Educational Research Centre
MEETING OF THE BOARD
6 March 2019

A meeting of the Board of the Educational Research Centre (ERC) was held on 6 March 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-0219)

The minutes of the last meeting were adopted and signed.

2. Matters arising from previous minutes

The Board agreed on its response to correspondence concerning ICT report. The Board noted the wishes of the author and was of the view that the issue had been handled correctly, but noted that this instance indicated a need for guidelines for development and review of reports including independent review where necessary. The Board therefore requested that the ERC issue staff with Guidelines for Reporting.

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

- Memo on process for working with ERC on new projects was submitted to DES in January and will form part of DES research planning.
- Details of budgets for CPD (continuing professional development) wellbeing, DLF (Digital Learning Framewore) evaluation and Gaeltacht Evaluation studies is yet to be received by the ERC.
- Report on Transition Year has been published (Feb 20). AC will email a copy of the report to Board members.
- GDPR and DP (data protection) developments – some progress has made with the OECD converning arrangements for PISA and PIAAC, ERC will seek legal advice as and when appropriate; CAP (Curriculum and Assessment Policy unit) has responded to queries relating

to ERC's national and international assessment programme; DPIA (Data Processor Impact Assessment) with Vidappt is in process for DOTS (Drumcondra Online Testing System); the ERC is also in the process of developing standard DSA (Data Sharing Agreement) with schools for standardised tests.

- The Board noted correspondence received by the ERC from the supplier of the DOTS platform (Vidappt) platform in February.

4. Governance matters (B-1-19-1, B1-19-2, B-1-19-3)

CPU met with relevant staff from DCU to discuss current understandings and issues relating to service arrangements between DCU and ERC. Pensions are the most complex area and will entail, in the first instance, some internal communication in the DES. Other areas that were discussed included payroll (which ERC and CPU agreed should remain tied to pension function regardless of where the long-term solution lies), lease and maintenance.

The date for the meeting between DCU (Dublin City University), DES (Department of Education and Skills) and ERC (Educational Research Centre) to discuss payroll, pension, lease etc. remains unconfirmed.

Review of the Annual reports 2016 and 2017 are still pending with the DES.

The Board reviewed the financial internal control reports as issued by Mazars a lot of the issues raised had been addressed already. The Board agreed that CEO expenses should be approved by the Chair of the Board and approved the proposed process for sign off of same. The Accounting policy will be amended to reflect same.

5. Review of Board terms of reference (B-2-19-1)

The terms of reference of the Board do not refer to conflicts of interest or related party transactions. Section (i) of the code of ethics of the Board and ERC employees details conflict of interest procedures and disclosures but not transactions with related parties. This highlights a non-compliance with the COP 2016.

The changes to the ToR were approved (See Appendix II).

6. Financial Statement 2018 (FS 2018) (B-2-19-2)

The draft Financial Statement 2018 including the statement of internal control was approved by the Board.

C&AG commenced 2018 audit of ERC accounts on March 4th 2019 and will now include draft FS in their review.

7. Risk Management (Recurring item)

The Board noted the discussions relating to risk at the preceding Audit and Risk Committee meeting and had nothing further to add on the matter but noted that a risk policy was in the program of work for 2019.

8. Staffing

Executive Officer (EO) and Research Assistant (RA) interviews were completed during February and panels created on foot of these.

David Millar was appointed as Research Fellow (RF) (methodologies).

Further sanctions for staff were confirmed by CPU. If all sanctioned posts are filled, total staff will be: 11 assistants, 12 associates, 5 fellows, 1 Assistant Principal, 4 EOs, and 2 HEOs, 1 Systems Administrator and 1 CEO (38.5 FTEs). Nine assistant posts are permanent while two are specified purpose for new DES projects. Two associate posts are acting up. One RF post is acting up. Pay ceiling issues for 2020 and 2021 (due to fluctuations in casual staff costs year on year) have been flagged with CPU.

The first draft of the IPA (Institute of Public Administration) review of staffing is expected in the last week in March and will be shared with the Board and CPU as soon as the final version is available.

