MINUTES

IFATE APPROVALS AND POLICY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting title:	IfATE Approvals and Policy Assurance Committee
Meeting date:	13 September 2023
Protective marking:	Official

Board members present:	Kate Barclay (KB) (Chair); Neil Morrison (NM) (via teleconference); Malcolm Press (MP) (via teleconference); Bev Robinson (BR) (via teleconference).
IfATE officials present:	Rob Nitsch, Delivery Director (RN); Carmel Grant, Deputy Director for Commissioning and Development (CG); Nikki Christie, DD People Services Route Group (NC) (items 1-5); Darren Shaw, DD Change Implementation (DS) (item 4) (via teleconference); Head of Governance; Head of Long-Term Assurance and Quality (TL) (item 5); Governance Manager (Secretariat).
Other stakeholders present:	Isabel Sutcliffe (IS), independent chair of the Assessment Panel (AP) (items 1-5)
Apologies:	Beth Chaudhary and Rachel Cooper, Strategy Directors.

Item 1. Welcome, introductions and conflicts of interest

1. The Chair welcomed members and officials to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Beth Chaudhary and Rachel Cooper, Strategy Directors.

2. The Chair noted that Jessica Leigh Jones (JLJ) had resigned from the IfATE board and consequently was no longer a member of the Approvals Policy and Assurance Committee (APAC). Members asked for their thanks to be recorded for her contribution to the APAC and its predecessor the Quality Assurance Committee, and asked that an exercise be undertaken to capture the skills of the remaining committee members, identify any gaps to be remedied, and make proposals for succession planning.

3. The Chair asked members whether they had any new declarations of interest to make. No declarations were made, and members recognised that they should declare any potential or actual conflict that may arise by virtue of their other interests.

Item 2. Minutes and actions from the last meeting

4. The Chair asked for a minor amendment to the draft minutes of the 28 June 2023 APAC meeting, to clarify that the Chair of the Green Apprenticeships and Technical Education Advisory Panel (GATE-AP) was independent. The minutes were approved following this amendment.

5. Members reviewed the action log and agreed to close all actions proposed to be closed. Members asked that an additional action was added, to review and clarify the role and remit of the GATE-AP.

Item 3. Assessment Panel report

6. The Chair welcomed IS, the independent chair of the Assessment Panel (AP), to the meeting. IS provided an account of the work undertaken by the AP since June 2022. In line with APAC requests, the AP had reviewed risks to the delivery of quality products across IfATE, and undertook a review of the quality cycle model.

7. IS explained that over the year the AP had matured into its role and now wished to review its Terms of Reference to ensure that they remained fit for purpose.

8. The AP had commended the maturity and confidence with which IfATE assessment officials approached their work.

9. APAC noted the assurance work undertaken by the AP, and discussed and agreed its assessment of key issues and risks in terms of standards without an end-point assessment organisation (EPAO); ensuring the quality of IfATE's growing portfolio of technical qualifications; the need to ensure EQA performance data was sufficiently robust and timely; the need to ensure grading was consistent between EPAOs on the same standard; and the need to further embed a culture of reflection, evaluation and sharing of best practice within IfATE to maintain consistency of approach across a large and growing suite of products.

10. APAC agreed the AP's proposed priorities for the coming year. These would be to: establish effective oversight of technical qualifications; support the standards revision process; advise on the continuous improvement of External Quality Assurance (EQA); advise IfATE on possible models to address the issue of standards without an EPAO; and review the AP Terms of Reference. APAC members also asked that AP build into its workplan a review of the assessment requirements of T Levels and evaluation of whether these were sufficient and proportionate.

11. IS noted that the AP had considered an informative deep-dive presentation on end-point assessment at its September meeting, and suggested that this research was distributed to APAC members.

12. APAC noted that the board was due to consider T Level awarding organisation risk at its September meeting, and asked for the board to be made aware of the challenges identified during this discussion.

Item 4. EQA transition

13. NC and DS introduced the item, which set out IfATE's proposed approach to apprenticeship standards without an EPAO following EQA transition.

14. NC and DS explained that an agile approach was proposed to be taken to develop a method for each standard according to their specific circumstances.

15. IfATE had identified 6 EQA Principles that will underpin IfATE's approach to External Quality Assurance (EQA), which have been scrutinised by the Assessment Panel. To fulfil successful EQA, evaluations of the quality of apprenticeship assessment must:

   i) produce employer informed, and assured, outcomes

   ii) assure that EPAOs are: (a) developing and delivering quality end-point assessment (EPA); and (b) compliant with assessment plans

   iii) evaluate the quality of EPA in delivery

iv) identify, and take action to address or prevent, unsatisfactory assessment

v) inform the review and continuous improvement of assessment plans, EPAOs and EQA overall

vi) operate within a clear governance structure that ensures IfATE is able to: (a) meet its statutory duty in relation to EQA; and (b) exercise its statutory powers to address unsatisfactory end-point assessment (where necessary).

16. Members thanked NC and DS for their work in this area, and acknowledged the EQA principles.

Item 5. Technical Qualifications quality assurance

17. TL introduced the item and set out how improving quality assurance supported all three of IfATE's strategic objectives by ensuring employer views are considered at every stage of the cycle, ensuring our systems are as simple and effective as possible and using evidence to drive continuous improvement.

18. The quality cycles model shared with APAC last year had been adopted and had guided developments in quality assurance. This consisted of four stages: policy and design; develop and approve; training and assessment; and review and improve.

19. Members asked whether the approach would be time-consuming or present an additional burden to providers. TL informed the committee that the model would not add to providers' workloads. The intention was to distil the necessary information from data already collected by IfATE or by partner agencies.

20. Members asked that officials ensured that any work undertaken in this area was aligned with the ongoing work in digital transformation, and asked that consideration was given to prioritising work using a risk-based approach.

Item 6. Operational report

21. RN provided an update on IfATE's operations and delivery performance. This included IfATE's input into the 'Maths to 18' proposals and IfATE's ongoing work to refresh its approach to trailblazers. RN added that IfATE was currently on course with its plan to deliver 100 reviews of apprenticeship standards by December 2023.

Item 7. Any other business and confirmation of focus for next meeting

22. The Chair thanked members and officials for their participation and confirmed that the next APAC meeting would take place on 08 November 2023, with a focus on product performance.