

**Educational Research Centre
MEETING OF THE BOARD
19 December 2023**

A meeting of the Board of the Educational Research Centre (ERC) was held online on 19th December 2023.

Board Members Present:

Mr. Edward Murtagh (EM), Chairperson, Prof. Michael Martin (MM), Dr. Sharon Feeney (SF), Dr. Eilish Broderick (EB) (first 30 minutes).

In Attendance:

John Regan (JR), Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Damian Downes (DD), Principal Officer (PO) and Secretary, who took the minutes.

Absent: Paula Fyans (PF)

Others Present: N/A

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 3.30 pm and welcomed the appointment of the two new board members, Dr. Eilish Broderick and Ms. Paula Fyans. The late appointment of both new members (8th December) made it difficult for both to attend. Luckily Dr. Broderick could attend for a short time.

The agenda was adopted (Appendix 1).

1. Minutes of meeting of 24 October 2023

The minutes as circulated were approved. No redactions required.

2. Conflict of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest declared either before or during the course of the meeting.

3. Matters arising from previous minutes

There were no matters arising.

4. Report on developments since previous meeting

The CEO's report was circulated and noted by the Board. The CEO highlighted the importance of the new strategy, work on which will be ongoing through 2024 and a draft will be circulated to the Board in September.

5. Governance and Internal Matters

- Draft Annual Report update – the report has now been translated and will be uploaded onto the website in the coming days.
- CPU Governance meeting on 29th November – the following matters were discussed and reported to the committee:
 - PO Head of Research – CPU to approve the candidate booklet. The emphasis is on research not operations.

- New board members – appointments due imminently.
- Budget 2024 due in early January. Should see an increase in pay budget.
- DCU lease – management reported that no progress had been made on the length of the lease and that an escalated action might be required.
- Terms of Reference document (for research projects) is being considered.
- Test pricing – no feedback on whether a corresponding per capita payment will be made to schools to cover any ERC price increases.
- S.I. – due to reduced staff numbers in its legal department, the S.I. is not going to change in the short-term. No timeline was provided.
- Workforce Plan update – On the recommendation of the ARC, DD circulated a memo outlining reasons for additional work. The Board accepted the need for this work to be carried out urgently.
- DCU Lease – the Board requested that two letters issue to DCU - one from the chairperson to the DCU board of governors chairperson and a second from the CEO to the President. The letters should request that the issue related to the length of the lease should be agreed as soon as possible.
- Disability access review update – the consultant's report has only just been received. Management will develop an implementation plan consistent with the recommendations of the report.
- Wellbeing review update – the draft summary document was circulated for information. Management will consult with Irish Life again to put an action plan in place.
- Kelleghan art collection sale – Whyte's will auction the works in Q1. Management will put forward a paper recommendation how the proceeds should be spent. It is recommended that a new bank account be set up to receive the proceeds.
- Actuarial Report – the work on the actuarial pension calculations has commenced and will be ready in time for the draft Financial Statements 2023 in February.
- Procurement update
 - Public Relations/Affairs presentations are due to take place in January.
 - Architect-led design team – three submissions have been received and a short-listing meeting will take place in January.

6. Finance

The Board discussed the following items:

- Presentation from C&AG to the ARC on 12/12/23 on findings from the 2022 audit. The Board welcomed the removal of the 'emphasis of matter' regarding the funding of pensions from the audit report. The Board noted the ARC's - requested an early start to 2023 audit field work stressing the need to complete the audit before 30th June.
- Income & expenditure 2023 report was circulated and noted by the Board.
- DoE Funding – the final drawdown from the Department was for the full non pay budget (€1,851k) and pension budget (90k) and €2153k out of €3576k pay budget.

7. Risk Management and Internal Audits

- ARC minutes September 2023 – circulated for information and noted by the Board.

- Update on DOT review & Update to Board and ARC effectiveness review – progress has been slow due to the sensitive nature of the data being accessed by the IT consultants working with the Internal Auditor. The works have progressed and both the software provider and the call centre contractor are participating fully. Work will continue into early 2024 but is now progressing well.
- Data Protection report – the annual report of data protection/management was circulated. DD discussed some of the key issues in the area.
- Health and Safety - the annual report of Health and Safety was circulated. DD discussed some of the key issues in the area.
- Review of Risk appetite – document circulated. The Board noted that the ARC discussed this matter and agreed that the risk appetite should remain the same albeit with changes to the rating system. Instead of a 1 – 10 rating, the ERC would move to a 1 – 5 system for all risk.

8. Policies

- Travel and Subsistence Policy – approved by the Board.
- Recruitment and Selection policy – approved by the Board. One minor typing error was pointed out and will be corrected before publication.

9. Staffing & HR

- PO Research post – the board agreed that a researcher should be recruited for this post
- Librarian – the librarian is due to start on January 3rd.

10. AOB

Dates for 2024 were confirmed as follows:

- 22 February – Board and ARC
- 7 May – Board only
- 25 June – Board and ARC
- 10 September – Board and ARC
- 22 October – Board only
- 10 December – Board and ARC

ARC meetings to begin at 2pm and Board at 3.30. The February meeting will be in-person.


 Edward Murtagh (Dec 20, 2024 23:00 GMT)

Appendix 1

**EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE
Board Meeting Agenda
3.30pm, 19 December 2023**

1. Minutes of meeting of 24 October 2023 (BMin – 102023)

2. Conflict of Interest

3. Matters arising from previous minutes

4. Report on developments since previous meeting

Shared documents:

- ✓ *Update document circulated by CEO (B-6-23-1 – for discussion)*

5. Governance and Internal Matters

Shared documents:

- ✓ *Wellbeing review Draft report summary (B-6-23-2 – for information)*

6. Finance

Shared documents:

- ✓ *Income & expenditure 2023 report (B-6-23-3 – for information)*

7. Risk Management and Internal Audits (Recurring item)

Shared documents:

- ✓ *ARC Minutes 10 October 2023 (B-6-23-4 – for information)*
- ✓ *Data Protection Report (B-6-23-5 – for information)*

8. Policies

- ✓ *Travel and Subsistence Policy (B-6-23-6 – for approval)*
- ✓ *Recruitment and Selection policy (B-6-23-7 – for approval)*

BM 122023

Final Audit Report

2024-12-20

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