

**Educational Research Centre  
MEETING OF THE BOARD  
25 September 2019**

A meeting of the Board of the Educational Research Centre (ERC) was held on 25 September 2019 at the offices of the organisation.

**Board Members Present:**

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

**In Attendance:**

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

**Absent:** N/A

**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 (Bmin-0919)**

The minutes of the last meeting were adopted and signed.

**2. Matters arising from previous minutes**

- Update was issued to the Board on contacts with CPU during the period. (Difficulties in establishing governance meeting date and communicating generally with CPU during August and September.)
- ERC still waiting on guidelines for dealing with surplus or unspent funds.
- Issue with payroll/pensions and meeting with Department of Education and Skills (DES) / Dublin City University (DCU) still pending feedback from CPU (Central Policy Unit).
- ERC has procured the services of an external consultant to issue pension statements to staff following correspondence from the Pensions Authority. The consultant is working on issuing statements for 2015/2016/2017 and 2018 by the end of October 2019.
- Changes requested by the Board to the AR (annual report) 2019 have been carried out.

**3. Report on developments since previous meeting**

(See Appendix II)

#### **4. Governance matters (B-5-19-1)**

- Alan Wall is leaving his role as head of CPU at end of October. Replacement not yet named.
- Purchase order authorised by Board for Legal costs.
- Potential alternative solutions for Library access are being investigated with other education authorities.
- CPU have now come back with comments for 2017 and 2018 AR.

#### **5. Finance (B-5-19-2)**

- The final version of the FS was reviewed by the ARC and following its recommendations approved by the Board by email on 05/07/2019. Significant changes to the Statement of Internal Control (SIC) had to be made. It is expected that, with the internal audit function now up and running, this won't be an issue in 2020 for the audit of the 2019 FS.
- The FS, SIC and Chair report to the Minister were signed off on 12/07/19.
- The Board reviewed the C&AG Management Letter and recommendations from the ARC and approved the proposed responses.
- The Board took note of the recommendation of the ARC to issue correspondence to CPU in relation to high risk matters arising from the Management letter.
- The Board expressed its concerns for the lack of updates on matters awaiting DES feedback and will issue letter to CPU accordingly.

#### **6. Policies and Terms of reference (B-5-19-3)**

The Board requested amendments to the Senior Management Team policy and will review at the next meeting.

#### **7. Risk Management (Recurring item) (B-5-19-4)**

- The Board was informed of the current risks with the online assessment and the current procurement exercise.
- An update on data protection matters relating to 2019 and 2020 projects was issued to the Board.
- ERC is waiting approval from DPER Re IT expenses before procurement for PISA and PIRLS 2020 items can start. The delays on this create a risk that the items won't be procured in time for the field trials in 2020.
- The procurement for internal audit services has been delayed due to the fact that the OGP framework is due for renewal.

## 8. Staffing

- A business case for IT/deputy CEO and admin staff was submitted to CPU in July. No response have been received yet. The Board was especially supportive of the Deputy CEO post which it feels is essential to providing relief from the CEO workload which is currently unsustainable.
- Staff training: In response to performance appraisals and training needs, staff training in Access, Adobe CC, Project Management and People Management was offered during Q3.
- Mid year appraisals were completed by the end of August.
- A research Fellow with Methodology expertise left at the end of August. SD is now responsible for some strands of the work having been appointed at Associate level following interview for his replacement. A replacement Research Assistant is being sought and interviews will take place on Sept 26th.

## 9. AOB

Provisional dates for Board meetings for 2020 were agreed as follows:

- 20/02/2020
- 31/03/2020
- 27/05/2020
- 30/06/2020
- 16/09/2020
- 02/12/2020

There being no further business requiring their presence, JC and AC withdrew from the meeting which concluded shortly after.

