

MINUTES

INSTITUTE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION BOARD

Meeting title: Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education Board
Meeting date: 21 September 2022
Protective marking: Official

Board members present: Dr Kate Barclay (KB); Dayle Bayliss (DB); John Cope (JCop); Jennifer Coupland (JCoU); Jessica Leigh Jones MBE (JLJ) (via Teleconference); Dame Fiona Kendrick (FK) (via Teleconference); Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE (the Chair) (RMS); Robin Millar CBE (RM); Neil Morrison (NM); Bev Robinson OBE (BR) (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); Peter Schild, Chief Financial Officer (PS); Jonathan Mitchell, Deputy Director, Portfolio & Partnerships (item 7) (JM); Anna West, Deputy Director, Integrated Skills System Development (item 7) (AW). Head of Governance

Other stakeholders present: Paul Kett, Director General, Skills Group (item 2) (PK); Sue Lovelock, DfE Director for Professional and Technical Education (SL); Saskia Navaratnam, Apprentice Panel Chair (item 5) (SN).

Apologies: Sir Peter Estlin; Professor Malcolm Press CBE.

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. On behalf of the board, the Chair expressed her condolences to the King and the Royal Family on the passing of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.
2. Apologies were received and accepted from Sir Peter Estlin and Professor Malcolm Press.
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. DfE Skills Group: an introduction and discussion of skills priorities

4. Paul Kett (PK), Director General of DfE's Skills Group, joined the meeting to update the board following DfE's recent re-structure. PK started by thanking the board for steering IfATE through an important and ambitious agenda.

5. PK explained the aim of creating the Skills Group was to bring all internal teams together to look across the skills portfolio in a coherent way and to increase efficiencies. The Unit for Future Skills was one important innovation emanating from the Skills Group creation. PK also confirmed the importance of the skills agenda which had continued with the transition to a new Prime Minister, Secretary of State for Education, and ministerial team. The view remained that the skills agenda is a critical enabler for growing the economy.
6. PK highlighted potential challenges likely to impact IfATE which were the desire to increase apprentice completion rates, ensuring T Levels can be scaled up and ensuring IfATE is doing enough for SMEs. He emphasised all IfATE's activities must have employers at their heart.
7. The board thanked PK and asked what three things IfATE could do to support the work of the Skills Group. PK highlighted IfATE should use its current mechanisms to increase employer involvement and demonstrate employers' voices had been heard. Secondly, IfATE should continue to show its agility in responding to changing needs. Thirdly, to champion T Levels as a good and robust choice for students. PK highlighted IfATE's work to date on sustainability and the green agenda.
8. The item concluded by PK highlighting that all stakeholders want a system which has quality at its heart and IfATE's collaboration with all stakeholders across the landscape is key.
9. Board members questioned how IfATE measures its impact on the system. Jennifer Coupland explained it collects significant data which shows the impact of IfATE's work. Rob Nitsch (RN) added there was grading data available and, in time, with more students taking T Levels, this data could also be analysed to demonstrate impact.

Item 3. Minutes and actions from the last meeting

10. The minutes from the last meeting, held on 13 July 2022, were agreed. The board noted there were five open actions, three of which were longer term actions with anticipated completion for two in January and one in March 2023. Updates for the remaining two items were addressed in the CEO report.

Item 4. CEO report

11. JCoU presented the CEO report. Board members expressed particular interest in the Health and Science T Levels core exam results.
12. JCoU explained that there had been, and was continuing to be, reviews to identify what had happened and lessons learned. Within IfATE, a content and a contractual review had been commissioned. If there were content issues, these would be addressed as soon as practicable and certainly for 2023 starters. The board asked for detail regarding the controls in place prior to the T Level being approved and JCoU explained the approvals process and the additional measures in place following approval. RN added the awarding organisations are subject to regulatory levers through Ofqual and contractual levers through IfATE. The board asked to be kept updated on developments.
13. The Chair asked for any other feedback on the CEO report and a request was made for the performance measures document to be in an easier to read format. The board noted the contents of the CEO report.

