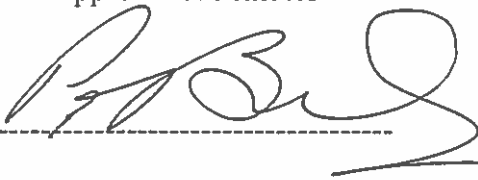


State Examinations Commission

Meeting No. 151

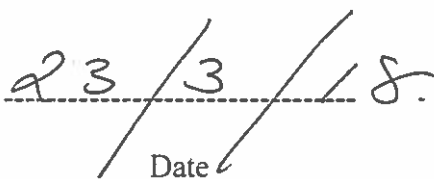
Friday, February 9th, 2018

Approval of Minutes



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pat Burke', is written over a horizontal dashed line. A long horizontal stroke extends to the right from the end of the signature.

Pat Burke, Chairperson



The date '23/3/18' is handwritten in black ink over a horizontal dashed line. Below the line, the word 'Date' is printed with an arrow pointing to the right.

Meeting Start: 10.00am

Meeting End: 14.30pm

State Examinations Commission

Meeting No. 151

9th February 2018 @ 10am in SEC, Athlone

Commissioners: Pat Burke, (Chairperson)
Mary Ryan, (Deputy Chairperson)
Prof. Teresa O'Doherty
Dr Richard Thorn
Martin Sisk

Executive: Aidan Farrell, (CEO)
Andrea Feeney, (Director Operations & IT)
Eamonn Murtagh, (PO)
Tim Desmond, (HEAD)
Jackie Wade, (HEO)

1. Commission pre meeting

The pre meeting of the Commissioners commenced at 10am and concluded at 10.25 without members of the Executive present.

2. Conflict of Interest Declaration

There were no conflicts of interest to note.

3. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of meeting no. 150 were approved and signed by the Chairperson.

4. Executive Report

The Executive Report was taken as read.

5. 2017 Examinations

It was recorded that there were no outstanding matters from the 2017 Examinations for the attention of the Commission.

6. Preparation for 2018 Examinations

The Executive confirmed that the preparations for the 2018 Examinations are on track.

7. Issues of Strategic Importance

a) Digital Transformation (Incl. On-Line Marking)

- (i) On-line Marking: Procurement process ongoing.
- (ii) On-line Fees: Project team is in place, with implementation of online fees facility expected in 2018.
- (iii) SEC Website Redesign: Progress reported

b) Contract Staff Supply

The Executive briefed the Commission on the current position on contract staff numbers. The issue of supply and release of teachers for Oral and Practical examination is a particular focus currently, with the Oral Examiner numbers at more or less the same levels at the equivalent point last year. Further engagement with schools who have not made examiners available in recent years to take place in the coming weeks. The SEC has sought the approval of the DES to apply the 1 January 2018 increase of 1% to contract staff fees, in accordance with the longstanding practice of mirroring teacher pay increases. It was noted that the scale payment introduced in 2017 will again be deployed in 2018, in a targeted fashion based on emerging needs.

c) Review of Operation of the RACE Scheme

The Executive provided an update to the Commission on progress on a number of trials relating to the use of Assistive Technology.

d) Senior Cycle Science Practicals Trialling Project

The Executive is currently finalising the report relating to the above project. The report will subsequently be submitted to the Commission for review, prior to engagement with the DES and NCCA on the findings.

e) Equity and Fairness Issues

Trauma and Adversity: The Commission had an initial discussion on the issue of Trauma and Adversity. The discussions will continue at future meetings.

Common Level Items: It was agreed that the matter of common level oral components will be considered within the wider context of LC Gaeilge syllabus revision. The Executive to set out proposed indicative timeline for the approach.

8. HR

The Executive updated the Commission on a number of recruitment competitions currently ongoing.

9. Corporate Affairs (including Risk Management)

(i) Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies

The Executive reported to the Commission that the Code of Practice for the Governance and State Bodies has been fully implemented within the SEC. The Executive also noted that it had responded to the outcome of the DES Corporate Governance Compliance Review at the end of 2017.

(ii) Annual Report 2016

Work on the 2016 Comprehensive Report to the Minister and the 2016 Annual Report is currently ongoing

(iii) Corporate Risk Register

The Commission approved the updated Corporate Risk register at the last meeting. The decision of the European Court of the Justice regarding the Nowak Case was discussed. The Executive to circulate the judgement to Commissioners for information. The Commission agreed that the Executive should progress an operationally feasible approach, subject to legal advice, to implement the judgement.

10. **Audit and Risk Committee**

The next Audit & Risk Committee meeting is scheduled for February 28th 2018, with the internal audits on Corporate Governance and the Statement of Internal Control ongoing. The ARC will advise the Commission on an approach for the Commission to consider in relation to the SIC after the meeting on the 28th February.

11. **Finance**

The Executive confirmed the 2018 Pay and Non Pay allocation from the Department, and the additional provision provided at the end of 2017 to alleviate the deficit.

Work is ongoing on the preparation of the draft 2017 Financial Statements. The Commission noted receipt of the letter from the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee regarding the timely finalisation of financial statements, which has been issued to all public bodies.

The Executive also informed the Commission of the technical engagements with the Revenue Commissioners regarding the provision of notification of contract staff leavers/starters on an ongoing basis.

12. **IT**

The Executive briefed the Commission on the progress of the Question Paper Unit Network Project, which is still in testing phase.

13. **Procurement**

The Executive briefed the Commission on the current procurement processes currently at evaluation stage, which are Question Paper Printing, Plastic Boxes for examination

stationery and trolleys as personal protective equipment for superintendents. The Executive also briefed the Commission on its engagement with the OGP and the Department of Education and Skills regarding OGP frameworks. The OGP to issue a specific letter of comfort to the SEC confirming that the SEC can directly engage in unique, time critical and specialised nature procurement as necessary.

14. AOB

The Multi Annual Work Plan had been circulated prior to the meeting for review. The Commission approved the plan subject to minor amendment regarding the timeframes which are to be reviewed by the Management Board.

The Executive briefed the Commission on an FOI request which was refused by SEC under Section 44 and 15 of the Act and reviewed by the Office of Information. The OIC upheld the decision of the SEC and stated that the decision was appropriate and in line with legislation.

The Commission expressed its great appreciation of the work and contribution to the SEC made by Bríd Uí Riordáin, former HEAD, RIP, and expressed its condolences to her family.

Meeting Concluded