



**Meeting of the Higher Education and Awarding Organisation Vocational Qualifications
Committee**

ONLINE

**Friday, 21 May 2021
Minutes**

Present

Adrian Anderson – UVAC
Alison Whittle – City and Guilds
Andy King – Nottingham Trent
Associate Professor Ann Minton – Derby (Chair)
Claire Newhouse – Leeds Trinity
David Summers – OCR
Emma Weston – Nottingham
George Ryan – UCAS
Jane Baker – Pearson
Louise Clarkson – NCFE
Mandy Crawford-Lee – UVAC
Michael Crossan – CCEA
Nicky Westwood – Wolverhampton
Resham Gill – Birmingham City
Ria Bhatta – Pearson
Sammy Shummo – LSBU
Professor Scott Wildman – NCH at Northeastern
Sue Betts – Linking London
Susie Wolstenholme – LSBU

1. Apologies for Absence

Received from Dr John Lanham, Paul Turner (NCFE), Liz Lerner, (Salford) Joe Bell and Julie Rowlett (C&G|ILM).

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2021 were agreed as an accurate record subject to the following amendment to item **3. T Levels - Update from City & Guilds:**

City & Guilds reported that for BSE-on-site – C&G had its T levels accredited by Ofqual in October 2020 and accredited by IfATE in January 2021. First delivery is from September 2021, so are on the 12-month countdown now. All of the key documents are available online and they are about to publish its GSEMS (guide sample exemplar materials). C&G have been running lots of webinars with providers and employers for over 12 months and the pace is really picking up now. Engagement is high and C&G are just starting Curriculum planning and creating a raft of resources and materials. However, it's unlikely these T Levels will offer a suitable route to HE.

3. Matters Arising

Action 1: NCFE representation - Paul Turner agreed to join as a substantive member but Louise is attending in his place today. Warren Cresswell (previously represented Cache|NCFE) is now at NOCN - is considering an invitation to join.

Action 2: Numbers of T level uptake to be a standing item on the agenda.

Action 3: UVAC to work on preparing a paper on the educational purpose of qualifications linked to Pearson's soft skills framework currently being designed with ~30 employers - to be picked up offline by MCL (UVAC) and JB (Pearson).

4. T Levels and Applied Generals – Update from Partners

Link to UVAC briefing: <https://uvac.ac.uk/t-levels-milestones-timeline/>

C&G - Can only provide centre numbers not actual learner numbers as delivery doesn't start until 2021. (September 2021 Wave 2 - BSE and Onsite Construction) - C&G has met all the IfATE milestones and in the process of approving the centres who have applied to deliver from September 2021. There are only 50 eligible centres allowed to deliver these T levels and out of them 44 will be delivering in 2021 and another 6 have deferred due to Covid etc. All the difficulties regarding the technical content have been ironed out and next year there are another 191 centres who can enter the market to deliver any open T level from any AO awarded T level contracts. The DfE timeline means any provider can deliver from 2025.

(September 2022 Wave 3 - Engineering and Manufacturing and Business and Administration) - a year behind Wave still in the development stage of the Technical Qualification (TQ) and fast approaching 31 May milestone 6 and 19 July final milestone 7. Important to get early HE engagement right for Engineering. Written feedback from the 7 HEI representatives involved has been positive. 99 centres have been approved to deliver Engineering and Manufacturing across all 3 pathways but no granular detail yet as to which specialist pathways; that will take another year to clarify. In Business and Administration there is only 1 pathway and 2 occupational specialisms and there are 106 centres approved to deliver. Outcome of Wave 4 due to be announced summer 2021. AW's presentation given at UVAC's State of the Nation on 7 May 2021 can be found here: <https://uvac.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/SOTN-07may2021.pdf>

which details the 'typical' HE entry requirements and demonstrates the current mapping to HE programmes.

Question form GR where to find list of providers approved: link to DfE centres approved to deliver by T level: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/providers-selected-to-deliver-t-levels>.

Pearson (September 2020 Wave 1 - digital and construction pathways) - no breakdown of numbers to hand but the original DfE forecast was 2,000 across the 3 wave 1 subjects but due to impact of covid the actual number is lower (~1,200). Focus during first year of delivery, is the summer assessment arrangement given exam cancellation. Earlier this year Ofqual's initial consultative proposal on T level was to delay the summer examination assessment to year 2 but most delivery providers who responded to the consultation expressed concern about the burden of assessment in year 2 given completion of the work placement requirement. So, the outcome of the consultation is that learners who wish to and who have completed the learning for the core component can receive a teacher assessed grade. So, first cohort will complete in summer 2022 and progress to HE which is exciting.

