

**Educational Research Centre
MEETING OF THE BOARD
3.30pm, 10th December 2024
Room 7, ERC St Patrick's Campus**

A meeting of the Board of the Educational Research Centre (ERC) was online 10th December 2024.

Board Members Present:

Edward Murtagh (EM), Chairperson, Dr. Sharon Feeney (SF), Deputy Chairperson, Dr. Eilish Broderick (EB), Paula Fyans (PF) and Orla Barry (OB).

In Attendance:

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

Absent: n/a

Others Present: Ray Mooney (ARC Chair) and Patrick Thorpe (ARC member)

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2.15 pm. Board members were reminded of the need for confidentiality of board matters.

The agenda was adopted (Appendix 1).

1. Project update: TIMSS presentation by TIMSS Study Team

The Chair welcomed members of the ARC for the presentation on TIMSS study. The two ARC members left the meeting after the presentation.

2. Minutes of the Closed meeting of the Board

The board approved the strategic plan for the Centre for the period 2025 – 2030.

Following satisfactory completion of his probationary period, the board approved the substantive appointment of the CEO in accordance with the terms of his contract of employment.

The board agreed that there is need for a review of the current employee performance management system and requested management prepare a draft policy for consideration by the board following consultation with staff representatives.

The Board were happy to note an application for professional development and approve same and undertook to review the Centre's CPD policies in 2025.

3. Minutes of meeting of 22 October 2024

The minutes of the meeting as circulated were approved.

4. Conflict of Interest and Register

Register will be finalised for the year 2024 and issue digitally to members for signing. There were no conflicts of interest reported either before or during the meeting.

5. Matters arising from previous minutes

The Internal Audit on Board Effectiveness recommended the creation of an actions log. This will come into effect with the new Board meeting software which will be in place for the April meeting.

6. Report on developments since previous meeting

- The CEO's report was circulated and discussed by the Board.
- The report included a Projects Timeline Gantt Chart and an appendix setting out test sales by test.
- The Free Test Credit Offer has now been completed adding over 75 schools to DOTS.
- The Board requested a report on Test Sales for the February meeting

7. Policies

Shared documents:

- **Board Terms of Reference** – this document was circulated for approval. It reflects the recommendations of the recent internal audits into the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and the Board Effectiveness Review. The Board approved the document but noted that the section on section 4, Matters for the Decision of the Board, should be brought back to the Board for discussion. It was noted that papers would issue 7 days in advance of meetings, not 3 days as stated in the document.
- **ARC Terms of Reference** – this document was circulated and approved.
- **Code of Conduct**
This interim update takes on board the updates to the Board and ARC Terms of reference. A larger document review is planned for 2025. The Code was approved by the Board.
- **Customer Charter** – circulated for approval but deferred to the February meeting.
- **Procurement Policy** – this policy was approved by the Board.
- **Protected Disclosure Policy** – this policy was circulated for approval. The Board asked that the policy be shortened and more tailored to the ERC. The revised policy will be circulated for approval at the February meeting.
- **Accounting Policy** – this policy is reviewed annually by the C&AG and updated yearly with any audit findings. The document was approved by the Board.

8. Governance and Internal Matters

- **New Chair Recruitment Update**

Process in place to select the next Chair. Announcement expected from the Department of Education in the new year.

- **Board Self-assessments**

Board self-assessment document was circulated for action. Members are requested to return their completed assessment directly to Governance AP, Anne Comey at anne.comey@erc.ie by 20 December.

- **DCU Lease/Building Plans update**

There has been no communication from DCU regarding the lease. It was agreed that the CEO will write to his counterpart with a view to moving this forward.

The proposed office plans for the refurbished building were shared with staff the feedback comments/observations will be responded to. Once agreement with the staff has been reached the architect can move forward with assessing the works and arranging for a quantity surveyor to provide estimated costs.

Following on from the recent internal audit into the Test Department and the issues raised in it, it is proposed to circulate a note at the February meeting setting out how we might proceed.

- **Strategic Plan 2025 to 2030.**

Update provided in the CEO report in item 4. The Board approved sending the Strategy to the Minister.