9. Strategic Plan (SP) (B-2-19-3)

The Board reviewed and approved the latest draft of the Strategic plan and noted that it had been sent to stakeholder agencies for feedback. It also noted that CPU was satisfied with the current draft. The Board was informed that work on a strategy for assessment had begun with a paper submitted to CAP on March 4 for discussion. It was agreed that the strategic plan should incorporate a strategy for standardisation of tests.

The strategic plan will be published with a short summary on the ERC website. JC so send wording for foreword to PT. It is expected that following design work the plan will be published in two-three weeks.

10. AOB

Date for next meetings confirmed as followed:
1 May 2019
19 June 2019
25 September 2019
4 December 2019

There being no further business, the meeting concluded.

Appendix 1

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EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE
Board Meeting
6 March 2019
Agenda

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1. Minutes of meeting of 13th February 2019 (Bmin-1-0219)

2. Matters arising from the minutes

3. Report on developments since previous meeting

4. Governance matters

5. Review of Board Terms of Reference (B-2-19-1)

6. Financial Statement 2018 (B-2-19-2)

7. Risk Management (Recurring item)

8. Staffing

9. Strategic Plan (Recurring item) (B-2-19-3)

10. AOB

Appendix 2

Proposed amendemenet to the Terms of Reference for the Board

11.3 Conflict of interests and disclosures

Board members should not be involved in outside employment/business interests in conflict, or in potential conflict, with the work or business of the ERC. Nor should they be involved in transactions with related parties.

Where such conflict arises or transaction exists, disclosure should immediately be made by Board members.

All such interests of parent, brother, sister, spouse, civil partner, children or step children, a body corporate with which the member is associated, or any other connected persons so far as they are known must also be disclosed.

If a member has a doubt as to whether the disclosure of an interest or transaction of his/her own or of a connected person, that member should consult the Chairperson.

The disclosure of an interest must be recorded in the minutes of Board meetings and kept on a confidential register by the CEO which will be updated on a yearly basis.
For as long as the matter to which the disclosure relates is being considered or discussed, the individual who made the disclosure must not be counted in the quorum of meetings.

Anyone who has disclosed an interest should:

- not influence nor seek to influence a decision to be made in relation to the matter
- not make any recommendations in relation to the matter, contract, agreement or arrangement
- absent himself/herself from meetings or part of meetings during which the matter is being discussed
- take no part in any deliberation relating to the matter
- not vote on a decision relating to the matter
- not retain information or materials with respect to the matter.

