

# Ofqual Board

## Paper 73/13

**Date:**

3 December, 2014

**Title:**

Annual review of the Governance Framework and update on changes to Executive level governance arrangements

**Report by:**

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**Responsible Director:**

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**Paper for decision**

**open paper**



**Issue**

1. The Ofqual governance framework is formally reviewed at least once every twelve months. This paper presents the outcome of that review and proposes adjustments to the framework. It also updates the Board on changes to Executive level governance arrangements.

**Recommendation**

2. The Ofqual Board is recommended to:-
  - (i) approve the adjustments to the Governance Framework set out at Annex A;
  - (ii) note the changes to Executive level governance arrangements.

**Analysis – Governance Framework**

3. Proposed changes to the governance framework are annotated as tracked changes in Annex A to this paper. Areas where change is proposed are:-

(i) Procedure for electronic business (page 21)

The procedure followed for electronic business (reproduced below) is now set out in the framework.

The Board Secretary will manage the process for electronic business set out below:-

1. Papers will be produced for all items of electronic business clearly setting out the recommendations to the Board and options considered together with any supporting analysis necessary.
2. The Board Secretary will agree with the report author and the Chair a timeline for decision to be taken. This will include sufficient time for the Board to read the report, seek clarification on the issues raised and to confirm their decision on the recommendations in the report.
3. The Board Secretary will circulate the report to the Board electronically and set out the timeline at 2 above. Questions or points of clarification should be directed to the Board Secretary who will arrange for a response to be drafted and circulated to all Board members in line with the agreed timeline.
4. Board members should confirm their decision on the recommendations in the report by the deadline indicated in the timeline. Once this deadline has passed the Board Secretary will confirm to the Board and report author the decision of the Board.
5. In order for a recommendation to be approved:-
  - a response must be received from at least 33% of the Board Members appointed at that time; when calculating this figure any fractions should be rounded down
  - a majority of the responses received must be in favour of the recommendation.

[These voting arrangements are as set out at paragraph 37 of the Rules of procedure for meetings of the Board.]

(ii) Schedule of Matters Reserved to the Board (page 22)

Minor changes are recommended to provide clarity as .

(iii) Whistleblowing Policy (page 54)

It is proposed that this is moved from the Governance Framework to the suite of Human Resources policy documents. This move will raise staff awareness of the policy.

(vi) Other General Amendments

Some other minor changes are proposed. Most of these are for reasons of presentation or clarification and are shown tracked with supporting comments at Annex A.

**Analysis – Executive level governance arrangements**

4. We have made changes to our executive level governance, set out in Annex B for the Board's reference. This includes removing the former 'Chief Regulator's Committee' and 'Chief Executive's Committee'. We now have the 'Strategic Management Group' comprised of the Chief Regulatory and four Executive Directors. This group is responsible for setting corporate strategic direction for the organisation.
5. Decision-making has been devolved further down into the organisation, in line with our new operating model. In particular, we have two programme boards – one to provide governance to General Qualifications matters (General Qualifications Programme Board), and the second to oversee Regulatory Strategy implementation (Regulatory Strategy Programme Board). The new Strategy & Policy Authority informs the development of our policy. Matters related to our Regulatory and Corporate Services directorate are addressed at the Regulatory Operations Meeting & Corporate Services Operations Meeting. These four groups report to SMG on a monthly basis.
6. Board will note the establishment of two governance groups to oversee the implementation of our new IT strategy – one ensuring the input of business users.

**Finance and Resource**

7. Costs for the review and implementation of the Governance Framework are marginal as they only concerned officer time.

**Impact Assessments**

Equality Analysis

8. No impact.

Risk Assessment

9. If the recommended adjustments to the Governance Framework not be made there would be a risk that the Framework would not be not suitable for the Board and its business not managed efficiently.

Regulatory Impact Assessment

10. No impact.

**Timescale**

- 11. Changes will take effect once the Board has approved them.

**Communications**

- 12. The revised Governance Framework will be communicated appropriately to staff and placed on the website.

Paper to be published	YES
Publication date (if relevant)	After the meeting

**ANNEXES LIST:-**

- ANNEX A** Annotated Governance Framework
- ANNEX B** Executive level governance diagram



# Ofqual Governance Framework



June 2014

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**Comment [at1]:** page numbers to be updated when document final

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## Governance Framework



### Introduction

1. The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) came into being on 1 April 2010 under the provisions of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (the Act) which was amended by the Education Act 2011. Ofqual is a Non-Ministerial Government Department. The Act sets out the following objectives for Ofqual:-

- the qualifications standards objective,
- The qualifications standards objective is to secure that—
  - regulated qualifications give a reliable indication of knowledge, skills and understanding, and
  - regulated qualifications indicate —
    - (i) a consistent level of attainment (including over time) between comparable regulated qualifications, and
    - (ii) a consistent level of attainment (but not over time) between regulated qualifications and comparable qualifications (including those awarded outside the United Kingdom) which are not qualifications to which this Part applies.

- the assessments standards objective,

The assessments standards objective is to promote the development and implementation of regulated assessment arrangements which—

- give a reliable indication of achievement, and
- indicate a consistent level of attainment (including over time) between comparable assessments.

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- the public confidence objective,

The public confidence objective is to promote public confidence in regulated qualifications and regulated assessment arrangements.

- the awareness objective,

The awareness objective is to promote awareness and understanding of—

- the range of regulated qualifications available,
- the benefits of regulated qualifications to learners, employers and institutions within the higher education sector, and
- the benefits of recognition under section 132 to bodies awarding or authenticating qualifications to which this Part applies.

- the efficiency objective.

The efficiency objective is to secure that regulated qualifications are provided efficiently and in particular that any relevant sums payable to a body awarding or authenticating a qualification in respect of which the body is recognised under section 132 represent value for money.

2. The Act sets out the duties that must be met and the powers that may be exercised by Ofqual in seeking to meet these objectives. Schedule 9 of the Act sets out arrangements for Ofqual's governance.

## **Corporate Governance**

3. The Board as a whole has a responsibility to ensure that Ofqual complies with its statutory responsibilities as set out in the Act, all other relevant legislation and government accounting rules in relation to its use of public funds. The Board is entrusted with public funds and therefore has a particular duty to observe the highest standards of corporate governance. This includes ensuring and demonstrating integrity and objectivity in the transaction of its business and, wherever possible, following a policy of openness and transparency in the dissemination of its decisions.

## **Collective responsibility of the Board**

4. The Board will act on a collective basis. As the body charged with governing Ofqual's strategic direction, the Board will abide by the following principles:-

- the Board will operate on the principles of collective responsibility, support and respect
- Members will be provided with all information necessary to ensure vigorous debate and effective decision making. Members may request any additional information they deem necessary to ensure that the decision making process is sufficiently well informed and robust
- Board Members should speak with one voice in public on Ofqual matters. Board Members should not make press statements in respect of Ofqual's affairs without the permission of the Chair (or in the absence of the Chair the Deputy and/or the Chief Executive). Briefing and assistance for Board Members making public statements will be provided. Nominated Board Members (other than those who disagreed with a decision) may be asked to present and articulate specific decisions of the Board to an appropriate audience
- Decisions of the Board will normally be reached by consensus and only in exceptional circumstances should a formal vote be necessary. All decisions of the Board will be recorded. Minority views will not normally be made public although, if a vote is necessary, the outcome of that vote will be recorded in the Board Minutes
- If a Board Member resigns as a result of a disagreement with a Board decision they may state the basis for the disagreement but may not publicly disclose the views of other Board Members.

## **The Board**

5. The Act states that the Board consists of:-
  - the Chair
  - between 7 and 12 Members appointed by the Secretary of State in consultation with the Chair (ordinary Members). The Board may appoint one of the ordinary Members as Deputy to the Chair (the Deputy)
  - the Chief Executive of Ofqual (who is also the Chief Regulator of Qualifications and Examinations).
6. One of the ordinary Members must be a person appointed following consultation with the Department of Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland.

7. The Chair and Ordinary Members will hold and vacate office in accordance with the terms of their appointment.
8. The Chair and Ordinary Members may resign from office at any time giving written notice to the Secretary of State.
9. The Secretary of State may remove the Chair or an ordinary Member from office on either of the following grounds:-
  - inability or unfitness to carry out the duties of office
  - absence from Ofqual's meetings for a continuous period of more than six months without Ofqual's permission.
10. Before removing an Ordinary Member from Office the Secretary of State must consult the Chair or Deputy.
11. There is an expectation that Board Members will serve on at least one Board Committee.

## **The Chair**

12. The Chair has a specific responsibility for providing effective strategic leadership of the organisation with a particular responsibility for:-
  - leading the Board in developing a strategy for discharging its statutory duties
  - promoting the efficient and effective use of staff and other resources
  - being an effective representative of Ofqual and its Board both internally and externally
  - encouraging high standards of propriety
  - ensuring that Board Members are aware of their duties, rights and responsibilities and that a Code of Practice for Board Members is in place
  - providing for the induction, training, objectives and assessment of individual Board Members and succession planning for the Board as a whole
  - acting as a point of contact between Ofqual, Ministers, Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly

- working continuously to improve the performance of the Board.
13. Close and regular liaison on a range of matters between the Chair and the Chief Executive and other senior staff of the organisation is essential. An effective working relationship between the Chair and the Chief Executive is of key importance to the well-being of the organisation and to the efficient progress of business. It is through this relationship that the balance will be maintained between the need for the Chief Executive to exercise their responsibility to manage the organisation and the need to ensure the Chair is aware of, and supportive of, the line taken on significant or potentially contentious issues.

