

**CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE
MANAGEMENT BOARD
MEETING No. 44: THURSDAY 10 MARCH 2016 (12pm – 4pm)
THE ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL, EDINBURGH
NOTE OF MEETING**

ATTENDEES

Management Board Members

Alan Armstrong	Education Scotland (ES)
Janet Brown	Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
Mike Corbett	National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)
Fiona Dalziel	Scottish Secondary Teachers Association (SSTA)
John Edward	Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS)
Larry Flanagan	The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)
Mhairi Harrington	College Development Network (CDN)
Grant Jarvie	Universities Scotland
Alan Johnston	Scottish Government (SG)
Graeme Logan	Education Scotland
Ann MacDonald	Scottish Teacher Education Committee (STEC)
Bill Maxwell	Education Scotland
Ken Muir	General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)
Robert Nicol	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
Neville Prentice	Skills Development Scotland (SDS)
Andy Smith	School Leaders Scotland (SLS)
Fiona Robertson	Scottish Government
Michael Wood	Association of Directors of Education (ADES)

Additional Attendees

Craig Flunkert	Scottish Government
Lorraine Sanda	Scottish Government
Chris Graham	Scottish Government
Liza McLean	Scottish Government
Pauline Walker	Head Teacher, The Royal High School

Apologies

Denise Brock	Education Scotland
Iain Ellis	National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS)
Ann McIntosh	Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland (AHDS)
Bill Miller	Community Learning and Development Manager Group
Susan Quinn	Educational Institute of Scotland
Seamus Searson	Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association
Damien Yeates	Skills Development Scotland

1. Welcome

1.1 Fiona Robertson (FR) welcomed the Management Board to The Royal High School.

2. Apologies / Note & actions from the previous meeting / Matters Arising

2.1 Apologies were noted from Denise Brock, Iain Ellis, Ann McIntosh, Bill Miller, Susan Quinn (substitute: Larry Flanagan), Damien Yeates (substitute: Neville Prentice) and Seamus Searson (substitute: Fiona Dalziel).

2.2 FR invited Alan Johnston to provide a short summary of progress on actions in the December minute. Ken Muir (KM) confirmed that leaflets to teachers from the Reflections process were published at the end of 2015. All other actions were covered under Matters Arising.

2.3 FR invited comments on the Minutes from December and January. Both Minutes were approved.

2.4 FR noted that whilst Governance and the role of Management Board was not included as a specific agenda item, Scottish Government have been working on options including a strategic advisory role for any future Board. FR stated that an agenda item on Governance would be brought to the next meeting.

3. CfE Implementation Update

2016 Diet: Education Scotland Update

3.1 Bill Maxwell (BM) introduced Paper 1. BM confirmed:

- that the CfE Implementation Group held a productive discussion the previous week about wider policy developments and their implication for the CfE Implementation Plan 2016/17, and;
- the Group are now taking full account of Developing the Young Workforce and the National Improvement Framework, in particular the work around CfE levels

3.2 BM confirmed that the Implementation Group are planning to hold an additional meeting in March to discuss developments in secondary curriculum structures.

3.3 FR noted that it will be important for the CfE Management Board to be sighted on the CfE Implementation Plan, with a particular focus on the aspects of the plan relating to Assessment and Qualifications. FR asked that the next meeting of the Management Board focus on progress against the 2015/16 Implementation Plan.

Action: Education Scotland to provide the June Management Board meeting with an analysis of progress against the 2015/16 CfE Implementation Plan.

2016 Diet: Scottish Qualifications Authority update

3.4 Janet Brown (JB) provided an update as follows:

- Status of the 2016 Diet is currently at amber – but this is not unusual at this stage in the timetable.
- All advanced Higher questions papers were completed on time and are now undergoing Quality Assurance.
- March assignment markers now in place.
- April assignments require additional markers but SQA are confident that markers will be in place.
- Diet is fully staffed.
- Some issues in relation to marker availability for the sciences, but this is being addressed with new marker requests coming in on a daily basis.
- System modifications are on track.
- Daily reports on progress are being considered by SQA management team.
- If necessary, SQA have escalation mechanisms in place, but foresee no need to use those mechanisms at the current time.

3.5 Michael Wood (MW) asked what would trigger a change in status from amber to red. JB confirmed that there are a series of triggers, with milestones reviewed at monthly SQA staff meetings.

3.6. Fiona Dalziel asked about specific challenges in the marking of assignments in graphic communication. JB confirmed that SQA are looking at the nature of assignments in graphic communication.

SQA Presentation: Review of National Course Design and Assessment

3.7 JB provided a presentation on the Review of National Course Design. JB confirmed that SQA is gathering a range of evidence to inform the review of the design of National Courses and their assessment. This includes thematic reviews, fieldwork visits and the findings of the National Qualification Support Teams. Summary points from the presentation were as follows:

- Many centres are now revisiting their BGE structures – candidates should be secure at CfE fourth level before beginning National 5.
- Presentation patterns: evidence of whole cohort presentation for National 5 and the continued use of the Added Value Unit for secure National 5 candidates.
- Recognition that unit assessment plays an integral part in the new National Qualifications and that SQA has recognised the issues in this regard and are addressing as a priority for action.
- Recognition that SQA requires to streamline the provision of information for teachers.