(September 2022 Wave 3 - Finance and Accounting pathways) - the syllabus is currently in development and Pearson have set up an HE representative Panel to ensure progression is assured and the curriculum aligns well with HE. Thanks to Linking London and UVAC for promoting invitation/representation. Positive feedback so far on draft syllabus with HEIs having advised on additional content. Major observation is that there is 'a lot' of content and to increase clarity on the depth and breadth of what needs to be covered. There is a further meeting in June and submission of final specifications in July. Numbers on the HE Panel - 10 universities covering both pathways. C&G have 7 HEIs for Engineering and Manufacturing and 6 on the Management and Administration and all but one is a member of UVAC (*not anymore - Newcastle are a returning member in AY 2021/22*).

UVAC - queried how government is intending to respond to the funding consultation of AGs / level 3 qualifications. Nothing publicly available yet - June possibly. Skills Bill published 18 May https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987474/Skills_and_Post16_Education_Bill_-_Impact_Assessment.pdf includes a section on technical qualifications and a more expanded IfATE role, linked to level 3. Admissions is a big issue but equally important is how particular L3 programme articulate with HE and how they are designed to meet the needs of differing types of students. An area to expand and at the higher level DfE see two routes T levels to TQs and A levels to HE and the view there is too much HE already. So, a real division on philosophical grounds. UVAC, following discussions with HEI members, Pearson and OCR submitted a very detailed response to the DfE Review of post – 16 qualifications at Level 3 in England: Second Stage, that closed at the end of January 2021. We are awaiting the Government response but expect little change to the roll out outlined in paper 3. UVAC has produced briefings, press articles, covered changes in webinars and discussed matters with UCAS colleagues.

OCR - DS was at the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) national strategy forum on 20th May and reported on the update from AO partners and Tom Berwick regarding the post-16 consultation. From DfE discussions it is likely to be a June commitment to reporting on level 3 consultation and Tom said off the record that DfE had been taken by surprise at the volume and

fervour in opposition to defunding Applied Generals from learning providers including the public response from Ofqual in defence of AGs. AA contributed to a NEON event looking at the role of AGs in supporting widening participation, access, and social mobility. Their analysis is significant in describing the impact of AGs in supporting access to HE from underrepresented groups. If there are any further things UVAC can do to support a multiple choice of routes to HE, then partners are to let AA/MCL know.

The other thing coming out of FAB is that the stringent view of the binary option is being reviewed by DfE, as not the best option. Taken as a positive movement.

NCFE - on track for all their Wave 1 and Wave 2 T levels (Education and Childcare, and Digital, Healthcare and Science). Concern about the mapping. No full update today.

HEI input:

BCU - the admissions team is being proactive and academics in 2 faculties have been briefed. More available information assists with briefing staff.

Wolverhampton - in discussion with FE partner colleges and what those pathways look like going into HE. There have been internal discussions about the entry criteria as some can act as a barrier. Trying to have internal conversation to influence mindset and culture.

UCAS - would be good to get message to admission team can update profile on UCAS.com to illustrate acceptance of T levels on entry for 2022 and DfE is keen to have them updated. Worry from DfE about perceptions of T levels in HE. RB wishes to know the number of universities who have expressed acceptance of T level as an entry qualification. Reminder that T levels have tariff points...it is about getting the message to admissions team in HE. Pushing the messaging via bulletin to update 2 level entry requirements via its entry tool. DfE language is that T level students will progress to HTQs so not helping the urgency and does not understand HE language as tariff points are not material to the research-intensive universities. Certain routes are not viable. Very mixed messages exist.

LTU - pockets of good practice linking with local FE but there is a total lack of understanding presently. DfE not helped themselves given the small size of the first cohort and will skew HEI involvement/interest as not seen as significant.

Linking London - a T level meeting on 22nd April was very well attended and had presentations from Pearson and the one college in London doing T levels in this first wave (Digital 11 and Early Years 13). Problems with placements was raised. Also heard from the University of Greenwich preparing for entry in September 2022, and all the good work they are doing with staff. Linking London is also preparing learner guides for the T levels in the first wave and an admissions guide for university staff.

5. Higher Technical Qualifications and the Lifelong Learning Entitlement – Update from Partners

NTU - put in an application for software developer HTQ and it was a long process. There is a project at NTU looking at various aspects of delivering HTQs including speeding up the internal approval process. There are teaching and learning work streams to ensure they articulate well and are a good route for learners plus how it is lined up to local skills needs and one around fair access and admission to ensure policies are wide ranging enough. This activity will continue throughout 2021. Also thinking about how HTQs link to modularisation, micro credentials etc.

LSBU - Dean of School Engineering is looking at HTQs in partnership with Lambeth College with a pathway from T levels. At an early stage.

Derby - VC in discussion with the governing council is looking at T level progression pathways including into/from apprenticeships. AM is advising they need to include vocational-academic *and* academic-vocational routeways.

Wolverhampton - like others: having a conversation internally about how to development ready for second phase of admission in digital and health.

LTU - looking to strengthen local FE and national college partnerships.