## **The Deputy**

14. The Board may appoint one of the ordinary Members as Deputy Chair (the Deputy).

## **The Chief Executive**

15. The Chief Executive of Ofqual is also the Chief Regulator of Qualifications and Examinations. The role encompasses:-
- leading Ofqual in acting as the authoritative independent regulator of assessment standards in England
  - acting as a public face of Ofqual, representing Ofqual to the public, Ministers, Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly
  - leading the public debate in relation to the objectives of the organisation, particularly the maintenance of standards
  - playing a leading role in the formation of links with stakeholders, particularly the recognised awarding organisations
  - acting as a point of contact between Ofqual, Ministers, Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly.
  - the overall management, organisation and staffing of the organisation
  - external representation of the organisation as agreed with the Chair
  - financial and other practices and procedures including conduct and discipline

- through personal leadership and example, promoting the values underpinning Ofqual
- co-ordination and implementation of policies and actions endorsed by the Board.

17. The Chief Executive is designated as Accounting Officer by HM Treasury. The Accounting Officer is personally responsible for safeguarding the public funds for which s/he has a charge, for ensuring propriety and regularity in the handling of those public funds and for the day to day operation and management of the organisation.

### **The Director of Legal**

18. The Director of Legal is Ofqual's senior legal advisor and is legal advisor to the Board and its Committees. They are responsible for providing legal advice to the Board and its Committees on any matters related to or arising from Ofqual's statutory and wider legal responsibilities.

19. The Director of Legal is entitled to direct access to the Board and its Committees and will be entitled on their own discretion to provide legal advice either during or outside of meetings.

**Comment [at2]:** Section added to reflect reporting line from the Director of Legal to the Board

### **The Board Secretary**

2048. The Board Secretary serves the Board but is not a member of it. They are responsible for convening meetings, recording those meetings and advising on procedure. The legitimacy of the Board's business depends on the proper conduct of its meetings, including the preparation of papers and minutes.

2149. The Board Secretary will be entitled to offer advice during a meeting when questions of procedure are under discussion and shall intervene where they judge that the Board or the Chair may be at risk of breaching its own procedures or legal requirements for the conduct of business.

2220. The Board Secretary will:-

- ensure the smooth running of the activities of the Board and its Committees
- facilitate good information flows between the Board and members of staff
- provide impartial information and guidance on Board procedures and corporate governance

- facilitate the induction and professional development of Board Members
- facilitate the urgency and electronic business procedures
- the Chair, Board Members and members of any Committee or Sub Committee will have access to the Board Secretary for advice and assistance.

**2324.** The Board Secretary will maintain a Register of Interests and a Register of Gifts and Hospitality for Members of the Board. The Registers, **extracts of** which will be published on the Ofqual website, list declarations by Board Members of:-

**Comment [at3]:** adjustment to reflect actual practice

- financial interests
- personal interests
- gifts and/or hospitality offered by or received from outside bodies and arising from the Member's position on the Board.

## Executive Attendance at Meetings

**2422.** Members of the Executive and the **Director of Legal**~~Lawyer~~ will normally attend meetings of the Board. On occasion non board members may be asked to withdraw from the meeting for specific items of business. Other members of staff may be requested to attend meetings of the Board to support the consideration of specific items of business.

## Committees and Sub-Committees

**2523.** The Board may establish Committees and any Committee so established may establish Sub-Committees. Board Committees and Sub-Committees may be established permanently or on a time limited basis, for example to undertake a specific review. Only the Board or Committee of the Board that established the Committee or Sub Committee may wind up that Committee or Sub Committee. Membership of any Sub-Committee so established should be reported back to the Board for it to note.

**2624.** Any Committee or Sub-Committee established will report back regularly on its work to the Board or Committee that established it.

**2725.** Membership of Committees and Sub-Committees must include at least one member of the Board or Ofqual's staff. The membership of a Committee of the Board may include persons who are not Board Members. The

membership of a Sub-Committee may include persons who are not members of the Board Committee or of the Board.

- | ~~2826~~. Appointments to Board Committees and Sub Committees will be for a period of up to three years or, in the case of members of the Board, until the Member's appointment to the Board expires. Appointments are renewable where appropriate.
- | ~~2927~~. The Board may make arrangements for the payment of such remuneration and allowances as it thinks fit to any person who is a member of a Board Committee or Sub-Committee but is not a Board Member or a member of Ofqual staff.
- | ~~3028~~. Membership of Committees, including the identification of a chair of such Committees, will be proposed by the Chair and agreed by the Board. Membership of Sub-Committees, including the identification of a Chair, will be proposed by the Chair of the Committee, in consultation with the Chair, and agreed by the Committee. Terms of reference for Committees and Sub-Committees will be agreed in the same way. The Committee with the responsibility for Audit should include at least one member with financial/accounting/auditing experience.
- | ~~3129~~. The Board may delegate any of its functions to the Chair, another Board Member, a Committee or Sub-Committee.
- | ~~3230~~. If the Chair is not a member of a Committee or Sub-Committee they have the right of attendance at any meeting of that Committee or Sub-Committee in an observatory capacity. The Chair will not be entitled to vote on any matter before that Committee or Sub-Committee unless they are a member.
- | ~~3334~~. Chairs of Board Committees and Sub-Committees may meet as a group to discuss matters of mutual interest. If such a meeting is required a request should be made to the Board Secretary who will make arrangements.
- | ~~3432~~. The Board has established a number of permanent Committees which are detailed at Annex D.
- | ~~3533~~. The Board must at least once in any five year period review its committee structure and the scope of each Committee's activities.

## **Joint Committees and Sub-Committees**

- | ~~3634~~. The Board and any other person may establish a committee jointly, any such committee will be known as a Joint Committee.

- | ~~3736~~. Any Joint Committee established may establish a Sub-Committee, any sub-committee will be known as a Joint Sub-Committee.
- | ~~3836~~. Any Joint Committee or Joint Sub-Committee established will report back regularly on its work to the Board or Joint Committee that established it.
- | ~~3937~~. Membership of Joint Committees and Joint Sub-Committees must include at least one member of the Board or Ofqual's staff. The membership of a Joint Committee may include persons who are not Board Members. The membership of a Joint Sub-Committee may include persons who are not members of the Joint Committee or of the Board.
- | ~~4038~~. Appointments to Joint Committees and Joint Sub-Committees of the Board will be for a period of up to three years or, in the case of members of the Board, until the Member's appointment to the Board expires. Appointments are renewable where appropriate.
- | ~~4139~~. The Board may make arrangements for the payment of such remuneration and allowances as it thinks fit to any person who is a member of a Joint Committee or Joint Sub-Committee but is not a Board Member or a member of Ofqual staff.
- | ~~4240~~. If the Chair is not a member of a Joint Committee or Joint Sub-Committee they have the right of attendance at any meeting of that Committee or Sub Committee in an observatory capacity. The Chair will not be entitled to vote on any matter before that Joint Committee or Joint Sub-Committee unless they are a member.

## **Management of the Board's Work Programme**

- | ~~4344~~. Effective corporate governance requires that Board Members abide by certain principles when making their own contributions to Board business, including:-
  - working co-operatively with fellow Board Members in Ofqual's best interests
  - reaching a view on issues based upon proper and impartial consideration of the facts presented and not on the basis of predetermined or partisan views
  - supporting corporate decisions whatever one's personal view on the matter under discussion

- respecting any decision of the Board that an item of business should remain confidential
- declaring any potential conflict of interest arising from discussions of business or from other aspects of membership.

| 4442. Planning and management of the Board's business are matters for the Chair, working closely with the Chief Executive and the Board Secretary. Proper advance planning of the Board's business is essential to good governance. Such planning enables:-

- key decisions to be made at the right time
- senior managers to know when papers are required and *ad hoc* demands on staff minimised
- the scheduling of Board and Board Committee meetings to be co-ordinated
- Board Members to reserve dates for meetings well in advance
- the weight of business presented to any one meeting to be managed
- key deadlines to be met.

| 4543. All Board Members will contribute to the effectiveness with which the Board carries out its business by:-

- playing a full and active role in Board meetings
- regular attendance at formal and informal meetings of the Board
- being adequately prepared for meetings
- respecting the Chair's authority in respect of the management of meetings.

| 4644. The Board must work within the delegated framework and the agreed rules which it has set. Some basic procedural rules are set out at Annex A to this framework. These cover such matters as rules of procedure for meetings of the Board and any Committees, Sub-Committees or Joint Committees including convening of meetings, quorum, voting, declarations of interest and the publication of papers. It is the responsibility of the Chair of each forum, guided by the Board Secretary, to ensure that these procedural rules are adhered to.

## Delegations

- | [4745](#). The Board may delegate any of its functions to a Committee, Joint Committee or to the Chair, the Deputy or to the Chief Executive. Any such delegation will be recorded as a formal resolution of the Board. Regardless of any delegation the Board remains ultimately accountable for and must take corporate responsibility for action taken.
- | [4846](#). The Board delegates to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair, or in the absence of the Chair the Deputy, as appropriate, the discharge of all statutory functions other than:-
  - any matter reserved to the Board (Annex B)
  - any matter delegated to a Committee or Joint Committee of the Board.
- | [4947](#). Detail of the delegation of functions is given in the scheme of delegation at Annex E.
- | [5048](#). The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair, or in the absence of the Chair the Deputy, may delegate the discharge of some of the functions of Ofqual to one or more members of staff. The Chief Executive will keep a list of such delegations.
- | [5149](#). The Board may make delegations or vary, revoke or add to existing delegations. Any delegation made by the Board may be limited or made subject to any conditions, for example, the Board may delegate a function only for a limited period of time or for a particular matter.
- | [5250](#). The Board may discharge a function itself even though it has delegated the discharge of that function.
- | [5354](#). The Board delegates to each Board Committee the discharge of those functions that fall within their respective terms of reference other than any matter reserved to the Board. The Board may instruct staff, or Board Committee, as to how to exercise a delegated authority.
- | [5452](#). Unless the Board imposes a condition to the contrary, a Board Committee or a Joint Committee may delegate the discharge of a function to a Sub-Committee or Joint-Sub Committee subject to any conditions imposed by that Committee.
- | [5553](#). The Board authorises the Chief Executive to sign contracts or other documents on behalf of Ofqual and to delegate this authority to one or more members of Ofqual staff.