9. Finance

- **Budget 2024**

There will be an underspend of approximately €650k in the pay budget due to actual start dates for new posts being less than the full 12 months salary budgeted for. All non-pay budget has been drawdown.

- **Financial Statements 2024**

The work on the 2024 Financial Statements has commenced. The first meeting with Mazars took place on 3rd December and LCP (pension actuarial valuation) will begin in early January. Internally, work on consolidating the data has also begun. The draft documents will be submitted to the ARC for its February meeting.

The C&AG has confirmed it will start its fieldwork at the end of March 2025. This year, the audit will be carried out by an external firm of accountants appointed by the C&AG. Management have been given assurances that this new team will not delay the certification.

- **Capital Gains Tax**

Revenue is continuing to work on our submission regarding the tax implications, if any, on the sale of artwork in 2024.

10. Risk Management and Internal Audits

- **ARC Minutes September 2024** – circulated for information.

- **Internal Audit, Internal Financial Controls**

Management comments have been provided to the Internal Auditor.

- **Audit Work Plan 2025**

It was agreed that the audits for the coming year would be Financial Internal Control (credit card and prompt payments), IT Security, Freedom of Information.

- **Risk Update**

DD gave a verbal update on risk. Recruitment of researchers with fluency in the Irish language remains a concern. This and other risks were notified to the Department of Education in the Q3 Early Warning Report.

11. AOB

The were no additional matters raised.

Appendix 1

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE Board Meeting Agenda 2.15pm, 10 December 2024 ONSITE

1. **Project update: TIMSS presentation by Aidan Clerkin (In presence of the ARC) Project time: 2.15pm to 2.45pm**
2. **Closed meeting of the Board 2.45 pm**
 - Confirmation of CEO appointment and performance review
 - Strategic plan 2025-2030
3. **Minutes of meeting of 22 October 2024 (BMin – 122024)**
4. **Conflict of Interest**
 - ✓ *Conflict Register Board and ARC*
5. **Matters arising from previous minutes**
6. **Report on developments since previous meeting**
Shared documents:
 - ✓ *Update document circulated by CEO (B-6-24-1A/AB/1C– for information)*
7. **Policies**
Shared documents:
 - ✓ Terms of Reference – Board (**B-5-24-5** – for approval) *(from previous meeting)*
 - ✓ Terms of Reference – ARC (**B-5-24-6** – for approval) *(from previous meeting)*
 - ✓ Code of Conduct (**B-5-24-7** – for approval) *(from previous meeting)*
 - ✓ Customer Charter (**B-5-24-8** – for approval) *(from previous meeting)*
 - ✓ Procurement Policy (**B-5-24-9** – for approval) *(from previous meeting)*
 - ✓ Protected disclosure policy (**B-6-24-2** – for approval)
 - ✓ Accounting Policy (**B-6-24-3** – for approval)
 - ✓ List of existing policies (**B-6-24-4** – for information)

8. Governance and Internal Matters

✓ Verbal update on governance matters to include:

- New Chair recruitment
- DCU Lease/Building Plans
- CPU Governance meeting
- Strategy
- Board Self-assessments

Shared documents:

✓ Board Self Assessment forms (**B-6-24-5** – for action)

9. Finance

✓ Verbal update on financial matters to include:

- Budget 2025 update and end of year 2024 finance timelines
- C&AG audit of 2024 FS update
- Test Department tax exemption application

Shared documents:

10. Risk Management and Internal Audits (Recurring item)

✓ Verbal update on Risk and Internal audit matters to include:

- Risk register and current strategic risks
- Internal audit review by ARC

Shared documents:

✓ Board Effectiveness Review – final report post Board review (**ARC 4-24- 6** – for approval)

11. Staffing & HR

✓ Verbal update on HR matters to include:

- Recent recruitment status
- Irish Language

Shared documents:

✓ Note on performance appraisal process (**B-6-24-7** – for information)
✓ Note on Local bargaining (**B-6-24-8** – for information)

12. AOB

✓ 2025 dates

Signature: 
Edward Murtagh (Apr 1, 2025 09:34 GMT+1)

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Apr 1, 2025

BM 122024 - FINAL

Final Audit Report

2025-04-01

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|-----------------|--|
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