

## **CCEA**

Minutes of a Special Council meeting held via MS Teams on Wednesday 10 June 2020 at 2.30 pm.

**Present:**

Mr T Carson (Chair)	Mr RJ Thompson
Ms P Slevin	Dr L Caul
Mr B Wilson	Mr C McKinney
Dr A Kerr	Mrs M Kinghan
Mrs K O'Hare	Mrs P Leitch
Mrs S Kirk	Mrs C Fitzsimons

Mr J Edwards (Chief Executive)  
Mrs L Scott (Director Finance & Corporate Services)  
Miss M Farragher (Director of Education)  
Mrs S King (Head of Regulation)  
Mrs E Martin (Business Manager, Curriculum & Assessment)  
  
Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

### **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Ms Rose Byrne, and Mrs Christine Harpur.

### **Chair's Business**

None identified

### **Main Business**

#### **Chief Executive's COVID-19 Situation Report**

##### **Corporate**

###### *Estates*

The Chief Executive confirmed that all appropriate checks have been completed for the Mallusk site, and staff have returned. Final checks are taking place on the Clarendon site together with a cleaning schedule to ensure the building is maintained in operational state for staff return.

###### *Business Planning*

The Chief Executive advised that the teams were re-working the CCEA business plan.

##### **Awarding**

The Chief Executive advised that 100% of centre assessment grades had been submitted (as of 5.30 pm, Friday 5 June 2020). He wished to place on record his thanks to all teachers and centres who were involved for their commitment to the process.

GCSE closes on 12 June, with 96% submissions to date.

The statistical modelling process is being finalised.

The Chief Executive reported that all targets have been met at this point in time.

*Private Candidates* : The Chief Executive advised on a small number of issues that are being resolved with centres by the team. These would be closed out as quickly as possible, however progress would need to be monitored through to conclusion of the awarding process.

## **Regulation**

The Head of Regulation continues to work through the statistical model checks with statisticians. At this time no issues of concern have been raised, with minor corrections and adjustments required.

Guidance for Vocational Qualifications has been issued. A request from the colleges to move the submission date for adaptive assessment, particularly for those in the industrial trade, has been facilitated and the issue resolved.

The Chief Executive noted that there had been a 40% decline in enrolment for FE colleges, this will effect entries for CCEA qualifications and potentially create qualification market instabilities. He confirmed that CCEA would maintain a watching brief and report back as appropriate.

A Council member sought clarification on whether there could be double entries in FE in next academic year. The Chief Executive that this could be the case, however the primary concern was that some Awarding Organisations had not been permitting adaptation beyond July, although regulatory action had resolved this.

The Chief Executive understood that DfE were considering alterations to the Apprenticeships programme to facilitate simulated experiences. He also advised that policy changes in regards to HE places would have a bearing in anticipation of grades and resits.

## **Curriculum & Assessment**

### *Assessment*

No further information was available on arrangements for statutory assessment for 2021.

### *Curriculum Support*

The Chief Executive advised that discussions were being held through DE's Restart Project on the implications for curriculum support. A Project Board, with Terms of Reference had been established, however this was in the early stages. More detail would become available over the next few weeks.

## **Communications**

The Chief Executive advised that there had been media interest on the Issue of Results and confirmed DE were responding to this request. No new issues to report in regards to the assessment arrangements for summer 2020, with a small but rising amount of enquiries for 2021.

CCEA has begun engagement with Principals on the component parts of DE's Restart Programme. Following closure of the GCSE centre assessed grades, CCEA will advise on what happens next, and outline plans for the next academic year. Clarity is still required on a range of matters including, final start date for schools and the arrangements for the adhering to the health restrictions.

A Council member sought and received clarification that the Minister for Education was ultimately responsible for making the decisions on how education will re-start in Northern Ireland, however CCEA, as an advisory body, is responsible for providing advice on request.

The Chief Executive advised that digital arrangements were in place to deliver the examination results into schools so they can be distributed to candidates. Advice will be available for schools on how to support their learners through this. Risk assessments are now under consideration on how to prepare school halls for the November examinations series – once permission is granted.

