

**Educational Research Centre  
MEETING OF THE BOARD  
13<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

A meeting of the Board of the Educational Research Centre (ERC) was held on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2018 at the offices of the organisation.

**Board Members Present:**

Pauric Travers (PT), Denise Burns (DB) , Edward Murtagh (EM)

**In Attendance:**

Jude Cosgrove (JC), Anne Comey (AC) who took the minutes

**Absent:** Prof Michael Martin (MM)

**Counsel Present:** N/A

**Call to Order**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 3.00 pm.

The Agenda was adopted (Appendix I).

**1. Minutes BMin – 0918**

The minutes of the last meeting were adopted and signed.

**2. Matters arising from previous minutes**

AC informed the Board that John Harper (Curriculum, Assessment and Policy, CAP) has indicated that as of Nov 13, correspondence concerning pension and payroll issues had not been sent to DCU and this is being followed up by CAP. The issue is urgent/critical and unless resolved soon, there is a risk that ERC payroll will not be processed in January.

No other matters arose from previous minutes that were not covered anywhere else on the agenda.

**3. Report on developments since previous meeting (See Appendix II)**

JC presented the Board with all updates relevant to projects, and all other matters were dealt with under other headings in this agenda.

**4. Governance matters**

Bequest: Revenue confirmed that they would allow tax exemption on the basis that the use of the bequest was for charitable purpose. ERC needs to advise the Department of Education and skills (DES) of the addition to the assets and decide how to proceed with keeping/selling paintings.

CPU section of DES visited ERC on Nov 9<sup>th</sup> and a number of urgent matters were addressed:

- Changes to the Statutory Instruments (SI) to incorporate the ERC in the bodies falling under the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA) are pending – these and any other changes e.g. charitable status required, will be requested at the same time, likely in Q1 2020 – for now, ERC will act in accordance with this legislation.
- Ethics Acts to be updated to include ERC – CPU to pursue.
- CPU to follow up on charitable status and understands that not having charitable status incurs several difficulties.
- CPU also to clarify correct procedure for underspend in consultation with CAP. Likely scenario is that underspend will be used during Q1 of following year.
- ERC to follow up pension and payroll issue again with CAP – now passed to Ruth Carmody. CPU understands the urgency of these matters.
- A meeting is planned later in Nov with Alan Wall and Harold Hislop (date to be confirmed) to discuss broader strategic and governance issues.

## **5. Policies (For discussion or review)**

### a. Child Protection Policy (B6-18-1)

Adopted by the Board provided the policy includes mention that the policy will be brought to attention of new employees during induction.

### b. Anti-Fraud policy (B-6-18-9)

Adopted by the Board providing inclusion of Chair of the ARC in Fraud Response Panel (as 3<sup>rd</sup> person).

### c. Terms of reference – Audit and Risk Committee

The Board confirmed that no changes to the terms of reference were required at this time.

## **6. 2016 Financial Statement (FS), Management Letter and Annual Report (B6-10-18 and B6-18-11)**

The Board confirmed that it will approve the 2017 financial statement re-draft, subject to no material changes. The Chair and the CEO to sign the accounts once they have been approved by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG).

The 2016 annual report is under review with CAP and, following receipt of comments, will be published on the ERC website.

The 2017 annual report will be reviewed by Central Policy Unit (CPU) section of the C&AG.

ERC's contact in the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) has changed and arrangements have been made for the 2018 accounts audit to start on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2019.

The ERC is awaiting the final version of the C&AG management letter and comments on the 2017 Financial Statement.

## **7. Risk Management (Recurring item)**

Information Technology (IT), Health and Safety (H&S), and financial internal controls audits have taken place. Reports for H&S and IT have been issued to the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) for review. The ERC is awaiting the report on the Financial internal controls audit, which will be issued to the Board before year end for review.