Item 5. Apprentice panel update

14. The Chair of the Apprentice Panel, Saskia Navaratnam (SN), joined to give an update to the board over the last six months. An open recruitment exercise had taken place and the panel had increased to 37 members. The aim was for there to be three apprentice representatives per Sainsbury route. Currently, the Catering and Hospitality and Hair and Beauty routes were not represented on the Apprentice Panel.
15. SN continued to explain that Apprentice Panel members had given advice internally to IfATE as well as more widely to other agencies on topics including reasons why apprentices may withdraw from an apprenticeship and apprentices' relationship with training providers.
16. SN reported on the Apprentice survey, explaining this had taken place earlier in the year. SN highlighted 2,000 responses had been received (a 100% increase on the previous year). Analysis was underway to understand how more support could be provided to apprentices, for example, in terms of updating IfATE's website and refreshing the work undertaken on the 'Raising the Standards' initiative.
17. The board commented on the quality and calibre of the current Apprentice Panel and suggested IfATE should utilise panel members to promote apprenticeships, at every available opportunity.
18. The Chair thanked the Chair of the Apprentice Panel, and the panel for their work and effort in raising the profile of apprenticeships.

Item 6. IfATE values and culture update

19. Avril Cooper (AC) outlined the paper setting out the reasons why culture and a set of values are important for an organisation. AC highlighted the purposes and benefits of having a set of values and behavioural indicators and set out the work which had been completed to date and the proposed future plans.
20. The board noted culture and values start with the leadership and commented on the importance of IfATE leaders living the values in their day-to-day work. The board noted that for values to be successful they should be seen as a longer-term objective and any messaging was simple and consistent. Additionally, the board noted measures needed to be realistic and achievable given the organisation has grown, and continues to grow, at pace. The board identified that the multi-site approach, with staff spread across the country presented challenges to ensuring all staff felt included.
21. The board noted the public sector sometimes tended to look inwards and suggested with the return to the office, there was an opportunity to re-set and re-focus on IfATE's core purpose and activities. The board also commented organisations could undermine their own work if they did not effectively deal with the basics, such as overlooking performance management. In conclusion, the board supported the intended approach.

Item 7. Delivering an Integrated Skills System: vision, insights and branding phases

22. Jonathan Mitchell (JM) and Anna West (AW) set out the plan to develop a vision for an integrated skills system, informed by a Big Conversation to understand employer views. JM explained IfATE had set itself a target to reach and directly engage with 6,000

stakeholders to identify the needs and aspirations, skewed towards identifying the needs of employers.

23. Additionally, a market research organisation would be procured to engage with larger firms and SMEs who did not currently interact with apprenticeships. The aim of the research is to understand in more detail what needs to change to help employers understand and use the skills system, to feed into the vision for the integrated skills system. In addition, an agency will be employed to help IfATE develop a brand strategy and, potentially, a quality mark which is capable of being well-understood and recognised.
24. The board asked how they could assist and support. JM explained the intent was for board members to join in and contribute and for them to share information with and utilise the board members' networks. The board questioned the ambition in delivering an integrated skills system and suggested that IfATE was one of several stakeholders in this space. They agreed that the word 'integrated' was unhelpful and asked for the project to be renamed. AW responded that IfATE's messaging would refer to making improvements to the skills system, and IfATE will work with partners to develop the vision. The intention is to set a multi-year strategy, which sets out how IfATE can improve the parts of the system it controls and acknowledges how this fits within the wider system.
25. The board questioned which stakeholders owned quality within the system and what would the quality mark be marking. The view was that the quality system was not currently joined up and further work would be needed to identify the challenges within the system.
26. The board questioned the risk ratings associated with the project overall. The board was of the view that some of the risk ratings were optimistic, given the current political and economic issues. The board questioned whether IfATE should appoint someone to chair an independent commission. The board were of the view this could go some way to mitigating potential risks regarding support for outcomes.
27. JCoU responded that the intended outcomes would deliver a ready-made solution. RC added that the ratings did reflect current conversations IfATE had been having with government. JCoU confirmed IfATE would consider the independence option and review the risks.
28. The board raised a concern regarding the timing of the project, given the current challenges being faced by employers, but were persuaded that business would be focussed on growth and achieving their targets. The board approved the timetable as set out in the paper.

Item 8. Matters arising from the papers for information

29. The board noted the minutes for committee meetings which had been approved since the July board meeting and the finance, people and HR reports and the board data pack. The board commented that several of the top apprenticeships by volume appear to be in the business and administration route. RN took an action to investigate the data further.
30. There were no further matters arising.

Item 9. Any other business (AOB)

31. The Chair asked for the briefing document which had been shared with Minister Andrea Jenkyns, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Skills, Further and Higher

Education) to be shared with board members as well as DfE's report 'Future skills needs in selected occupations'.

32. The Chair asked board members for their experience of using the portal for board papers and correspondence. Board members agreed to continue using the portal, noting its value.
33. RM wished to thank IfATE staff for their thoroughness and patience in briefing him on the performance scorecard document. He stated it was a great example of making board documents fully accessible.
34. There was no other business, and it was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on 16 November 2022.

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