

Access Consultation Forum Minutes and Actions

11th February 2009, London

| Attendees: | Apologies: |
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| Alan Greig, Ofqual (Chair) Julie Swan, Ofqual Shakina Luke, Ofqual Tanwa Idris, Ofqual Lisa McMahan, CCEA Joanne Lowe, DPAP Miro Griffiths, DPAP Tudor Thomas, WJEC Rachel Bell, DCSF Sharon Louis, DCSF Helen Buckley, DCSF Madeline Swords, QCA Jo Lea, Young Minds Niki Polydorou, OCR Roger McCune, CCEA Hester Glass, QCA Lucy Fisher, QCA Cathy Barnes, FAB Alan Startin, Edexcel Janet Williams, AQA Elizabeth Dolman, OCR Paul Simpson, BATOD Rory Cobb, RNIB Linda Lascelles, AFASIC Robert Holland, Skills Alun McCarthy, DCELLS Barbara Vincent, DWP Jo Champion, NDCS Sue Flohr, BDA | Carol Copland, QCA Jenny Reed, IBO Samantha Lloyd, International Baccalaureate Paul Murray, DENI Nick Lait, JCQ Karen Hughes, Edexcel Peter Donachie, Scottish Executive Declan Hyland, DENI Patricia McDonald, SQA Len Belton, WJEC Peter Noaks, DWP |

1) Apologies

As highlighted above

2) Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting

3) Outline proposal for trialling extended access arrangements – MS

MS updated the group on the extended access project and the rationale behind it. The group expressed concerns that the research was limited in the spectrum of disabilities and that inclusion sheets should be included in each specification for clarity and information. The group agreed that the pilot needed to happen but that maybe a rethink of how it is done might be necessary. The group thought that the most pressing issue was GCSE English especially around speaking, listening and writing. The group also raised the fact that in considering reasonable adjustments both the needs of the learners and the need to maintain qualification standards had to be addressed.

Action: MS to circulate inclusion sheets well in advance of the next meeting, so that the group can properly comment on them.

4) GCSE, Applied A Level projects and GCE 2009/10 inclusion sheets – MS

MS updated the group on the extensive work that had gone into the development of the inclusion sheets and confirmed that the inclusion sheets were relevant to GCSE 2010 subjects. MS asked the group if all of the reasonable adjustments needed to be piloted. Awarding bodies and disabled representative groups had some concerns with the formation of the inclusion sheets around the lack of consistency between the sheets and the lack on involvement of disabled people. The group considered that a small sub-group should be formed to further consult around the usefulness of the inclusion sheets. The group also agreed it would be useful to consult with subject specialists before the sheets are published.

Action MS A small working group could be formed to take this work forward, which includes representatives of disability groups.

14-19 teams will get back to members of the ACF with a working document on the pilot for them to feed into.

5) Report back on research into access arrangements in Higher Education MS

MS updated the group on the research on support available to disabled students in HE. The group noted that useful approaches had been identified.

Action MS To share employment research data with the group when it is completed.

6) Exemptions from 2009 for GCSE & GCE, Principles for discussion and noting – AG

AG updated the group that the principles had been circulated to all awarding bodies and that generally they were content to work with the document, for the time being. There is still concern with the notion of clarity around separate and combined component parts. The group wanted clarity around the use of the word “may” being used around certificate indications.

JCQ has devised a consent form that maybe used for gaining candidates consent for the use of exemptions and certificate indications, due to the small numbers of legal challenges.

Action: AG to circulate draft explanatory note to awarding bodies and to seek for their comments on the use of the word “may” with regard to certificate indications.

7) Update on Equality Bill and Equality impact assessment on draft clauses – RB

RB updated the on group around other ways of communicating the contents of documents around access arrangements including inclusion sheets. The group felt that documents on access arrangements and exemptions should be simplified for parents, centres, teachers (mainly SENCO) and other representative disabled groups.

The group discussed the need for signposting parents to more useful information regarding the process of access arrangements, one suggestion related to a flowchart of processes and dates for the access arrangements so that parents got requests in on time and could ensure that centres were also on time.

Action: SL to consider an information section on the Ofqual website showing guidance on access arrangements via a flowchart.

8) Impact of monitoring DDA on awarding bodies - AG/SL

AG updated the group on the continued work on monitoring the impact of the new duties to include general qualifications in DDA work on awarding bodies. AG thanked those awarding bodies who have

returned their tabled documents and encouraged others to return theirs as soon as possible so that Ofqual could update DCSF with the information collated.

9) Single Source Access Arrangements – SL

SL updated the group about the progress of the single source access work and confirmed that the regulators and awarding bodies had met and discussed the way forward with this work. It was suggested that the single source access work should now be stream lined through this group with a small sub-group set up from the previous single source group. The group raised the issue that the online portal was only for General qualifications and that it should also include vocational qualifications.

Action: SL to provide the group with an update on the current stage of the project.

10) Update on Fair Access by Design for General and Vocational Qualifications

AM updated the group on the progress of the Fair Access by Design document, he said that the final document of the general qualification document was ready for circulating from the 13th February with the feedback incorporated. The group was also updated on the work to merge both the general and vocational qualifications of the Fair Access by Design document.

11) Ofqual research project plan proposal - AG/SL

SL shared some initial and early ideas a research project that Ofqual was considering. The group was told that the research would look at technology etc to consider opportunities for a wider range of reasonable adjustments that would minimise the need for the use of exemptions.

Action: SL to speak to DCSF Pathfinders to see what work they are conducting around this topic and perhaps build on the back of what is already happening.

Action: SL to send a draft project specification to members of the group.

12) AOB

SL provided an update to the group on the OLM project. She added that the project had not moved ahead as planned due to contractual issues. The first training is now expected to commence at the end of February or early March 2009.

The group asked about facilities for engaging with the volunteer sector, this was agreed to be picked up at the next meeting.

13) Date of next meeting

12th May 2009 12-3pm (including a working lunch)