



## Fifty sixth meeting of the Board of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority

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### Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 17 May 2007 at the Chesterfield Hotel, London W1

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#### Present

##### *Members*

Sir Anthony Greener	Chairman
Dr Ken Boston	Chief Executive
Mr Mike Beasley	
Mr Edward Gould	
Mrs Sue Kirkham	
Mr Ian Ferguson	
Mr Nick Stuart	
Sir David Watson	
Mr Richard Greenhalgh	
Mr Jim Rose	

##### *Observers*

Ms Jane Joyner	Ofsted
Mr Ralph Tabberer	DfES

##### *Staff*

Mr David Gee	Managing Director, NAA
Ms Mary Curnock Cook	Director, Qualifications and Skills
Ms Isabel Nisbet	Director, Regulation and Standards
Mr David Robinson	Director, Communications and Marketing
Ms Carol Copland	Director, Legal and Corporate Affairs
Mr Andrew Hall	Director, Strategic Resource Management
Mr Mark Luggar	Corporate Governance Manager
Ms Claire Herbert	Board Support Coordinator

#### Apologies for absence

Mr David Sherlock	
Ms Clare Chapman	
Mr Ioan Morgan	
Mr John Valentine Williams	Welsh Assembly Government
Mr Mick Waters	Director, Curriculum

## **1. Minutes of the Board meeting on 29 March 2007**

1.1 The Board approved the minutes of 29 March 2007.

## **2. Matters arising from 29 March 2007**

2.1 The Chairman informed Members that Edward Gould was retiring from the Board and expressed his, the Board's and QCA management's gratitude for Edward's exemplary performance and contribution as a Board Member.

2.2 The Chairman tabled a letter from the Secretary of State, dated 14 May 2007, confirming additional funds of £2.5 million for additionally agreed remits.

## **3. The Chief Executive's Report**

### *Changes in Board paper templates*

3.1 Ken Boston brought Members' attention to the new format for Board papers, which have been designed to make papers quicker and easier to read and to better clarify actions that Members are recommended to take.

3.2 He also informed the Board that, from May 2007, the QCA Executive would be meeting monthly at daylong meetings in Coventry.

### *Education and Skills Committee: 14–19 Diplomas*

3.3 Ken Boston drew Members' attention to the Select Committee's report on 14–19 Diplomas.

### *International Baccalaureate*

3.4 Ken Boston reported that the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) had distributed the 2005 version of the history paper to 1,100 UK students in 2007; many students had seen the 2005 version before. The IBO's UK office is in Cardiff and, in line with the three country regulatory arrangements in the UK, Wales should take the regulatory lead, and consult with QCA. He proposed to write to the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS) at the Welsh Assembly, and recommended that the Chairman write on behalf of the Board to the CEO of the IBO to inform him of QCA's concerns.

3.5 The Board endorsed Ken Boston's approach and agreed that the Chairman should write to the CEO of the IBO expressing the Board's concerns.

### *Employer training*

3.6 Ken Boston informed Members that discussions had taken place between the VQ reform Board, the DfES and a number of employers on how best QCA can recognise high quality employer-based training within the Qualification and Credit Framework.

### *GCE A Level in Ancient History*

3.7 Ken Boston reported the OCR awarding body has dropped Ancient History from its suite of classical subjects; OCR is the only awarding body that offers Ancient History. QCA has received a large amount of correspondence from university professors; the wider public reaction has been strongly in favour of continuing with Ancient History; and both the

House of Commons and Lords have debated the issue. He reported that QCA has no statutory power or 'contract' to force awarding bodies to deliver small enrolment subjects, and highlighted this as weakness in the system.

#### *iGCSEs*

- 3.8 Ken Boston informed Members that the Secretary of State intends to take no action on offering 'iGCSEs' (as accredited under a different name) for the maintained sector. It was recognised that if the iGCSE were submitted under a different name QCA would be likely to accredit them.

#### *Media scorecards*

- 3.9 Ken Boston reported on the presence of QCA in the media over the last three months. Director of Communications and Marketing, David Robinson, confirmed that the analysis is undertaken by an independent agency, which is meant to ensure that the scorecard has a balanced perspective. David Robinson will consider the frequency of which the media scorecards are presented to the Board.