1 May 2019
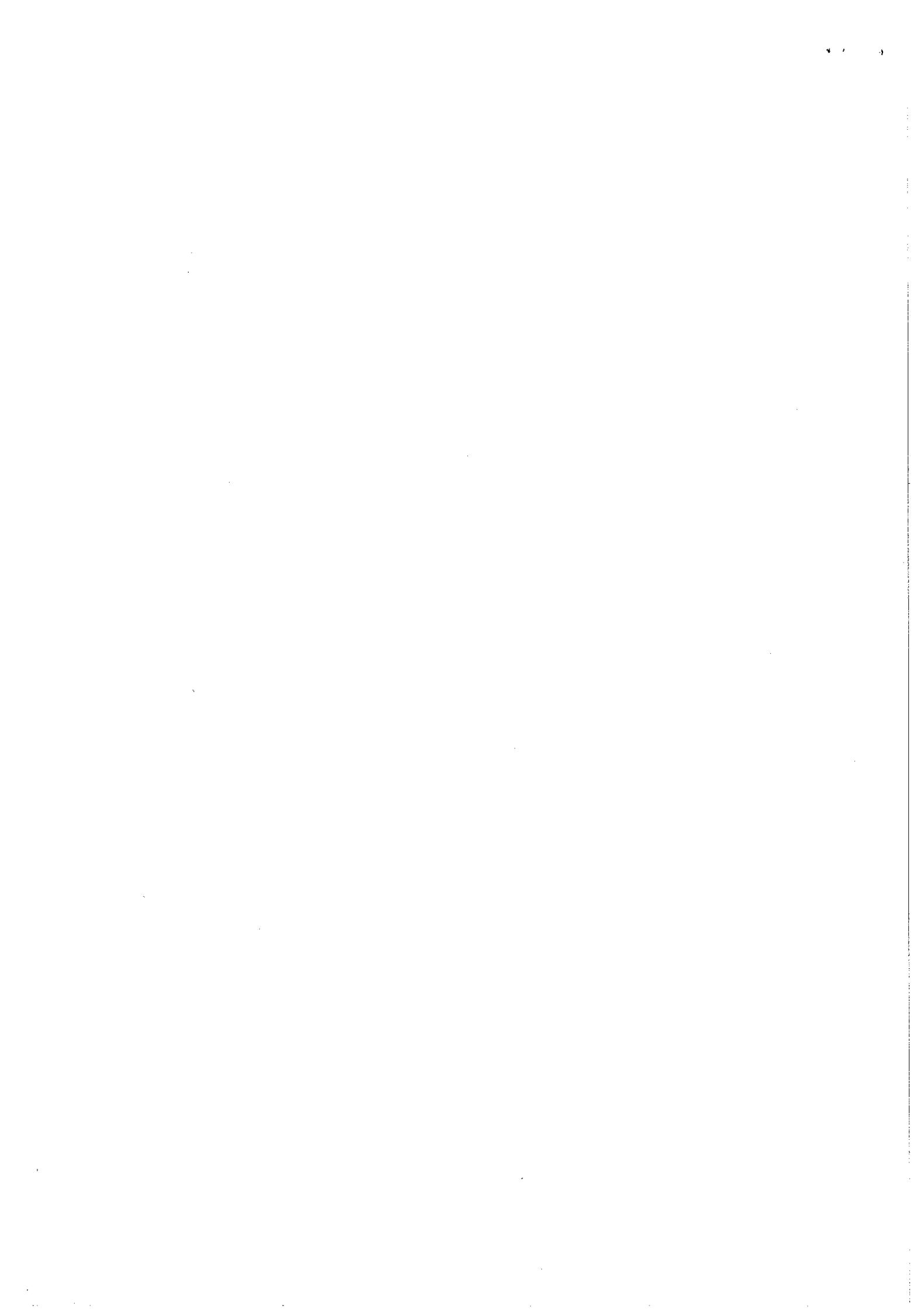
ERC Governing Board meeting

March 6, 2019

Progress and activity report since previous meetings of Nov 12, 2018

3. Developments

- Memo on process for working with ERC on new projects submitted to DES and will form part of DES research planning.
- Details of budgets for CPD wellbeing, DLF evaluation and Gaeltacht Evaluation studies is yet to be received by the ERC.
- Report on Transition Year published (Feb 20)
- GDPR and DP developments – some progress made with OECD, ERC to receive legal advice; CAP has responded to queries relating to ERC's national and international assessment programme; DPIA with Vidappt in process; also in process of developing standard DSA with schools for standardised tests.

4. Governance

- CPU met with relevant staff from DCU to discuss current understandings and issues relating to service arrangements between DCU and ERC. Pensions are the most complex area and will entail, in the first instance, some internal communication in the DES. Other areas that were discussed included payroll (which ERC and CPU agreed should remain tied to pension function regardless of where the long-term solution lies), lease and maintenance. Tri-party meeting planned for the latter half of March.

7. Risk management

- See letter from Vidappt – short- and medium-term risk mitigation plans.

8. Staffing

- EO and RA interviews completed and panels created
- David Millar appointed as RF05 methodologies
- Further sanctions for staff confirmed. If all sanctioned posts are filled, total staff will be: 11 assistants, 12 associates, 5 fellows, 1 Assistant Principal, 4 EOs, and 2 HEOs, 1 SA and 1 CEO (37 or 33.85 FTEs). Nine assistant posts are permanent. Two are specified purpose for new DES projects. Two associate posts are acting up. One RF post is acting up. Pay ceiling issues for 2020 and 2021 have been flagged with CPU.
- IPA review of staffing expected in the last week in March – will share with Board and CPU as soon as it is available.

9. Strategic plan (two documents to be circulated on Monday as below)

- Strategic plan reviewed by CPU and agencies/partners. Launch not planned. Publication date of March 29 with newspiece, tweet and memo to CPU and DES comms?
- Work on strategy for assessment begun with paper submitted to CAP on March 4.

10. AOB

- Board response to correspondence concerning ICT report.