

MINUTES

INSTITUTE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION BOARD

Meeting title: Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education Board
Meeting date: 16 November 2022
Protective marking: Official

Board members present: John Cope (JCop); Jennifer Coupland (JCou); Sir Peter Estlin (PE); Jessica Leigh Jones MBE (JLJ); Dame Fiona Kendrick (FK); Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE (the Chair) (RMS); Robin Millar CBE (RM); Neil Morrison (NM); Malcolm Press CBE (MP); Bev Robinson OBE (BR); Dayle Bayliss (DB) (via teleconference).

IfATE officials present: Beth Chaudhary, Strategy Director (BC); Dr Rachel Cooper, Strategy Director (RC); Rob Nitsch CBE, Delivery Director (RN); Kristofer McGhee, General Counsel (KM); Avril Cooper, HR Director (AC); David Wilson, Chief Financial Officer (DW); Paul Dowse, Deputy Director, Digital and Analytical Services Division (PD); Head of Governance; Committee Governance Manager; Chris Morgan, Deputy Director, Commercial Delivery (item 5) (CM) (via teleconference), Carmel Grant, Deputy Director, Commissioning & Development (item 5) (CG) (via teleconference).

Other stakeholders present: Peter Mucklow, DfE Director for Apprenticeships (PM); Ankura observers) (via teleconference).

Apologies: Dr Kate Barclay, Board member.

Item 1. Welcome, introductions and declarations of conflict of interest

1. Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith (the Chair) welcomed board members and participating officials to the meeting, including David Wilson and Paul Dowse, who were attending their first IfATE board meeting. The Chair thanked Bev Robinson for hosting IfATE and enabling a tour of the Blackpool and the Fylde College. The Chair welcomed observers from the external organisation undertaking the board effectiveness review who were joining by teleconference.
2. Apologies were received and accepted from Dr Kate Barclay.
3. The Chair asked board members whether they had any declarations or conflicts of interest to make. All board members recognised that should a potential or actual conflict arise by virtue of their other interests (outlined in the declaration of interests) then it must be raised at the outset of the relevant meeting which deals with the issue giving rise to the actual or potential conflict. No actual or potential conflict of interests were declared.

Item 2. Minutes and actions from the last meeting

4. The board agreed the minutes from the last meeting, held on 21 September 2022. The board noted there were six open actions, four of which were longer term actions with anticipated completion of three in January and one in March 2023. The CEO report provided updates for the remaining two items.

Item 3. CEO report

5. Jennifer Coupland (JCoU) presented the CEO report and highlighted early findings from the Big Conversation. JCoU cited the ongoing conversation with DfE and their work regarding the 2030 strategy and potential crossovers. A board member asked about DfE's 2030 strategy and whether there could be duplication. JCoU explained initial findings were as had been expected, regarding interest in the apprenticeship levy and modularisation of provision. Peter Mucklow (PM) added that the Treasury owned the apprenticeship levy policy. The Chair queried long-term plans for the levy and noted Rishi Sunak had referenced the apprenticeship levy in the Mais lecture he had given. The board heard HM Treasury had established a group to consider the apprenticeship levy in the future. The Chair requested that Rishi Sunak's Mais lecture speech be shared with board members.
6. JCoU highlighted the work undertaken to enable the temporary uplift on selected funding bands to mitigate the cost-of-living increases regarding apprenticeship delivery. JCoU emphasised the support given for the initiative by PM and DfE and how RN and IfATE colleagues had created a rapid response team to enable it to happen. PM added with inflation at 11% there was a desire that a supply shortage should not diminish the apprenticeship experience. A board member highlighted a further aspect which was the impact of the cost-of-living on apprentices and their minimum hourly wage. The Chair asked for IfATE to undertake work to investigate the impact of the cost-of-living on apprentices.
7. JCoU made board members aware that the new Secretary of State (SoS) for Education had asked DfE officials to engage with IfATE regarding the Lifelong Learning Entitlement and employer needs. This was a positive endorsement for IfATE. The Chair requested that the SoS for Education be invited to meet the IfATE board.

