

**Educational Research Centre
MEETING OF THE BOARD
20 February 2020**

A meeting of the Board of the Educational Research Centre (ERC) was held on 20 February 2020 at the offices of the organisation.

Board Members Present:

Pauric Travers (PT), Chairperson; Michael Martin (MM) (Via Skype Link); Edward Murtagh (EM)

In Attendance:

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

Absent: Denise Burns (DB), Deputy Chairperson

Counsel Present: N/A

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 3.30 pm.

The Agenda was adopted (Appendix I).

1. Minutes BMin (Bmin-1219)

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed and signed.

2. Conflict of Interest

A new conflict of interest register was created following up from internal control audit finding in September and the matter included as a recurring item.

No conflict of interests were raised.

3. Matters arising from previous minutes

- There was no feedback from the DES on the Gap Analysis provided in Q4 2019.
- The matter of timing of the 5 yearly Critical Review was clarified with the C&AG who confirmed that it did not expect same until 2021 (5 years from appointment of first board).
- Clarification on of what critical review might include is required and the Board will need to consider what it wants to achieve.

There were no other matters arising not discussed under subsequent headings.

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

5. Governance matters (B-1-20-1 and B-1-20-2)

Updates were provided by JC and AC on the following items:

- Transition agreement follow up: JC and AC met with Declan Raftery, Director of Operations, and Éamonn Cuggy, Head of Finance in DCU to discuss various matters including pensions and lease on ERC main building. The meeting was very constructive and ERC and DCU will start working towards an agreement. The matter of pensions remains complex, as a number of issues rest with the DES/Higher Education Authority (HEA).
- Discussion on pensions with Central Policy Unit (CPU): this item is under legal review within the DES. This remains a high-risk item. A pension update is due with pensions Authority on Feb 28.
- The payroll has been successfully externalised since January 2020. However data prior to 2020 and 2020 data are not yet available via Quantum software within the ERC and further discussions with DCU and the payroll provider will be required before the matter is fully resolved.

The Board Secretary confirmed that:

- Ethics reports had been received from all relevant parties and that the originals (for Board members only) will be sent to Standards in Office Commission.
- The Protected disclosure report for 2020 was available and would be published on the ERC website after the meeting. There were no protected disclosures to report in 2019.
- An updated purchase order was issued for the legal costs attached to the procurement of online assessment following correspondence issued to the Board members in December 2019 and their respective approval.

Copies of the draft Performance Delivery Agreement for 2020 and Output statement for 2019 issued to the DES in January 2020 were presented to the Board.

JC and AC have the next governance meeting with CPU in the ERC on 5 March 2020.

6. Finance (B-1-20-3/4/5/6)

The Board noted the budget allocated to the ERC by the DES for 2020.

The Board noted that the drawdown issued by the DES in December allowed for the reserves proposed by the ERC and agreed by the DES.

The draft SIC, Governance Statement, Draft pension Actuarial Valuation and draft Financial Statement for 2019 were presented to the Board and approved. It was noted that some amendments were required to the FS 2019. The Board agreed to review the draft remotely and approve the FS 2019 by email. This will be minuted in the next Board meeting.

Due to the work required on closing the Financial Year 2020, I&E figures for Q1 2020 will be presented to the Board at its next meeting in March instead of an I&E statement for January.

7. Policies and procedures (B-1-20-7/8)

The Equality and Respect policy and Safety Statement were approved by the Board. In relation to the H&S Statement, some minor edits were noted for consistency of language, but the content was approved.

8. Risk Management (Recurring item) (B-1-20-9/11)

The Board reviewed the Risk register and noted the concerns of the ERC in relation to the formalisation of risk reporting and the need to for the process to be reviewed and streamlined. The Board approved further training on the matter and agreed that the Q4 audit of same should help consolidate the process.

An update was provided on the current issues with the supply of online assessments (the Board noted that the DES is kept informed of the situation).

An update was provided to the Board on the current online assessment procurement exercise and a review of costs for same was also provided.

The Board confirmed receipt of the Report on 2019 activities from the ARC.

9. Self-Assessment (B-1-20-10)

There was delay in issuing these before end 2019 and therefore some of the assessments are still pending. These will be collected and reviewed and findings reported on at the next meeting

10. Staffing

The draft business case for additional administration staff and an IT Manager which is to be submitted to CPU was presented to the Board. Board invited to provide comments prior to its submission. The IT manager's case is based on input from BM.

The Board was notified that a Research Associate was granted a career break for work at the OECD for around 1 year, commencing April 2020.

The Board was also informed of the resignation of the two Research Assistants working on the Gaeltacht recognition study; this leaves the project at risk, but, following sanction from DES, recruitment is underway in response to these resignations and the career break.

11. AOB

There being no further business the meeting concluded.

Appendix 1

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dawn Smith", is positioned to the right of the "Appendix 1" heading.

**EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE
Board Meeting
20 February 2020
Agenda**

1. Minutes of meeting of 4 December 2020 (Bmin-6-1219)
2. Conflict of Interest
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. Report on developments since previous meeting
5. Governance matters (B-1-20-1 and B-1-20-2)
6. Finance (B-1-20-3/4/5/6)
7. Policies and procedures (B-1-20-7/8)
8. Risk Management (Recurring item) (B-1-20-9/11)
9. Self-Assessment (B-1-20-10)
10. Staffing
11. AOB