## Removal of the Chair and Chief Executive

**5654.** The Chair and Chief Regulator may only be removed from office by the Secretary of State or Her Majesty respectively on either of the following grounds:

- (a) inability or unfitness to carry out the duties of office;
- (b) absence from Ofqual's meetings for a continuous period of more than 6 months without Ofqual's permission

The Board does not therefore have the statutory power to remove the Chair or Chief Regulator from office. In the event that the either of the grounds for removal are met, the Board may however make a submission to the Secretary of State asking him to remove the Chair or to petition her Majesty for the removal of the Chief Regulator as appropriate.

## Code of Conduct

**5755.** Board Members will comply with the Code of Conduct for Members of the Board as set out at Annex C.

## Reviewing the Board's Performance

**5856.** The Board will review its own performance and that of its Committees regularly. A summary of the findings will be included in Ofqual's Annual Report and Accounts.

**5957.** The Chair will review the performance of all Board Members regularly . The Chair's performance will be reviewed annually by an appropriate process.

## Review of the Governance Framework

**6058.** This governance framework will be reviewed after six months of operation and thereafter as and when required by the Board, but at least once every twelve months.

## Annexes

Annex A Rules of Procedure for meetings of the Board

Annex B Matters reserved to the Board

Annex C Code of Conduct for the Board

Annex D Permanently established ~~Committees of the Board~~ Committees

Annex E Scheme of Delegation

~~Annex F Whistleblowing Policy~~

**Comment [at4]:** This document to be moved into the suite of HR policies to make it more accessible to staff

## **Governance Framework – Annex A**

### **Rules of procedure for meetings of the Board**



#### **Introduction**

1. The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) came into being on 1 April 2010 under the provisions of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (The Act) which was amended by the Education Act 2011. Ofqual is a Non-Ministerial Government Department.

#### **Frequency of Meetings**

2. The Board shall meet at least six times in each financial year. The period between any two consecutive meetings of the Board shall be no greater than three months.
3. An emergency meeting of the Board may be called by the Chair or the Chief Executive where in their opinion an urgent matter has arisen, or following receipt of a written request to the Board Secretary, signed by at least two Board members, setting out the reason why a special meeting is required.
4. The Board may also hold development and strategy events. The purpose of such events will be to provide an opportunity to reflect more thoroughly on strategy and key issues and also to develop its working practices.

#### **Location of Board meetings**

5. Board meetings will usually be held in Coventry but may on occasion be held elsewhere. In exceptional cases Board Members may participate in a meeting by video conference, telephone or any communication technique that allows all persons participating in the meeting to hear each other.

#### **Notice of Meetings**

6. Board meetings will normally be called well in advance and, in any event, with a minimum of five clear working days notice. A Board meeting may exceptionally be called at less than five clear working days notice. Notice of a Board meeting will be given to Board members in writing (including by fax or e-

mail). Failure to receive notice of a Board meeting will not invalidate that Board meeting or any business transacted at it.

7. By the end of each calendar year, the Board Secretary will propose, for the Board's approval, a schedule of meetings of the Board and any Committees currently established for the financial year commencing the following April.

## Agenda and Papers

8. The agenda and papers for Board meetings will normally be circulated at least five clear working days in advance of the meeting.
9. The papers for each meeting shall comprise:-
  - an agenda drawn up by the Board Secretary in consultation with the Chair and Chief Executive which shall indicate the matters to be discussed at the meeting
  - a copy of the draft minutes of the last Board meeting
  - such other supporting documents and information relevant to the matters to be discussed as the Chief Executive may think appropriate.
10. Non receipt of papers by individual Board Members does not invalidate a Board meeting or any business transacted at that meeting.
11. Where a meeting of the Board is called at short notice the Board Secretary shall distribute notice of the meeting and the papers relating to the business to be transacted at the earliest practical opportunity. Papers may be distributed by e-mail.
12. With the permission of the Chair, papers may exceptionally be tabled at a Board meeting or circulated after the agenda.

## Executive Attendance at Meetings

13. Members of the Executive and the ~~Director of Legal Lawyer~~ will normally attend meetings of the Board. On occasion non-board members may be asked to withdraw from the meeting for specific items of business. Other members of staff may be requested to attend meetings of the Board to support the consideration of specific items of business.

## Other Attendees at Meetings

14. The Board may invite other individuals to attend meetings of the Board, for example the Board may wish to hear a particular Stakeholder's point of view on a matter. The invitation may be for the entire meeting or for a specific item(s); the invitee is not obliged to attend. Any individual attending a Board meeting in this capacity will not be entitled to vote and may be asked to withdraw from the meeting at any point.

## Quorum

15. Any decision made by a properly constituted Board satisfying the requirements of these procedure rules shall be deemed to be a decision made by the Board.
16. In order to ensure that there has been proper input to, and scrutiny of, decisions it is necessary to have a quorum for meetings of the Board. The quorum for meetings of the Board shall be 33% of the Board Members appointed at that time; when calculating this figure any fractions should be rounded down.
17. If a Board member cannot participate in a discussion and/or voting on any matter as a result of a declaration of interest (see the Code of Conduct for Members of the Board) they will not count in the quorum for that item.
18. If a quorum is not available for the discussion of any matter(s) this will be recorded in the minutes and the decision made will be ratified at the next quorate meeting of the Board.
19. If a Board meeting becomes inquorate during the course of the meeting any decisions made will be ratified at the next quorate meeting of the Board. If those Members present at an inquorate meeting determine that a decision that falls to be taken by that meeting is of such significance that the decision should be taken by a quorum, that decision may be taken under the deferred decision provision at paragraphs 32 to 34 below.
20. All or any of the Board Members may, in exceptional cases, participate in a Board meeting by video conference, telephone or any communication technique that allows all persons participating in the meeting to hear each other. Board members participating in this manner will be deemed to be present at the meeting and shall be entitled to make decisions and to vote and be counted in the quorum.

21. Written comments on agenda items submitted by a Board member who is absent may be circulated to those Board Members that are present and read out at an appropriate point in the meeting. This provision does not apply to Members who are not permitted to participate in a matter as a result of the declaration of a conflict of interest.

## **Chair**

22. If present, the Chair will preside over all Board meetings.
23. In the absence of the Chair, whether this be temporarily on the grounds of a declared conflict of interest or otherwise, the Deputy will chair the meeting.
24. In the event that both the Chair and Deputy are absent and the Chair has not nominated a Board Member to chair the meeting, a Board Member, chosen from amongst those present, will chair the meeting. In the event that this is necessary the Board Secretary will seek a nomination for chair from amongst those present that Members must agree on.
25. It is the responsibility of the Chair or member presiding at the meeting to:-
- decide the order in which Board Members will speak, ensuring that adequate views are sought in order to make informed decisions
  - determine all matters of order, competency and relevancy
  - decide which matters are or are not out of order in terms of the meeting
  - determine whether a vote is required and how it is carried out in accordance with paragraphs 29 to 31 below
  - maintain order in the meeting
  - adjourn the meeting, if necessary, for whatever period of time they believe is appropriate.

## **Conflict of Interest**

26. All Board Members must comply with the procedure for conflicts of interest set out in the Code of Conduct for members of the Board at Annex C to the Governance Framework.

## Order of Business

27. The normal order of business at every meeting of the Board shall be:-
- (i) where the Chair and Deputy are both not present and the Chair has not nominated a Board Member to chair the meeting, to select a Member to chair the meeting
  - (ii) to receive any apologies for absence
  - (iii) to consider any declarations of interest
  - (iv) to receive, modify (if necessary) and approve as a true and accurate record the minutes of the previous Board meeting; once approved the minutes will be signed by the Chair
  - (v) to deal with any matters arising from the minutes of the previous Board meeting in the order in which they appear
  - (vi) to receive a report on any urgent decisions taken between meetings
  - (vii) to consider such business as is set out on the agenda for the meeting
  - (viii) to receive reports and recommendations from any Committee, Sub-Committee, Joint Committee or Joint Sub-Committee of the Board
  - (ix) to consider if the open board papers may be published
  - (x) to consider, at the discretion of the Chair, any items of other business
  - (xi) any matters presented to the Board for information only.
28. The order of business may be varied by resolution of the Board at the Chair's discretion.

## Voting

29. Decisions of the Board will normally be made by consensus rather than by formal vote. Failing consensus, decisions will be made by a vote when:-
- the Chair (or in the Chair's absence the Deputy or Member acting in that capacity) feels that there is a body of opinion amongst Board Members at the meeting that disagrees with a proposal or have expressed reservations about it and no clear consensus has emerged, or

- a Board Member who is present requests that a vote be taken and this is supported by at least one other Board Member, or
  - the Chair feels that a vote is appropriate
30. If a vote is taken, the number voting for, against and any abstentions shall be recorded in the minutes. The Chair will cast his/her vote at the same time as the Board. Voting shall normally take place by a show of hands or such other means of assent or dissent as the Chair deems appropriate.
31. In the event of an equality of votes, the Chair shall have a second and casting vote. The decision will be carried by a simple majority. The Chair's ruling as to the outcome of such a vote shall be final.