A Council member asked for clarity in regards to centres being permitted to post results electronically in advance of issue of deadlines by JCQ. The Chief Executive advised that he would progress the issue of flexibility with the team and amend the guidance as appropriate.

## **Regulation**

### *Update – Appeals Consultation*

The Head of Regulation advised that the appeals document was currently under review by the legal team to ensure it is sufficiently robust should it be subject to challenge. She advised that the document would be finalised on 11 June and following legal approval, would be issued to centres. A Council member suggested that the information be issued on Monday 15 June 2020. This was agreed.

The Chair wished to place on record his thanks to the Head of Regulation for the work completed on the consultation, and also to the legal team for the provision of expertise and advice.

## **Education**

### **Response to Departmental Letter Requesting Advice – Qualifications Restart      CB/10June/01**

The Chief Executive apologised for the late issue of the paper, however this was unavoidable given the range of matters currently being addressed. He drew attention to the presentation provided, and advised that both had been prepared, in response to the letter received from F Graham in regards to the provision of advice on General Qualifications arrangements for 2020/21.

The presentation outlined :

- Restart 'Now' – for teaching from September 2020 – deliverables in next 12 months – within existing commitments.
- Restart 'Future – for financial year 2021-2024 – lessons learned and mitigation of future scenarios, to include specifications in a new policy context through a 3 year programme.
- CCEA's 2020-2021 Approach to 'Restart Now' through a 5 stage plan.
- CCEA's scope for Restart – to include advice to and direction from DE; and policy dependencies.
- The 5 principles of Qualifications Restart.
- Health Restrictions impact.
- Scenario Forecast for Restart Now : possible scenarios (1-5) with likelihood and impact (ratings from low to high).
- Guided learning impact and overall potential impact.
- What changes could be made to specifications.
- Questions for DE – points of direction.
- Restart 'Long term'.

The Chief Executive recognised that schools require clarity, however the main responsibilities at present (given there is only a 5 week timeframe) will be delivering the summer 2020 outcomes and overarching plans for qualifications delivery for 2021. He stated that a considerable amount of work was required within the timeframe to achieve both objectives

Longer term future of qualifications will also need to be considered in the light of lessons learned following completion of the current arrangements (including centre assessed grades).

The Chief Executive advised that in Stage 1 - concepts were currently being discussed with principals groups to look at different scenarios. Engagement will begin with NAHT and subject advisory groups. Over the coming weeks the proposals will be finalised and come forward to Council for consideration. He confirmed that GCoR and technical issues will also require review. There may also a requirement to conduct a consultation towards the end of June/beginning of July (unless otherwise directed by the Minister, which would require DE consultation).

He outlined the range of challenges that could be faced, including potential challenge on the basis of breach of promise (in some instances candidates have completed learning units or components).

He confirmed that DE's expectation was a broad range of views from CCEA and drew attention to those areas which fall within CCEA's powers of authority. He assured members that CCEA would advise on policy within its remit, however decisions may be required from DE to allow work to be progressed in other areas.

He reminded members of the four principles used to assess the options for summer 2020 awarding and confirmed these remained valid, with the addition of a fifth (realising potential):

- **Fairness:** Ensure that candidates receive fair results that enable judgements to be made about progression to further or higher education, employment or other avenues;
- **Reduced Burden:** Balance the inherent delivery risks with the opportunities afforded by other arrangements, particularly in consideration of the burden on resources
- **Impact Limitation:** Limit the impact, as far as possible, to the summer 2020 cohorts, to avoid knock-on effects on future examinations and qualifications arrangements; and
- **Minimised Uncertainty:** Minimise uncertainty for candidates and school leaders, maintaining their confidence in the system.
- **Realising potential:** Enable candidates to progress their education, in as far as is possible, and recognising the importance of knowledge, understanding and skills.

The first communication will be to outline what CCEA can do and what direction is required to put this in place. The Chief Executive stated that clarity was required on the whole situation, the level of investment required to ensure CCEA strike the correct balance on standards and support to negate any challenges in regards to maintenance of standards.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for his detailed presentation.

