

Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Council

Minutes of the fifth-seventh meeting of Council, held at 10.00 hours on Thursday 14 April 2005 in the Connemara Coast Hotel, Galway.

Present: Dr A Murray (Chairperson) Mr B Carlin
Mr D Thompson Mr D McKee
Ms P O'Farrell Ms M Watson
Mr J Ellison Mr J Collins
Professor P Roebuck

Mr G Boyd (Chief Executive)
Mr D Mulholland (Director, Corporate Services)
Mr N Anderson (Director, Operations)
Mr R Hanna (e-Learning Development Manager)
Ms C Gallagher (Curriculum & Assessment Manager)
Mr M Montgomery (Assessment Manager) for Item 5 only
Mr R McCune (Accreditation Manager)
Mrs J Scharf (Principal Officer) for Item 7 only

Miss N Kennedy, Support Manager to Council

Introduction

Dr Murray welcomed members to Galway and advised that in the absence of Dr Lennon she would chair the meeting.

1 Apologies

Dr A Lennon; Dr W Mulryne; Mr J Lee; Mr B Turtle; Mrs H McClenaghan; Mr J Clarke; Mrs D Black; Mr D Woods; Mrs B O'Hare.

2 Chair's business

The Deputy Chairperson reported that

- Mr Hanna; Ms Gallagher and Mr Montgomery would be present for the Curriculum & Assessment items; and
- Mr McCune and Mrs Scharf would be present for the Regulation & Qualifications items.

Members were asked to note the programme for the Joint Conference with NCCA.

Minutes of special meeting 15 December 2004 and Ad hoc meeting 26 January 2005

Dr Murray suggested to members that in order to draw the issue to a conclusion a summary of both meetings be recorded as follows :

Special meeting 15 December 2004

The Chairman called a special meeting of Council to discuss a request from the Department of Education to engage the services of the Chief Executive, Gavin Boyd to

assist with the task of dealing with ELB issues. This was discussed and it was agreed that the Chairman and Chief Executive would seek further clarification from the Department of Education on the nature of the task and the expected time commitment.

An ad hoc committee was set up to action the matter over the Christmas period.

Ad hoc committee 26 January 2005

The Ad hoc committee met and agreed that the Chief Executive could and should assist the Department of Education. This drew the matter to a conclusion.

Members agreed to sign off the summaries.

Update on the overview steering group

The Chief Executive reported that the group consisted of 4 members: Dr Mark Brown, Principal Finance Officer (DE); an Accountant from DFP; an Internal Auditor from DE and the Chief Executive of CCEA. The work of the group is now complete. The remit up until 31 March 2005 was to:

- Establish the true financial position of two boards;
- Ensure the agreed board budgets for 2005/2006 were in line with allocations; and
- Oversee the development of proper financial accounting systems with the boards.

The financial positions have been established and the 2005/06 budgets have been adopted by the boards. Financial controls were in the process of being set up. New financial structures will be put in place after the RPA.

The Chief Executive informed members that he had received a letter from the Minister (dated 4 April) inviting him to be part of a strategic working group to establish a social partnership to improve communications and give advice to government on policy development.

Members agreed that the Chief Executive should join the group subject to discussing the matter with the Chairman.

3 Minutes of previous meeting held on 16 February 2005

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 February 2005 were approved by Council and a copy signed by the Deputy Chairperson.

Action points

The Chief Executive reported that the majority of the action points had been dealt or were on the agenda for today's meeting. He said that the Director of Policy position was under discussion and the Management Statement was being reviewed. However, the situation may change in light of the RPA consultation.

Mr Carlin urged the Chief Executive to continue addressing issues involving CCEA regardless of RPA.

Mr Ellison asked if the area of special consideration had been tightened up in the light of the maladministration case. The Chief Executive agreed that Mr Anderson would circulate these procedures to members.

4 Committees

(a) Learning for Life and Work Committee : 2 March 2005

In the absence of the Chairman, Dr Lennon, the Chief Executive reported that the meeting had consisted of several presentations from :

- Mrs Norma Sinclair from DEL – on the Essential Skills Strategy. Members were concerned that the figures provided were 10 years old and asked for more up to date data to be provided.
- Mrs Oonagh Hinds from Invest Northern Ireland – on the Accelerating Entrepreneurship Programme which is working well.
- Mr Dennis Legge and Mr Aidan McCormick – on the Dungannon/Cookstown initiative. The partnership continues to work well and the model is one of good practice.

Mr McKee asked that a letter be written to Mr Legge and Mr McCormick congratulating them on the success of the partnership.

- The final project plan will be discussed and approved by the Committee at the next meeting.

