

MINUTES

IFATE APPROVALS AND POLICY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting title: IfATE Approvals and Policy Assurance Committee
Meeting date: 19 April 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: Rob Nitsch, Delivery Director (RN); Beth Chaudhary, Strategy Director (BC); Carmel Grant, Deputy Director for Commissioning and Development (CG); Head of Governance; Governance Manager; Joanna Moonan, Deputy Director for People Services (JM) (via teleconference) (item 3 only); Chris Morgan, Deputy Director for Commercial Delivery (CM) (item 5 only); co-lead of Funding Community of Practice (via teleconference) (item 4 only).

Other stakeholders present: Three members of the Trailblazer Reference Panel (DC, AH and RJ) (via teleconference) (item 3 only)

Apologies: Malcolm Press, board member; Rachel Cooper, 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 16 February 2023 were considered and members requested a minor amendment to clarify that the chair had asked members to declare any new interests at the previous meeting.
4. APAC agreed to close all actions proposed to be closed, noting that four remained open and were related to workstreams due to return to APAC in future meetings.

Item 3. Trailblazer Reference Panel

5. JM introduced the item and explained that the Trailblazer Reference Panel (TRP) had provided collective feedback on how they work with and are supported by IfATE. Key points of feedback were received on how IfATE engages with trailblazers, the time commitment

of trailblazer members and their experience of the pilot of the new funding model for calculating apprenticeship funding band recommendations.

6. AH, DC and RJ set out their experience as members of trailblazer groups engaged with IfATE. In their view their role had become more demanding in terms of time commitment, and that their time could be put to better use if they had a renewed focus on the areas in which trailblazers held expertise. Some trailblazers described difficulties with the funding system, and the challenges encountered in providing sufficient evidence for some aspects of the funding calculation although the support provided by IfATE officials was praised. Trailblazers emphasised the importance in maintaining engagement with a wide range of organisations in forming trailblazer groups and the importance of ensuring the model by which trailblazers operated was simple and clearly defined, focused on the areas in which trailblazers could be most effective, and responsive. Trailblazers expressed a strong view that their contributions should be restricted to areas where they possessed the most expertise and experience.
7. Members asked AH, DC and RJ for their view on how IfATE should support trailblazers in future, and were advised that support on the more technical aspects of trailblazer work would be beneficial, and free up trailblazer time to focus on providing sector-specific expertise. One trailblazer informed the committee that the representative body within their sector was involved in trailblazer work and that other trailblazer groups may benefit from the involvement of relevant representative bodies.
8. The Chair thanked AH, DC and RJ for their views and for all their contributions as trailblazers. Members were satisfied that officials understood the issues faced by trailblazers but felt that more could be done to resolve the concerns expressed by trailblazers. They asked that work be undertaken to review the model under which trailblazers operated. The committee decided that the IfATE Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) should be made aware of the challenges in the trailblazer model.

Item 4. Implementation of new funding model pilot and lessons learned

9. The co-lead of the Funding Community of Practice introduced the item and explained that views were sought on the proposal to close the current 15-month pilot phase of the new model by which IfATE calculated funding band recommendations. Officials were confident of the outputs provided by the pilot phase but were conscious of the need for ongoing refinement of the process, particularly in respect of the more complex calculations in the model.
10. Members advised that they were conscious of the feedback received from trailblazers regarding the difficulties encountered in delivering apprenticeships within the funding bands calculated under the pilot. They were informed that the model was found by trailblazers and others to be more transparent and reliable than the previous model, and that the model had performed well against the success criteria identified at the start of the pilot by IfATE, DfE and the Minister for Skills at that time.
11. Members outlined no objections to the proposal for the pilot phase of the new funding model to be closed and for the model to be implemented in full, on the basis that the outputs would be monitored on an ongoing basis in the interests of continuous improvement. The committee asked that IfATE consider the differences between the funding bands allocated to some apprenticeships and the actual cost of delivering them.

Item 5. T Level Generation 2 contract re-tenders

12. CM introduced the item, which described interventions to de-risk T Level development and delivery as well as improve quality. The committee was informed about the success criteria, enduring risks, and how the lessons learned from the delivery of the first generation of T Levels had been incorporated into the design of Generation 2 T Levels.
13. Members asked whether the contractual arrangements would be sufficiently robust to enable early intervention where necessary, and were informed that the existing T Level contracts contained a number of controls, and that these would be strengthened further in Generation 2. Members asked whether an earlier decision point would be beneficial in preventing a contractual failure.

Item 6. Operational report

14. RN provided an update on IfATE's operations and delivery performance. These included the forecast expenditure of the apprenticeship levy and an update on the results of the recent extraordinary funding band reviews. In relation to the Prime Minister's recent announcement on the requirement to study mathematics until the age of 18, the committee was informed that IfATE was considering the mathematics content within its existing product suite and would seek to contribute to the advisory group formed by the government to advise on this policy.

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

15. Members considered a proposed series of actions to address the APAC-related comments and observations in the recent external evaluation of the IfATE board. These included: revisions to the Terms of Reference to further clarify the purpose of APAC; ensuring that APAC focuses on governance and oversight; and a refreshed approach to business planning and action tracking.
16. The Chair thanked members and officials for their participation and confirmed that the next APAC meeting would take place on 28 June 2023, with a focus on emerging skills and foresighting.

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