On the basis of these reports and of the divisional risk assessments carried out (Projects, Data Protection, H&S, and the 2016 Internal Controls review by the C&AG), the ERC will issue a Strategic Risk Register for review by the ARC in Q1 2019. This will feed into the work programme for 2019 and subsequent years.

## **8. Staffing (B-5-18-4)**

Following various discussions and meeting with CPU:

- The ERC received sanction for making 4 positions permanent (3 Associates and 1 Assistant), as well as sanction for 1 Research Associate for PISA.
- The ERC is awaiting sanction for 2 Research Associate vacancies created by Research Fellow appointment.

The ERC and CPU have discussed the need for regular contacts with DES in relation to staffing in general and are in the process of putting a system in place (via an organisation chart and spreadsheet) for quicker sanctions.

Recent updates are:

- An ad for Research Associate (and panel) has been issued and the recruitment is in process. Interviews to take place on Nov 15 and 16. The panel created on foot of this recruitment campaign will remain for one year.
- Five research assistants are on temporary contracts (expiring between Dec 2018 and Sept 2019) and two research associate positions remain unfilled. There is also lack of clarity on sanction for fifth research fellow post.
- These and other staffing issues were discussed with Neville Kenny (CPU) on Fri Nov 9. ERC has been assured that responses to the issues raised will be provided on or before December 3.

The Board noted that until these issues are resolved, there are no staff available to work on new DES projects and that the relevant sections of DES have been informed of this.

The ERC is meeting with Institute of Public Administration (IPA) to scope the independent review of staffing on November 12<sup>th</sup> which will serve as the basis for the staffing element of the Strategic Plan (SP).

## **9. Strategic Plan (SP)**

A draft plan was issued by JC.

The ERC is to procure external advice on the SP following consultation with staff and stakeholders.

Staff consultation will take place on December 4<sup>th</sup>. Consultations with the DES will take place on December 3<sup>rd</sup> and in February and a first draft SP is to be issued to the Board. A second draft will issue at the end of February for final approval on March 6<sup>th</sup>.

The SP will need to incorporate other stakeholder views. Given the tight timeline, it is planned to include stakeholder consultation on assessment and dissemination/reporting within strategic plan itself.

#### **10. Appointment and replacement of Board and ARC Member**

CPU is advancing the Board vacancy and needs to submit a note to Minister's office regarding Ministerial discretion: CPU is aware that this is urgent, that the Board member should be female, and that financial expertise would be a priority.

The appointment for the Board and the ARC member will be dealt with conjointly provided financial expertise is sought.

#### **11. AOB**

Dates for the 2019 were agreed as follows:

13 February 2019

6 March 2019

1 May 2019

26 June 2019

25 September 2019

4 December 2019

## **Appendix 1**

### **EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE Board Meeting 13 November 2018 Agenda**

1. Minutes of meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018 (Bmin-618)
2. Matters arising from the minutes
3. Report on developments since previous meeting
4. Governance matters
5. Policies (For discussion or review)
  - d. Child Protection Policy (B7-18-01)
  - e. Anti-Fraud policy (B-7-18-02)
6. 2017 Financial Statement, Annual Report 2016 and 2017 and management letter for 2016 FS
7. Risk Management (Recurring item)
8. Staffing
9. Strategic Plan (Recurring item) (B7-18-03)
10. Appointment and replacement of Board and ARC Member
11. AOB

## **Appendix 2**

### **Report on developments since previous meeting, November 13, 2018**

*Progress and activity report since previous meetings of Sept 12, 2018*

#### **Staffing (update to be provided under item 8)**

- Sanction has been given to recruit for one new research associate position for PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2021. Interviews to take place on Nov 15 and 16.
- Panel, to remain for one year, is to be established on foot of this recruitment.
- Four temporary staff have been made permanent.
- ERC and CPU continue to work on outstanding urgent staffing issues.
  
- Meeting with Institute of Public Administration (IPA) to scope the independent review of staffing took place on Nov 12.

