

Educational Research Centre
MEETING OF THE BOARD
26th September 2017

A meeting of the Board of the Educational Research Centre (“ERC”), was held on September 26th 2017 at the offices of the organisation.

Board Members Present:

Pauric Travers (PT), Chairperson; Denise Burns (DB), Deputy Chairperson; Michael Martin (MM) (Via Skype Link), Jude Cosgrove (JC); Edward Murtagh (EM)

In Attendance:

Peter Archer (PA), Anne Comey (AC) who took the minutes

Absent: N/A

Counsel Present: N/A

Call to Order

PT called the meeting to order at 2.30 pm.

The Agenda was adopted (Appendix I).

1. Minutes BMin 4 – 0517

The minutes of the last meeting were adopted.

2. Matters Arising from previous minutes

- A request from Social Inclusion Unit of the DES for data gathered from 120 schools, that participated in the evaluation of DEIS, was refused. PA confirmed that ERC attended a meeting with DES recently and the two parties understand the reasoning and he is hopeful that no issues will arise from this refusal.
- A meeting took place with DCU on 06/07/2017 in relation to library access. ERC and DCU have come to an agreement on how to proceed from here on.
- Letters of appointment have been issued to ARC members.
- ERC awaiting feedback from DES on annual report as well as audit report from C&AG.
- Letter confirming extension of post was issued to the CEO.

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

4. Researching Transition Year

Aidan Clerkin gave a presentation which was followed by questions and discussions.

5. Updates on the transition agreement

The transition agreement which was due to expire in Sept 2017 has been extended for a further 12 months.

6. ERC Lands and Premises

The Board approved the signing of the deed of renunciation on the condition that the document would be issued to DCU with a letter highlighting the urgency of the drafting of a lease agreement between DCU and the ERC.

The Board agreed that it was appropriate, in this instance, for the document to be signed by the CEO.

7. Governance Matters

- ERC awaiting C&AG report to be able to finalise financial statement and annual report.
- PA and AC to attend a Governance meeting with DES on 28/09/2017
- Provided DES has no objection Board would support the ERC requesting Charity Status.

8. Review of Grievance Policy (B5-17-1)

Revised policy adopted.

9. Staffing

Two Research Assistants recruited to replace departing staff started in September 2017. The issue of delegated sanction specifically stating that new entrants to ERC must start on point 1 of the scale regardless of their part work in public sector to be raised at Governance meeting. This has a detrimental effect on attracting qualified and experienced staff in an area of work already suffering from the lack of national training programs.

10. Strategic Plan

The staff will prepare material for inclusion in the ERC strategic plan.

11. AOB

Health and Safety Training: a fire drill took place in September and all staff are now trained in fire awareness and manual handling.

Procurement for printing requirement: the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) has agreed to take on the procurement for the ERC printing on behalf of the ERC given the complexity of the exercise. Work has started on a draft document but will not be completed until December at the earliest. Given the deadline with internal projects at this stage it is possible that the work will not be completed until Q2 2018.

A member of staff represented the ERC during a conference in the Middle East. His flights, accommodation and travelling expenses were covered by the hosts. The Board understands that this is not in contradiction with the Code of Conduct as no reciprocity/contract for any type of work are involved. The Board also agreed that all such cases were to be seen in the same manner.

12. CEO recruitment

The salary for the new CEO has been confirmed to the DES by DEPR. The recruitment process for the new CEO can now commence. The board agreed that the DES should be involved in the process. Given that PAS will not be involved in the recruitment because of its current commitments, the Chairman will speak to the DES about the logistics for the recruitment. A job description is currently with the DES for review.

Appendix 1

**EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE
Board Meeting
26th September 2017**

Agenda

1. Minutes of meeting of 5 July 2017 – BMin5-0717
2. Matters arising from the minutes
3. Report on developments since previous meeting
4. Researching Transition Year (Input by Aidan Clerkin)
5. Updates on the transition agreement and related matters
6. ERC Lands and Premises issue
7. Governance matters
8. Review of Grievance policy (B5-17-1)
9. Staffing
10. Strategic Plan
11. AOB
12. CEO Recruitment

Appendix II

Developments since meeting of July 5, 2017

1. At the time of the July meeting, Susan was about to begin some analysis for the Social Inclusion Unit of the DES. She completed that work and submitted a report in advance of a meeting on August 2. In the report, there is evidence that the identification of schools for the successor of DEIS would be enhanced by using a number of variables in addition to the Haas-Pratchet Index. The implications of this are still being considered by the DES.
2. Eemer and other staff have done and will continue to do demonstrations of DOTS (our computer-based tests).
3. I am a member of an NCSE working group and a smaller advisory group charged with developing a new model for the allocation of resources to SEN students with additional care needs (effectively those needs for which Special Needs Assistants or SNAs are currently allocated). The working group has decided that some 'front loading' (providing all or most schools with a baseline allocation) would be desirable and, on that basis, we have been asked to examine relationships between current SNA allocations and other variables that might be used as part of such a baseline allocation.
4. Preparations are being made for a study of the feasibility and possible impact of moving PISA testing in Ireland from spring to autumn. This will involve testing in a sample of schools in September or October 2018 and, among other things, comparing the results with those from the PISA main study in the second term of 2017/18. In the meantime, data from the field trial have been submitted.
5. Several thematic reports using data from TIMSS 2015 are at an advanced stage.
6. We have agreed to a request from the DES ICT Policy Unit to become involved in a pilot study of the roll out of the Department's Digital Learning Framework. Although work will commence in the next few weeks, details are still being worked out.
7. Two reports from the evaluation of DEIS will be ready for publication in the next few months. The first is a review of international literature on effective practice. The second, being referred to as a 'context report', examines relationships between outcome variables and other data gathered as part of the evaluation.
8. There are ongoing discussions with the Teacher Education Section of the DES and the PDST (Professional Development Service for Teachers) about possible Centre involvement in the establishment of an evaluation dimension to work in this area with a particular emphasis on student well-being.
9. Considerable time was devoted to the deed of renunciation issue (see Agenda item 6).
10. Following interviews over several days, two new research assistants were appointed (see Agenda Item 9).
11. 17 members of staff attended on-site workshops on MPLUS statistical software delivered by Andres Sandoval Hernandez of the University of Bath.
12. The wide ranging implications of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for the Centre, including the Board, were apparent at a training session attended by Anne, Adrian and Patricia.

13. Staff attended training on health and safety matters (manual handling and fire safety).

Pam Twest
29 Nov 2017