

# MINUTES

## INSTITUTE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS & TECHNICAL EDUCATION BOARD

Meeting title:	Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education Board
Meeting date:	19 July 2023
Protective marking:	Official
Board members present:	Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE (the Chair); Dr Kate Barclay; Dayle Bayliss; John Cope; Jennifer Coupland (JCoU) (via teleconference); Sir Peter Estlin; Jessica Leigh Jones MBE (via teleconference); Dame Fiona Kendrick; Sir Robin Millar CBE; Neil Morrison; Malcolm Press CBE; Bev Robinson CBE (via teleconference).
IfATE officials present:	Dr Rachel Cooper, Strategy Director (RC) (via teleconference); Rob Nitsch CBE, Delivery Director (RN); Kristofer McGhee, General Counsel and Board Secretary (KM); Avril Cooper, HR Director (AC); David Wilson, Chief Financial Officer (DW); Jane Pierce, Deputy Director, Engineering, Construction & Transport route group (JP) (item 7); Paul Dowse, Deputy Director Digital & Analytical Services (PD) (item 9); Simon Love, Head of Governance.
Other stakeholders present:	Kate Ridley-Moy, incoming DfE Director of Apprenticeships (KRM); Kiera Harper, DfE Director of Technical Qualifications & Essential Skills (KH); Robert Halfon MP, Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education (item 5); Julia Kinniburgh, DfE Director General of Skills Group (items 5 and 6); Mark Reynolds (Group Chair and CEO, Mace Group) (item 7).
Apologies:	Beth Chaudhary, Strategy Director (BC).

### **Item 1. Welcome and declarations of conflict of interest**

1. Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith (the Chair) welcomed board members and participating officials to the meeting.
2. The Chair asked board members whether they had any new declarations of conflict 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. John Cope stated he is now a parliamentary candidate for the Esher & Walton constituency. JCoU stated she had accepted a role to become a trustee of WorldSkills UK which is expected to begin in October 2023. The Chair told the board she was undertaking work with the British Chambers of Commerce on work and skills in the workplace. This was a temporary piece of work which would conclude in December 2023. All declarations were recorded and agreed that they did not give rise to an actual or perceived conflict for items on this agenda.

### **Item 2. Minutes and actions from the last meeting**

3. The board agreed the minutes from the last meeting, held on 10 May 2023, subject to an amendment at paragraph 25, changing from: “The board ... asked that thought be given as to how ESG could be incorporated into the board committees.” to “The board ... asked that thought be given as to how ESG could be incorporated into the board *and its* committees.”.
4. The board reviewed the action log. KM confirmed progress had been made against all open actions and noted that several actions had been completed.
5. The Chair welcome KH and KRM to the meeting as the nominated DfE observers. The Chair also took the opportunity to thank Sue Lovelock, who had moved to a different role within DfE, and Peter Mucklow, who was retiring, for their support and contribution during their time as DfE observers.

### **Item 3. CEO report and finance and risk updates**

6. JCoU presented the CEO report and provided the board with an update on the current position regarding wave 4 T Levels. JCoU also reported a positive quarterly performance review with DfE where there was appreciation and recognition for the work IfATE had achieved in the first quarter of 2023/24.
7. JCoU also provided an update on IfATE’s work on its branding strategy. DfE is reviewing its technical education brand portfolio and IfATE is linking in with the review, however, IfATE is on track for the board to receive an update at its next meeting in September. JCoU gave an update on IfATE’s review of the model it uses to collaborate with employers. The work is being split into two phases with the second phase being a more fundamental review of how IfATE collaborates with employers in the most effective way possible.
8. The board highlighted that employers were calling for the apprenticeship levy to be spent on other forms of training and questioned what the potential risks were with that approach. JCoU confirmed IfATE was supportive of the current Government position. As apprenticeships are deemed to be the gold standard of training, there should be

safeguards in place as to what the levy funds. The board questioned whether it was possible to grow the levy without increasing the cost to businesses particularly in the climate of increasing inflationary pressures.

9. JCoou highlighted the work IfATE colleagues were undertaking regarding organisational risks to make them more specific.

#### **Item 4. HR report and update**

10. Avril Cooper (AC) presented the paper, highlighting the progress which has been made to the HR function. The board was keen to ensure progression for IfATE's people and highlighted whether, internally, IfATE could have its own version of the occupational maps to support organisational progression. The board also encouraged IfATE to be aspirational, including consideration as to whether IfATE could become an exemplar employer to the marketplace.
11. The board requested further clarity on the critical roles as defined in the report and were pleased to see a centralised learning and development budget to enable efficient and wise spending. The board also challenged IfATE to look to 2030 and beyond and to identify those skills which will be required as well as considering the impact of AI. The board questioned whether external assistance is available to support with workforce planning. AC welcomed the comments.
12. The board were keen to understand more in terms of the changes the HR initiatives will deliver for the organisation and how IfATE's products would be used to support progression, as well as offering more T Level industry placements. The board also highlighted the real benefit of colleagues and teams getting together as a way of supporting learning, development and progression.

