

Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

COUNCIL

Minutes of the seventy-fifth meeting held on Wednesday 17 September at 1000 hours in the Boardroom, 3rd Floor, CCEA, Clarendon Road, Belfast.

Present : Mr D McKee (Chairman) Ms M Watson
Mr M Bowen Mr J Wilkinson
Mr D Thompson Mrs D Black
Ms C McKinney Mrs H McClenaghan
Ms P O'Farrell

Mr G Boyd (Chief Executive Designate, ESA)

Mr N Anderson (Acting Chief Executive)
Mr R Hanna (Director of Education Strategy)
Ms AM Duffy (Director of Operations)
Mrs L Lynch (Principal Officer, Curriculum & Assessment) For Item 5 only

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

Introduction

The Chairman welcomed members to the first meeting of Council following the summer break and advised that Mr Gavin Boyd, Chief Executive Designate would be joining the meeting for the item on Convergence.

The agenda for this meeting was re-ordered so that the Education Strategy items could be taken at the end. The Principal Officer, Curriculum & Assessment would be present for the Early Years Enriched Curriculum Project discussion.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr J Collins; Dr M Brown; Mr N Downing; Ms M Crilly; Mr H McCullough (DEL); Mr M Fegan and Mr M Quinn.

2 Chairman's Business

The Chairman informed members that Professor Roebuck had resigned from the Council and Audit & Risk Committee. Martin Bowen has agreed to Chair the Audit & Risk Committee and Dorothy Black will chair the Learning for Life and Work Sub-Committee. Both members were congratulated on their appointments.

It was agreed that the Chairman would meet with all Chairs of Committees to discuss protocols for managing convergence and corporate governance as soon as possible.

NCCA/CCEA Standing Committee

The second meeting of this committee took place on 28 August. The Acting Chief Executive reported that the following two projects had been identified for joint working :

- The impact of English as a Second Language; and
- The use of mobile phones to promote the teaching of languages, this particular project is for the Irish language. (Fon Project).

The Chairman confirmed that no funding had been allocated by CCEA for these projects however DE would welcome further joint working with NCCA on the basis that it would add value.

The next meeting of the Standing Committee is scheduled for Monday 10 November and further details would be issued in advance.

Accountability Review

The Acting Chief Executive reported that he and the Chairman had met with the Permanent Secretary, other senior officials from the Department and the Chief Executive Designate (ESA) on 13 August 2008 for an accountability review meeting.

In addition to the finance and organisation priorities discussions, concerns were raised on behalf of the Council regarding the lack of clarity on 14-19, the Diploma developments and regulatory arrangements.

An assurance was given by DE that discussions on 14-19 were underway with DEL and further information would be issued to CCEA so that it can be taken forward through the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Committee.

The Acting Chief Executive advised that he had been in discussions with the Chief Executive Designate (ESA) regarding regulatory arrangements and a paper would go forward to the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Committee for discussion at its next meeting at the end of September.

Vacancy Control

The Chairman advised that he had stressed the impact that vacancy control was having across the organisation and that this continuing to cause concern and asked that the Department make every effort to address this.

Investment in technology: was also raised to ensure that CCEA maintained its competitiveness in the market place. DE agreed that this was a serious issue and gave an assurance that this would be looked into.

Remuneration Committee

The Chairman advised that he had called a meeting of the remuneration for 22 September to discuss business manager recruitment.

4 Convergence

The Chairman welcomed the Chief Executive Designate (ESA) to the meeting.

The Chief Executive Designate (ESA) gave a presentation on 'Working towards the Education and Skills Authority', in particular:

- Why is Change Necessary;
- Implications for CCEA; and
- Issues to be resolved.