3.8 JB highlighted potential ways forward which include:

- consideration and resolution of general issues;
- qualifications can refined in keeping with original design principles driven by Curriculum for Excellence, and;
- possible requirement for review of original Qualifications Design Principles.

3.9 FR invited AJ to provide a short update on the work of the Assessment and Qualifications Group. AJ confirmed that the group are looking to conclude their first phase of work in the coming weeks, with the next meeting of the Group due to be held in week beginning 14th March. The Group's initial conclusions will be shared with the Management Board and with Ministers.

3.10 Management Board members provided the following reflections:

- Larry Flanagan (LF) stated that there is strong consensus around the original ambitions of Curriculum for Excellence, with significant progress in primary and further progress to be made in secondary sector (for example, ending the “two term dash” to National 5, the need to create further space for the significant learning, the need to improve the connection between BGE and senior phase). He added that the group has further to go to achieve the reduction in bureaucracy sought by union members.
- Mike Corbett (MC) confirmed that his organisation agreed with SQA about the main challenges but there are some differences about the timing of when to address the issues. For example, there is a need to address concerns about capable students undertaking too many “added value units” and some challenges around parental perceptions of National 4.
- BM emphasised that it is important to communicate with schools to address some of the key myths highlighted in the SQA presentation.
- Mairi Harrington (MH) said that it's important for the Management Board to protect the necessary time and space to ensure that BGE is treated as the main strategic priority for the Board.
- Ken Muir (KM) suggested that there may be a role for the Curriculum Forums to address some of the issues raised in the SQA presentation.

3.11 FR thanked Board members for their contributions and noted that the Qualifications and Assessment Group will provide its initial conclusions in the coming weeks. Management Board would consider the next steps at its next meeting (June 2016).

Action: Qualifications and Assessment Group to provide its interim report in March and to report back to the next meeting of the Management Board in June 2016.
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4. Introduction to The Royal High School

4.1 Pauline Walker (PW) provided a short introduction to the Royal High School.

5. Discussion session with young people (S5-S6)

5.1 The Board separated into 4 groups, joining with small groups of young people from S5 and S6. Annex A provides a summary of the key points from the discussions.

6. National Improvement Framework

6.1 Graeme Logan (GL) and Lorraine Sanda provided a short update on progress with the NIF:

- Work is underway around data collection for 2016, based on what is available from existing data sources.
- A key challenge is in relation to the collection of data on CfE levels.
- There is a desire to simplify the guidance, rationalising into shorter, sharper guidance.
- A draft letter has been produced from the Fiona Robertson regarding data collection arrangements for next year. LS stated that the NIF team are keen to receive suggestions on the letter and the broader package to local authorities.

6.2 LF commented that teacher professional judgement is one of the most significant aspects of the NIF and that moderation needs to be profiled more highly than standardised assessment. LF added that guidance documents need to move away from the concept that achievement of a level is a plateau, and that the Scottish Government and Education Scotland team need to continue to take care around the language used in the documentation. GL confirmed that the NIF Team are keen to minimise any misunderstandings regarding priorities and language, hence the desire to seek Management Board views.

6.3 MC confirmed that he is content with the majority of the NIF documentation, though there are some aspects where their views diverge. Examples include the policy/approach regarding Freedom of Information (FOI), concerns about workload impacts on teachers and concerns around creating an impression that curricular areas beyond literacy/numeracy are being afforded a lower priority.

6.4 GL confirmed that one of the key reasons for the focus on literacy/numeracy (beyond them being core areas of the curriculum and key priorities for CfE) is to avoid over-burdening teachers. GL stated that Education Scotland is keen to retain the principle of holistic teacher judgement.

6.5 In response to a query from MW, GL confirmed that teachers would be asked to provide data on achievement all the way to the end of term in June, with the data expected to reach Scottish Government by August/September.

6.6 Robert Nicol (RN) noted that the impact of the NIF will begin to be borne out by the end of 2016.

6.7 FR concluded by confirming that the NIF dashboard will reflect all of the NIF drivers and not simply the assessment/attainment data. FR noted the general consensus about the direction of travel but a need to ensure that the subtleties of language are reflected in the documentation and guidance

Action: Education Scotland and Scottish Government team to consider comments from the Board and update the NIF letter and guidance documents accordingly.
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7. OECD Review

7.1 Liza McLean (LM) introduced the paper by stating that the Scottish Government team were keen to return to the Board following the workshop discussion session in January. LM confirmed that the OECD expert team are keen to continue to be involved as the Scottish Government and partners take account of their recommendations.

7.2 FR directed the Board to page 6 in the paper which contained six key bullet points on the next steps following the January workshop session.

7.3 LF emphasised the importance of providing a balanced perspective in any papers and plans, implementing the OECD recommendations in the round and not simply those recommendations relating to standardised assessment and data.