## **Deferral of Decision**

32. Any Board Member may propose to defer a decision on an agenda item in order that the Board can be provided with additional information to support the taking of that decision, or for any other reason. If this is agreed, the decision to defer the taking of the decision, together with the reason for doing so, will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting together with a proposed timescale for returning the matter to the Board for consideration.
33. A deferred decision may be taken through postal or e-mail correspondence outside of the Board meeting, where this is agreed in the meeting.
34. All deferred decisions taken between Board meetings will be reported on and reflected in the minutes of the Board meeting subsequent to the decision being taken.

## **Urgency**

35. During the course of Ofqual's business, matters may arise between scheduled Board meetings that require urgent Board approval or discussion and cannot be postponed until the next convened Board meeting. Where decisions that would ordinarily be taken at Board meetings have to be made on an urgent basis they may be taken by the Chair, in consultation with the Chief Executive. A decision taken under this provision will be reported at the next Board meeting together with an explanation of the reasons for urgency. The decision will be recorded in the minutes of the Board meeting to which it is reported.
36. If the Chair and the Chief Executive consider the urgent decision to be of a significant nature they will request the Board Secretary to arrange for the

matter to be decided or discussed via [electronic business-mail](#) or at an emergency Board meeting. The Board Secretary will be instructed to convene such a meeting.

37. In the case of a decision made by [electronic business-mail](#) in order for a recommendation to be approved:-
- a response must be received from at least 33% of the Board Members appointed at that time; when calculating this figure any fractions should be rounded down
  - a majority of the responses received must be in favour of the recommendation.

[The procedure for taking decisions by electronic business is at Appendix 1 to this document.](#)

38. If the Chair is unavailable then the views of the Deputy will be sought on the matters at paragraphs 35 and 36 above. Similarly, if the Chief Executive is unavailable then the views of the member of the Executive nominated as acting Chief Executive will be sought in their absence.

## **Governance and Records**

39. Any point of order alleging a breach of these procedure rules shall be heard immediately. The Chair's ruling on the point of order shall be final.
40. The Board Secretary or their representative will be present at meetings of the Board and any meetings of a Committee, Sub-Committee, Joint Committee or Joint Sub Committee of the Board to advise and record any decisions made. If the Board Secretary or their representative is not present no decision will be deemed to have been taken. The Chief Executive and/or the Chair will agree any representative of the Board Secretary.
41. The Board Secretary shall be responsible for ensuring that the minutes of the meeting, including a record of any resolution passed by the Board and any Committee, Sub-Committee, Joint Committee or Joint Sub Committee are retained. The Chair (or in the Chair's absence the Deputy or Board Member acting in this capacity) will be asked to agree the minutes before they are presented to the Board for approval at the next Board meeting; once approved the minutes will be signed by the Chair.
42. Once approved by the Board the open minutes will be published on the Ofqual website. Open papers will be published on the Ofqual website shortly after the

Board meeting at which they were considered. At the end of each meeting the Board will be asked to confirm that the open papers may be published; any material considered to be confidential will be redacted before publication.

## **Reserved Matters**

43. Those matters set out at Annex B to the governance framework are reserved to the Board for decision. This does not preclude other matters being referred to the Board for decision.
44. Where it is a matter of judgment as to whether a matter is reserved to the Board or not the Chair in consultation with the Chief Executive (or in the absence of the Chair the Deputy) will determine whether the matter is reserved to the Board and should be referred to the Board.

## **Code of Conduct**

45. Board Members will comply with the Code of Conduct set out at Annex C to the Governance Framework.

## **Application of Board Procedure Rules to Committees and Sub-Committees**

46. These rules, where they can be appropriately applied, apply to all meetings of the Board, its Committees, Sub-Committees, Joint Committees and Joint Sub-Committees. These rules of procedure will not apply where the specific rules of procedure for the Committee or Sub Committee already make provision for the activity to be undertaken and/or procedure to be followed at meetings of that Committee , Sub-Committee, Joint Committee or Joint Sub-Committee.

## Rules of procedure for meetings of the Board – Appendix 1

### Procedure for electronic business



The Board Secretary will manage the process for electronic business set out below:-

1. Papers will be produced for all items of electronic business clearly setting out the recommendations to the Board and options considered together with any supporting analysis necessary.
2. The Board Secretary will agree with the report author and the Chair a timeline for decision to be taken. This will include sufficient time for the Board to read the report, seek clarification on the issues raised and to confirm their decision on the recommendations in the report.
3. The Board Secretary will circulate the report to the Board electronically and set out the timeline at 2 above. Questions or points of clarification should be directed to the Board Secretary who will arrange for a response to be drafted and circulated to all Board members in line with the agreed timeline.
4. Board members should confirm their decision on the recommendations in the report by the deadline indicated in the timeline. Once this deadline has passed the Board Secretary will confirm to the Board and report author the decision of the Board.
5. In order for a recommendation to be approved:-
  - a response must be received from at least 33% of the Board Members appointed at that time; when calculating this figure any fractions should be rounded down
  - a majority of the responses received must be in favour of the recommendation.

[These voting arrangements are as set out at paragraph 37 of the Rules of procedure for meetings of the Board.]

# Ofqual Governance Framework – Annex B

## Matters Reserved to the Board



The following matters are reserved to the Board for decision.

### 1. Ofqual Policy

**Comment [at5]:** Wording adjusted to reflect the Board's strategic role

- 1.1 Approval of Ofqual's strategy and forward programme of work
- 1.2 Approval of major items of Ofqual policy that raise new issues of principle including:-
  - standards
  - regulation of National Curriculum and Early Years Foundation Stage Assessments
  - approach to investigations of significant failings
  - regulatory frameworks for qualifications and National Curriculum and EYFS Assessments
  - principles for the recognition of Awarding Organisations and ~~principles applied when accrediting accreditation of~~ qualifications
  - strategic approach to sanctions eg withdrawal of recognition, fee capping and fining
  - ~~the Taking Regulatory Action policy~~enforcement action
  - ~~economic~~ regulation strategy
- 1.3 Approval of the Ofqual communications strategy
- 1.4 approval of the strategy underpinning the general Conditions of Recognition and any significant change or amendment
- 1.5 matters of strategic importance that require public consultation and decisions arising from that consultation

1.6 Ofqual's strategic regulatory approach

## 2. Organisational Issues

2.1 Approval of the annual budget and any material changes to it

2.2 Approval of the annual report to Parliament

2.3 Approval of the annual report and accounts

2.4 Decisions to commence or defend significant litigation

~~2.5 Approval of the publication of any Ofqual consultation paper of strategic importance and major decisions following that consultation~~

**Comment [at6]:** This item replaced with the final bullet at 1.2

2.56 Approval of Ofqual's response to any significant external consultation of strategic importance to Ofqual

2.67 Approval of any delegation in accordance with Ofqual's governance framework and the variation or rescinding of any such delegation

## 3. Management Issues

3.1 Approval of major changes to Ofqual's structure

3.2 Determining the reward strategy for Ofqual

3.3 Approval and strategic monitoring of Ofqual's Health and Safety policies

3.4 Oversight of the capability/capacity of Ofqual to meet its statutory objectives.

3.5 General oversight of the discharge by the Executive of Ofqual's business

## 4. Contractual and Other Obligations with Third Parties

4.1 Approval of contracts in the ordinary course of business above £150,000.

- 4.2 Approval of any memorandum of understanding or formal agreements of strategic importance that Ofqual may enter into with a third party

## **5. Financial Reporting and Controls**

- 5.1 Review performance against Ofqual's strategy, objectives and budget and ensuring any corrective action is taken

## **6. Board Membership and other Appointments**

- 6.1 Appointment or removal of the Deputy if the Board determines that this appointment is necessary
- 6.2 Appointment to or removal from Board Committees including identification of the chair and the payment of such remuneration and allowances to any person who is a member of a Board Committee or Sub-Committee but who is not a Board Member or a member of Ofqual staff
- 6.3 Appointment to or removal from any Joint Committee established including the payment of such remuneration and allowances as it thinks fit to any person who is a member of a Joint Committee or Joint Sub-Committee but is not a Board Member or a member of Ofqual staff

## **7. Delegation of Authority**

- 7.1 Approval of terms of reference of Board Committees

## **8. Governance**

- 8.1 Undertaking regular reviews of the performance of the Board and Board Committees
- 8.2 Approval and review of the governance framework other than technical changes which may be signed off by the Chair
- 8.3 Approval and review of this schedule of matters reserved for Board decision

## **9. Statutory**

9.1 Anything that is by law reserved to the Board.

## Governance Framework – Annex C

### Code of Conduct for Members of the Board



#### Introduction

1. This document sets out a code of practice for Members of the Board (the Board). Board Members must observe the Code of Conduct whenever they conduct business of the Board or act as a representative of it. This document supplements the Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies published by the Cabinet Office that can be viewed at [http://resources.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/code-of-conduct\\_tcm6-38901.pdf](http://resources.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/code-of-conduct_tcm6-38901.pdf).

**Comment [at7]:** Adjusted to include reference to Cabine Office Code of Conduct

#### Public Service Values

2. The Board will in its activities and actions at all times:-
  - Observe the highest standards of propriety through impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to the stewardship of public funds and the strategic leadership of Ofqual,
  - Maximise value for money by ensuring that Ofqual's functions are delivered in the most economical, efficient and effective way, within available resources and with independent validation of performance where appropriate,
  - Be accountable to Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly for the activities of Ofqual, its stewardship of public funds and the extent to which key performance targets and objectives have been met, and
  - Carry out its functions transparently and to follow best practice
3. The Board endorses and abides by the principles of public life as set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Committee) as set out and reproduced at Appendix 1 to this Code of Conduct.

