

**Access Consultation Forum
Minutes and Actions**

21st September 2009, Scarman House, Warwick University

Attendees: Julie Swan, Ofqual (Chair) Shakina Chinedu, Ofqual Megan Fisher, Ofqual Zara Ahmed, QCDA Joe Jarvis, QCDA Paul Sowerbutts, QCDA Helen Buckley, DCSF Alun McCarthy, DCELLS Declan Hyland, DENI	Janet Williams, AQA Paul Simpson, BATOD Sue Flohr, British Association of Dyslexia Jo Campion, NDCS Niki Polydorou, OCR Robert Holland, Skill Tudor Thomas, WJEC
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Apologies: Miro Griffiths, DPAP Rachel Bell, DCSF Madeline Swords, QCDA Cathy Barnes, FAB Peter Donochie, SQA Peter Nokes, DWP Jenny Reed, International Baccalaureate Samantha Lloyd, International Baccalaureate Rory Cobb, RNIB Patricia McDonald, SQA Peter Challinor, Edexcel	Paul Murray, DENI Patricia McDonald, SQA Jenny Trotman-Blake, Edexcel Joanne Lowe, DPAP Barbara Vincent, DWP Linda Lascelles, AFASIC Lisa McMahan, CCEA Sharon Louis, DCSF Jo Lea, Young Minds Roger McCune, CCEA Suzanne Jones, QCDA Annette Foulcer, SQA Nick Lait, JCQ
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1) Apologies

As above

2) Introduction

Members introduced themselves and the organisation they were from. Julie Swan explained that as Ofqual is now fully Coventry based, future meetings will be held in the Coventry area and, when possible, at Ofqual's offices at Spring Place, Coventry.

3) Minutes of previous meeting

Items 1-6 were agreed from the previous meeting. Jo Campion noted that she attended the previous meeting, although the minutes do not reflect this. The minutes will be amended to show this.

Shakina Chinedu provided an update for item 7. The issue had been raised with JCQ, QCDA and awarding bodies to progress suitable access arrangements for the key skills tests. Paul Sowerbutts explained that Edexcel had offered to provide a bank of exam papers that can be used for these on-demand exams, although the main contact, Spencer Kelly, has moved to a different post, thus requiring a re-establishment of contact.

Shakina Chinedu updated the group on item 8. Progress towards a single access arrangement for all types of assessment had been difficult because of the large number of bodies involved and the different approaches to assessment and reasonable adjustments that were required, for example for general and for vocational qualifications.

ACTION: Ofqual and Tests and Exams Support Group (TESG) to meet with Gareth Davies to discuss management of the bank of tests papers and review progress. Rory Cobb to be informed as he is likely to be involved with this

4) Diploma inclusion sheets update

Zara Ahmed provided an update on the development of inclusion sheets for the Diploma Lines of Learning Criteria. QCDA is currently developing a template in consultation and agreement with Ofqual, which will be used for 17 Lines of Learning, and it aims to give advice to awarding organisations on inclusive learning, which goes beyond the current GCSE/GCE inclusion sheets. Many reasonable adjustments have already been identified, so there should be little need for exemptions. Phase 4 of the Lines of Learning is currently being worked on, which will hopefully be ready by October 2009. Once QCDA/Ofqual have simplified and agreed a final template, it will be circulated to the group, and people will have the opportunity to raise any issues if necessary.

5) Functional skills inclusion sheets

Paul Sowerbutts updated the group on the Functional Skills inclusion sheets, and explained that the qualification is now in the final year of the pilot, and QCDA is in the process of finalising proposals for regulatory criteria for functional skills qualifications. Functional Skills inclusion sheets have been developed and workshops have been held to consult with QCDA's Disabled Persons Advisory Panel (DPAP) to address access issues. An online consultation was held from June-August 2009 to gauge people's views.

The group considered the wording of draft inclusion sheets on English, ICT and Maths. Proposals that were made in response to feedback received so far include:

- Further clarification on Functional Skills English, by way of a table of components
- Change titling from 'English – speaking and listening' to 'Speaking, Listening and Communication'
- To allow use of BSL.

QCDA will soon be making recommendations to Ofqual on the inclusion sheets. QCDA will liaise with Functional Skills awarding organisations over the proposals.