He stressed that although business continuity was critical, there would be significant changes to the system. For CCEA the real change would be that the organisation would not continue to function in its current formation. There will be a continuity of operational activities only, and the main changes would relate to:

- Corporate Services. There will be single HR, Finance, Legal and Secretarial support functions within ESA. Therefore CCEA will cease to pay staff and cease to have an HR and Finance function – but not until the new arrangements are in place.
- Curriculum. There will be an integrated approach to the development, roll out, delivery and support of the curriculum. CCEA are one of a number of organisations currently involved in this. Once ESA is established this will be managed through one area. It was recognised that there would be ongoing curriculum development work but this would be on a much smaller scale since the review of the curriculum was now complete.
- Review of Specifications – once this work was completed it would be wound down.
- The professional development of teachers within the school community; mentoring and developing young teachers and new school heads will also be streamlined and managed through one area.
- Regulatory Function – DE will be the regulators for General Qualifications. However the day to day responsibilities will be devolved to ESA and will be part of the Chief Executive's responsibilities.

No decisions have been made around location, however it was intended to minimise disruption for staff as much as possible.

Following discussions on a range of issues the Chairman of Council agreed to meet with the Chairs of the Committees outside of the meeting to debate these further.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive Designate (ESA) for his input into the meeting.

A copy of the presentation was issued to members via e-mail following the meeting.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 June 2008

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 June 2008 were proposed by Mr Martin Bowen and seconded by Mr David Thompson as a true and accurate record. A copy was signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman drew attention to page 9 of the minutes, in particular the suggestion of publishing Council members' attendance on the web-site. He confirmed that this would not go ahead and current arrangements would remain in place.

Action Points

The Chairman advised that the majority of action points had been completed.

6 Examinations – presentation on Summer 2008 series

The Director of Qualifications gave a presentation on the Summer 2008 examinations series. She gave an overview of :

- Challenges in respect of the volume of entries; staffing; support required and the impact of technology;
- Innovation through computer aided awarding;
- Key performance indicators including business efficiencies; and
- An overview of the results and awards

Re-issue of ICAA key skills component

Statements of ICAA Key Skills Components for 2007, Foundation Stage, had to be re-issued as a result of a mark of 10 being entered into the system as opposed to a mark of 16. This was discovered this year and resulted in grade changes from D to C. The Director of Qualifications reported that an independent review would be carried out across the sections involved. Members were assured that the appropriate checks would be put in place to ensure marks are entered into the system accurately.

Standards

The Director of Qualifications informed members that a research project was underway to track student attainment from KS3 into GCSE to establish if CCEA's standards are equivalent to those set by other awarding bodies operating in Northern Ireland. This is in the early stages of development and will be discussed by the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Committee before coming to Council at a later stage in the year.

The Chairman asked for further information to be provided to the Council on extending the provision for Applied GCE. It was agreed that a paper would be drawn up for the December meeting of Council.

Efficiency Savings/use of technology

- Piloting of candidates accessing their results on-line will commence this year;
- EGOML will go live for the first time in 2 languages : Spanish and German;
- Introduction of OMRs for all coursework and access arrangements on-line; and
- The processing of revised AS alongside legacy AS.

It was hoped that the introduction of all of the above on-line services will lead to efficiency savings in the coming year.

The Chairperson of the Curriculum & Assessment Committee suggested that the issue of results on-line should run together with UCAS and QUB and asked that this be progressed further.

Members were happy with the information provided. A copy of the presentation together with additional statistics was e-mailed to Council following the meeting.

The Acting Chief Executive thanked the Director of Qualifications for her overview and reminded members that in previous years CCEA paid significant attention to the detail of examinations processing due to difficulties previously experienced. Well established procedures and robust systems are now in place. These will continue to be reviewed to ensure Council has ongoing confidence in this area. He advised that he would be re-submitting the business cases for Electronic Script Scanning and Modernisation to the ESA ICT Management Board to ensure CCEA is in a position to offer equivalent services as its competitors.

The Chairman of the Regulation, Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Committee wished to place on record his thanks to the Director of Qualifications and officers for the work carried out in this area.

Issue of Results

The Acting Chief Executive reminded members of the media coverage regarding issuing all examination results on the same. He confirmed that all of the examination results (GCSE and GCE) had been issued on the same day this year and candidates had benefited from this.

Mrs McClenaghan left the meeting at this point.

5 Curriculum & Assessment

The Chairman of Council welcomed the Principal Officer (Curriculum & Assessment) to the meeting.

