

MINUTES

IFATE PRODUCT ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting title: IfATE Product Assurance Committee
Meeting date: 12 June 2024
Protective marking: Official

Board members present: Dr Kate Barclay (KB) (Chair); Jane Hadfield (JH); Mark McClennon MBE; Sir Robin Millar CBE (via teleconference) (RM).

IfATE officials present: Rob Nitsch CBE, Delivery Director (RN); Rachel Cooper, Strategy Director (RC); Carmel Grant, Deputy Director, Commissioning and Development (CG); Lucy Rigler, Deputy Director, Skills System Strategy and Oversight (LR); Joanna Moonan, Deputy Director, People Services route group (JM) (via teleconference) (item 4 only); Simon Love, Head of Governance (SL); External Stakeholder Communities Manager (CF) (item 5 only); Governance Manager (Secretariat).

Other stakeholders present: Simon Holmes, TH White Ltd (SH) (via teleconference) (item 4 only); David Kirschner, independent land based industries consultant (DK) (via teleconference) (item 4 only); Ashley Roberts, Mersey Fire and Rescue Service (AR) (via teleconference) (item 4 only); Apprentice Panel Chair (AW) (via teleconference) (item 5 only); 2 Apprentice Panel members (item 5 only).

Apologies: None.

Item 1. Welcome, introductions and conflicts of interest

1. The Chair welcomed board members and officials to the meeting. All board members were present.
2. The Chair asked board members whether they had any new declarations of conflict of interest to make. The Chair reminded board members 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 new declarations were made.
3. The Chair informed the committee that IfATE Delivery Director Rob Nitsch would be leaving IfATE on 31 July in order to take up a new position as Chief Executive of the Federation of Awarding Bodies. Committee members thanked Rob for his immense contribution to IfATE since its earliest days, and for all the dedicated support he had provided to PAC and its predecessor committees.

Item 2. Minutes and actions from the last meeting

4. The draft minutes of the 11 March 2024 Approvals Policy and Assurance Committee meeting were approved without amendment.
5. Members reviewed the action log and agreed to close all actions proposed to be closed.

Item 3. Operating context

6. Rachel Cooper and Rob Nitsch introduced the item and informed the committee that IfATE's proactive external engagement had been scaled back in line with pre-election guidance, but that core operational activity continued. The main challenges for the apprenticeship programme were set out, which included withdrawal rates and whether the level of assessment was a factor.
7. Members noted that there were a variety of reasons for non-completion of an apprenticeship, and requested officials undertake an analysis of different reasons for non-completion.

Item 4. Apprenticeship performance – the employer perspective

8. Joanna Moonan introduced David Kirschner and Simon Holmes, who had contributed to the development of the land-based services engineer occupational standard, and Ashley Roberts, who had contributed to the development of the operational firefighter occupational standard, to provide an employer perspective on the impact of the apprenticeships programme.
9. David and Simon informed the committee their experiences with IfATE officials had been very positive and that their respective occupational standards broadly reflected the requirements of their industries. They informed the committee that in their experience, some training providers found it challenging to recruit and retain quality lecturers and they believed this was linked to funding rates.
10. Ashley informed the committee that although she had significant experience nationally through her work as apprenticeship lead for the National Fire Chiefs Council, she would provide a perspective as an individual employer of apprentices. Ashley advised her apprentices did not appear to face the same challenges in terms of quality of training, but

that funding was also an issue in her sector. She praised the support received from IfATE officials.

11. The employers added there were a number of experienced individuals in their respective sectors who had the knowledge to be excellent lecturers, but that many of these did not have the formal qualifications necessary to teach in a further education setting.

Item 5. Apprenticeship Panel update

12. The External Stakeholder Communities Manager introduced the members of the apprentice panel in attendance. The apprentices explained that following the direction previously given by board members, the Panel had recruited additional members and now had representation of all 15 occupational routes within its 37 members. The Panel had undertaken more engagement on social media and in conferences. A member of the panel had attended the recent Quality Alliance meeting, which brings together a variety of partner organisations involved with the quality of apprenticeships and technical education and is jointly chaired by IfATE and the DfE.
13. The Apprentice Panel had formed dedicated working groups to work on its five priority areas. These were: adult apprentices; careers advice; completion rates; small and medium enterprises; and stakeholders and communications. Members confirmed their ambition that the Apprentice Panel increase its collaboration with Route Panels, Trailblazers and IfATE's operational teams, in order to inform ongoing work, avoid duplication of effort and ensure that the apprentice voice was embedded throughout IfATE's activities.
14. Highlights of the year had included National Apprenticeship Week, where significant work had been done on social media and attendance by two apprentice panel members at the House of Lords Industry and Regulators Committee. Both these events had enabled the panel to raise the profile of apprentices and apprenticeships.
15. Members expressed their thanks to the members of the Apprentice Panel for their efforts, and also to the Apprentice Panel members' employers who have been so supportive of the panel's efforts. Members suggested that a board member could be appointed as a sponsor of the panel, to provide support and advice as needed.

Item 6. Apprenticeship performance analysis

16. Lucy Rigler introduced the item, which provided a summary of apprenticeship starts, achievements, withdrawals and outcomes. She added that in future, analyses would consider impact in more complex metrics than withdrawal rates alone. IfATE's policy and data teams were working together to develop appropriate measures, some of which would in time describe longitudinal trends in the data.
17. Members asked officials to consider how the EDI impact of IfATE's products could be included within future analyses. Members were advised that EDI impacts might be most evident over the longer term, but that IfATE had already developed and published the EDI Toolkit to support employers in putting equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of the development of occupational standards and apprenticeships. Members noted that ensuring employers had access to the deepest and widest talent pool, in conjunction with the development of the green economy, would yield significant benefit for the productivity and growth agenda.

Item 7. Confirmatory discussion

18. Members considered the views of the employers and apprentices who had addressed the meeting, and concluded that there was evidence to demonstrate significant progress in the apprenticeship programme. Members noted that success may be a complex concept to define, as success measures may change over time as employers' requirements evolve.

Item 8. Any other business

19. There was no other business.

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