

**Minutes**

Board Meeting

Time and venue

9.00am by Microsoft Teams

Date

Wednesday, 16 June 2021

Attendees**Board**

Ian Bauckham	Interim Chair
Susan Barratt	(until item 29/21)
Delroy Beverley	
Lesley Davies	
Hywel Jones	
Simon Lebus	Chief Regulator
Dr Catherine McClellan	
Dame Christine Ryan	
Matt Tee	
Mike Thompson	(until 30/21)
Frances Wadsworth	

Ofqual

Danielle Cartwright	Private Secretary to the Chief Regulator
Niamh Field	Board Secretary
Claire Gill	Director Strategic Relationships VTQ (item 30/21 and 31/21)
Daniel Gutteridge	Director of Legal
Michael Hanton	Director of Strategy and Markets
Cath Jadhav	Director for Standards and Comparability/SRO General Qualifications 2021 Programme (item 30/21 and 31/21)
Catherine Large	Executive Director, Vocational & Technical Qualifications
Dennis Opposs	Standards Chair (item 32/21)
Jane Parsons	Director of Communications
Sean Pearce	Chief Operating Officer
Emma Scott	Director VTQ Operations (item 30/21 and 31/21)
Julie Swan	Executive Director, General Qualifications

25/21 Welcome and apologies for absence

There were no apologies.

26/21 Declarations of interest

There were no other new declarations of interest.

Board members would review the Register of Interests and advise the Board Secretary of any updates. **ACTION: Board Members**

27/21 Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes from the Board Meetings held on 27 May 2021 were approved. There were no matters arising.

The reports and updates from Board Committees were received and noted.

28/21 Chief Regulator's Report

Consideration was given to the Skills Bill and the forthcoming change in legislation that was anticipated to give more clarity to the role of Ofqual and IfATE. Ofqual has and will continue to engage with DfE as the legislation evolves.

Consideration was given to the summer communications strategy. The Board noted that communications and messaging were currently focused more towards the sector while the TAG submission process was underway, and welcomed assurance that the messaging would shift to become more student, parent and public centric. It was noted that, both individual and joint messaging with DfE around GQs and VTQs will be amplified in July once the TAG submission process has ended.

29/21 Ofqual Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21

i. Financial Position Report/Outturn 2020/21

The Board noted the update on Ofqual's financial performance for the year ending 31 March 2021. The final outturn underspend remains unchanged at £0.89 million which was reported to the Finance and HR Committee on 12 May 2021 and is reported in the Annual Report and Accounts. The underspend remains consistent with previous forecasts. As previously reported to the Board, there were three key drivers of the underspend:

- i. Vacancies that were supported during the latter half of the year by Ofsted staff without recharge
- ii. The impact of the Secretary of State for Education deferral of the NRT from March to April 2021. The costs which will be incurred in the current financial year will be covered by DfE
- iii. The contingency was not required for its intended purpose

The Chair of the Finance and HR Committee had reported to the Chair in writing that the 2020/21 accounts were consistent with the information provided to the Committee during the reporting year and that the points she had raised had been addressed to her satisfaction. The Finance and HR Committee was content with the figures presented

The Board congratulated the Associate Director, Finance and Commercial, and her team, on the well-managed outturn during this difficult period. The accounts closure and the final audit had gone smoothly given the additional challenges of remote working. ARAC and Finance and HR Committee members emphasised that the External Auditors had been very complimentary about how exceptional the process had been.

ii. Receive the Annual Report on Governance, Risk Management and Control

The Board received the updated Annual Report on Governance, Risk Management and Control that outlined the work of ARAC in providing assurance of the management systems and controls that applied in Ofqual during the period 1 April 2020 until 31 March 2021.

The Board noted the scale and scope of the Committee's activity during the year in addition to the assurance activity undertaken.

iii. Ofqual Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20

The Associate Director, Finance and Commercial presented the substantially complete Annual Report and Accounts for the 2020/21 financial year and any remaining minor amendments would be incorporated by the end of this week. There was one unadjusted misstatement relating to a prepayment which is considered not material and has not been adjusted for. We received an unqualified opinion from the external auditors in the Audit Completion Report and there were no recommendations made. This was a first for Ofqual.

iv. Receive the report from the External Auditor and Management Representation Letter

The Board received and noted the Audit Completion Report 2020/21 and the Management Representation letter which will be signed by the Chief Regulator and submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General with the final version of the accounts.

v. Receive the recommendation of the Audit Committee to approve the Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair of the ARAC recommended the approval of the Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21.

RESOLVED:

The Board resolved to approve the Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21.

30/21 Awarding 2021 Update

An update was provided on progress of awarding VTQs, and specifically the challenges for AOs in issuing Performance Table Qualifications (PTQs) and Functional Skills Qualifications (FSQs). The situation is being monitored closely and the Board *asked to* be kept abreast of the situation.

Consideration was given to contingency arrangements for PTQ TAGs that are submitted late after the 18 June deadline and it was reported that centres are, like last summer, working to submit TAGs on the deadline. AOs are managing

this with centres who are being reminded that late TAG submissions will delay results being issued on time and the potential knock on effect for students.

The Board asked that we continue to monitor AO's processes to clear the backlog relating to FSQs.

The Board welcomed the approach UCAS was taking to best support centres and exam boards to identify and prioritise students who might want to submit a priority appeal.

An update on recent publications and speeches was provided. The Director of Communications was considering creating a rolling brief on the website to signpost visitors to the appropriate section and documents on the website. The Chief Regulator reported that consideration was being given as to whether to source standby external support for the Communications Team.

31/21 Awarding 2022 Update

An overview of progress on VTQ arrangements for awarding 2022 was provided including DfE's policy position and approach towards Performance Table Qualifications. The consultation on VTQ arrangements was currently on hold until the DfE policy position for GQs was known. A mixture of some content reduction or optionality for a small number of GCSEs and advance notice for other GCSEs and for AS and A levels is currently being considered by Ministers. The timeline for releasing information on advance notice is also being considered and debated. The urgency for confirmation from Ministers in relation to the approach for 2022 was noted to ensure we could commence the consultation before the end of the summer term. It will be important in the consultation to make clear the respective roles and responsibilities for DfE and Ofqual.

The Board noted that there was growing support from teachers for returning to exams.

The DfE and Ministers have also asked for our views on possible approaches to grading in 2022 and a note was sent outlining the options and the pros and cons of each. The Board noted that the decision on grading sits with Ofqual but that it would want to take into account a range of views as the policy is developed.

32/21 Changing the governance of the Standards Advisory Group National Reference Test Sub-Group

The National Reference Test (NRT) Sub-Group of the Standards Advisory Group (SAG) was established in 2016 to support Ofqual's work in developing, introducing and using the NRT. A more flexible approach to the governance arrangements, membership and focus on the Sub-Group was proposed which included removing the Sub-Group from the Board's governance structure.

RESOLVED:

The Board resolved to disband the SAG NRT Sub Group and replace it with a new group outside of the formal Committee structure that advises the Deputy Chief Regulator on the Test.

22/21 Publication of Papers

Agreed to publish open papers

23/21 Any Other Business

Board members would welcome a discussion on what the Devolved Administrations and other countries were doing in relation to the future of exams and assessments. It was suggested that this could be considered at a future Board Strategy Day. **ACTION: MH**

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 11.30am