

**Educational Research Centre  
MEETING OF THE BOARD  
30 June 2020**

A meeting of the Board of the Educational Research Centre (ERC) was held remotely on 30 June 2020.

**Board Members Present:**

Pauric Travers (PT), Chairperson; Denise Burns (DB), Deputy Chairperson; Michael Martin (MM); 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 3.45 pm.

The Agenda was adopted (Appendix I).

**1. Minutes (Bmin-0420)**

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

**2. Conflict of Interest**

No conflicts of interest were raised.

**3. Matters arising from previous minutes**

The revised minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

AC provided an update on the gap analysis following a governance meeting with CPU in early June 2020.

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

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

JC provided an update on various developments and activities (See Appendix II).

**5. Covid 19 (B-3-20-1)**

The Board was informed that:

- ERC has continued to operate remote working.
- Updated guidelines on remote working were issued 03/06/2020.
- COVID 19 policy and response plan has been drafted and externally reviewed, safety statement updated, risk assessments completed, response team established.
- Induction for all ERC staff from external supplier to be finalised by early July.
- PPE obtained.
- Extremely limited on site work envisaged during July/August.

## **6. Governance matters (B-3-20-2)**

The Board was informed that:

- Governance meeting with CPU on 08/06/2020
- Payroll audit start was delayed because of the office closure but is now underway
- The C&AG audit is also underway. Some elements (sampling mostly) requiring site access will be issued at a later stage.
- Pension statements for SPSS members were issued on 30/06/2020.
- An update was provided on the status of various ongoing procurement exercises.

The issue of the lack of contingency plan to cover certain essential functions for the CEO and Senior Administrator were noted, especially in the context of Covid 19. The Board agreed that two Research Fellows from the SMT were to be designated to cover business continuity where required (signing of accounting documents, purchase orders, payroll, contractual documents and any other documents requiring one or both signatures of either the CEO or the Senior Administrator).

## **7. Finance (B-3-20-3/4)**

The Board was provided with:

- An update in standardised tests and test department income
- Updated budget 2020
- Budget 2021/2022

The Board was informed of an update requested by the C&AG on the Statement on Internal Control, which will be carried out when the C&AG have finalised the audit, and other potential updates required have been identified.

## **8. Policies and procedures (B-3-20-5)**

The Board was informed of an update to the H&S Statement (lone working on-site) to bring it in line with the requirements of the Return to Work Protocol.

## **9. Risk Management (Recurring item) (B-3-20-6A/B/C)**

Board members were issued with documents pertaining to the development of revised risk procedures and ongoing discussions with the Audit and Risk Committee. The Board was asked to identify its risk appetite, which will form the basis of the ERC's risk statement and risk policy. The following documents were reviewed and discussed.

- Approval of ERC's Risk Management Roadmap.
- Approval of the ERC's Risk Appetite Statement (with Risk Appetite Matrix).
- Approval of Risk Register approach with provision of feedback.

The Board also reviewed strategic risks.

## **10. Staffing**

The Board was informed that the recruitment of assistants for the Gaeltacht Recognition Study is underway with interviews planned for July 8.

Business cases for an IT manager, an EO and a CO were formally approved by CPU. recruitment is to commence in August/September.

Reasons for non-approval for the upgrade to HEO post associated with the Test Department is pending. It was noted that correspondence had been received in relation to the granting of a one year extension

[REDACTED]

**11. AOB**

- JC informed the ARC of a complaint raised via An Coimisinéir Teanga in relation to the standardisation of the new Reading and Maths tests. The ARC recommended that the Board issue a submission to the authority in response to its review.
- A submission to the Oireachtas Special Committee on Covid 19 was submitted by the ERC in relation to the reopening of schools.
- Discussions have taken place on the feasibility and desirability of the ERC hosting a forum on assessment in Q1 2021 whose initial objective would be to inform the ERC's assessment strategy and roadmap for end 2021.

There being no further business the meeting concluded.



## **Appendix 1**

**EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE  
Board Meeting  
30 June 2020  
Agenda**

- 1. Minutes of meeting of 29 April 2020 (Bmin-3-0420)**
- 2. Conflict of Interest**
- 3. Matters arising from the minutes**
- 4. Report on developments since previous meeting**
- 5. Covid 19 (B-3-20-1)**
- 6. Governance matters (B-3-20-2)**
- 7. Finance (B-3-20-3/4)**
- 8. Policies and procedures (B-3-20-5)**
- 9. Risk Management (Recurring item) (B-3-20-6)**
- 10. Staffing**
- 11. AOB**

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## Appendix 2

### Developments since previous meeting of April 29, 2020

#### Projects

- PISA 2018: work is continuing on three themed areas – wellbeing, ICT and reading literacy. Outputs expected Q4 2020. A new assistant joined the ERC in mid-May to support this work.
- PISA feasibility study: report submitted to DES; awaiting publication date.
- PISA 2021: Postponement of main study to 2022 is confirmed. Necessity for further field trialling in 2021 not yet confirmed.
- PIRLS 2021: confirmation received that paper PIRLS is an option – considerable risks associated with digital PIRLS due to on site visits; also large financial cost relative to digital PIRLS. Detailed comparisons of both submitted to DES. Decision to be taken early September at the latest.
- NAMER 2020: Now postponed to 2021 as previously indicated; work proceeding as planned on the basis of the adjusted timeline.
- DLF: Wave 1 entering into the report drafting phase. Agreement with DES on revised project plan which postpones case study visits to 2021 and removes one of the three follow up waves of data collection.
- TPL Wellbeing: Full draft literature review report submitted and feedback has been very positive. Analysis commencing on the survey data, with low response rates flagged and discussed with DES.
- NEPS: DES has approved NEPS and ERC to work together to supply, at no cost to schools, the PPADE with scoring tool and manual to schools which register their interest in the autumn. ERC is funding the work. From 2021 it is envisaged that PPADE will be distributed at cost from test department.
- TUSLA: Report submitted and first review edits implemented. Sign-off during first half of July is envisaged.
- SET model: Revised model to be delivered to DES in September. All data received and work will take place July-August.
- DEIS: Report on DEIS and PISA 2018 achievement in final stages with initial work on PISA 2018 context report commenced.
- GRS: A final decision on testing in the autumn is yet to be taken; recent DES Circular on Inspections indicates that on site visits by DES will be high priority and kept to a minimum, so ERC will plan accordingly (minimising or eliminating any Autumn 2020 on site visits).
- PIAAC: One year delay has been confirmed by OECD. OECD is aware of risks posed to CSO and the study in Ireland due to Census 2021.
- Standardised testing: Shortly commencing work with new supplier. Data export from existing system is complete. A new member of staff will work with the online assessment team from mid-July for 6 months to support migration, development and testing of the new system.
- LC 2020: ERC is quality assuring the calculated grades model for LC 2020. Three members of staff (including CEO) assigned. The establishment of SLA and DPA have been delayed but were signed off on June 26.
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