

## Access Consultation Forum

Thursday 9 October

### MINUTES

Attendees:	Apologies:
Alan Greig (Ofqual, Chair) Alun McCarthy (DCELLS) Rachel Bell (DCSF) Helen Buckley (DCSF, Note) Sharon Louis (DCSF) Linda Lascelles (AFASIC) Janet Williams (AQA) Paul Simpson (BATOD) Alan Startin (Edexcel) Nick Lait (JCQ) Simon Robinson (NDCS) Elizabeth Dolman (OCR) Niki Polydorou (OCR) Hester Glass (QCA) Carol Copland (QCA) Rory Cobb (RNIB) Rob Holland (Skill) Barbara Waters (Skill) Patricia McDonald (SQA)	Sue Flohr (BDA) Roger McCune (CCEA) Brendan McDowell (CCEA) Paul Murray (DENI) Cathy Barnes (FAB) Beth Reid (NAS) Marc Bush (Scope)

#### **1) Welcome and Terms of Reference:**

Alan Greig welcomed everyone. He explained the Forum's role is to discuss access arrangements for disabled candidates taking GCSEs, A Levels and the Diplomas with a specific focus on candidate's taking exams this academic year in the immediate term. In the longer term more strategic discussions about implementing access will be discussed. The Forum would report to the Access to Qualifications Group on its progress. This group, led by DCELLS, handles high-level decisions on both general and vocational qualifications.

Any concerns about Functional Skills and the resulting changes to GCSEs should still be raised via the Access Arrangements Group. However, in the medium term he anticipated that both meetings would merge.

#### Action:

Helen Buckley to update the Terms of Reference.

#### **2) Provisions for the Equalities Bill**

Rachel Bell gave a presentation on DCSF's proposals for the Equalities Bill. Members were in agreement with the main thrust of the proposals, although there was concern that certificate indications were not to be included.

#### Actions:

Members to let Rachel Bell have their detailed views by Monday 20 October.

### **3) The roles of Ofqual and QCA**

Alan Greig gave a presentation about the draft proposals for splitting the work on access to exams between Ofqual and the QCDA. He explained once Ofqual was set up as an independent organisation, the QCA's work on developing qualifications would move to the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA).

This will mean the QCDA will be responsible for developing criteria for qualifications. They will be required to supply a report to Ofqual on compliance with the criteria for qualifications covered by the DDA. As part of the accreditation process for qualifications, Ofqual will take into consideration compliance with the equalities criteria and satisfy itself that this has been fully considered by the awarding body.

### **4) English GCSE**

The GCSE English Criteria Inclusion sheet was developed to support the new GCSEs in English Language and English Literature which will be first taught from 2010. These sheets are intended to describe which skills are assessed and the provision of access arrangements.

Forum members asked that consultation with practitioners take place on the barriers to assessment for disabled candidates. Members specifically asked what role professionals supporting disabled children such as language therapists had in the design of the Inclusion Sheet. They felt subject criteria needed to be included, if the Inclusion Sheet was to be used for GCSEs and A Levels. Member's also noted that there needed to be an understanding of multiple impairments.

#### Actions:

Alan Greig to go back to Margaret Farragher with the Forum's feedback on the Inclusion sheet and revise the template for the next meeting.

### **5) Issues concerning November 2008 exams series**

The awarding bodies requested further guidance from regulators on appropriate access arrangements for candidates taking exams this year. It was agreed that a further meeting would take place between awarding bodies and regulators on procedures for the November series.

Helen Buckley referred to the NAA online tool for exams officers and other staff who enter disabled candidates for exams. This tool should make it easier to identify which access arrangements are appropriate.

#### Actions:

- Alan Greig, Alun McCarthy and Roger McCune to meet the awarding bodies to discuss feedback on individual cases, in a separate meeting to be arranged by Ofqual. [POST MEETING NOTE – this meeting took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> Oct and it was agreed that the same access arrangements will be used for the November and January exams as were used in the last set of exams.]
- Helen Buckley to share link to the NAA's online access arrangements tool: ([http://www.naa.org.uk/naa\\_18139.aspx](http://www.naa.org.uk/naa_18139.aspx))

## **6) Close and Date of Next Meeting**

### Actions:

Ofqual to canvass members for a meeting in late November or December to discuss how requests for reasonable adjustments on behalf of candidates taking exams this year should be applied.