

## CCEA Equality Screening Exercise

### Proposal to Increase Examination Entry Fees

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## **1 Background and Introduction**

In July 2023 CCEA requested that the Department of Education approve an increase to the examination fees centres pay CCEA to enter their candidates for CCEA examinations. This payment allows candidates to sit CCEA assessments and receive a qualification certificate once the assessment requirements associated with the qualification have been met.

The request to increase examination entry fees was as a result of the increasing challenges faced in recruiting and retaining contractors who mark and moderate CCEA assessments, largely due to static examiner fees from 2010 to 2023, and the lack of scope within CCEA's annual budget to fund the increases in fees paid to them.

All panel members received the paper for CCEA's Finance Committee titled: "Increase in Examination Entry Charges and Introduction of Fees for Examination Appeals." Please note, the latter was dealt with through a separate screening process.

## **2 Screening exercise**

A screening exercise was carried out with the following included:

- Setting up an equality panel to represent a range of expertise;
- Gathering panel views through an Equality Screening Questionnaire;
- Screening panel meeting to review feedback and agree impacts; and
- Reporting

### **2.1 Equality panel screening questionnaire**

The screening panel was asked to consider and comment on the likely impact, in any way, on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this proposal, including an indication of the level of impact on the group, i.e. minor, major, or none.

Comments were invited for each question for the nine Section 75 categories.

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this temporary process, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?  
minor/major/none
2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?
3. To what extent is the temporary process likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?  
minor/major/none
4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Additional questions

5. Are there any potential impacts of the process on people with multiple identities?
6. Are there other potential equality impacts relevant to the outcomes outlined that have not been covered?

## **2.2 Panel questionnaire returns**

10 returns were received from panel members. The summary of the findings to each question is set out below.

### **Question 1 – What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this temporary process, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?**

For Religious Belief, Political Opinion, Racial Group, Marital Status, Sexual Orientation, Disability and Dependants, 10 panel members agreed there was no impact and no comments were received.

For Age, 4 minors were recorded.

For Men and Women Generally, 1 minor was recorded.

In both instances the concerns centred on the impact the cost increase may have on Private Candidates who may enter for CCEA examinations once they have left formal education.

After discussion the response to all nine categories under Question 1 the impact was recorded as minor.

### **Question 2 - Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?**

No concerns were formally recorded for Question 2. One comment was made regarding Age, but in light of discussions under Question 1, this was withdrawn.

### **Question 3 - To what extent is the temporary process likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?**

No concerns were formally recorded for Question 3.

### **Question 4 - Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?**

No concerns were formally recorded for Question 4.

There were no additional considerations and no other considerations.

## **2.3 Screening panel meeting**

The panel was invited to attend a MST meeting to allow for discussion on the responses and to decide on the level of impact for each of the section 75 groups.

Where there was deemed to be no impact in an equality category, it was recorded as such and discussion was mainly based around the comments in relation to minor and major impacts. The consultation was in relation to additional bias that may have been introduced as a result of the proposals or bias exacerbated by them.

Discussion at the meeting considered the impacts recorded through the questionnaire and concluded that no major impacts on section 75 groups would result or new bias introduced.

### 3. Outcomes

Minor impacts were recorded in only one area - Age.  
The increase to examination fees was screened out.

### 4. Approvals

	Name	Job Title	Date
Screened by	M McAuley	Business Unit Manager Qualifications	27 September 2023
Approved by	K McBride	Head of Resources	27 September 2023

## **Appendix 1 Minutes of the Screening Panel Meeting**

### **Minutes of the Equality Screening Exercise in Relation to Proposal to Increase Examination Fees**

In attendance: Michael McAuley (Chair), Elaine Lennox, Esther Martin, John Daly, Michelle Wilson, Noeleen McGreer, Pamela Larmour, Deborah Stinson, Liam Dempsey, Andrea Molloy.

Apologies: Ryan McAuley, Roger Trigg, David Crosbie.

The Chair opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending the meeting at short notice, and for completing the questionnaire in advance of the meeting. He advised that the proposal was to increase examination fees and conversations in relation to this had started last November. Discussions had taken place with DE and the Council have been kept abreast of progress. The matter has been discussed at Finance Committee and it was requested that a screening should be conducted before the matter was brought to full Council.

He advised that legal advice had been sought as to whether a screening should be undertaken, and a response had only been received at 16.50 yesterday. The advice had covered two issues that is, the increase in fees and the proposal to introduce a cost for appeals. The equality screening for today has only taken account of the increase in entry fees and the position regarding the introduction of a fee for appeals would be handled at a later date.

He advised that examination fees have not increased since 2009/10, therefore there has been no increase in cost for 14 academic years- there is a need now to increase the fees to cover costs.

The Chair then proceeded to go through the findings of the equality screening. He advised that there were nine questionnaires (this was increased to 10, as one was received just as the meeting had started) and that on section 1 the only issue raised was in relation to age, under this category 4 people viewed it as having a minor impact, 5 viewed that there was no impact.

#### **Section 1**

**What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this temporary process, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? minor/major/none.**

The Chair advised that there were nine questionnaires (this was increased to 10) and that on section 1 there was no impact for the first three categories Religious Belief, Political Opinion and Racial Group. The first issue raised was in relation to Age, under this category 4 people viewed it as having a minor impact, 5 viewed that there was no impact. The comments received were as follows:

*'Older privately candidates may take this cost on themselves. This group are a very*

*small proportion of CCEA's entrants and may be older learners.*

*Could impact on mature students in terms of cost of entry, or those who need to resit passport subjects a number of times.*

*People who are 20+ years of age wishing to return to education may experience difficulties due to the increased cost of examination entries.*

*Private candidates who return to school and pay own entry fees could be impacted.'*

Discussion took place in relation to the comments above and it was reinforced that the cost is in the main borne by the Centre. The cost for GCSE will increase from £28.80 to £31.60 which represents a 9.7% increase and is well below the cost applied by other awarding organisations. The cost for 'A' level is proposed to increase from £81.20 to £89.52, 10.25% increase.

The Chair recommended that unless anyone had anything further to add that the impact be recorded as minor.

This was agreed by the panel.

The Chair advised that there were no impacts in relation to Marital Status, Sexual Orientation and Disability. The only other minor issue raised was in relation to Men and Women Generally where the following comment was received.

*'Could have an impact on those who need to resit subjects several times. For example, resitting English and or Mathematics at GCSE level to gain a grade necessary to access employment or a course of further study.'*

## **Section 2**

### **Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?**

The Chair advised that there was only one comment received under this section which was in relation to age.

*'There may be the opportunity to provide means tested reduced examination fees for learners who have to pay their own fees because of age.'*

The panel respondent advised that in light of discussion under section 1, they were happy to stand down the comment.

The Chair advised that there were no comments received under sections 3&4 and also additional and other considerations.

The Chair asked the Panel if there was anything anyone wished to raise.

In the absence of no further comments the Chair thanked everyone for their input and advised that the increase to examination fees had been screened out.

The meeting ended.

