



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority

**Forty-fourth meeting of the Board of the
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 29 September 2005
At the English Speaking Union, Charles Street, London W1**

Present

Members

Sir Anthony Greener
Mr Richard Greenhalgh
Dr Ken Boston
Mr Mike Beasley
Mr Ian S Ferguson
Dr Helen Gilchrist
Mr Edward Gould
Mrs Sue Kirkham

Chairman
Deputy Chairman
Chief Executive

Observers

Mr Wil Edmunds
Mr Peter Housden
Ms Jane Joyner

Chairman, ACCAC
DfES
Ofsted

Staff

Ms Mary Curnock Cook
Mr David Gee
Mr Stephen Goulder
Mr Mike Green
Mr Arthur Jordan
Ms Isabel Nisbet
Mr David Robinson
Mrs Hayley Tucker
Mr Ian Valvona
Mr Mick Waters

Director, Qualifications and Skills
Managing Director, NAA
Secretary to the Board
Director, Human Resources
Director, Finance
Director, Regulation and Standards
Director, Communications and Marketing
Corporate Governance Manager
Business Manager to Chief Executive
Director, Curriculum

Apologies for absence

Ms Clare Chapman
Ms Jean Humphrys
Mr Jim Rose
Mr Nick Stuart
Sir Mike Tomlinson
Sir David Watson

Board member
Ofsted
Board member
Board member
Board member
Board member

Minutes of the Board meeting on 14 July 2005

1. The minutes were agreed as a true record.

Matters arising from 14 July 2005

Independent Committee on Examination Standards

2. The Chief Executive, Ken Boston, recommended to members that subject to further discussion with Sir Mike Tomlinson, the Independent Committee on Examination Standards not be continued. The two main reasons for this are:
 - Committee members, Dr Barry McGaw (Chair) and Professor Caroline Gipps are no longer available, and hence the proposed 2005–06 work programme has slipped;
 - the establishment of the Regulation and Standards Division within QCA.
3. Members agreed to this course of action.

National Occupational Standards Board

4. The Chief Executive informed members that it was originally proposed that the QCA should transfer to the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) the levy the QCA collects on NVQs, for the SSDA then to apply in procuring national occupational standards from the Sector Skills Councils and other sector bodies.
5. The Chief Executive advised members that the QCA had received advice from its lawyers that to do this would not be in accordance with the scheme laid down in section 36 of the Education Act 1997 and the Education (QCA Levy) Regulations 2002.
6. Until the statutory scheme has been modified, the Chief Executive proposed that the SSDA take over from the QCA some of the administrative aspects of the funding and procurement of national occupational standards. A draft memorandum of understanding has been prepared by QCA's lawyers and is being negotiated with the SSDA.
7. The Chief Executive informed members that the draft memorandum of understanding should be signed by 23 October 2005.

QCA/DfES risk workshop

8. The Director of Corporate Support, Stephen Goulder, updated members on the QCA/DfES risk workshop that took place at QCA on 6 September 2005. Feedback from both organisations was very positive.
9. Members were informed that further discussion of risk would take place at the QCA/ DfES Senior Management Review Group (SMRG).

QCA location

10. The Director of Corporate Support, Stephen Goulder, reported that preliminary discussions had taken place with the DfES on the location of QCA and it was agreed that a paper setting out options would be presented to the Board at its meeting in March 2006.

Chief Executive's Report

11. The Chief Executive highlighted the key points of his report that had not been covered during the Board away day on Wednesday 28 September and the morning of Thursday 29 September.

Coursework report

12. The Chief Executive reported that the Regulation and Standards division had prepared a report on coursework which raised a number of issues concerning plagiarism and the internet. This report would be published in late October or November 2005.
13. The Director, Regulation and Standards, Isabel Nisbet, informed members that the coursework report focused on current issues while the Qualifications and Skills division had been commissioned to look at future developments of coursework.
14. Members expressed an interest in being closely involved in the work on future developments of coursework.

Tiered assessments

15. The Chief Executive stated that some examination papers were tiered for difficulty in order to most appropriately assess an entire cohort of students whose abilities were markedly different at the extremes. Officers at QCA have been asked to work with the awarding bodies to find alternative approaches to present the results of tiered papers.

Update on negotiations with Pearson/ Edexcel

16. In July 2004 Pearson/Edexcel was awarded a three-year contract to provide test operation services for the national curriculum tests.
17. The Chief Executive informed members that contract discussions with Pearson/ Edexcel were close to conclusion.
18. It was agreed to discuss this further under item F on the development of National Curriculum Test provision.