#### *Progress tests*

- 3.10 Ken Boston reported that QCA has been remitted by the DfES to develop progress tests, as part of the DfES's *Making Good Progress* publication. A two-year pilot will commence in September 2007. Members commented that, whilst they understood the reasons behind the decision to take the higher score from the two tests, the consistency of test results was also an important consideration. Managing Director of the National Assessment Agency, David Gee, commented that the project initiation document was still being defined with the DfES.

#### *Financial annex*

- 3.11 The Board noted the Financial Performance Report for the full year ending 31 March 2007. This had been fully examined by the Audit Committee, and the Board was satisfied that expenditure had been properly constrained within agreed budgets and remits.

### **4. Selection of Coventry office building**

- 4.1 Director of Strategic Resource Management, Andrew Hall, introduced Susan Tymoszuk, Relocation Project Coordinator, Arthur Jordan, Head of Relocation and Andrew Morgan, Donaldsons. He presented the process for selecting the Coventry office, covering the availability of government estate, OGC and DfES involvement, QCA's requirements, the evaluation process and the scoring chart for each of the five potential offices, and commented that the selection went through a rigorous process. Andrew Hall presented the Evaluation Panel's recommendation that the Board endorse the Butts development, a large proposed redevelopment site of which QCA would occupy an office block on. The current timetable would allow QCA to occupy by June 2009. However, occupation could take place earlier if the planning process could be accelerated. Temporary accommodation could be offered from Autumn 2008.
- 4.2 The Board was satisfied of the rigour and correct conduct of the selection process and endorsed the Evaluation Panel's recommendation, and asked that the necessary final approvals be obtained as quickly as possible.
- 4.3 Andrew Hall informed Members that the Secretary of State's approval would be communicated by 30 June 2007.

## **5. Education and Skills Select Committee**

- 5.1 Ken Boston reported that a high-level context paper on assessment will form the basis of QCA's evidence to the Parliamentary Education and Skills Committee Inquiry into Testing and Assessment, planned for the summer 2007. He reported that QCA has a critical role to play as the authority on curriculum and assessment.
- 5.2 The Board confirmed this direction and discussed aspects of the direction the submission might take.
- 5.3 Director General for Schools at the DfES, Ralph Tabberer, commented that it would be beneficial for the DfES and QCA to take a joined-up approach to ensure alignment, whilst respecting QCA's objectivity and role as the assessment authority.
- 5.4 Ken Boston informed Members that he would distribute QCA's submission to the Select Committee via email to Members and DfES within one week, as the due date for submission was 4 June 2007. The Chairman invited Board Members to provide comment as quickly as possible.

## **6. Secondary Curriculum Review**

- 6.1 Ken Boston considered the proposed submission to the Secretary of State and commended it to the Board.
- 6.2 Sue Horner, Head of Standards and Assessment Policy, noted that more work is being carried out to exemplify the level descriptions for some subjects. The Board agreed, but commented that it should not delay other subjects.
- 6.3 Board Members provided comment on the programmes of studies and level descriptions for some subjects, particularly Personal and Economic Well-being and Citizenship. Members expressed the need to ensure clarity around what aspects are and are not statutory. The Board consensus was that additional aspects of subject teaching might be made statutory as and when necessary, as implementation of the curriculum proceeded.
- 6.4 The Board commented that the current timescales for implementation are desirable and achievable and should not be revised.
- 6.5 Ken Boston reported he would continue to keep the Board informed.

## **7. Review of fees—criteria**

- 7.1 Isabel Nisbet, Director of Regulation and Standards, introduced the paper, which contained proposals for criteria and processes which the regulatory authorities could use when making judgements about awarding bodies' proposed fees for revised A levels and Diplomas. This followed decisions by the Board on 1 February 2007 at the conclusion of a review of fees for A levels and GCSEs. The Board considered the recommendations in the paper on the understanding that further discussions would be taking place, as a matter of urgency, between QCA and the regulators for Wales and Northern Ireland.

7.2 Following discussion, the Board approved the recommendations in principle, but expressed the hope that scrutiny of fee proposals would normally remain at a high level, with awarding bodies asked to submit proposals together with a narrative explanation. It was agreed that proposals should be discussed with the awarding bodies as soon as possible. Ralph Tabberer referred to the need to drive down costs of the qualifications system. Isabel Nisbet said that QCA had received a new remit to consider the efficiency of the system, and that awarding bodies had offered to be involved in that work.