#### **Item 5. Robert Halfon MP, Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education**

13. The board welcomed Robert Halfon, MP, the Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education to the meeting. The Minister started by thanking IfATE for its work to date and set out his approach to skills using the 'ladder of opportunity' model, with the top rung relating to prosperity and job security. The Minister highlighted the initiatives which have or are being implemented by the Government to date. The board questioned the timeline for implementing the lifelong loan entitlement for other qualifications which the Minister noted.
14. The board noted there was a feeling Government departments could do more to provide industry placements for T Level students, which the Minister noted. The board agreed to write to the Cabinet Office to lobby for setting targets for public sector contracts to include apprenticeships and T Level industry placement opportunities.
15. The board heard that the Minister is keen for IfATE to promote itself and its products more to really highlight the quality of its products and its work with employers.

#### **Item 6. DfE Skills Group: key priorities**

16. The Chair welcomed Julia Kinniburgh (JK) to the meeting and asked JK what she saw

were IfATE's strategic risks. JK identified IfATE's products, particularly regarding the embedding of T Levels into the qualification landscape and the capability of the awarding organisation market. JK also identified the challenges IfATE faces regarding employer engagement as a further strategic risk.

17. The board discussed the options available to mitigate those risks, acknowledging that some solutions may take time to bed in and be effective.

#### **Item 7. The construction industry: current priorities and future needs**

18. The Chair welcomed Mark Reynolds (MR) from Mace Group who presented on the current skills initiatives in the construction sector and future skills needs. MR explained the skills gap challenge faced by the sector. The Construction Leadership Council is focussing on four priorities to mitigate the identified skills gaps and the volume of employees who exit the sector. The board discussed reasons for withdrawals and RN offered to share withdrawals data.
19. MR also explained some of the challenges regarding competency in a post-Grenfell world and how this is captured by the sector. MR welcomed the input and support received from IfATE, particularly collaborating with Jill Nicholls, Head of Construction & Transport route group, on maintaining and revising many occupational standards. MR highlighted the significant amount of work which is required to complete revisions and suggested a systemic approach may be of benefit.
20. MR highlighted the importance and value of IfATE's occupational maps. He also stressed the similarity and overlap between and across occupational standards and routes, for example, shipbuilding, automotive and even craft occupations. MR welcomed T Levels as a route into the sector but expressed concern where the T Level covered a 'trade' and cited the example of on-site construction.
21. The board questioned MR on whether he had any thoughts on how SMEs can better train their employees. MR suggested looking at examples from other sectors, for example, gas and electric where there are many SMEs who are self-employed.

#### **Item 9. Digital delivery plan**

22. Paul Dowse (PD) introduced the item, highlighting three key points; that of alignment to DfE's technology strategy, an agile planning approach as the technology is changing constantly and how the new infrastructure will support better employer engagement.
23. The board noted the plan and requested early waypoints to support the cultural shift which IfATE's people would need to make, particularly given the speed of the digital environment. The board were content for Neil Morrison and Jessica Leigh Jones to be part of IfATE's Programme Board, which would be chaired by IfATE's HR Director, with ARAC receiving regular updates on development. The board asked that the framework be clearly set out, building in skills gaps to ensure future digital delivery to deliver the promised efficiencies. KRM requested that DfE's digital team be involved and feed into IfATE's Programme Board.
24. The board asked PD what he considered to be the significant risks. PD highlighted prompt

action to approve the business case without delay, as any delay to business case approval would have consequential delays to delivering the plan. The board noted this and offered their support in removing any potential delays.

25. The board sought assurances that culture and accessibility were included within the plan. PD confirmed both aspects were included but would ensure these were drawn out further.
26. The Chair asked the board if they were comfortable to approve the digital delivery plan. The board confirmed they were.

#### **Item 10. Any other business**

27. For timing reasons, the board asked that the item on T Levels be returned to the September board. The Chair asked the board to give thought to how partnerships could be formed in the awarding organisation market.
28. The board noted the update following the last Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee meeting and questioned the measures in place regarding scenario planning in the event of a cyber security incident. IfATE colleagues to provide clarification on this point.
29. The Chair confirmed the next meeting would be held in London on 21 September.

Author	Secretariat, Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education
Date created	20 July 2023
Version	Final