Agency personnel and consultants

19. The Chairman referred to the financial annexes and expressed concern relating to agency personnel and consultants. He questioned why these posts were not filled with permanent staff and asked that these figures be closely analysed when budgeting for 2006–07.

Structure of the Chief Executive's report

20. The Chief Executive referred to the operational annexes of the report and stated that they had been further refined since the last Board meeting. He recognised that more work was needed to ensure they were more concise.

Report on the delivery of National Curriculum Tests 2005

21. The Managing Director of the National Assessment Agency (NAA), David Gee, presented the paper to the Board and reported that there had been a safe delivery of the 2005 National Curriculum Tests.
22. The presentation focused on the following key areas:
 - delivery of papers to schools;
 - successful marker recruitment;
 - quality of marking improvements for key stage 3 English;
 - results to schools and reviews; and
 - initiatives and improvements for 2006.
23. Members congratulated the NAA on the successful delivery of the 2005 National Curriculum Tests.
24. Peter Housden, DfES, acknowledged the hard work carried out to ensure the safe delivery of the tests and felt that it was a very creditable result for QCA. He encouraged QCA to continue working closely with stakeholders, particularly in the English community, to communicate the progress made this year.
25. David Gee informed members that there was no evidence that the 2006 date for the release of scripts and marks could be brought forward.
26. One option to improve the process was to introduce on-screen marking for key stage 3 English but Pearson/ Edexcel had to demonstrate that they could meet the criteria for on-screen marking. David Gee stated that he would have an update on this by the November Board meeting.

Report on the delivery of A level and GCSE examinations 2005

27. The Managing Director of the NAA, David Gee, presented the paper to the Board and reported that the delivery of all A level and GCSE Examinations was completed to time for 2005.

28. Members were encouraged by the change in the format and timing of the press conference held by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and the safe delivery of scripts between centres, markers and the awarding bodies.
29. Members asked to see data on level 3/ BTEC entries and asked if the GCSE and A level data included adult entries. David Gee agreed to report back at the next meeting.

The development of National Curriculum Test provision

30. The Managing Director of the NAA, David Gee, presented the paper to the Board.
31. David Gee reported that the contract for National Curriculum external marking and data collection was due for re-tender for the 2008 test cycle and the contract for this activity would need to be in place during 2006–07.
32. David Gee summarised options available to the Board at the re-tender point including enhancing support to the current contractor through to opening the market to new players.
33. David Gee proposed a project of three phases:
 - Phase one: analysis of the options available and a strategy proposal;
 - Phase two: production of an Invitation to Tender (ITT) and stimulation of the market;
 - Phase three: administration of the tender process and awarding of the contract.
34. Members agreed to phase one of the project. David Gee agreed to update members on progress at the Board meeting in March 2006.

Contracts over £1million

35. There were two contracts over £1 million presented to the Board.

Optional test and batch mailing distribution services

36. The Board endorsed the requisition.

Development, production and distribution of modified test materials for use by pupils with visual and hearing impairment for 2007–2010

37. The Board approved the competitive tendering of this work.
38. The Chairman expressed concern that the Board were agreeing to the tendering of contracts for up to five years with no clear idea of whether funding would be secured for future years.
39. Peter Housden reassured the Board that most suppliers were aware of how Government-funded contracts operated and QCA Finance Director Arthur Jordan made it clear that all contracts signed by QCA could be cancelled with three months notice.

Delegation of Chairman's financial authority

40. The Chairman informed members that he would be on leave on the date of the next Board meeting. As a result he proposed that, as a standing arrangement, when out of the country or otherwise unavailable to authorise expenditure he would formally assign his financial responsibility to Richard Greenhalgh, the Deputy Chairman of the Board and Nick Stuart, Chairman of the Audit Committee.
41. The Chief Executive added that he was attending a conference in Melbourne, Australia during October and informed the Board that Mary Curnock Cook, Director of Qualifications and Skills would act as Chief Executive.
42. Members agreed to the Chief Executive's recommendation and requested that these arrangements be reviewed on a regular basis.

Contracts over £200,000

43. The Board noted the paper.

Agenda items for future Board meetings

44. It was agreed that the December Board meeting would concentrate on the QCA strategy paper as discussed at the Board away day.

Any other business

45. The Chief Executive informed members that he had received a consultation paper from the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) on the proposals to create an enlarged Ofsted as a single inspectorate for children and learners. The closing date of submissions was 4 November 2005.
46. It was agreed that a paper would be drafted and circulated for Board comments and a submission would be made by the deadline. The paper would then be submitted to the Board for information at its meeting on 10 November.
47. There was no other business.

Dates of remaining meetings in 2005

Thursday 10 November
Thursday 15 December