8. JCoU invited David Wilson (DW) to share initial thoughts on IfATE's current financial position. DW stated his priority was to test the current forecasts to ensure IfATE could successfully meet its allocated budget. A board member queried sufficiency of headcount. Avril Cooper (AC) explained IfATE was actively progressing a great deal of live recruitment activity whilst closely monitoring turnover to ensure IfATE was resourced sufficiently. AC highlighted some challenges to recruitment in terms of the market and the potential for a smaller Civil Service. The Chair questioned what the potential impact could be. DW explained IfATE should anticipate receiving guidance imminently as part of next year's business planning. JCoU stated there could be a potential budget reduction which would create a challenging environment for IfATE to achieve its objectives. A board member expressed concern that the expectations of the outcomes from the Big Conversation could be unmanageable in this environment. JCoU acknowledged the potential risk but said early outcomes appeared to indicate any changes would be more incremental in nature.
9. The Chair asked committee chairs to update board members on committee activity and recent meetings.
10. Sir Peter Estlin (PE) updated the board on the Audit, Risk & Assurance committee (ARAC). PE highlighted that real clarity had been made on the difference between moderate and substantial assurance. PE shared, with the board, preparatory plans for the Annual Report and Accounts (ARA) to ensure smooth, efficient approval of the 2022-23 ARA.
11. Jessica Leigh-Jones (JLJ) updated the board on the Approvals Policy & Assurance committee (APAC). The committee held an in-depth discussion on T Levels following the summer 2022 Health and Science T Levels exam results. The committee requested a root cause analysis paper be presented at this board meeting. The committee heard from the route panel chairs on their role and route panel experience and the meeting concluded by receiving a presentation from a solicitor apprentice on their positive experience.
12. Robin Millar (RM) updated the board on the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion committee (EDIC). The committee had held a discussion on equity vs equality and had heard from an IfATE colleague who had been in care and how they had forged a successful career for themselves. The committee had welcomed the news that IfATE would publish the EDI strategy shortly. RM confirmed that the committee had ambitions to further evolve the committee.

Item 4. Update on IfATE's digital strategy

13. Paul Dowse (PD) gave an update on progress regarding IfATE's digital strategy. He started by thanking board members for their time in attending and inputting at the recent workshop Microsoft had facilitated. PD confirmed IfATE colleagues were coming to the end of the research phase. Early findings from the research indicated IfATE's current systems were no longer fit for purpose and an alternative approach was needed, following the growth of the organisation.
14. Board members were supportive of the direction of travel given in the paper and recognised the risks associated with the approach. Board members acknowledged this type of programme is costly, difficult and there will be challenges during project delivery.
15. Board members raised several observations and asked IfATE to be clear on the outcomes and objectives. To mitigate against cost challenges, IfATE should look for incremental improvements, building on a staged approach to ensure developments and improvements deliver as intended, with mandatory staged checkpoints.

16. The board encouraged a controlled and robust project management approach to mitigate against procurement and resourcing challenges and emphasised the need to ensure systems will 'talk' to one another, internally and externally with partner organisations, when implemented.
17. The board confirmed they were content with the approach and the timeline and requested a roadmap for development to enable oversight of the project.

Item 5. T Levels update

18. Rob Nitsch (RN) outlined the paper setting out responsibilities for T Levels within IfATE. RN confirmed the situation regarding the Health and Science T Levels continued to be dynamic and the review of content was continuing.
19. RN handed over to Chris Morgan, Deputy Director, Commercial Delivery (CM). CM explained IfATE is working closely with all T Level suppliers and looking at how existing arrangements can be used to improve quality and consistency. CM confirmed, regarding the Health and Science issues, that IfATE, DfE and Ofqual had taken immediate action to ensure affected students were not disadvantaged, which the board welcomed.
20. The board discussed additional factors which had come to light following concerns raised by providers on the Health and Science issues which highlighted the involvement of several other agencies and organisations. RN confirmed these discussions had taken place and were ongoing. There were some elements which were in IfATE's remit and action had been taken to address identified elements. Other elements would need joint and sustained action to resolve the issues.
21. The board discussion moved on to providers and available support for them to ensure a consistent student experience. A board member highlighted IfATE and DfE had moved quickly once the issue had been identified and that had been acknowledged and welcomed by providers.
22. The board reflected on the risks to the T Level programme, more generally. The Chair requested a further update at a future meeting to consider the programme risks.

Item 6. Matters arising from the papers for information

23. The board asked for an update on people matters. Avril Cooper confirmed colleagues had continued to attend the office, with attendance rates at between 40 – 60%. Following the restructure and to support team cohesion, Insights training is scheduled to be available from the beginning of 2023. Additionally, IfATE will receive headline staff survey results at the beginning of December. Further data will follow including benchmarking data against the Civil Service as a whole.
24. There were no further matters arising.

Item 7. Any other business (AOB)

25. A board member thanked IfATE colleagues for the quality of the board papers.

26. There was no other business, and it was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on 17-18 January 2023.

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