*Pauline John*  
4 December 2019

## Appendix 1

### EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

#### Board Meeting

**25 September 2019**

#### Agenda

1. Minutes of meeting of 19 June 2019 (Bmin-4-0619)

2. Matters arising from the minutes

3. Report on developments since previous meeting

4. Governance matters (B-5-19-1)

5. Finance (B-5-19-2)

6. Policies and Terms of Reference (B-5-19-3)

7. Risk Management (Recurring item) (B-5-19-4)

8. Staffing

9. AOB

## Appendix 2 Report on developments since previous meeting

- Developments since the previous meeting (item 3)
  - a. Standardised testing: The ERC submitted a short strategy document to DES outlining its position on standardised testing in late August, to contribute to a broader DES-led strategy. ERC has also provided costings for standardised testing (both paper and online) and has suggested that DES review the administration of its standardised testing grant at primary level. DES plans to hold a meeting with ERC, Inspectorate and NCCA to progress this strategy. Date TBC.
  - b. Online testing development work: Procurement via open dialogue has begun for the new integrated online assessment system.
  - c. NEPS test standardisation training completed, fieldwork in progress as planned.
  - d. CPD wellbeing progress with the literature review proceeding as planned, although library access has been a significant obstacle. The survey sample has been drawn and survey development commencing. The literature review is due for publication in Q1 2020 and the survey of principals and teachers will also be administered during Q1 2020.
  - e. DLF evaluation is also progressing as planned with baseline report planned for end Q4. Longitudinal survey development nearing completion.
  - f. Gaeltacht school recognition scheme evaluation proceeding as planned (surveys and test development work underway).
  - g. TIMSS 2019: Data submission has been delayed due to non-signing of contract with IEA; negotiations are in progress and ongoing. Current risk of non-inclusion of Ireland in initial draft reporting at NRC meeting in December.
  - h. NAMER 2020: Preparations for the main study are underway as planned. The DEIS and NAMER teams are collaborating to manage the larger than normal size of the study. A current focus of the work is the finalisation of the questionnaires. A member of SIU has joined the advisory committee, which is due to meet in early October.
  - i. PISA: 2018 reporting is proceeding as planned; launch is planned in DES Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> and Board will be invited to attend in due course. Two further reports on PISA are high priority for Q1 2020: feasibility study and DEIS.
  - j. PIAAC: Progress report from CSO earlier this month confirms that all is proceeding as planned. Next governing board meeting is in January 2020.
  - k. PIRLS: DES has agreed that PIRLS 2021 will be digital. Project is progressing as planned. Pilot study in four schools in Q4 gathering open ended item responses is planned along with a small number of other countries.
  - l. Evaluation of DEIS: ERC completed and submitted a technical review of the new DEIS identification model. ERC's preferred (weighted) approach is to be adopted, with some additional reporting and analysis for ERC expected in the coming weeks.

m. Resource allocation modelling: ERC and NEPS completed a report on case studies of complex needs and ERC is in the process of exploring availability of relevant data for follow-up work in this area with NCSE.

n. Strategic work/independent work: Aidan has been approached to appear in a documentary on TY being aired in S Korea. Training with Hub na NÓg is confirmed for mid-January 2020.

Online facilitation work. Facilitation is due to begin pre-  
for the new integrated online assessment system.

NEPS first standardisation training completed, follow-on in February as  
planned.

CDW will begin dialogue with the interim review procedure as planned.

PEH draw up survey development commission. The interim review is  
due for publication in Q1 2020 and the survey of households and teenagers will

also be launched during Q1 2020.

DFB evaluation is also progressing as planned with particular focus on  
for end Q4. Facilitated survey development meeting completed.

Geographic school location selection proceeding as planned  
(survey and test development work underway).

TMSS 2019: DES supervision has been delayed due to non-signing of

contract with EY; negotiations are in progress and ongoing. Current risk of  
non-signing of tender in initial draft reporting of NRC members in December

NAME 2020: Preparations for the main study are underway as planned. The  
DES and NAME teams are collecting data on the first tranche of the

size of the study. A current focus of the work is the finalisation of the  
designs. A member of SIU has joined the advisory committee, which is  
due to meet in early October.

PIRA: 2018 reporting is progressing as planned; launch is planned in DES Dec

3rd and 4th will be available to download in due course. Two further reports on  
PIRA: the final report for Q1 2020: finalised study summary and DES.

PIAAC: Progress report from CSD earlier this month contains draft all re-  
port designs as planned. Next meeting post-meeting is in January 2020.

PIRS: DES has agreed that PIRS 2021 will be digital. Project is progressing as  
planned. Pilot study in four schools in Q4 starting open ended item

responses to baseline study with a small number of other countries.

Evaluation of DES: ERC completed and submitted a technical review of the  
new DES implementation model. ERC's letter (written) specifies it to be

adopted. With some additional reporting and analysis for ERC expected in the  
coming weeks.