## Relationship with Government

4. Communications between the Board and Ministers/Parliament/Northern Ireland Assembly will normally be through the Chair and, as appropriate, the Chief Executive except where the Board has agreed that an individual Board member should act on its behalf. Nevertheless, individual Members have the right of access to Ministers on any matter which they believe raises important issues relating to their duties as a member of the Board. In such cases the agreement of the rest of the Board should normally be sought.
5. The main point of contact between Ofqual and the DfE, BIS, DELNI and any other Government department on day to day matters will normally be the Chief Executive or other member of staff authorised to act on behalf of Ofqual.

## The Role of the Chair

6. The Chair has particular responsibility for providing effective strategic leadership on matters such as:-
  - leading the Board in developing a strategy for discharging its statutory duties,
  - promoting the efficient and effective use of staff and other resources,
  - being an effective representative of Ofqual and its Board both internally and externally,
  - encouraging high standards of propriety,
  - ensuring that Board Members are aware of their duties, rights and responsibilities and that a Code of Practice for Board Members is in place,
  - providing for the induction, training, objectives and assessment of individual Board Members and succession planning for the Board as a whole
  - acting as a point of contact between Ofqual, Ministers, Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly
  - working continuously to improve the performance of the Board.
7. The Chair should ensure that the Board meets at regular intervals throughout the year, and that minutes of meetings accurately record decisions taken and, where appropriate, the views of individual Board Members.

## Corporate Responsibilities

8. Members of the Board have a duty to ensure that public funds are properly safeguarded and that at all times the organisation conducts its operations as economically, efficiently and effectively as possible with full regard to relevant statutory provisions.
9. Other important responsibilities of Board Members include:-
  - the discharge of Ofqual's duties under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 as amended by the Education Act 2011 and all other relevant legislation
  - ensuring that high standards of corporate governance are observed at all times (see Appendix 2 – Six Principles of Good Governance)
  - establishing the overall strategic direction for Ofqual
  - ensuring that the Board operates within the limits of its statutory authority and in accordance with conditions relating to the use of public funds
  - overseeing the delivery of planned results by monitoring performance against agreed strategic objectives and targets

## Responsibilities of Individual Board Members

10. Individual Board Members should also be aware of their wider responsibilities. These include the duty to comply at all times with this Code of Conduct (and any agreed modification to it) and with rules relating to the use of public funds; and to act in good faith and in the best interests of the organisation and its stakeholders. They should not use information gained in the course of their public service to promote their private interests. All Board Members should ensure that they comply with rules on the acceptance of gifts and hospitality set out at Appendix 3 to this code and for dealing with conflicts of interest at Appendix 4. Board Members, except where expressly agreed or provided for, should not disclose to outside parties any closed working papers of Ofqual and its meetings.
11. Although any legal proceedings initiated by a third party are likely to be brought against Ofqual as a corporate entity, in exceptional cases proceedings may be brought against the Chair or other individual Board Members. However, individual Board Members who act honestly, and in good faith and without negligence will not have to meet any personal civil liability (including

costs) which is incurred in execution or purported execution or their Board duties. The Government will indemnify Board Members against claims in these circumstances.

## **Accountability to Parliament**

12. Ofqual is responsible for providing Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly with such information as may be requested concerning its policy decisions and actions. The Chair and/or Chief Executive will aim to respond positively to any request to appear before an elected body. Appearance before Parliamentary Select Committees and Committees of the Northern Ireland Assembly is an essential element of demonstrating accountability.

## **Attendance at Conferences and Stakeholder Events**

13. All invitations to Board members to attend or speak at sector or stakeholder events should be referred to the Chief Executive or in his/her absence the Director of Policy and Engagement for advice. Care will be taken to ensure that there is appropriate Board representation at events and that Board Members are properly briefed in advance of attendance.

## **Exit Restrictions**

14. On termination of office Board Members will return all property belonging to Ofqual. The duty of confidentiality owed by Board Members continues to apply after they have left office.

## **Application of Code to Committees, Sub-Committees, Joint Committees and Joint Sub-Committees**

15. The rules set out in this code and its appendices, where they can be appropriately applied, apply to all members of Committees, Sub Committees, Joint Committees or Joint Sub-Committees of the Board who are not members of the Board.

## **Code of Conduct for Members of the Board – Appendix 1**

### **The Seven Principles of Public Life**



The principles of public life apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the civil service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, NDPBs, and in the health, education, social and care services. All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources. The principles also have application to all those in other sectors delivering public services.

#### **Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

#### **Integrity**

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

#### **Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

#### **Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

## **Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

## **Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful.

## **Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

## Code of Conduct for Members of the Board – Appendix 2

### Six Principles of Good Governance



1. Good governance means focussing on the organisation's purpose and on outcomes for citizens and service users
  - Being clear about the organisation's purpose and its intended outcomes for citizens and service users
  - Making sure that users receive a high quality service
  - Making sure that taxpayers receive value for money
2. Good governance means performing efficiently in clearly defined functions and roles
  - Being clear about the functions of the governing body
  - Being clear about the responsibilities of non-executives and the executive, and making sure those responsibilities are carried out
  - Being clear about relationships between governors and the public
3. Good governance means promoting values for the whole organisation and demonstrating the values of good governance through behaviour
  - Putting organisational values into practice
  - Individual governors behaving in ways that uphold and exemplify good governance
4. Good governance means taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risk
  - Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken
  - Having and using good quality information, advice and support
  - Making sure that an effective risk management system is in operation
5. Good governance means developing the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective

- Making sure that appointed and elected governors have the skills, knowledge and experience they need to perform well
  - Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance, as individuals and as a group
  - Striking a balance, in the membership of the governing body, between continuity and renewal
6. Good governance means engaging stakeholders and making accountability real
- Understanding formal and informal accountability relationships
  - Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with an accountability to the public
  - Taking an active and planned approach to responsibility to staff
  - Engaging effectively with institutional stakeholders

## Code of Conduct for Members of the Board – Appendix 3

### Procedure for the Acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality



1. Board Members are expected to observe a high standard of personal integrity. In all cases where a gift, reward or item of hospitality is offered, accepted or declined, Board Members must advise the Board Secretary in order that the matter may be included in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality. Hospitality accepted should be in the interests of Ofqual and help further its objectives.
2. The guiding principles governing the acceptance of gifts and hospitality are that:-
  - The conduct of Board Members should not foster suspicion of any conflict between their official duties and personal interests or advantage, and
  - Board Members should not accept a gift, reward or hospitality which would or might:-
    - appear to place them under any obligation to the giver
    - compromise their impartiality
    - be improper
    - be more frequent or regular than would be regarded as normal or reasonable, taking into account the nature and value of the item.
3. Any hospitality accepted should not be over-frequent or over-generous. Accepting hospitality frequently from the same organisation could lead to a perception that Ofqual is being influenced by the objectives of that organisation.
4. Any hospitality accepted should not appear lavish or disproportionate to the nature of the relationship Ofqual has with the provider. If the Board Member is in any doubt about the propriety of accepting a gift, reward or hospitality then it should be refused.

5. The principles set out above are not intended to stop Board Members from accepting for example:-
  - an isolated gift of a trivial nature such as a diary or calendar
  - the occasional meal during the course of an official visit
  - tickets to cultural or social events if attendance is justifiable in the interests of Ofqual, for example where Ofqual has membership of or is affiliated to another organisation and is invited to attend its annual dinner
6. A distinction should be made between items offered as hospitality and those offered in substitution of fees for speeches or lectures or other work carried out in an official capacity. Offers of this kind may be accepted where reasonable and proportionate; if a Board Member is in any doubt if such hospitality is reasonable and proportionate they should seek the guidance of the Chair and/or Board Secretary.
7. If a decision is made not to accept a gift, reward or item of hospitality this should be recorded in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.
8. Unsolicited gifts should normally be returned with a suitable letter of refusal explaining Ofqual's policy.
9. The Register of Gifts and Hospitality will be published on the Ofqual website.

## **Code of Conduct for Members of the Board – Appendix 4**

### **Rules for Dealing with Conflicts of Interest**



1. All Board Members must declare any personal or business interests which may conflict with their responsibilities as Members of the Board.

### **Register of Interests**

2. The Board Secretary shall maintain a Register of Board Members' disclosable interests which shall be a public document and shall be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it remains accurate and up to date. Extracts from the register will be published on Ofqual's website. The purpose of the register is to ensure transparency in relation to any interests of Board Members, or of their spouses, partners and dependent children, that have the potential, or might be perceived as having the potential, to give rise to a conflict of interest.
3. For each Board Member the register must contain details of any of the following held or carried by that Board Member, their partner and/or immediate family:-
  - employment details for the Board Member including directorships and membership of directing bodies
  - details of any contracts to which the Board member is party and which will result in remuneration or receipt of grant
  - names of any organisations in which the Board Member has a significant shareholding or other financial interest
  - details of any membership by the Board Member of a professional body, subject association or trade union
  - any other interests that the Board Member believes should be brought to the attention of Ofqual
4. It is the duty of each Board Member to declare to the Board Secretary any matter that is required to be included on the Register. If a Board Member is in doubt as to whether a particular matter should be declared, they should

declare it and the Board Secretary (in consultation with the Chair if appropriate) shall decide whether it should be included on the Register.

