

MINUTES

IFATE APPROVALS AND POLICY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting title: IfATE Approvals and Policy Assurance Committee
Meeting date: 16 February 2023
Protective marking: Official

Board members present: Kate Barclay (KB) (Chair); Jessica Leigh Jones (JLJ) (via teleconference); Neil Morrison (NM) (via teleconference); Bev Robinson (BR) (via teleconference).

IfATE officials present: Rachel Cooper, Strategy Director (RCo) (via teleconference); Governance Manager (RCr); Carmel Grant, Deputy Director for Commissioning and Development (CG); Head of Governance (SL); Rob Nitsch, Delivery Director (RN).

Apologies: Malcolm Press, board member; Beth Chaudhary, Strategy Director

Item 1. Welcome, introductions and conflicts of interest

1. The Chair welcomed members and officials to the meeting.
2. 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

3. The draft minutes of the Approvals Policy and Assurance Committee (APAC) meeting held on 30 November 2022 were approved without amendment.
4. APAC agreed to close all actions proposed to be closed, noting that two remained open and were related to workstreams due to return to APAC in future meetings.

Item 3. Reflection on APAC's first year including review of Terms of Reference

5. SL introduced the item and explained that in line with good governance practice, the Committee should review its Terms of Reference (ToR) on at least an annual basis, and recommend any changes it felt necessary to the IfATE board for approval.
6. SL and RN had drafted revisions to the ToR based on feedback previously provided by APAC members. Members endorsed the suggested changes to the ToR but wished to await the outcome of the board effectiveness review due to be received by the IfATE board in March to determine whether any further changes were required. The committee suggested that future APAC meetings receive a brief overview of IfATE process and policy assurance activity to support APAC's governance function regarding

apprenticeships and technical qualifications. Members also requested a concise summary of the responsibilities of the board, its committees and executive decision-making structures.

7. After making minor amendments for clarity, members endorsed the draft report to the board on APAC activities and APAC chair's statement.

Item 4. Look forward to 2023-24

8. SL introduced the item, which provided a draft programme of items for APAC's consideration during 2023-24. Members approved the forward look and requested that flexibility was retained to ensure that APAC remained able to consider emerging or topical issues that arise during the course of the year.

Item 5. Level 3 qualification update

9. CG introduced the item and explained that the Department for Education (DfE) had confirmed the policy position on Level 3 qualifications. This had enabled IfATE to publish its process and guidance for awarding organisations (AOs) and open a Registration of Interest form. The committee was updated about how many qualifications IfATE had identified as those which may be submitted for approval in cycle 1. Although registering interest was not mandatory, IfATE had committed significant resource to raising awareness amongst AOs of the importance of registering interest and the benefits of doing so to maximise participation.
10. Members noted the importance of this work and asked what engagement had taken place with Ofqual and with AOs. CG advised that a series of meetings of bipartite and tripartite meetings had taken place between IfATE, DfE and Ofqual and that IfATE had proactively contacted AOs who may be eligible for cycle 1 but had not yet applied. The overall aim of the process would be to better align qualifications with employer need.

Item 6. T Level reviews update

11. CG introduced the item, which provided an update on IfATE's response to the issues identified with the summer 2022 core assessments in the Health & Science T Levels. The response included: a content review, looking at the TQ specifications and other materials; and a contractual review looking at the contract provisions and contract management arrangements. Both reviews had concluded and IfATE officials were working through action plans to address the issues identified. The findings of the Content review had already been published by IfATE on 23 January, and a summary of the recommendations arising from the contractual review would be published soon by the DfE in their forthcoming T Level Action Plan.
12. Members were provided with an update on Wave 4 and Generation 2 T Levels and were informed that a communications plan was in development to ensure that providers and AOs were fully appraised. An additional specialism in cyber security was in development for the Digital Support Services T Level.
13. Members asked for the board to be provided with regular updates on the T Level Generation 2 procurement.

Item 7. Operational report

14. RN introduced the item and provided an update on the accelerated funding band reviews currently underway. Funding bands for apprenticeships would ordinarily only be reviewed

as part of a wider review of the occupational standard to which they relate, but the DfE had made a request for certain funding bands to be reviewed by exception due to the impact of the rising cost of living. 20 funding bands would be reviewed, and officials aimed to complete the reviews within 8 weeks.

15. RN provided members with an update on discussions related to the postgraduate teaching apprenticeship.

Item 8. Any other business and confirmation of focus for next meeting

16. The Chair thanked officials for their work and noted that the visit to the National Horizons Centre prior to the meeting had been interesting and informative, and had led to several useful enquiries for IfATE to follow up. These related to employer mobilisation, the make-up of trailblazer groups, and the effectiveness and efficiency of receiving and responding to feedback.
17. It was confirmed that the next APAC meeting would take place on 19 April 2023, with a focus on funding and commercial considerations.

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