(b) e-Learning & Services Committee : 16 March 2005

Mr Ellison reported that:

- A full update was received on developments and it was agreed that this will be brought to the full Council at an appropriate time so that they materials can be reviewed.
- Presentations had been given by ALTA on automated assessment of mathematics items and exemplar libraries : phase 2 tasks on English which had been developed by CCEA Multimedia.
- Mr Alan Jennings, Principal of Newtownbreda Primary School gave an overview of his experiences in piloting the assessment materials.

The committee was impressed by the ALTA presentation, in particular the mathematics and the demonstration of the CARN software for pupil profile.

Ms Watson asked if the ALTA demonstration could be presented to Council at a future meeting.

5 Curriculum & Assessment

Policy Advice on Assessment Arrangements and Pupil Profile for Primary Schools

C/57/1

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed Mr Hanna, Ms Gallagher and Mr Montgomery to the meeting, and informed members that the Curriculum and Assessment Committee had debated the issues in this paper on 23 March. This was now coming forward to Council for approval.

Ms Gallagher explained that the paper is a compromise between the ethos of assessment for learning and the collection of comparative data on pupil progress and achievement. The 5 level scale will continue to be used. Revised levels are currently being trialled with board officers and teachers – feedback to date is positive.

Foundation Stage

Mr Montgomery tabled a mock pupil profile report. The approach taken has been as soft and qualitative as possible and will provide a mechanism for:

- Observation and interaction;
- Qualitative reporting and personal development;
- Setting the baseline for assessing oracy and numeracy.

The statements provided are taken from a bank which will be trialled this year. Default sets of statements will be provided which can be personalized.

The following comments were made :

- the need to include numeracy;
- clarity on the skills required for foundation stage – the need for them to be identified and explained;
- clear and easily understood communications for parents;
- bank of questions to be issued in 'Plain English';
- the need to lay out the problems discretely;
- inclusion of oracy and pre-reading skills; and
- the development of mathematics.

The Chief Executive suggested that RE be reflected within Personal Development.

It was agreed that the exemplar would be redrafted taking the comments into consideration and used for part of the teachers' trials in May and June. An update will be given at the next meeting.

Key Stages 1&2

Ms Gallagher outlined the proposals for Key Stage 1 and 2.

Assessment and the structure of the pupil profile in two parts, Part A and Part B.

Part A : Teachers will

- describe qualitatively what each pupil knows; understands and can do in each learning area, referring to the skills and capabilities pupils have developed during the year;
- indicate important areas for development and qualitative insights for the receiving teacher;
- comment on pupils' aptitudes and interests and also on the overall development of skills and capabilities.

Part B will show :

- the outcomes of the annual objective assessments in reading and numeracy (from Year 4 onwards);
- the summative outcomes of teacher assessment in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

The information will be used at the parent-teacher meetings.

Members discussed the issues and raised the following concerns :

- the information regarding the child's progress must be conveyed sensitively;
- engagement between teacher and parent to be encouraged and ways explored of accessing the reluctant parent;
- language needs to be parent friendly to ensure parents understand the issues;
- Graphical approach may be too complex, but if used, needs to be parent friendly.
- Report should be valuable and meaningful.

The Chief Executive suggested that the comments be taken on board, reworked into the report, trialled and brought back to Council at a later date.

Quality Assurance

Mr Montgomery reported on the new approach to ensure quality assurance is built into the system. The four strands are :

- *Accreditation of schools*
Aim is to recognize the professionalism of teachers and facilitate the transition to a model of moderation for improvement and self-regulation.
- *Professional development*
To ensure teachers are adequately resourced and trained in assessment and providing them with the relevant and appropriate opportunities to do so.

- *Local moderation*
Where local primary and post-primary schools moderate each others' work across levels spanning both phases eg Levels 3-5. A key benefit of this will be its cross-phase nature and developing a culture of self-regulation.
- *Central moderation*
The need for central moderation will remain until teachers' expertise and confidence grows. The process will change to a light touch sampling of all schools. On-line moderation will be conducted where possible and transition mechanisms will be put in place as appropriate.

Members were happy with the approach taken and agreed that accreditation of schools be phased in from September 2007 and monitored on an ongoing basis.

ICT supported Assessment, recording and reporting

Mr Montgomery reported that CCEA will continue to work with the PMB to ensure appropriate training for teachers and also with C2K to ensure the systems that will be put in place are user friendly and accessible by the least ICT literate teachers.

Mr Ellison stated that the biggest risk was the lack of clarity regarding ownership. It is clear that CCEA owns the pupil profile but the vehicle for delivery is C2K. The delivery is critical and concerns regarding this risk need to be raised with the Department as a matter of urgency.