5. A Board Member shall make a declaration of interests for the purposes of the Register immediately on taking up appointment as a Board Member, and shall subsequently declare any new matter that is required to be included on the Register as soon as possible after it arises.
6. Board Members may be required at any time to confirm to the Board Secretary that their current entries on the Register are accurate and up to date and the Board Secretary will ask them to do so at least once in every year. Each Board member must sign a form to confirm the accuracy of their entry on the Register if requested to do so by the Board Secretary.

## **Declaration of Conflicts of Interest at Meetings of the Board**

7. Before any item is discussed at a Board Meeting each Board Member must disclose any conflict of interest that they believe may arise in relation to that item. If a Board Member is in any doubt as to whether a particular matter constitutes a conflict of interest that should be disclosed, they should disclose it.
8. The Chair (or in the absence of the Chair the Deputy or other Member acting in that capacity for the meeting in question) will decide if a matter disclosed by a Board Member amounts to a significant conflict of interest that would prevent that Board Member from participating in the discussion of the item under discussion. They may take advice from the Board Secretary and/or [Director of LegalLawyer](#) in deciding this.
9. Where the Chair (or in the absence of the Chair the Member acting in that capacity for the meeting in question) decides that any Board Member does has a conflict of interest and that interest is of such significance that the Member should not participate in the item under discussion that Member should withdraw from the meeting.

## Ofqual Governance Framework – Annex D

### Permanently Established ~~Committees of the~~ Board Committees

A horizontal row of 25 small black squares.

1. The Board has established five committees:-
  - Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
  - Standards Advisory Group
  - Finance Committee
  - Reform Committee
  - Vocational Advisory Group
2. The terms of reference for these Committees are appended to this document.

## Appendix 1 - Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

### Terms of Reference



1. The Board has established an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to support it in its responsibilities in terms of control, governance and risk management.

#### **Membership**

2. The Committee shall consist of up to four members appointed by the Board. One of the members shall be nominated by the Board to Chair the committee. The Committee may co-opt up to two external members who are independent of Ofqual's Board to fill any skills gaps.
3. Appointments are made for a period of up to three years or until the Member's appointment to the Board expires; whichever is the sooner. Appointments are renewable where appropriate.
4. The Chair of the Board will attend meetings on a 'by invitation' basis.
5. Alternates are not permitted.

#### **Role**

6. Promote the highest standards of propriety in the use of public funds by Ofqual, to be satisfied that arrangements are in place to encourage efficiency, effectiveness, proper accountability and value for money for the use of those funds
7. Advise the Board on anything that affects the financial health, probity or external reputation of the organisation.
8. Ensure the system of internal controls of Ofqual complies with HM Treasury requirements.
9. Ensure the internal systems within the organisation promote a climate of financial discipline and internal control which will help to reduce the opportunity for financial mismanagement, will satisfy the Board that it will

achieve its key objectives and targets and that the organisation is operating in a manner which will make most economic and effective use of resources available.

10. Ensure that the identification of key risks that threaten the achievement of Ofqual's objectives is carried out and that a register of these risks is maintained.
11. Ensure that Ofqual has a strategy in place to manage risk including the identification of appropriate risk owners and the monitoring of the satisfactory operation of that risk management strategy.
12. Satisfy itself that arrangements are in place to raise the awareness of risk generally across Ofqual.
13. Challenge and hold the Executive to account on aspects of the Committee's role set out above as appropriate.

## **Duties**

14. Review Ofqual's internal and external financial statements, reports and Annual Accounts ensuring they reflect best practice, comply with appropriate guidance and are produced in a timely manner.
15. Provide an independent opinion on the adequacy of risk management by:
  - commenting on proposals for implementation of risk management and expressing an opinion on their overall adequacy;
  - receiving reports concerning the effectiveness of controls in each area of major risk;
  - commenting annually on the effectiveness of risk management activity in the organisation on the basis of audit reports received and the internal audit annual report.
16. Review the nature and scope of external audit, consider external audit reports and management letters and ensure that the external auditor has the fullest co-operation of staff.
17. Consider and advise the Board on its annual and long-term Internal Audit programme and consider Internal Audit reports reviewing the effectiveness of Ofqual's internal control systems.

18. Agree any in year changes to the annual internal audit plan, if the timings of meetings do not permit this the Chair, or in their absence the Independent Member, should agree such changes with the decision reported to the Committee at its next meeting.
19. Recommend the appointment, fees and termination of employment of the Internal Audit service.
20. Make recommendations to the Board in order that it may be assured that internal controls of the organisation are fit for purpose, effective and give value for money.
21. Review the operation of Ofqual's codes of practice for Board members and staff including the Register of Interests and Hospitality and Whistleblowing Policies.
22. Consider any matters referred by the Board, the Principal Accounting Officer or the Head of the Internal Audit service (or a representative of any external provider of internal audit services).
23. Oversee policies on fraud/financial irregularity including any action taken under that policy.
24. Assess from time to time its own effectiveness and report its findings to the Board.

## **Access**

25. The Head of Internal Audit (or a representative of any external provider of internal audit services) and the representative of external audit will have free and confidential access to the Chair of the Audit Committee.

## **Meetings**

26. The Committee shall normally meet four times a year. The Chair of the Committee may call additional meetings as s/he deems necessary.
27. A quorum shall be considered to be two members of the Committee.
28. Meetings of the Committee will normally be attended by the Chief Executive (Accounting Officer), Director of Corporate and Business Services, Head of Financial Accounting, Head of Strategic Planning (Officer responsible for Risk) and the Board Secretary. Any other members of staff may be asked to attend meetings to assist it with its discussions on any particular matter.

29. A representative of the NAO and representatives of the Internal Audit service will normally be in attendance.
30. The Committee may ask any or all of those who normally attend but who are not members of the Audit Committee to withdraw to facilitate open and frank discussion of particular matters.
31. The Committee will be provided with the opportunity to meet with the internal and/or external auditors, without members of the Executive present to discuss any issues of concern or interest.

## **Reporting**

32. Minutes will be taken of each meeting of the Committee. The Committee will formally report back in writing, via its minutes, to the Principal Accounting Officer and the Board after each meeting. The Chair of the Committee will present the minutes to the Board. Meetings of the Committee will be scheduled to allow this reporting mechanism to be achieved effectively.
33. The Audit Committee will provide the Principal Accounting Officer and the Board with an Annual Report, timed to support finalisation of the Accounts and the Governance Statement, summarising its conclusions from the work it has carried out during the year.

## **Review**

34. These terms of reference form part of the Ofqual Governance Framework and will be reviewed each year when that framework is reviewed.

## Appendix 2 – Standards Advisory Group

### Terms of Reference



1. The Board has established a Standards Advisory Group to support its role in relation to qualification and assessment standards. This includes, but is not limited to, matters concerning comparability between regulated qualifications, international comparisons, validity, reliability, predictability and setting standards.

#### **Membership**

2. The Advisory Group shall consist of:-
  - Between two and five members of the Board
  - A pool of independent members (see paragraph 5)
3. One of the board members shall be nominated by the Board to chair the Advisory Group.
4. Appointments are made for a period of up to three years. In the case of board members the appointment is for three years or until the member's board term expires; whichever is the sooner. Appointments are renewable.
5. The independent members are generally appointed to the Advisory Group to bring particular expertise, and will usually be expected to attend only those meetings where their particular expertise is involved. A programme of themed meetings will be developed so that attendance by independent members may be planned.
6. Alternates are not permitted.

#### **Role**

7. The role of the Standards Advisory Group is to consider and advise the Ofqual Board on qualification and assessment standards issues.

## **Duties**

8. To consider an annual and longer term programme of work on standards proposed by the Director of Standards.
9. To consider regular updates on the work programme, including the work of the Standards and Research Technical Advisory Group.
10. Where possible to consider and advise on significant standards issues before they are considered by the Board
11. To review other standards issues at the request of the Board or the executive.

## **Meetings**

12. The Advisory Group shall meet at least 3 times a year. The Chair of the Advisory Group may call additional meetings as s/he deems necessary.
13. A quorum shall be considered to be two members, one of whom should be a member of the Ofqual Board.
14. Meetings of the Advisory Group will normally be attended by the Chief Executive, Director of Standards and Research, relevant senior members of the Standards and Research Directorate and the Board Secretary. Other members of staff may be asked to attend meetings as appropriate.
15. The Advisory Group may invite other individuals to attend meetings, for example to hear a particular stakeholder's point of view in a matter. The invitation may be for the entire meeting or for a specific item(s).
16. The Advisory Group may ask any or all of those who normally attend but who are not members of the Advisory Group to withdraw to facilitate open and frank discussion of particular matters.

## **Reporting**

17. Minutes will be taken of each meeting of the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group will normally report back in writing, via its minutes, to the Board after each meeting. The Chair of the Advisory Group will present the minutes to the Board. Meetings of the Advisory Group will be scheduled to allow this reporting mechanism to be achieved effectively.

## **Review**

18. These terms of reference form part of the Ofqual Governance Framework and will be reviewed each year when that framework is reviewed.

## Appendix 3 – Finance Committee

### Terms of Reference



1. The Board has established a Finance Committee to support it with its responsibilities in relation to Finance.

#### **Membership**

2. The Committee shall consist of up to four members appointed by the Board; members should not be a member of the Audit Committee. One of the members shall be nominated by the Board to Chair the committee.
3. Appointments are made for a period of up to three years or until the Member's appointment to the Board expires; whichever is the sooner. Appointments are renewable where appropriate.
4. Alternates are not permitted.

#### **Role**

5. The role of the Ofqual Finance Committee is to consider and advise the Board on finance issues (both capital and revenue).
6. The Committee is authorised by the Board to investigate any activity within its terms of reference. It is authorised to seek any information it requires from any committee of the Board, or directly from any Board Member or member of staff of Ofqual.

