

**Educational Research Centre
MEETING OF THE BOARD
1 May 2019**

A meeting of the Board of the Educational Research Centre (ERC) was held on 1 May 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);

In Attendance:

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

Absent: Edward Murtagh (EM)

Counsel Present: N/A

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2.00 pm.

The Agenda was adopted (Appendix I).

1. Minutes BMin (Bmin-0319)

The minutes of the last meeting were adopted and signed.

2. Matters arising from previous minutes

Following the decision from last meeting, CEO expenses are now approved by the Chair of the Board.

The Terms of Reference for the Board were updated as agreed.

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

The CEO updated the Board on various items including progress on the 2019 work programme and invited Board members to the Process Conference being organised by ERC and ETS (Educational Testing Service, USA) in Dublin in May.

4. Governance matters

- ERC payroll and pension solution is still pending a tri partite meeting between the DES, DCU and the ERC. The ERC needs to comply to the Pension legislation and is currently unable to issue Pension statements to its members. In the short term the ERC is seeking to outsource a review of the Single Pension scheme with a consultant,

to compile pension data and issue statements. ERC received a letter from the Pensions Authority requesting a progress update on this issue by the end of May.

- A request for a governance meeting in May has been put to the CPU (Central Policy Unit).
- Need for Gap Analysis of the code of Practice 2016 was discussed and request for same will be issued to the DES.

5. Financial (B-3-19-1)

The Board reviewed the Income & Expenditure for Q1 2019 and noted the increase in Test Department expenditure. This increase is linked to the printing of the new tests and had been flagged with the DES in Q4 2018 and also with the Board. The Board had no other comments on the item.

Further to discussions with the C&AG there is a possibility that the extra cash in bank at year end 2018 will need to be identified as deferred funds. A second Draft of the FS 2018 was issued to the C&AG including these changes and final decision is pending review from the Deputy Director of the C&AG.

The Board noted that the ERC was still awaiting guidelines from CPU on surplus and unspent funds.

6. Publication Guidelines (B-3-19-2)

The Board was invited to comment on draft reporting guidelines which were drafted with input from Research Fellows and are intended for internal use.

The Board suggested changes that emphasised the importance of preserving the independence of the ERC. JC to carry out the changes and email same to the members, after which the guidelines will be circulated to all staff and shared with CPU for information.

7. Risk Management (Recurring item)

Pensions (as noted above) – actions planned include compilation of previous pension data by an external consultant and a request for written update from CPU concerning progress made.

A review of DOTS (ERC's online testing system) is underway. The first of two meetings with the reviewer takes place on May 2, with review to be completed around the end of May. Three staff members are to attend a FLIP (France, Luxembourg, Italy, Portugal – international collaboration on open source online assessment) meeting on June 6-7; consultation with another online assessment expert on foot of this review is planned for over the summer.

The DPIA (Data Privacy Impact Assessment) of DOTS has been completed and a DPA (Data Processor Agreement for ERC and Vidappt) and Privacy Statement/End User Licence Agreement (for schools) is being drafted. The Board reviewed the discussions relating to risk

carried out in the Audit and Risk Committee earlier and had nothing further to add on the matter but noted that a risk policy was in the programme of work for 2019.

8. Staffing (B-3-19-3)

Eight new staff began / are due to begin between three of these staff are working under specified purpose contracts.

The Research Fellow with expertise in methodologies will be leaving probably in September. This represents a significant loss in expertise. Difficulties in recruiting for this post may require the role to be reviewed to facilitate acting-up at Associate rather than Fellow level if necessary.

The Board reviewed the IPA organisational and staffing review which was completed at the end of April and commented on its high quality. Discussions took place on the next steps and priorities and all agreed that the first step is the submission of business cases to CPU/DPER on all additional staff indicated in recommendations.

Current HR priorities are skill profiling, structured training programme and workforce planning. An HR audit is planned for Q3 2019.

An ERC skills matrix currently being completed by staff, as recommended in the IPA staffing review; this will be used for planning, identifying gaps, and assigning staff to projects.

9. Strategic Plan

Given that the Strategic Plan (SP) was adopted at the end of Q1 2019 the Board agreed to remove the item from the agenda as a recurring item. The SP will appear on the agenda as required but no less than once a year.

10. New Board and ARC member

The Chairperson gave a quick update on the recruitment of a new Board member and confirmed that selection has not been finalised.