Curriculum & Assessment Committee Meeting Report : 11 September 2008

The Chairperson of the Committee advised that the meeting was devoted to three items, all of which were on the agenda for this meeting. She reported on the following:

- *Early Years – 6th year report recommendations*: The committee discussed in detail the outcomes of the 6th Year Report and draft recommendations. QUB researchers had been asked to meet with the Principals of each group of schools to disseminate the findings to date. Members felt that such meetings should be conducted on a one-to-one basis. This has been taken forward by the Director of ES and his officers.

The QUB researchers will be invited to the next committee meeting on 5 November to present the views of the principals and teachers following the one-to-one meetings and discuss the report as well as providing contextual information not contained in the 6th Draft report. Some of this data has already been collected and some will emerge from meetings with Principals and teachers. The Chairperson suggested that all Council members may wish to attend this meeting.

- *Moderation and Reporting* : This paper was presented as a first draft. Members were broadly happy with the recommendations around the moderation process, however, recommended the process could be carried out in directed time.

Further clarification is required around the system check specified by DE and how this would relate to ETI inspections.

The committee recognised that further work was required around the issue of reporting.

This paper would also come back to the meeting on 5 November for further debate.

Every School A Good School : Draft Response : Members debated the first question and could not reach agreement. They asked that this be referred to Council at this meeting for further discussion and agreement.

On the whole the majority of responses were accepted with some additional comments and changes required.

Recommendations based on the Early Years Enriched Curriculum Evaluation Project 6th Year Report
C/75/1

The Director of ES advised members that the study was already at an advanced stage when he took over responsibility when appointed in March 2008. He advised that he had initiated further work to capture as much contextual data from the Principals as possible.

The draft recommendations provided for discussion were based on the feedback from the report and work undertaken during the summer months.

Following a detailed discussion, members sought confirmation on:

- whether there was additional contextual information available which would be part of the next draft report; and
- the original research brief.

The Director of ES confirmed that these were aspects of the further work he had initiated.

With regard to the scope of the research he recognised that it was a limited, small scale longitudinal study. NFER reviewed the study (including the scope) in 2005 at CCEA's request and advised that a much larger scope would have required a significantly larger budget.

The Chairman of Council asked the Director of ES to meet with the QUB researchers as soon as possible to seek clarification on the issues raised by the Curriculum & Assessment Committee and Council so that decisions can be made around the future of the project.

The Director of ES confirmed that this meeting had been scheduled. It was intended that the researchers would attend the Curriculum & Assessment Committee meeting on 5 November to provide clarity on all of the issues raised and any further contextual information that has not been included in this draft report.

Mr Thompson left the meeting at this point.

Draft response : Every School A Good School : A Strategy for Raising Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy
C/75/2

The Director of ES advised that CCEA officers considered the strategy and presented a draft response for consideration by the Curriculum & Assessment Committee. As pointed out by the Chairperson of the committee, members agreed with the majority of the response and suggested minor changes and additions. These would be taken on board and incorporated into the final response.

Question 1 : Council members agreed to tick the 'Yes' Box. Council's view is that the wording of this question does not provide the same opportunity for an open-ended response as others in the consultation.

Council believes that there is a range of factors and interventions which can contribute to improving levels of literacy and numeracy in young people. All young people should have equality of educational opportunity and that the focus of this consultation should consider the issues in the broadest sense and with equal weight.

It was agreed that the 'yes' box be ticked with the caveat added as the first bullet point.

The revised draft response will be e-mailed to Council for their consideration and comment before submitting to DE before the deadline of 30 November 2008.

The Director of ES advised that this paper had been tabled for information at this point. A further draft would be discussed at the Curriculum & Assessment Committee on 5 November in order that advice can be provided to DE following their requests in December 2007 and April 2008 respectively.

7 Any other business

Transfer Process

The Acting Chief Executive advised that CCEA had received a request from DE and advised that he and the Director of ES will engage with the DE in taking this work forward.

8 Date of next meeting

The Chairman advised that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday 22 October 2008 at 1000 hours.

This would be a Corporate meeting, however, if there were any educational issues requiring discussions they would be added to the agenda.