#### **Duties**

6. The duties of the Committee shall be to:
  - ensure the good and efficient management of Ofqual's assets and operations;
  - ensure that financial considerations are taken into account by the Board in reaching and implementing its decisions;

- check that appropriate advice is tendered to the Ofqual on matters of financial propriety and regularity and more broadly on effective, efficient and economical administration.
- advise and report to the Board on matters relating to finance and accounting;
- monitor and review the financial performance of Ofqual and its activities;
- to advise and report to the Board on matters relating to remuneration;
- consider and recommend the annual budget for Ofqual to the Board;
- reviewing cash flow forecasts;
- reviewing the organisation's longer term financial outlook beyond the immediate annual budget; and
- maintain a strategic overview of Ofqual's financial position.

## **Meetings**

7. The Committee shall meet at least 3 times a year. The Chair of the Committee may call additional meetings as s/he deems necessary.
8. A quorum shall be considered to be two members.
9. Meetings of the Committee will normally be attended by the Director of Corporate Services, the Head of Finance and the Board Secretary. Other members of Ofqual staff may be asked to attend meetings to assist it with its discussions on any particular matter.
10. The Committee may invite other individuals to attend meetings. The invitation may be for the entire meeting or for a specific item(s).
11. The Committee may ask any or all of those who normally attend but who are not members of the Committee to withdraw to facilitate open and frank discussion of particular matters.
12. The agenda and papers for meetings of the Committee will be circulated at least five clear working days in advance of the meeting. Papers may exceptionally be tabled at a committee meeting or circulated after the agenda with the permission of the Chair of the Committee.

## **Reporting**

13. Minutes will be taken of each meeting of the Committee. The Committee will normally report back in writing, via its minutes, to the Board after each meeting. The Chair of the Committee will present the minutes to the Board. Meetings of the Committee will be scheduled to allow this reporting mechanism to be achieved effectively.

## **Review**

14. These terms of reference form part of the Ofqual Governance Framework and will be reviewed each year when that framework is reviewed.

## Appendix 4 – Reform Committee

### Terms of Reference



1. The Board has established a Reform Committee (the “Committee”) to support it with its responsibilities in relation to qualification reform.

#### **Membership**

2. The Committee shall consist of up to five members appointed by the Board. One of the members shall be nominated by the Board to Chair the committee.
3. Appointments are made for a period of up to three years or until the Member’s appointment to the Board expires; whichever is the sooner. Appointments are renewable where appropriate.
4. Alternates are not permitted.

#### **Role**

5. The role of the Committee is to support and advise the Board and Executive on issues associated with Ofqual’s reform programme and take decisions delegated to it by the Board.

#### **Duties**

6. The duties of the Committee shall be to:
  - provide advice on emerging reform policy prior to its consideration by the Board;
  - take urgent decisions related to qualifications reform that would ordinarily fall to the Board and which cannot reasonably be postponed until the next scheduled Board meeting; and
  - take any decisions specifically delegated to the Committee by the Board and consider any issues requested by the Board;
7. The Committee may resolve to refer a decision to be taken by it back to the Board for decision by the Board.

8. Decisions on whether a matter should be considered by the Board or the Committee are to be taken by the Chair and Chief Regulator in consultation.
9. Where possible, there should be prior discussion of the matter under decision at the Board.

## **Meetings**

10. Meetings of the Committee shall be called as required.
11. A quorum shall be two members, one of whom should be an ordinary member of the Board.
12. Meetings of the Committee will normally be attended by the Director of the Reform Programme, Director of Strategic Reform and the Board Secretary. Other members of Ofqual staff may be asked to attend meetings to assist it with its discussions on any particular matter.
13. The Committee may invite other individuals to attend meetings. The invitation may be for the entire meeting or for a specific item(s).
14. The Committee may ask any or all of those who normally attend but who are not members of the Committee to withdraw to facilitate open and frank discussion of particular matters.
15. Where possible the Board will be advised in advance at its routine meetings of matters to be considered by the Committee.
16. A log of delegations to the Committee from the Board and actions against them will be maintained by the Board Secretary and presented to the Board from time to time for review.

## **Reporting**

17. Minutes will be taken of each meeting of the Committee. The Committee will normally report back in writing, via its minutes, to the Board after each meeting. The Chair of the Committee will present the minutes to the Board.

## **Review**

18. These terms of reference form part of the Ofqual Governance Framework and will be reviewed each year when that framework is reviewed.

## Appendix 5 – Vocational Advisory Group

### Terms of Reference



1. The Board has established an Advisory Group to support its role in relation to vocational qualifications and assessment. This includes, but is not limited to, matters concerning, appropriate forms of assessment, comparability between regulated qualifications, international comparisons, validity, reliability, predictability and setting standards in vocational assessment.

#### Membership

2. The Advisory Group shall consist of:-
  - Up to six members of the Board
  - A pool of independent members (see paragraph 5)
3. One of the board members shall be nominated by the Board to chair the Advisory Group.
4. Appointments are made for a period of up to three years. In the case of board members the appointment is for three years or until the member's board term expires; whichever is the sooner. Appointments are renewable.
5. The independent members are generally appointed to the Advisory Group to bring particular expertise, and will usually be expected to attend only those meetings where their particular expertise is involved. A programme of themed meetings will be developed so that attendance by independent members may be planned.
6. A panel of representatives from awarding organisations will be established to provide specific advice and support to the group when necessary. These representatives will not be members of the advisory group.
7. Alternates are not permitted.

#### Role

8. The role of the Vocational Advisory Group is to consider and advise the Ofqual Board on qualification and assessment standards issues.

## **Duties**

9. To consider an annual and longer term programme of work on vocational qualifications and assessment by the Director of Regulation.
10. To support and advise Ofqual in its work on Vocational Qualification reform.
11. Where possible to consider and advise on significant vocational assessment issues before they are considered by the Board.
12. To review other vocational assessment issues at the request of the Board or the executive.

## **Meetings**

13. The Advisory Group shall meet as necessary.
14. A quorum shall be considered to be two members, one of whom should be a member of the Ofqual Board.
14. Meetings of the Advisory Group will normally be attended by the Director of Regulation, relevant senior members of Ofqual staff and the Board Secretary. Other members of staff may be asked to attend meetings as appropriate.
15. The Advisory Group may invite other individuals to attend meetings, for example to hear a particular stakeholder's point of view in a matter. The invitation may be for the entire meeting or for a specific item(s).
16. The Advisory Group may ask any or all of those who normally attend but who are not members of the Advisory Group to withdraw to facilitate open and frank discussion of particular matters.

## **Reporting**

17. Minutes will be taken of each meeting of the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group will normally report back in writing, via its minutes, to the Board after each meeting. The Chair of the Advisory Group will present the minutes to the Board. Meetings of the Advisory Group will be scheduled to allow this reporting mechanism to be achieved effectively.

## **Review**

18. These terms of reference form part of the Ofqual Governance Framework and will be reviewed each year when that framework is reviewed.

## Ofqual Governance Framework – Annex E

### Scheme of Delegation



1. The Scheme of Delegation (set out below) is a schedule setting out various powers of authority by post holder. The principles of the Scheme of Delegation is as follows:
  - a. No financial or approval powers can be delegated to an officer in excess of the powers invested in the delegating officer
  - b. Powers may only be delegated to officers within the organisational control of the delegating officer
  - c. All delegated powers must remain within the financial and approval limits set out in the Schemes of Delegation
  - d. All powers of delegation must be provided in writing, duly authorised by the delegating officer. Any variations to such delegated powers must also be in writing.
  - e. All applications for short term powers of delegation, such as holiday cover, which are not intended to be permanent must be provided in writing by the delegating officer, prior to the period for which approval is sought
  - f. Any officer wishing to approve a transaction outside their written delegated powers must in all cases refer the matter to the relevant line manager with adequate written powers, before any financial commitments are made in respect of the transaction
  - g. A power is delegated on condition that it cannot be further delegated. Where this is not the case, the extent of the authority to delegate onwards must be stated in writing by the initial delegator, and details also provided in writing to Head of Finance.

	<b>Reserved to Board</b>	<b>CEO</b>	<b>Directors</b>	<b>Delegated Manager Level 2</b>	<b>Delegated Manager Level 1</b>
Authorising and signing contracts/variations/extensions/contract requisition forms within budget/Corporate Plan/Additional remit					
Contracts	Over £250k	Up to £250k	Up to £100k	Up to £50k	Up to £10k
<b>Contract Values and Procurement route</b>					
<b>Full OJEU Process Where Applicable</b>	<b>In line with above Authorisation Levels</b>		<b>3 Quotes – Authorised by Delegated Manager</b>	<b>Authorisation by Delegated Manager</b>	
Over £113K	Over £10k Full Tender Process		Up to £10k	Up to £2K	
<p>All contracts, contract variations or extensions and consultants agreements/ contracts must be approved in writing by Procurement before signing, and signed copies must be retained by Procurement.</p> <p>Contract variations and extensions must follow the Scheme of Delegation.</p> <p>Low Risk Projects - for non-core, low risk, non-commercial or politically sensitive projects: Variations/extensions must be signed off in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation <u>for the value of that variation/extension.</u></p> <p>High Risk Projects – for core, high risk, commercial or politically sensitive projects: Variations/extensions must be signed off in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation <u>for the aggregate value of the contract including the value of the variation/extension.</u></p> <p>Letters of termination must be authorised by a Director or above.</p> <p>Non-disclosure Agreements / Confidentiality Undertakings must be authorised by a Band F Manager or above.</p>					

# Ofqual Governance Framework – Annex F

## Whistleblowing Policy

**Comment [at8]:** This policy to be reviewed with staff groups and moved into the suite of HR policies to make it more accessible to staff. This matter discussed at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.