The Chief Executive agreed that the risk around curriculum implementation, the assessment regime and the capability of the C2K infrastructure is huge and it is important for everyone concerned to be clear on who has overall responsibility. He agreed to raise this again with the Permanent Secretary.

The Deputy Chairperson asked that the advice be changed to reflect the concerns clearly and robustly; and that the recommendations be adapted accordingly.

Implementation timetable

Members noted the revised timetable for the implementation of the new curriculum. Concern was expressed about the programme slipping back further. The Chief Executive agreed that progress needed to be made.

It was agreed that Year 5 and 6 be piloted in June 2006.

NI Performance : PISA Report 2003

C/57/2

Mr Hanna drew attention to the summary provided for members' information. The paper put the PISA survey into context and explains the outcomes of the NI survey.

The 2000 survey focused on reading literacy; 2003 on mathematical literacy and the 2006 will focus on scientific literacy and will return to reading in 2009.

In 2000 the survey was conducted across 32 countries. NI did very well.

In 2003 the study was conducted across 41 countries, however the UK as a whole failed to meet the sampling criteria and the results were considered not sufficiently reliable. Scotland and Northern Ireland did meet the criteria (separately). The NI study was funded by DE and key results show that NI students scored significantly higher than the average for OECD schools on the scales for mathematical, reading and scientific literacies.

Mr Collins asked for a benchmarking exercise to be considered with Finland.

The Chief Executive agreed to look into this further.

Review of Public Administration

The Chief Executive said a special meeting of Council took place on 6 April to gauge members' reaction and agree a way forward.

Whilst members' broadly accepted the review, there seemed very little strategic and specific arguments for CCEA to be split in this way, and that the proposed structural changes should not be accepted until a clear strategy has been put in place. It was agreed that CCEA should make a submission, supported by:

- Revisiting the decisions to merge NICC and NISEAC in 1992 and building on these arguments;
- The reputation and success of the organisation, taking into consideration its track record and all achievements to date; and
- The implications for the delivery of the new curriculum.

Mr Hanna has been appointed project manager and will work with the Chief Executive and a sub-committee of Council to put together the first draft of the submission.

A series of meetings have been set up over the next few months and the schedule will be circulated to members.

It was agreed that members should contact Mr Hanna directly regarding the RPA.

Dr Murray asked for the minutes of the 6 April meeting to be circulated with the schedule of meetings.

The following members of Council were proposed to be part of the steering group:

Mr John Ellison, Business
Mr Brian Turtle, Further Education
Dr Wilfred Mulryne, Post-Primary Education
Mrs Mae Watson, Teacher Training.

The invitation to join the steering group was extended to all members of the Council who wished to be part of the steering group and discussions going forward.

7 Regulation and Qualifications

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed Mr McCune and Mrs Scharf to the meeting. She informed members that due to rescheduling the Council meeting, the papers coming forward for information and discussion will be discussed by the Regulation & qualifications

at its meeting on 20 April and asked members to note the majority of the papers as work in progress.

Implications of 14-19 Qualifications and Skills White Paper for CCEA

C/57/3

Mr McCune informed members that the White Paper relates only to England. However there are implications for Northern Ireland. This paper raises members' awareness to the issues and represents development work in progress.

Mrs Scharf drew attention to the summary of the White Paper and outlined the work in progress regarding the following issues:

- The need for clarity on collaborative work to be undertaken and what the Northern Ireland policy requirements are, if any.
- Can CCEA initiate work to develop a policy with regard to titles and labels for GCSEs and GCEs and the unitization of all GCSEs.
- What is the added value of a general diploma? Will young people in Northern Ireland be disadvantaged if they do not have access to this award even though they have individual qualifications?
- Does the Northern Ireland policy reflect the possibility of a two-year Key Stage 3 which had implications for 'accelerated' and 'catch-up' learning opportunities, both of which are based on the intention to remove the concept of age-related qualifications.
- Should Northern Ireland go down the vocational diploma route? If not will young people be disadvantaged if they do not have access to all 14 diploma lines?
- Will HE modules be available in Northern Ireland schools?

Members noted the work done to date, and asked for the following points to be considered:

- ensure GCE and GCSE specifications and style of assessment relate closely to all other changes;
- work closely with the rest of the United Kingdom to ensure compatibility with arrangements and at the same time ensuring we have a clear view of the needs of Northern Ireland;
- ensure there is currency to enable Northern Ireland to operate within the university structure.

The Chief Executive said that the work in progress would be discussed by the Regulation and Qualifications Committee who will bring issues back to Council for discussion/decisions as they arise.

Post Qualifications Admissions

C/57/4

Mr McCune said that the paper had been provided for members' information.

CCEA will be involved in the consultation from examinations and issue of results points of view as one of the proposals is to consider the issue of results early in August to allow more space for the proposed post-results application phase.

