

ELL(2) 02-03(p.3)

Education & Lifelong Learning Committee

Title: Quinquennial Review of the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC)

Purpose

1. To consult the Committee on the Quinquennial Review of the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) and to provide an overview of progress to date with the Review. Standing Order 9.7 provides that the subject committees shall keep under review the discharge of public functions in their field by public bodies.

Recommendation

2. That the Committee notes the accompanying paper provided by the independent reviewers (Open Direction Ltd.) detailing the review process and action to date and, offers comments on the key questions the Review is looking to address. Professor Steve Bristow and Gari Lewis of Open Direction Ltd. will introduce their paper during the meeting.

Background

3. The Quinquennial Review of ACCAC is part of the programme of reviews announced by the former Finance Minister in May 2000 and is being undertaken in accordance with the guidelines published at that time. The Review of ACCAC was formally commissioned by the Minister for Education and Life Long Learning and the then Finance Minister in April 2003 following consultation with the Committee on the terms of reference.

4. Independent reviewers (Open Direction Ltd.) have been appointed to undertake the Review and they are presently conducting a wide-ranging consultation due to end on 11th July. The terms of reference for the review are set out at Annex 2 of the consultation document that accompanies Open Direction's paper.

5. For previous Quinquennial Reviews of ASPBs, Subject Committees have had the opportunity to comment on draft interim reports before they were finalised and subsequently presented to Ministers for action.

6. The timing of the ACCAC Review means that the draft interim report will not be available until after the start of the Summer recess. In order therefore to avoid a significant delay to the review process and still allow for adequate consultation with the Committee, the Committee is being given the opportunity to comment on the Review at this stage.

7. Key questions to be addressed at this stage of the Review are as follows:

"In the light of the statutory duties and functions of the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales, the objectives of the National Assembly and models of good practice elsewhere, is there a continuing need for all the functions of Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales and, if so, is the current organisational framework for delivering those functions the most appropriate?"

8. The Committee is invited to offer its comments on the key questions being posed in this first stage of the Review - that is, "are the functions necessary?" and "should they be undertaken by an ASPB?".

Next steps

9. The Committee's comments will inform the reviewers' drafting of their interim report before it is presented to Ministers later in the summer. Ministers at that stage will decide whether the second stage of the review (looking at effectiveness and corporate governance issues) should be commissioned.

10. The Committee will be invited to consider and comment on the Review's conclusions and recommendations in the autumn. Following this, final Reports on the Review will be submitted together with the Committee's comments to Ministers and a Cabinet response to the Review's findings will be prepared. The intention is that there will then be an opportunity for a Plenary debate before the Review is finally concluded.

Compliance

11. The authority to conduct Quinquennial Reviews derives from Section 40 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 in conjunction with the founding legislation for the bodies concerned. The Review is being undertaken in accordance with the published Quinquennial Review guidelines.

Action for Committee

12. The Committee is asked to note the contents of the reviewers' paper and offer comments on the Quinquennial Review's key questions.

Contact point

13. Financial Planning Division.