## **8. Market for qualifications**

8.1 Isabel Nisbet presented a paper that considers the current market for qualifications. She set out reasons for change to meet, most importantly, the needs of learners and, as identified by Leitch, the national need. She outlined, for discussion, a vision for the future in a unitised, credit-based system, which would involve widening the supply side of the market to include employers and colleges, as well as current awarding bodies. In this vision, regulation would be primarily at the level of the organisation offering qualifications and units, rather than at the level of individual qualifications or units, although, of course, detailed monitoring would still be possible.

8.2 The Board commented that the vision presented was aligned with Ken Boston's speech at the annual review, and that the Leitch Review provides an impetus for change.

8.3 Ken Boston informed Members that he is meeting with large and prominent organisations to discuss proposals and to develop a worked example.

8.4 The Board endorsed the direction of travel and requested that, for its meeting on 12 September, developments be reported and that a more detailed, long term direction of travel be described.

## **9. Post-Leitch update**

9.1 Director of Qualifications and Skills, Mary Curnock Cook, provided a post-Leitch update, focusing on the Leitch Implementation Plan, key issues and QCA proposals.

9.2 Discussion followed on the DfES's Leitch Implementation Plan and Sector Skills Councils' (SSCs) responsibilities for approving qualifications. Mary Curnock Cook reported that SSCs could have a formal role in the accreditation process, within a single regulatory framework, regulated by QCA.

9.3 The Board commented that the Leitch Review places the QCF as the integral component to deliver the Leitch vision and that a formal remit from the DfES was necessary. Ralph Tabberer informed the Board that he would seek clarification from the DfES about the additional remit.

## **10. DfES Corporate Performance Report**

- 10.1 Ken Boston introduced the DfES Corporate Performance Report on QCA, and outlined the process between DfES and QCA for determining the report's content. He informed Members this report was the first of an ongoing quarterly reporting and review of QCA by the DfES.
- 10.2 The Board commented that it was a useful and valuable tool for use by senior management for opening ongoing and constructive communication, and wished to see the reports as part of the discharge of their responsibilities.
- 10.3 Ralph Tabberer informed the Board the report is made available to the DfES Board and Ministers.

## **11. QCA Strategic Systems**

- 11.1 Andrew Hall provided an update to Members on the outcomes of an internal review of QCA's programmes that will deliver the Diploma and QCF. Discussions focused on a contract that may be tendered to set up a centralised programme for Strategic Systems. PwC, QCA's internal auditors, may submit a bid for the contract. Nick Stuart, Chair of QCA's Audit Committee, commented that it could present a significant conflict of interest if, following bid evaluations, PwC were awarded the contract. Andrew Hall is preparing tender documents and succession and transition plans for potential new internal auditors, as a contingency.

## **12. Key Programme Milestones underpinning the Strategic Plan**

- 12.1 Andrew Hall presented key programme milestones of the programmes of work set out in the Strategic Plan. Members commented that it demonstrated comprehensively the deliverables and milestones of key programmes of work and requested, for the Board meeting on 19 July, a succinct report of QCA's top priorities.

## **13. Annual report from the Audit Committee**

- 13.1 The Board noted the paper. The Chairman expressed his and the Board's gratitude to Nick Stuart, Chair of the Audit Committee, and members of the Audit Committee for their work.

## **14. Management Statement and Financial Memorandum**

- 14.1 The Board noted the paper.

## **15. Design principles for 'full' level 2**

- 15.1 This item was deferred to the Board meeting on 19 July 2007.

## **16. 14–19 diploma: situation report**

- 16.1 The Board noted the paper.

**17. Contracts over £1 million**

17.1 The Board approved the following contracts:

- A two-year extension to a contract with TSO for publications warehousing, running the order line and order fulfilment service.
- An extension to funding the unitary awarding bodies for two years and external marking for one year for strategies to recruit and retain examiners.
- A contract to procure the development and pre-testing of test materials for mathematics at key stage 2 and 3 for 2010–2012.
- A fourth paper was presented for Members' information, which reported on the procurement of a contract with Capgemini for management support to the Diploma programme.

**18. Contracts over £200K**

18.1 The Board noted the paper.

**19. Agenda items for future Board meetings**

19.1 The Board noted the paper.

**20. Any other business**

20.1 There was no other business.

**The next Board meeting will take place on Thursday, 19 July 2007**