It is anticipated that the consultation paper will be published in late May and the consultation period would be extended into October. Recommendations will be made in December 2005.

Professor Roebuck supported this proposal. It would be excellent if universities were able to judge students on performance rather than estimated grades.

The Chief Executive said there were strong arguments as to why this is a good thing to do. He suggested that some thought be given to the logistics before participating in the consultation.

Interim report of Consultation on Development of a New Framework for Achievement
C/57/5

Mr McCune advised members that the interim report had been provided for information.

He reported that the consultation period had been extended to the end of April and that feedback to date was positive, with general support for the direction proposed.

Mr Thompson sought clarification as to whether or not the Department had issued guidance to schools on the proposed changes. Mr McCune confirmed that timescales would be issued to schools in June/July but the guidance paper which was due to be circulated at Easter had been put back.

Professor Roebuck asked for consideration to be given to putting a mechanism in place to bring together all interested groups to ensure this is progressed.

The final report will be presented to Council at its next meeting.

Entitlement Framework: the vocational/academic divide
C/57/6

Mrs Scharf said that the Department of Education had asked CCEA for advice on issues relating to the implementation of the Entitlement Framework set out in the Post-Primary Review, in particular:

- defining what is meant by a 'course'; and
- categorising courses as 'general' or 'applied' with minimum overlap.

The Chief Executive said that it was important to get the definitions right. Institutions may be required to offer up to 27 courses, this definition needs to ensure that there is appropriate breadth and entitlement, nor should the qualifications or range of choices be diminished.

Definition of a course

The following definition was discussed and agreed by Council as appropriate and reasonable.

*A course is a period of study, based on **one** specification, which leads to a single or double award qualification, accredited within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The content of the course should be distinct, in that it is not replicated in any other course offered by the school.*

Definition of an 'applied' course

Members discussed the proposed definition:

An applied course is one where subject knowledge and understanding is developed in relation to a 'work' context and/or where practical skills are developed within a 'work' context.

Members were unhappy with the inclusion of *and/or* and wanted to ensure that the appropriate assessment be included in this definition. Mr Thompson proposed the following as an alternative :

An applied course is one where knowledge, understanding and skills are developed in relation to the work context.

Members agreed that this was an appropriate definition.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Chairman would write to the Minister outlining the definitions, however, the paper will be discussed by the Regulation and Qualifications Committee whose comments will also be reflected in the advice.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked Mr McCune and Mrs Scharf for the clarity of the explanations in relation to the definitions.

8 Finance

Finance report to end February 2005 (and tabled year end figures)

C/57/7

February 2005 Results

Mr Mulholland reported:

- Baseline expenditure of £57K favourable for the month, however £390K adverse on year to date basis due to provisions made for restructuring.
- Projects : remain underspent by £669K across a wide range of subjects due to delays in starting some and the impact of industrial action on others. Approximately half of the underspend will be recovered and the remainder will go back to the DE with a full explanation.
- Capital : £200K still remaining due to a substantial in-year bid. This will be spent on equipment and software to strengthen the ICT infrastructure.

Year-end position (31 March 2005)

Mr Mulholland reported that the year finished within budget, showing an underspend largely due to the impact of industrial action and reduced teacher release costs.

Mr Mulholland drew members' attention to the detail of paper C/57/8 which explained the budget allocations for 2005/2006. Included is the formal letter from DE advising the approved budget allocation's for recurrent and capital expenditure for 2005/2006.

- Baseline funding has been adjusted to take into consideration project funding – total allocation £4546K
- Capital allocation £268 (which falls short of the projected £350K).

DE have confirmed they will be prepared to consider in-year bids for capital requirements should this be necessary.

Members agreed the budget for 2005/2006.

Mr Carlin wished to place on record his congratulations to Mr Mulholland and his team for this achievement.

Entry level English update

The Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services left the meeting for this item.

Mr Anderson updated members' on the issues surrounding the Entry Level English problem.

Members noted the information and asked to be kept informed.

9 Any other business

Ms Watson wished to thank Council members and NCCA who contributed generously to the collection of just over £200 for the Hospice Walk.

The Chief Executive wished to place on record his thanks to Miss Kennedy who continued to work effectively regardless of the significant increase in workload over the last 6 months and without adequate support. Members added their thanks.

Members thanked Dr Murray for chairing the meeting.

10 Schedule of Meetings 2005/2006

C/57/9

The Deputy Chairperson drew members' attention to the schedule of Council and Committee meetings for 2005/2006 and asked them to note the dates as confirmed.

The next Council meeting will take place on **Wednesday 8 June 2005** at 1000 hours.

Chairman

Date

