or sit the autumn exams. The Board were informed that Ofqual had advised DfE that we had not consulted on students receiving their mock result following appeal and the Board had not as yet considered or agreed the proposal; the DfE advised that they would proceed with the press statement. The Board were informed that DfE had said it would be for Ofqual to advise what a valid mock process was.

The Chief Regulator indicated that throughout the process, the Executive Team had tried to fulfil Ofqual’s role in accordance with its objectives whilst being cognisant of the outcomes that the DfE was targeting. However, if Ofqual acceded to this request, this would be a fundamental shift. The Chief Regulator could not, as the independent regulator, accede to a request that contradicted what Ofqual had been established to do.

The draft press statement was read out. Board members noted the difficult situation this now caused. The wording in the draft press statement suggested a diluted and compromised standardisation process, even given the opportunity for Ofqual to define what would constitute a valid mock.

The Board noted the difficult position the DfE were in and that allowing a further ground for appeal remained preferable to awarding the centre grades (CAGs). Nevertheless, the risks associated with the government policy decision which could be in tension with the independent regulatory system were noted. Ofqual would need to determine the definition of a valid mock result to minimise and protect the reliability of the results, as far as possible. There would inevitably be students and parents who believed that CAGs should be awarded in line with the approach taken in Scotland.

The Board noted that some of Ofqual’s key stakeholders had recognised the political pressure Ofqual was facing and had spoken out in support of Ofqual as

an independent regulator. The Board recognised that these were unprecedented circumstances but students should still receive valid, regulated qualifications.

The Board took a short break while the Chief Regulator spoke with the Secretary of State for Education (SoS). The Chief Regulator reported that the SoS was concerned that this issue was resolved quickly.

The Board agreed that Ofqual would need to provide a response to the proposal and work with the SoS to ensure progression for all students whilst not compromising further on standards. To do this, Ofqual would need to see the detailed policy position.

*This section has been redacted as it contains legally privileged information.*

It was noted that an embargoed government press statement had just been received, and was widely reported in the media while this meeting was still in session.

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The Board indicated that it wished to pursue the necessary steps to see how the government policy as outlined in the press statement could be achieved, subject to Ofqual being able to define a valid mock result. It noted that Ofqual would need to issue a statement outlining what the proposal meant and why this had happened. The Chief Regulator would respond to the SoS accordingly.

One Board member did not support the proposal. A second did not support, until/unless clear criteria were established such as the mock being held in exam conditions, the mock paper being based on an actual whole past paper and being marked against the appropriate mark scheme.

The meeting ended at 22.45pm.