### Introduction

1. ~~Ofqual takes malpractice seriously and encourages people to speak out if they are aware of any actual or potential malpractice within the organisation. Ofqual is committed to creating an open culture, where concerns can be raised without fear of reprisals.~~
2. ~~A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern in good faith relating to any of the areas detailed in paragraph 8 and 9 below. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of Ofqual's activities you should report it under this policy.~~
3. ~~The whistleblowing policy exists to help individuals raise concerns over any wrongdoing within Ofqual relating to unlawful conduct, financial malpractice, or dangers to the public or the environment. It does not apply where staff are aggrieved about their own personal position – in such instances Ofqual's grievance procedure applies. (Details and advice on this are available from the intranet or from Human Resources.) The whistleblowing policy is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of the organisation itself are at risk.~~
4. ~~The whistleblowing policy is intended to encourage and enable individuals to raise serious concerns within Ofqual rather than overlook a problem. The policy also outlines how individuals may properly raise concerns outside Ofqual.~~
5. ~~All Ofqual staff may use this Code including permanent and temporary employees. It also covers agency workers and employees seconded to a third party. Any concerns relating to the third party, if relevant to the employee's secondment, can also be raised under this Code. Ofqual is committed to Equality and Diversity and will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of any member of Ofqual staff regardless of their gender, disability, race, age, sexual orientation, religious belief or gender reassignment.~~
6. ~~Contractors working for Ofqual may also use the provisions of this Policy to make Ofqual aware of any concerns that the contractor's employees may have with regard to contractual or other arrangements with Ofqual. The private concerns of the contractor relating to non-~~

~~Ofqual business should be raised with the relevant contractor and/or other suitable agency/regulator – including the police, if appropriate.~~

## **Policy Statement**

- ~~7. — Ofqual is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity, and accountability and will take action to address improper practices. As part of this commitment, Ofqual is determined to follow best practice on whistleblowing and:~~
- ~~• provide opportunities for individuals to raise concerns outside of their line management structure;~~
  - ~~• ensure that any individuals who come forward with concerns, raised in good faith, are not discriminated against or victimised even if they turn out to be mistaken;~~
  - ~~• ensure that concerns are treated in confidence and make every effort not to reveal the identity of the whistleblower. (Ofqual cannot give a complete assurance that an individual's identity would not be revealed — see paragraphs 22 and 23 below.);~~
  - ~~• investigate all concerns, ensure individuals receive a response to their concerns, and take all possible action against wrongdoers; and~~
  - ~~• take action against anyone found to have made a false allegation maliciously.~~
- ~~8. — The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 sets out the categories where the statutory whistleblowing protection applies. These are:~~
- ~~• a criminal offence;~~
  - ~~• a failure to comply with a statutory or legal duty (e.g. Data Protection Act etc.);~~
  - ~~• a miscarriage of justice;~~
  - ~~• endangering of an individual's health and safety;~~
  - ~~• damage to the environment;~~
  - ~~• deliberate concealment of any of the above.~~
- ~~9. — In addition, Ofqual will provide similar protection to any employee or worker "blowing the whistle" on any issue deemed to be a breach of the Ofqual Staff Code of Conduct. The overriding concern should be that it would be in the public interest for malpractice to be corrected and, if appropriate, sanctions applied. The policy is subject to any relevant legislation and specifically will operate within the requirements of the Data Protection Act.~~

## **How to Raise a Concern**

- ~~10. — The Public Interest Disclosure Act encourages individuals to raise their concern with their employer, staff are encouraged to discuss any~~

concerns with their immediate line manager wherever possible. If staff do not feel confident raising a concern with their manager they may contact:-

————— Natalie Prosser  
————— Head of Legal  
————— Ofqual  
————— Spring Place  
————— e-mail : [natalie.prosser@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:natalie.prosser@ofqual.gov.uk)  
————— telephone : 024 7671 6702

————— Maggie Galliers  
————— Ofqual Board Member  
————— e-mail : [maggie@galliers.net](mailto:maggie@galliers.net)

————— Alison Townsend  
————— Governance Officer  
————— Ofqual  
————— Spring Place  
————— e-mail : [alison.townsend@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:alison.townsend@ofqual.gov.uk)  
————— telephone : 024 7671 6726

Any of the above will provide advice on how to take the issue forward and will ensure that the relevant key contact is notified that a whistleblowing concern exists. If you are uncertain whether something falls within the scope of this policy you can seek advice from the above who will discuss this with you in confidence.

————— The independent charity Public Concern at Work also gives free confidential advice at any stage about how to raise a concern about serious malpractice at work. Public Concern at Work may be contacted on 020 3117 2520 / 020 7404 6609 between 9 am and 6 pm, Monday to Friday or by email at [helpline@pcaw.co.uk](mailto:helpline@pcaw.co.uk)

11. ——— Whilst individuals can raise concerns verbally, it is often better to put them in writing though any method of communication is acceptable. When raising a concern background information on the history of the concern will need to be provided giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason for the particular concern in order to allow any points raised to be clarified. If an allegation is received anonymously, it may restrict what action Ofqual is able to take. The earlier concerns are raised; the easier it will be to take action.

12. ——— Trade Union representatives may support an employee raising an issue of concern throughout the process.

## How Ofqual will Respond

13. Any concern raised either in writing or verbally under the whistleblowing policy, will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days. The acknowledgement will:-
  - Acknowledge that the concern has been received;
  - Summarise the details of the concern; and
  - Identify how the matter is being dealt with.
14. The action taken will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may be:
  - investigated internally by an appropriately skilled and experienced employee, knowledgeable in the area concerned e.g. Lawyer, Internal Audit, HR, Chief Executive, Manager;
  - referred to the Police;
  - referred to the Health and Safety Executive
  - referred to the External Auditor;
  - the subject of an independent enquiry.
15. In order to protect individuals and Ofqual, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for further investigation.
16. The amount of contact between the officer(s) considering the issues and the employee reporting the concern will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided.
17. When any meeting is arranged, individuals will have the right, if desired, to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague. The meeting can be arranged away from the normal place of work, if requested.
18. Steps will be taken to minimise any difficulties which individuals may experience as a result of raising a concern and provide any appropriate support. For instance, if the individual is required to give evidence in disciplinary or criminal proceedings, Ofqual will provide advice about the procedure.
19. Ofqual accepts that individuals raising a concern need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed and will notify them when the whistleblowing policy process has been completed. This will normally be within 20 working days of a concern being raised. In addition, details will be given on what action has been taken to correct

~~working practices, which have been found to be at fault by the investigation.~~

## **Safeguards**

- ~~20. Ofqual recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the alleged malpractice.~~
- ~~21. Ofqual will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of any staff regardless of their gender, disability, race, age, sexual orientation, religious belief or gender reassignment and will take action to protect individuals wherever possible provided that:~~
- ~~• The concerns are raised in good faith;~~
  - ~~• The information provided is believed to be true, even if the allegation is not subsequently confirmed by the investigation;~~
  - ~~• Allegations are not made for personal gain.~~
- ~~22. Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality as far as is reasonably practical. Individuals should be aware that actions taken as a result of their report may lead to their identity being revealed, either by inference or as a result of disciplinary or legal proceedings. If this should happen, Ofqual will not tolerate any individual being harassed or victimised in any way.~~
- ~~23. Support will be provided to help overcome any difficulties experienced as a result of raising a concern. During the investigation, any meetings with the individual raising the concern can be arranged away from their place of work and they will have the opportunity to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague, if they wish. If the individual is required to present evidence as a witness, arrangements will be made to provide them with support through the process. Access to counselling and support is available to all employees.~~
- ~~24. Every effort will be made to keep the individual reporting the matter of concern informed. However, the information provided will be determined by the nature of the investigation and whilst safeguarding the rights of other individuals involved in the process.~~

## **Malicious Allegations**

- ~~25. Ofqual will take action against any individual found to have made a malicious or vexatious allegation. For an employee, this could result in disciplinary proceedings.~~

## **Raising Concerns Outside of Ofqual**

27. This policy is intended to provide employees with an avenue to raise concerns within Ofqual. If an employee instead takes the matter outside of the organisation, they should ensure that they do not disclose confidential information. Employees should also check that they do not contravene the Public Interest Disclosure Act as this does not provide blanket protection and only allows individuals to disclose matters to their employer or specified bodies. Any breach of the Act could lead to disciplinary action.

28. If an individual wishes to raise a concern outside Ofqual or feels that Ofqual has not handled their concern appropriately, the following possible contact points may be relevant—

- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- Trade Union/Professional Association
- Your solicitor
- The Police
- The Health and Safety Executive

29. Whilst we cannot always guarantee the outcome you are seeking, we will try to deal with your concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy you can help us to achieve this.

30. If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled, you can raise it with the other contact in paragraph 10. Alternatively you may contact the Chair of Ofqual or our external auditors:-

\_\_\_\_\_ Amanda Spielman  
\_\_\_\_\_ Chair  
\_\_\_\_\_ Ofqual  
\_\_\_\_\_ Spring Place  
\_\_\_\_\_ [amanda.spielman@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.spielman@ofqual.gov.uk)  
\_\_\_\_\_ 024 7671 6741

## **Monitoring/Review**

31. Monitoring and review of the Ofqual Whistleblowing Policy will be undertaken by Ofqual's Audit and Risk Committee on an annual basis in line with their Terms of Reference.

ANNEX B – Executive Level Governance Arrangements

Executive Governance