6) Parent/learner document and Direct Gov

Shakina Chinedu provided an update for the group on information to access arrangements for parents, learners and centres. We need to ensure parents, learners and centres have good and timely information on access arrangements. DCSF and Ofqual have discussed this and how best to inform parents of options available and the best course of action to take. The Direct Gov website is to have links to Ofqual and DCSF sites on access arrangements.

Ofqual is currently working on a flowchart and parent/learner information to be put on its website in relation to access arrangements. This will link to DCSF, QCDA, and Direct Gov. It was felt it would be useful for the group to look at the flowchart and guidance before it is put on the website.

DCSF are developing SENCO training and guidance, which is important for new SENCOs starting in September 2009 as they have to pass specific training; it is also open to existing SENCOs. The learning outcomes that form the key part of the specification for the national SENCO course can be reviewed online.

ACTION: Janet Williams to send existing parent/learner guidance to the group

ACTION: Shakina Chinedu to send current flow chart to the group and bring it to the next meeting

ACTION: All group members to go to www.tda.gov.uk, search for 'SENCO' and review the learning outcomes that form the key part of the specification for the national SENCO course. Feedback on this is to be sent to Helen Buckley (Helen.Buckley@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk) by 29th

September at the latest, so it can be taken to a meeting she is having with SEN and SENCO colleagues then

7) Certificate indications and exemptions

Shakina Chinedu explained that a meeting with JCQ, awarding bodies, DCSF, disability group members and Ofqual took place on 26th August 2009, to discuss the application form for exemptions and the use of certificate indications. Members discussed the notes from this meeting that had been circulated to the group, and asked for certain points to be clarified; for example that certificate indications had been in existence for many years to demonstrate that an exemption had been granted.

It was noted that a proposal would be considered by the JCQ admin committee in November/December to update the wording that is currently used on the back of certificates to explain an exemption. The proposed revised wording would be expressed in more positive terms than the wording currently in use. A revised version of the JCQ application form for exemptions was agreed at the meeting.

The group were pleased to note the developments that had been made, however there was a longer term wish that the achievements of all learners should be expressed in a positive way.

8) Introduction to Diploma equality project

Shakina Chinedu explained that QCDA are currently planning a project to embed equality of opportunity into Diploma delivery. This would address six strands of equality. This is currently being put to tender. It is expected that work will be completed by the end of the year, and guidance from this will follow in the New Year.

9) Update on the Equality Bill and Consultation

Helen Buckley updated the group on the key milestones for the Equality Bill:

- July 2009: Commons Committee Stage
- October 2009: Report stage and third reading in House of Commons
House of Lords first and second readings
- November 2009: Committee Stage (after Queen's speech)
- Early 2010: Royal Assent

Helen and Rachel Bell have met with stakeholders to discuss clauses of the Bill, and feel that early discussion will be helpful to inform understanding on what the scope is for the Bill.

Julie Swan informed the group that an event will take place prior to Christmas to discuss the consultation and scope of reasonable adjustments.

Helen agreed there was a need to clarify whether the legislation would apply to all qualifications, current as well as new, and transitional arrangements would need to be considered.

It was noted that some disability groups had concerns about the wording of the Bill and the reference to public confidence in qualifications in particular.

Declan Hyland explained that Northern Ireland has separate legislation. There is currently a watching brief on England.

Wales will be covered by the English legislation. Discussions were taking place in Scotland to consider how the Equality Bill will apply to SQA.

ACTION: Robert Holland and Jo Campion to circulate committee briefing they had prepared.

10) AOB

It was reported that QCDA is commissioning research into different forms of reasonable adjustment for use in English assessments. Awarding organisations are being invited to participate in the project.

Shakina Chinedu updated the group on CABs (Component Awarding Bodies) and DABs (Diploma Awarding Bodies) issues. Some CABs and DABs are not subject to the JCQ Regulations, raising issues about consistency of approaches. Opportunities for CABs and DABs to work with the JCQ requirements were considered.

Jo Campion reported a concern that had arisen with an International English Testing System (IELTS) assessment. It was noted that this was being investigated by the awarding body.

Janet Williams reported on her analysis of the cover sheets completed by oral language modifiers (OLMs). Unfortunately the data available on use of OLMs was limited. As such, accurate analysis of the use of OLMs is difficult to carry out. Janet is still working on this, and will report back at the next meeting.

11) Date of next meeting

To be confirmed

Spring Place, Coventry