#### **Risk and audit (update to be provided under ARC item 6)**

- Health & Safety audit completed
- IT audit completed
- Financial audit underway
- Project risk status improved
- ERC level risk register is under development
- Current risks were discussed with Audit and Risk Committee and major risks are discussed under other agenda items.

#### **Legal and Finance (update to be provided under item 4)**

- Revenue has confirmed that ERC does not need to pay tax on bequest.
- Changes to the Statutory Instruments (SI) to incorporate Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA) pending – for now, ERC will act in accordance with this legislation.
- CPU to follow up on charitable status and understands that not having charitable status incurs several difficulties.
- CPU also to clarify correct procedure for underspend in consultation with Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP).

#### **Governance and Strategy**

- The Department of Education and Skills (DES) is to develop a new statement of Strategy by March 2019 and this will be accompanied by annual action plan. ERC is to identify and submit actions for implementation in 2019 by Nov 23.
- JC attended one day IPA training on corporate governance Sept 27. Arising from this, the support of IPA for conducting independent staffing review and developing strategic plan has been secured.
- AC attended IPA training on internal audits in November, with further training later in the month.
- ERC to follow up pension and payroll issue again with CAP –CPU understands urgency of these matters.
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- 2016 annual report to be signed off by CAP, 2017 annual report to be signed off by CPU.

- DES governance meeting confirmed for Dec 3 2018 and late Feb 2019.
- There will be a staff wide consultation on strategy Dec 4 and a meeting with DES on this topic Dec 3.
- CPU is advancing the Board vacancy and needs to submit a note to Minister's office regarding Ministerial discretion.

### **Project related meetings and activity**

- CPU is to draft an outline of how project planning across the sections of the DES is to occur from 2019 onwards and send to ERC for review
- RASG (Resource Allocation Support Group) – meeting of Oct 3 (JC and David Millar (DM)) where the revised model was presented. The group agreed to revisit the weightings given to the various components of the model for 2019-2020. New model to be finalised Q1 2019.
- DEIS / NAMER (Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools) / (National Assessment of Mathematics and English Reading) – meeting Oct 15 (JC, Susan Weir, Suzanne Dillon, Mary Cregg and Susan Mulhall) to confirm 'marriage' of the two studies. Inclusion of separate stratum for rural DEIS has been costed. NAMER 2020 will be paper-based. DES expectations for DEIS evaluation activities in 2019 remain unclear.
- Standardised testing –
  - The transition period (old-new tests, paper-online) represents a risk in the sense that the sales of tests are impossible to predict and CPU has been informed of this. All ERC staff involved in testing to meet Nov 29.
  - The standardization of the post-primary SAR (Spatial and Abstract Reasoning) module, which will be made available as an additional module with the DRT (Drumcondra Reasoning Test), is currently in progress.
  - Transfer of the paper-based test of Irish reading for Second years in Irish-medium schools (standardized in 2013) from paper to the DOTS system (to be available in Spring 2019) and ditto for maths test; Translation of the new primary mathematics tests to Irish, to be made available on paper (First to Sixth classes) and computer (Third to Sixth classes) from Spring 2019.
  - Two parallel pieces of development work are in progress: scoring templates for 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> class online tests and update of norms for paper-based primary tests (existing system).
  - ERC staff have attended five conferences in September-October to promote the new tests at both primary and post-primary. Multiple drop-in sessions in education centres scheduled for Q4 2018 and Q1 2019.
  - An article on DOTS (Drumcondra Online Testing System) and the new primary tests will be appearing in the November issue of the IPPN's (Irish Primary Principals' Network's) *Leadership+* magazine.
  - Some internal discussions have been held on pricing for the new primary tests (both online and paper). This will be finalized soon and are contingent on decisions about scoring programme.
  - An information brochure will be sent to all primary schools in Q1 2019. DES has been contacted regarding grant aid for post-primary testing and any plans for a circular on standardised testing.
  - Representatives from school management software at primary and post-primary levels have made contact with the ERC, indicating interest in the possibility of integrating Drumcondra test scoring and reporting into their systems. Our understanding is that this would likely be seen as a positive development by schools.