7.4 The Board discussed the “leading from the middle” recommendation and the question of whether this means a model which empowers teachers, or one which empowers the middle layer of governance (i.e. local authorities). The Group noted the challenges involved in moving away from an approach that is driven from national organisations. FR noted that the new regional partnerships between local authorities provide a potential solution to strengthening the role of local authorities vis-à-vis national organisations.

7.5 The Board noted the importance of the recommendations in relation to the CfE narrative, with FR noting that the key challenge will be to develop a narrative which engaged with parents and young people. MC noted that the language used in any new narrative will be crucial, with a key priority the need to develop language which is meaningful and clear to parents. MC welcomed the focus on implementing the recommendations in relation to research.

7.6 In relation to collaborative professional leadership (paragraph 7 in the paper), MH commented that the implementation of the recommendations carried potential for some excellent collaborative learning between early years, primary, secondary and further/higher education. MH stated that the focus should be on the skills needed throughout the learner journey, not simply one part of that journey. KM added that the collaboration should not simply be with one organisation or group of professional but with several. KM pointed to the new issue of Teaching Scotland magazine which contained a comprehensive article from Mark Priestley (Stirling University) on options for the new narrative.

7.7 BM stated that it will be important for Education Scotland to continue with its efforts to re-focus on brokering and facilitating collaborative learning between schools rather than producing central guidance and documentation.

7.8 JB stated that it would be important to provide a proportionate mechanism to monitor whether teachers are taking on a greater professional leadership role. It is not sufficient to simply state the intention and step back. LF stated that Professional Update and other reforms are intended to create the space for teachers to develop their professional leadership capacity, and this is vitally important.

7.9 LM and Chris Graham (CG) concluded by thanking the Board. They confirmed that the OECD Team will return in June and the aim will be to engage with OECD colleagues on Scotland's follow up plan to the review.

Action: Scottish Government Team to take account of MB comments in shaping the detailed OECD follow-up plan.

8. Assessment and Qualifications

8.1 Covered under items 4 and 6.

9. Curriculum Developments

9.1 The paper on curriculum developments was noted by the Board.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 None.

11. Close and date/venue of next meeting

Next meeting: Wednesday 8th June 2016
Venue To be confirmed

*Learning Directorate
Scottish Government
March 2016*

Annex A: Summary of discussion sessions with young people

Pupil Team 1

- Potential for S3 to provide better preparation for timed exam situations.
- Some felt there has been insufficient time for independent learning in the senior phase.
- A feeling that there is a persistent divide between vocational and non-vocational.
- Big leap between Higher and Advanced Higher – less study time, large amount of individual time.
- A feeling that National 4 is under-valued and not as well recognised as it could be.
- Frustration at modern languages being treated as solely an academic subject rather than a mix of academic/life skill.
- A desire for a larger number of subject choices at Higher.
- A need for more guidance on skills pathways.
- A need to work even harder to shift the focus away from “pure results” and onto broader learning.

Pupil Team 2

- Some felt there was a lack of challenge in S1-S3.
- Relatively smooth transition from S3 into S4 but a need for greater emphasis on exam technique in BGE.
- Choices not always as well supported as they might have been – better quality careers guidance needed.
- “This year’s 5th year” received much better support – big strides taken by the school and Head-teacher.
- General feeling that assessment has taken greater priority over learning. This could be stressful at times, teachers sometimes “learning on the go”.
- “Old Higher” to new Higher was a major shift.
- A feeling that National 5 is effective in setting young people up for the new Highers.
- Assignments were sometimes too specific.
- Enjoyed the challenge of senior phase, feeling more confident as there was a gradual “build up” to exams.
- More formative assessment is needed.
- A feeling there is a hierarchy of subjects with some not taken as seriously as others.

Pupil Team 3

- Some concerns at the scale of the jump between N5 and Higher in particular subjects (sciences, maths both mentioned specifically).
- Some disruption to learning with teachers leaving.
- Concern at Highers being delivered over two years as it appears it largely involves repeating in year two what has already been covered in year one.
- Feeling that National 5 exams prepare young people well for tackling Highers.

- Frustration at no point in doing National 4 unit assessments when also doing National 5 (lack of fall-back situation).
- School uses unit assessments at level C but then supplements these with additional level A/B questions to extend/challenge pupils.
- Concerns expressed at the added demands of completing folios, assignments, etc...at this time of year. The period following the prelims up until Easter particularly stressful.
- Pupils felt that prelims were helpful and a valuable indicator of likely performance.
- Concern that timetabling arrangements for pupils following some college courses means that they lose out on teaching time in some subjects they still study at school.
- Limited use of Heriot Watt University SCHOLAR materials.
- Concern expressed that some Advanced Higher course aren't able to run owing to small uptake numbers in school.

Pupil Team 4

- Strong support for more open choice columns in relation to subject choices
- Appreciated the extra time and work provided by teachers.
- Issues around the clarity of unit assessments vs exams – for instance, some did not realise that they could pass their unit assessment on the basis of class work.
- The 2 year route to Higher could be intimidating.
- Curriculum for Excellence was a new development for the school, greater emphasis on technology.