11. AOB

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

Appendix 1

**EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE
Board Meeting
1 May 2019
Agenda**

- 1. Minutes of meeting of 6th March 2019 (Bmin-0319)**
- 2. Matters arising from the minutes**
- 3. Report on developments since previous meeting**
- 4. Governance matters**
- 5. Finance (B-3-19-1)**
- 6. Publication Guidelines (B-3-19-2)**
- 7. Risk Management (Recurring item)**
- 8. Staffing (B-3-19-3)**
- 9. Strategic Plan (Recurring item)**
- 10. New Board and ARC member**
- 11. AOB**

Appendix 1

**EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE
Board Meeting
1 May 2019
Agenda**

- 12. Minutes of meeting of 6th March 2019 (Bmin-0319)**
- 13. Matters arising from the minutes**
- 14. Report on developments since previous meeting**
- 15. Governance matters**
- 16. Finance (B-3-19-1)**
- 17. Publication Guidelines (B-3-19-2)**
- 18. Risk Management (Recurring item)**
- 19. Staffing (B-3-19-3)**
- 20. Strategic Plan (Recurring item)**
- 21. New Board and ARC member**
- 22. AOB**

Appendix 2 Report on developments since previous meeting

- Strategic plan published on April 3.
- All new primary level paper and online tests are finalised and on sale. 15K free tests are being provided on a first come first serve basis at primary level and 25% discount in post-primary tests is offered over April and May. ERC is experiencing a very high volume of calls and queries on both online and paper tests. Call log to be used for workforce planning for next year.
- Recent international meetings include PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) governing boards (April; Adelaide and Paris, respectively). Further work on General data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is needed although the OECD is now working with EU and national centres as well as international contractors after identifying core challenges; the frequency of PISA cycle under active consideration post 2024; and there will be a PIAAC meeting with DES and Central Statistics Office (CSO) on May 10.
- Draft data for PISA 2018 arrives July 3. International and national reports are planned for Dec 3. Concerning PISA 2021, a decision will need to be made about participation in creative thinking. Some concerns about framework and coding reliabilities have been identified by Ireland and some countries including the US are not taking part in this innovative domain. A decision will be made this month in consultation with DES.
- TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) fieldwork is coming to a close and is proceeding largely as planned. However, slightly higher refusal rates, particularly at primary level, have potential implications for data quality. Also, the quality of the translation to Irish was lower than desired. This is due both to poor quality work on part of national translation company and insufficient checking by international verifier. For future work of this nature, the translation company in question will not be used; international verification is in the process of being checked; and ERC will implement additional internal quality assurance checks prior to finalising the materials.
- NAMER (National Assessment of Mathematics and English reading) fieldwork is commencing shortly; all on target; coding of 6th class NAMER test booklets takes place in July and follows directly from coding on TIMSS.
- NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service) PPAD-E (literacy components) study is now back on the programme of work (PoW) with testing due this autumn in 80 schools (first years) (following discussions with NEPS on March 26). Some work on GDPR and logistics and quality control of fieldwork is required between now and then.
- The other three new studies, Digital Learning Framework (DLF), Continuous Learning Development (CPD) wellbeing and Gaeltacht Recognition are generally on target. Gaeltacht study has some challenges due to the high number of very small primary schools participating.
- Irish Journal of Education (IJE) 2018 still in process of being finalised and we are actively looking at ways to enhance efficiency and quality of the design for 2020. Other issues including expansion of editorial board and widening the call for submissions will also be considered.

- A staff meeting was held on April 4: feedback on main issues arising from appraisals and proposed ways to address these were discussed. Improvements to staffing levels, training, appraisals process itself and a strategic response to the IPA review serve to provide potential solutions to all major concerns.
- Meeting in DES attended by David and Patricia on data protection and data sharing on April 8. A new section, Data Compliance and Support, has been established. This section is in the process of mapping out all data held in DES. ERC will be following up with various data sharing requests in May and June with the objective of submitting a suite of requests covering the next 3 years or so.
- Centre-wide CPD plan now completed for 2019, with refinements planned for 2020; in particular, staff will be encouraged to submit more structured and detailed requests for CPD as part of the appraisal next year.
- We are exploring Geographic Information System (GIS) for analysing test sales data and this will be of relevance to other studies such as the DLF evaluation.
- Meeting with CAP (Jude, Aidan, Gerry) takes place on May 9 to discuss ERC's assessment strategy. We have a desire to move away from the commercial model and this will require strategic, logistic, technical and legal planning and review work during Q3-Q4 2019.

*Patricia Judd
19 June 2019*