- CPD (Continuing Professional Development) wellbeing – ERC met with DES Oct 23 (JC and SW) and have provided observation on draft Terms of Reference (ToR). Project plan submitted to DES Oct 31. Advisory group meeting Dec 14.
- DLF (Digital Learning Framework) evaluation – Terms of Reference have been drawn up and sent to DES Oct 25. Baseline survey to all schools attending national seminars from Nov 5 onwards.
- Gaeltacht recognition evaluation – meeting with DES Oct 25 (JC and Gerry Shiel) to try to establish ToR for the study (2019-2022). ToR drafted and is under review by DES (sent Nov 2); budget estimates based on Inspectorate sample data to be sent to DES this week.
- NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service) standardised assessment: budget drafted and ToR to be developed.
- IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) General Assembly – Astana Oct 9-12 – included progress reports on all IEA studies and workshops to suggest ways to improve the studies in terms of policy and teacher relevance – lots of discussion of measurement of non-cognitive factors and qualitative methods - also some discussions on GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) ERC submitted business case and costings to DES regarding ICCS (International Civic and Citizenship education Study) 2022 but decision is not to participate (Oct 30). ERC is disappointed about this decision.
- PISA – PGB (PISA Governing Board) Nov 5-7, Prague – issues raised by Ireland included GDPR for PISA 2021, mathematics framework, innovative domain (costing and reliability), and trends in SES (socioeconomic status) measurement.
- PISA 2021 – international options are student ICT, student wellbeing and parent questionnaire (ERC had proposed not to participate in parent questionnaire).
- PIRLS 2021 –ERC NRC (National Research Co-ordinator) now identified – meeting in Taiwan early Dec – likely to be full computer-based assessment (previously, a combination of paper and electronic assessment was expected but this is now off the table)
- PIAAC (Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies)– meeting with CSO (Central Statistics Office) and DES Nov 22 and PIAAC Governing Board meeting Nov 26-27. A priority will be to ensure that a similar approach to GDPR as PISA is taken with PIAAC.
- Logfile symposium – Dec 10-11 with three ERC staff attending, plans and funding confirmed for conference and workshop late May 2019.
- ERC project managers meeting Oct 22 – improvements to project status reporting to better assess and monitor risk were discussed and to be implemented at next status update.

### **Reports/Publications**

- Three DEIS publications expected/completed by end Q4 2018: *A survey of Home-School-Community Liaison Coordinators in primary and post-primary schools (published Nov 1); evaluation of DEIS at post-primary level: update on trends over time in achievement and retention; Achievement in the Junior Certificate Examination: Trends in DEIS and non-DEIS schools (article).*
- DLF trial final evaluation report – published Oct 22 as part of PDST TiE (Technology in Education) shared learning day which included a presentation by JC and AW.
- ERC Research Series 5 – secondary analysis of ICT at home and school – submitted to DES for final review.
- Transition year: review of research on Transition Year, and issues arising, at the request of the NCCA as part of their review of the Senior Cycle; article accepted by *British Journal of Educational Psychology* for publication Q4 2018/Q1 2019; article accepted by *Educational*



*Psychology* expected for publication Q4, 2018; ERC report on *The Transition Year experience* to be published Q4 2018/Q1 2019

- Irish Journal of Education, Vol. 43 (2018) should be ready to go to print in early 2019. Includes article that reviews Tom Kellaghan's contributions to educational research.
- PISA 2015 Thematic Report – Home background, Student wellbeing and science performance should be ready for the first quarter of 2019.
- Content of ERC website is to be updated by end Q4. Relatively minor structural and design changes may continue into Q1 2019.