

**Access Consultation Forum
Minutes and Actions**

12th May 2009, London

Attendees:	
Attendees: Julie Swan, Ofqual (Chair) Shakina Luke, Ofqual Lisa McMahan, CCEA Joanne Lowe, DPAP Rachel Bell, DCSF Sharon Louis, DCSF Helen Buckley, DCSF Jo Lea, Young Minds Niki Polydorou, OCR Suzanne Jones, QCA Jenny Reed, , International Baccalaureate Samantha Lloyd, International Baccalaureate Sue Flohr, British Association of Dyslexia	Cathy Barnes, FAB Janet Williams, AQA Jenny Trotman-Blake Edexcel Elizabeth Dolman, OCR Paul Simpson, BATOD Rory Cobb, RNIB Robert Holland, Skill Alun McCarthy, DCELLS Annette Foulcer, SQA Chris Sarginson, Gallant 2000 George Rowley, Gallant 2000

Apologies Carol Copland, QCA Lewis Alison AQA Nick Lait, JCQ Patricia McDonald, SQA Tudor Thomas, WJEC Peter Donachie SQA	Peter Noaks DWP Barbara Vincent, DWP Madeline Swords, QCA
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1) Apologies

As above

2) Introduction

The format of the meeting was explained –a two-part work-shop, to be followed by a short formal meeting. It was acknowledged that this was a new approach that would be evaluated and refined. It was intended to provide full opportunities for input and discussion.

3) Diploma Inclusion sheets - group exercise

Gallant 2000 explained to the group that they had been commissioned by QCA to develop the Diploma inclusion sheets; they invited the group to look at the sheets and consider two issues:

- Whether the template was clear and appropriate and how it could be improved
- The types of barriers and access arrangements that might need to be considered for sample principal lines of learning.

During the feedback session it became clear that the group felt that the inclusion sheets were overly complicated and that the template used for the GCSE/GCE was a better model. The group felt that because it was difficult to understand the inclusion sheets, it made it harder for them to decide on appropriate access arrangements. The group would welcome the opportunity to work through these again, once the sheets have been re-designed.

Action: Gallant 2000, QCA and Ofqual representatives to consider the feedback and alternative approaches.

4) Workshop on Equality Bill & group exercise

Rachel Bell updated the group on the progress of the Equality Bill through Parliament. The group was asked to note that the Bill had been introduced in the Commons on the 27th April and that its second reading had taken place on the 11th May. It was expected that the Bill should reach committee stage by late June.

The clauses of the Bill relevant to qualifications and assessments provided for:

- The concept of competence standards for general qualifications to be removed
- The regulators to determine which parts of a qualification cannot be reasonably adjusted and the limits on any reasonable adjustment eg where a pass mark is set or an intrinsic skill is required.
- Awarding bodies to provide for reasonable adjustments, within the principles established by the regulators

Secondary legislation would set out how the regulators should consult and publish their decisions.

It was expected that Royal Assent would be granted in early 2010. New duties will occur at least two months after Royal Assent.

Members were then divided into groups and asked to work through a series of questions relating to the effects and opportunities of the Equality Bill.

The main messages fed back by the groups were that:

- That the Bill was a positive development
- It provided an opportunity to introduce a more consistent approach to reasonable adjustments
- The need for the regulators to have regard both to public confidence and to the needs of disabled people could create difficulties

- There would need to be clarity about the respective responsibilities of the regulators, awarding bodies and centres and about the routes for complaint and appeal and for legal challenge
- Consultation would need to be genuine and inclusive
- The need to design-in inclusivity would be highlighted
- That assessments would need to be designed to enable learners to demonstrate what they know and can do

It was confirmed that the feedback would be used by the regulators as they considered their approaches to consultation on the way by which they should respond to new duties. There would be future opportunities for the group to contribute to thinking and, of course, to respond to a formal consultation in due course.

- **Formal meeting**

5) Minutes from previous meeting

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

6) Inclusion Sheets GCSE English, Maths & ICT 2010

A number of drafting points were raised about the inclusion sheets, together with the following:

- Questions about team working – there was some surprise that team working has been identified as an assessment objective for English and ICT.
- The need to acknowledge that some candidates with a hearing impairment have problems with written English
- Where use of scribes is allowed for English the limitations on their role should be defined – eg with regard to spelling and punctuation
- The use of BSL interpreters. As BSL is not English, there is a need for clarity about the limitations on its use. It was noted that the inclusion sheets provided for BSL interpreters use to be limited to communication of instructions and questions only
- There were questions about the use of readers in maths and the need to be clear about their role, eg how to they should deal with mathematical symbols
- In terms of barriers in maths, some candidates have difficulties with probability, inferences and deduction but such understanding is integral to the subject
- On ICT, barriers for visually impaired candidates can arise from the design of the assessments – eg if a question requires the production of a graph that involves manipulation of the mouse

7) Adult Literacy paper modification – JS/SL

This item was raised due to complaints that Ofqual had received from learners regarding access arrangements for adult literacy exams. Questions were asked of JCQ and awarding bodies about making suitable access arrangements for learners taking these exams. The situation was complicated as the assessments were QCA's. Awarding bodies were still waiting for a bank of exam questions that could be used for these on-demand exams. Clarity was also sought for the difference between enlarged and modified papers. It was noted that if fonts larger than the specified size were requested this could amount to a modification of a paper rather than a simple enlargement. However, it had to be recognised that centres and learners might not understand the distinction between these two possibilities.

Action: SL to set up a meeting with JCQ and awarding bodies to progress suitable access arrangements.

8) Single Source Access Arrangements – SL

SL updated the group about the progress of the single source access arrangements work. As had been noted at the previous meeting, progress had been difficult to achieve, and that it was probably better to go back to the original idea of addressing access issues specific to the Diploma, as the Diploma contained both general and vocational qualifications.

Action: SL to set up a meeting with single source access members to discuss the way forward on access arrangements using the diploma template.

9) AOB

Rory Cobb and Paul Simpson had undertaken a survey seeking views on the accessibility of the English GCSE to visually and to hearing impaired learners.

The results of this survey had been circulated with the papers. The survey had sought views on a fully inclusive design model, an 'alternative approaches' pathway and exemptions. The exemptions approach was the least favoured of the model, although there was no clear consensus in favour of any of the models.

The group noted the outcomes of the survey with interest and would welcome further discussion on the alternative models and, if possible, a widening of the sample surveyed.

10) Date of next meeting

21st September 2009 12-3pm

Warwick University, Coventry