

Fifty second meeting of the Ofqual Board

**Public minutes of the meeting held at 10:00 on
Wednesday 20 May 2015 at Ofqual, Spring Place, Coventry**

Present: Board Members

Philip Fletcher
Maggie Galliers
Anne Heal
Dana Ross-Wawrzynski
Amanda Spielman (Chair)
Terri Scott
Glenys Stacey (for all items below except 11/15)
Roger Taylor
Tom Taylor (for items 1/15 to 11/15 only)

Ofqual

Jeremy Benson Executive Director for Vocational Qualifications
Beth Black Research Fellow (for items 8 to 10/15 below only)
Michael Hanton Executive Manager to CEO (for items 1 to 4/15 below only)
Michelle Meadows Executive Director for Strategy, Risk & Research
Dennis Opposs Standards Chair (for item 8/15 below only)
Natalie Prosser Director of Legal
Ian Stockford Acting Executive Director for General Qualifications
Alison Townsend Board Secretariat Manager

1/15 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Tim Balcon, Mike Cresswell, Barnaby Lenon, Neil Watts and Julius Weinberg.

2/15 Declarations of Interest

Philip Fletcher declared an interest in the matter the subject of item 7/15 below (part) headed 'General Qualifications Update' insofar as it related to the GCSE Religious Studies subject content. Philip was a member of the Church of England Archbishop's Council. The Church of England had contributed to the development of the Religious Studies subject content. The interest was

not regarded as significant and he remained in the meeting during the consideration of this matter.

3/15 **Minutes**

The Board agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 25 March 2015 as a true record subject to minor adjustment.

Matters Arising

The Board considered and noted a paper on matters arising from previous meetings:-

11/12, 16 May 2012 – the report to the Northern Ireland Assembly was being drafted and a target date for its submission would be set. The Board asked that an outline of the next annual report to Parliament be presented to the September Board meeting.

70/14, 3 December 2014 – the trial into the conduct, marking and grading of spoken language skills in GCSE English Language had been completed and final recommendations made to the Chief Regulator who had approved them. A further update and recommendation on part of this work is included at item 7/15 on the agenda for this meeting. The Board questioned how the speaking listening grades would be made visible; this would be discussed with exam boards and JCQ.

91/14, 28 January 2015 – the consultation on proposals for a new qualifications framework and post-QCF conditions and guidance had started on 25 March 2015 and would close on 17 June 2015.

92/14, 28 January 2015 – the consultation on the new criteria and changes to the conditions associated with raising the participation age that would support the decisions on Guided Learning Hours had started on 25 March 2015 and would close on 17 June 2015.

103/14, 27 February 2015 – the contract with NFER for the National Reference Tests had been signed on 17 April 2015.

111/14, 25 March 2015 – the corporate plan had been finalised and was published on 30 March 2015.

111/14, 25 March 2015 – the regulatory burden statement had been finalised and was published on 30 March 2015.

111/14, 25 March 2015 – the regulatory strategy statement had been signed off and was published on 30 March 2015.

111/14, 25 March 2015 – the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee had reviewed the process to identify strategic issues and had been reassured by the process presented.

112/14, 25 March 2015 – the decision on the award of the contract for the replacement regulatory IT system had been taken by a board sub group by electronic business. The decision had been confirmed on 2 April 2015.

115/14, 25 March 2015 – the consultation on resit arrangements for outgoing GCSE, AS and A level specifications was being drafted and was planned to start towards the end of May 2015.

116/15, 25 March 2015 – the development of the consultation on changes to the regulation of National Assessments was on hold.

All other matters arising were picked up on the agenda.

4/15 **Chief Executive's Report**

The Board considered and noted an update paper on key issues for the Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive reported that the new team level structures had been successfully implemented earlier that week. The Board noted that the organisation was carrying a large number of vacancies and was updated on the process to recruit to these in line with the civil service recruitment rules. The Executive were conscious of the need to lead the organisation to deliver the corporate plan objectives.

The Board received an update on the findings of the GCSE Maths research project and actions to be taken by exam boards and noted that the report on this work was due to be published the following day.

5/15 **Chief Operating Officer's Report**

The Board considered and noted an update paper on operational matters. The Board went on to discuss the work to prepare Ofqual's CSR submission and noted the principles that underpinned the modelling and the potential implications. The Board enquired about the timing of the submission and it was agreed that, if a decision on this was needed before the next Board meeting, a teleconference would be called.

The Board went on to discuss the report and the issues raised in it including:-

- the level of staff turnover and the reasons people were choosing to leave the organisation;
- the move to more flexible working. The Board was concerned that the systems in place to support this, particularly IT, should not place disproportionate support costs on the organisation;
- the background to recent requests from awarding organisations to surrender part of their scope of recognition. The Board heard that the requests had been triggered by the removal of the QCF and that the effect of the changes had been to rationalise the recognition of organisations that had been recognised to offer more qualifications than they wanted to. The

Board noted that the changes did not affect the range of qualifications available in the market; and

- how Ofqual could use the data from the complaints handling process more effectively.

Finance

The Board received an update on the process to draw up the 2014/15 accounts and noted that the outturn was close to budget. Because of this the year end audit from the NAO would particularly focus on checking that all obligations had been captured correctly and the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee reported that the Committee had discussed this matter at its meeting the previous day. The Board noted that a breach of delegated spend, no matter how small, would lead to the automatic qualification of the accounts.

The Board went on to discuss the development of Ofqual's submission for emergency budget in July and the strategy for this. The Board noted the long term scenarios being considered including alternative options for funding Ofqual and that Ofqual's legislation currently prohibited charging for services.

9/15 **Strategy, Risk and Research Update**

The Board considered a paper that provided an update on current activities within the Strategy, Risk and Research Directorate. The Board received an overview of key issues including:-

- the GCSE Maths research work that was due to be published the following day;
- a joint symposium with Oxford University on Teacher Ethics in Assessment that had taken place in March 2015;
- work to support the development of Ofqual's new regulatory strategy particularly the principle of regulating for validity. This work had included the development of a new definition of validity and related technical terms;
- collaborative work with the University of Oxford to investigate the impact of qualification structures on teaching and learning;
- work to collect metrics on the quality of GCSE and A level assessments; and
- work to monitor the marketing activities of exam boards.

The Board discussed the teacher ethics symposium and the follow up work that was taking place. The Board noted the limit of Ofqual's remit in this area and that it was hoped that other organisations would take this work forward; work was under way to try to encourage this.

11/15 **Report on the work of board committees**

The Board considered and noted a paper that provided an update on the work of the Reform Committee, Finance Committee and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee that had all met since the last board meeting. The Committee Chairs gave a short verbal update on the matters considered at each meeting.

12/15 **Publication of Papers**

The Board agreed, that those papers indicated as open should be published with the exception of some minor redactions agreed during the meeting and review of paper 8/15 prior to publication.

13/15 **Other Business**

There was no other business.

14/15 **Date of Next Meeting**

The next Board meeting would be on Wednesday 29 July 2015.