

Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Council

Record of the Council Workshop held on Wednesday 21 December 2005 at 12.30 pm in the Boardroom, 3rd Floor, CCEA Offices, Belfast.

Present :

Dr A Lennon (Chairman)	Mr B Carlin
Mr J Ellison	Mr J Collins
Dr W Mulryne	Dr A Murray
Ms P O'Farrell	Mrs M Watson
Mrs D Black	Mr J Lee
Mr B Turtle	Mr D Thompson
Mr J Clarke	Mr D McKee

Mr D Woods (Assessor DE)

Mr G Boyd, Chief Executive
Mr N Anderson, Director of Operations
Mr R McCune, Accreditation Manager
Mrs J Scharf, Principal Officer
Mrs C Heathwood, Principal Officer
Ms C Gallagher, Curriculum & Assessment Manager
Mr M Montgomery, Pupil Profile Manager

Miss N Kennedy, Manager, Council Secretariat

Introduction

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. He reported that the workshop would cover the two broad areas of 14-19 developments and the pupil profile.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Professor P Roebuck; Mr D Mulholland; Mrs M Cree; Mrs B O'Hare.

Chairman's business

Review of Public Administration

The Chairman reported that the proposed model appeared to be largely based on CCEA's submission and recommendations. CCEA's current functions were likely to remain with additional functions incorporated. He congratulated the Chief Executive and officers involved on this achievement.

The role of the Council as a 'think tank' has yet to be determined. It was agreed that this would be discussed further with the Department.

The Chairman had written to the Department outlining the need to proceed with the current curriculum changes and pupil profile as a matter of urgency. A series of meetings will be set up to take these issues forward.

Reconstitution of the Council

The Chairman confirmed that the Council would be reconstituted on 1 April 2006. Letters have been issued those members eligible for re-election. The Chairman asked those members who had not yet responded to confirm to him or Miss Kennedy if they wished their name to be put forward to the Department.

Session 1 : 14-19 Developments in England

The Chairman welcomed Mr McCune, Mrs Scharf and Mrs Heathwood to the meeting.

Mr McCune drew members' attention to the briefing paper on 14-19 Developments in England and presented the main issues for discussion. He stressed that the proposals were, at this stage, relevant to England. CCEA were monitoring the developments, particularly those which would have implications for Northern Ireland.

The following points were discussed. :

Specialised Diplomas:

- Currency of diplomas with HE and employers needed to be clarified;
- Levels of diplomas and equivalence with GCE/GCSE would be issues
- UCAS tariff was to be decided;
- Clarification of the 14 diploma lines was required;
- Higher Education needed to be included in discussions on content of diplomas, especially at level 3;
- How diplomas would be accredited within National Qualifications Framework needed to be agreed by Regulatory authorities?
- The need to maintain standards and equivalences; and
- The need for fit for purpose assessment for the elements of the diplomas was emphasised.

The Chief Executive emphasised that many practical issues about the diplomas needed to be thought through. CCEA would continue to monitor developments from a Northern Ireland perspective. He outlined the nature and scope of qualifications development that CCEA had been engaged in over the past few years and how this work had meant that there was a flexible provision available to schools/colleges here..

Functional Skills:

- a review of the present skills qualifications ie. key/essential had been undertaken by CCEA-what was now needed was to look at how the proposed functional skills would sit with these current skills;
- discussions were in hand as to how functional skills could be embedded within current qualifications, particularly GCSEs;
- the nature of assessment to be used with functional skills need to be discussed; and
- wider skills will be taken into consideration when reviewing the GCSE.

GCE

It was agreed that whatever is decided with regard to the addition of 'harder' questions within GCEs, the specifications need to have currency with HE. In addition, the revised assessment model needed to be manageable.

GCSE

Members welcomed the review of the role of coursework within GCSEs which would help to address the assessment burden, particularly in ensuring the relevance of coursework; .

The Chairman commended the close working relationship there was with the Department of Education/department for Employment and Learning. This had helped CCEA in its work within this very complex area.

It was agreed that the work would be progressed through the Regulation & Qualifications Committee and come back to Council, as appropriate, for discussion and agreement.

Session 2: Pupil Profile

The Chairman welcomed Ms Gallagher and Mr Montgomery to the meeting.

The Chief Executive drew attention to the supporting papers and gave a presentation on progress to date. He sought agreement on the principles around the pupil profile, but assured members that further work was required in terms of presentation of the documents.

Members were happy with the principles presented around the pupil profile and congratulated officers on the progress made to date.

The following points were raised:

- parents to be provided with as much information as possible to allow them to assist with the programme of learning to support their child. The information should be user friendly, clear and meaningful to ensure a general understanding;
- the importance of using the same, recognised tests to ensuring best practice;
- further discussion with schools about the June report as end of year closure;
- further consideration on issues around the accountability of the teacher;
- levels to be used by the teacher only and a description given to parents – to be discussed further;
- wording in the document (report) to be cut down and language to be user friendly;
- need to include socially disadvantaged parents and try to engage in face to face discussions through a 3rd party – perhaps the home-school liaison officer;
- to ensure manageability this will need to be trialled and evaluated properly and backed up with evidence;

- the non-verbal score, (baseline score) to be placed within the programme for learning;
- the issues of technical support needs to be resolved; and
- manageability in the classroom to be considered and evaluated by the schools.

The Chief Executive agreed that the points raised would be taken into consideration and included as appropriate.

The Chairman wished to place on record his thanks to the officers on progress made to date. He sought assurances that further investigation would be carried out into the reliability of ALTA.

Dr Mulryne confirmed that this was a concern of the Curriculum & Assessment committee and asked that further work be done in this area.

It was agreed that further investigation would be done and brought back to the Curriculum & Assessment Committee at its next meeting in February 2006.