

MINUTES

INSTITUTE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS & TECHNICAL EDUCATION BOARD

Meeting title:	Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education Board
Meeting date:	20 March 2024
Protective marking:	Official
Board members present:	Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE (Chair); Dr Kate Barclay; John Cope; Jennifer Coupland; Sir Peter Estlin; Dame Fiona Kendrick; Jane Hadfield; Mark McClennon MBE; Sir Robin Millar CBE; Neil Morrison; Professor Malcolm Press CBE; Bev Robinson CBE (via teleconference).
IfATE officials present:	Beth Chaudhary, Strategy Director; Dr Rachel Cooper, Strategy Director; Rob Nitsch CBE, Delivery Director; Kristofer McGhee, General Counsel and Company Secretary; Avril Cooper, HR Director; David Wilson, Chief Financial Officer; Simon Love, Head of Governance; Lucy Rigler, Deputy Director Skills System Strategy and Oversight (item 5 only); Jonathan Mitchell, Deputy Director, Future Skills and Innovation (item 7 only); Jane Pierce, Deputy Director Engineering, Construction & Transport route group (item 8 only).
Other stakeholders present:	Head of Sponsor Team, DfE (via teleconference), Tessa Griffiths, Director, Skills Strategy & Engagement, DfE (via teleconference).
External attendee:	Paul Feely, Academy & Engineering Director BAE Systems Naval Ships (item 8 only) (via teleconference).

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

1. Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith (the Chair) welcomed board members and participating officials to the meeting.

Item 2. Declarations of conflict of interest

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. No new declarations were made.
3. John Cope confirmed he had left UCAS and is taking up a consultancy role with a public relations firm.

Item 3. Minutes and actions from the last meeting

4. The board agreed the minutes from the last meeting, held on 31 January 2024, subject to minor amendments.
5. The board reviewed the action log and noted the progress on the open actions and agreed to close those actions which had been recorded as concluded. A board member sought clarification on the proposed approach for how IfATE would include environment, social and governance (ESG) issues in board matters. After further discussion, the Chair suggested the board member discuss with officials following the meeting.

Item 4. CEO report, strategic risks and finance updates

6. The CEO presented this item and provided an update to the board on the current situation regarding T Levels. Bidding closed for the first wave of the next generation of T Levels on 13 March. All contracts have received bids and officials will now evaluate these bids ahead of contract decisions being made in the summer.
7. The CEO also highlighted the ongoing work regarding IfATE continuing to have a central London presence. IfATE colleagues were in discussion with both the Department for Education and the Government Property Agency to achieve a satisfactory and sustainable outcome.
8. The board welcomed the ongoing work and progress regarding approval of reformed Level 3 qualifications and noted that this was in line with IfATE's objective to create a simpler skills system.
9. The board requested further detail on trends in apprenticeships data. The Delivery Director confirmed he would provide further detail for the next board meeting.
10. The board commented on potential impacts to the digital delivery plan. The CEO confirmed that IfATE would need to make careful choices to ensure the plan delivered the desired improvements and efficiencies.
11. The CEO was pleased to report she had met with the Secretary of State for Education who had commented positively on IfATE's achievements and the strength of employer representation on IfATE's board.

Action 79: Delivery Director to provide information on apprenticeship data trends.

Kate Barclay left the meeting at this point.

Item 5. Strategic guidance update

12. The Strategy Director introduced the item, explaining the current iteration had taken into consideration the board's previous observations, and welcomed views and comments from the board.
13. The board considered the scope of the strategic guidance and how IfATE could differentiate between its 2024-25 objectives and those which were longer term or continuing. The board were keen to understand how IfATE could continue to deliver its core functions as well as responding to further requests given budgetary pressures. Officials acknowledged the need to make considered choices regarding resource to manage outputs and outcomes appropriately. DfE officials confirmed mechanisms were in place to manage any additional requests. The Strategy Director confirmed DfE and IfATE officials had a shared understanding regarding IfATE's budget and resource for the financial year 2024-25.
14. The CEO highlighted the board would also continue to be apprised through IfATE's annual delivery plan and key performance indicators report which are shared with the board at each meeting.
15. The Chair thanked officials for the update.

Item 6. Executive appointments

16. The board considered the content of the paper and confirmed the proposal regarding executive appointments.

Item 7. Skills Compass project update

17. The Chair welcomed Jonathan Mitchell, Deputy Director, Future Skills and Innovation to the meeting. Jonathan emphasised one of the project's aims is to enable IfATE's products to be future facing based on insights arising from an even wider evidence base. He explained Skills Compass will support the revision and review of existing IfATE products, as well as development of new products, underpinned by a more stable and future-facing body of occupational standards.
18. Board members sought further information on risks associated with the project. Jonathan acknowledged there were challenges, but the range of benefits the project could deliver outweighed the challenges.
19. Board members requested further information on how the outcomes would be externally validated. Jonathan explained how the project intended to achieve this, with the aim of the Skills Compass work resulting in IfATE engaging with potentially many more employers and, therefore, providing an even wider testing base of employer views on IfATE products.
20. Board members requested that IfATE officials prepare a paper for the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee setting out the expected financial costs of the Skills Compass project, including ongoing running costs, and the associated grant funding.
21. The Chair thanked Jonathan for the update and requested a further update in due course.

Item 8. Employer voice

22. Jane Pierce, Deputy Director, Engineering, Construction & Transport route group introduced Paul Feely, Academy & Engineering Director at BAE Systems Naval Ships. Paul spoke about his involvement in the UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce, highlighting that the industry is wide and diverse ranging from pleasure craft to warships. Paul explained the aim of the taskforce was to

ensure shipbuilders and the associated supply chains can access the skills they need now and in the future.

23. Paul highlighted some of the challenges the industry experienced such as fluctuation of skills demand over time and not just at the early years career stage. The industry was embracing technology and cited the example of autonomous robotic welders.

24. The board questioned how the Taskforce had engaged with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Paul explained the Taskforce had produced a toolkit to support all employers, including SMEs and raise awareness that a range of programmes exist which can help the industry attract and train more skilled people.

25. The Chair thanked Paul for sharing his insight and experience of the Taskforce.

Item 9. Matters arising from the papers for information and any other business

26. Board members had no comments to raise from the papers for information.

27. The CEO informed the board she had been invited to attend a visit in Germany to learn more about how the German apprenticeships and technical education system works in practice.

28. The Chair thanked board members for their time and confirmed the next meeting would be held on 8 May.

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