### *Discussion*

Members sought and received clarification on a wide range of matters, to include the arrangements for re-opening schools and proposals for teaching. The Chief Executive said that it had been proposed to have a blended learning approach with a hybrid of home and school learning.

The following points were suggested for consideration :

- Distinction to be made between what the proposals will be for Primary and Post-Primary schools (as it may be perceived that primary require more structure).
- Clarification from C2K on their views on access to the Managed Service by parents and learners.
- Other mediums of learning to be researched, for example through the BBC, mobile phone devices or accessing internet portals in libraries.
- Subject content across the suits of subjects to work towards achieving equity and balance.
- Acting on the principle of fairness to ensure children get the results that reflect their ability (given that some children are disadvantaged and do not have access to hardware or a conducive learning environment). Every child should have the same opportunity.
- To ensure CCEA addresses the issues within its remit, ensuring fairness and equity across all children and learners.

- Inclusion of timescales to ensure CCEA has sufficient time for decision making; and clarity required on plans for next academic year together with timeframe for programme of work.
- Clarity on short term decisions required, and plans for longer term work.

Clarification was sought on the level of engagement with DE to ensure there is a shared understanding of the key issues. The Chief Executive confirmed discussions with DE on a twice-weekly basis. He recognised the need for understanding the requirements for delivery and the form assessment may take – these issues will also be communicated with DE. He confirmed he would seek clear direction on the range of issues articulated.

A Council member, whilst recognising the significance between the DE request to CCEA, and the announcement of Years 12 and 14 returning to schools on 17 August, appealed for further clarity for staff in schools to allow them to begin to prepare and plan. He stated the need for consistent information to alleviate the pressure and anxiety amongst teachers. The Chief Executive confirmed he had issued a letter to school principals on the arrangements for controlled assessments that carry forward into summer awarding; and said he would endeavour to continue to provide as much information as possible to give stability across the system.

The Chief Executive confirmed that discussions have taken place on what would be possible in regards to remote digital proctoring for general qualifications, and advised that this would not be safely completed for January 2021. Some digital solutions were, however, in place for Vocational qualifications, but were not uniform across all Awarding Organisations.

A Council member raised the issue of modular versus linear examinations and whether this would be revisited. The Chief Executive confirmed that this was a matter for longer term discussion over the next 24 – 36 months, as it would likely require full policy consultation and a full specification rewrite.

The Chair was satisfied that the paper had been discussed in full and asked that the Chief Executive progress this with DE, to include the caveat that CCEA will provide advice within its own remit. The Chief Executive agreed to do so and confirmed he would consider the points raised by members and include as appropriate in the response.

### ***Options Paper on Payment of Examiners - Summer 2020***

***CB/10June/02***

The DoFCS drew attention to the detail provided in the paper and confirmed the information had been submitted to DE for consideration. She advised that the paper set out a range of options and proposals for payment of examiners for the summer 2020 examination series. The proposals have also been through legal review.

She confirmed that furloughing was not an option as CCEA was a public body.

Members discussed the information in detail, sought and received clarification on a range of issues, and were satisfied with the explanations provided.

The proposal was formally proposed by Mr Robert Thompson, and seconded by Mrs Kathleen O'Hare.

The Chief Executive confirmed that a significant amount of work had been carried out in drawing together the proposals in respect of the 3 categories, and advised that this would now be condensed into one single proposal for DE and DoF consideration, and subsequent approval.

The Chair thanked the DoFCS and her team for the detail provided.

CCEA officers left the meeting at this point.

## **Any Other Business**

### *Resourcing*

The Chief Executive raised the issue of the significant pressure the Executive Team was encountering as a result of the impact of COVID-1.

Members sought and received clarification on a number of issues, and agreed that a paper setting out interim proposals be brought to a closed session of Council for consideration at its meeting on 17 June.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

The Chair confirmed the next Council Briefing was scheduled for Wednesday 17 June at 2.30 pm. It was anticipated that a longer session would be required and members should be advised accordingly.

The Chair reminded members that the Council Business meeting would take place on Wednesday 24 June at 1.30 pm, and the Chief Executive's Covid-19 situation report would be incorporated into this session.