BCU - had tried to organise an event and the UVAC briefing note has proved a useful stimulus to discuss in longer term plans.

Pearson - for the first phase/wave HTQs the responses/successful outcomes will go public in June. Working with branding team and though nearly finalised, the SoS asked for a change. Interestingly the contract and terms and conditions are due to be issued end of June after all the work on submission has been done! For the second phase/wave, where once the talk was a 60% minimum map to the KSBs in the first submissions, now the IfATE (who haven't wanted to state a minimum figure because it may vary from sector to sector, occupation to occupation) are stating they expect a 100% map to the KSBs that can be delivered in a classroom environment. This is challenging and for some Standards the reality will be that the 100% that can be delivered in a classroom is only 40% of the total KSBs. The differential cost of delivering in FE and HE is to be included in a report by HMT and DfE. DfE Lifelong Learning Entitlement Team are looking at how HTQs can be modularised. Quite a lot of research underway and where they map to an occupational route the suggestion is they should be modular. UVAC involved in the UUK roundtable on HTQS and the work of costing HE delivery vis a vis FE and that is due to report. Interesting to see the relationship between Ofqual and the IfATE. But overall, the process was agreeable and there is a degree of retrofitting with the introduction of modularisation and credit approaches. So, they are listening, and the discussion is open. There is broad agreement of the view that the IfATE understanding of the qualification development and validation process vis a-vis the relationship to their route maps not quite appropriate yet.

UVAC - the IfATE are strengthening its approach to how occupational maps work and we will speak to our membership about how the maps will be used to influence not just apprenticeships, T levels and HTQS but a range of different things. Importantly, from their development in apprenticeships how will they relate to a full-time education? Another issue for UVAC is what the experience of the HTQ process is - what is good and bad, and a BIG issue is the role of credit and credit transfer between HE and FE and how you determine comparability between HTQs with different credit values/sizes but at the same level. IfATE is being asked to consider fostering the development of new occupational standards where gaps in Occupational Maps are apparent and to support revision to meet economic and societal objectives e.g., the Green Jobs and Net Zero agenda. Occupational Maps could develop as career maps including information on wage returns and the benefits of options.

One area where UVAC will need to focus more attention in addition to Apprenticeships, T Levels and HTQs, concerns Paragraph 77, of the Skills for Jobs White Paper: *“The Lifelong Loan Entitlement which will deliver a major transformation in further and higher education ... useable for modules at higher technical and degree levels regardless of whether they are provided in colleges or universities ... space out studies, facilitate the transfer of credits between different institutions.”* We are expecting a formal consultation this year on the introduction, from 2025, of a Lifelong Loan Entitlement, equivalent to four years post-18 education. The more intelligence we have from the sector, the better. Key thing is ‘watch this space’. Government will consult on how it will work in the future: shorter programmes, transfer of credit and how the funding system will support this...

Linking London - in 2006 Linking London, one of 35 in the country set up by HEFCE, had a work strand on credit accumulation and transfer and all of its work is on its legacy site, which is part of www.linkinglondon.ac.uk. It also ran a Erasmus+ funded project on Gender, Lifelong Learning and Social Class (code name GLAS) with four European partners for two years and this too is on the collaboration part of the website with again a large work strand on CATs.

6. Transition of young people into careers (14-19) project in NI – Michael Crossen, Business Manager, Examination & Assessment Administration: Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)

From a NI perspective NI is at a distance from England developments but England does provide a glimpse into the future as NI is 7 years behind. The initiative is at an embryonic stage. NI is a challenging space; having a joint government means there is little agreement. The DoE looks after education to age 16 then the Department of the Economy looks after FE - so it is disjointed. The review did recognise the need to join up policy for 14–19-year-olds jointly funded by both Departments - quite uniquely and new for NI. The final product is a short term 14-19 joint action plan to move towards a more strategic approach set within a wider framework at a higher level to transform the landscape. 2011 Alison Wolf report is influential in this space. The project is broken down into 5 pathways: progression and pathways; post-16; curriculum delivery; careers and funding. General challenges are impact of covid etc and has introduced fresh thinking and is trying to look at what business will look like. Brexit has introduced some uncertainty for the NI economy and brings lots of implications for skills needs. Range of language and terms used by the 14-19 education and training sector causes confusion and alignment is sought. Subject and pathway choices have led to some accusations of misinformation on the part of students; indeed, led to a situation of poor choices and obstacles to progression. Complexity of pathways also identified as an issue. Challenges of parity of esteem between vocational/technical and academic pathways still acute compared to England. Multiplicity of qualifications and high-stake exams impacts on likely student success so looking at single point assessments. There is a love for NI schools and BTEC programmes - so withdrawals of funding for some qualifications is causing alarm. Competition and duplication at post-16 is being addressed with the aim to look at complementary pathways. Lack of an articulated sixth form policy is leading to problems, and this is exacerbating the equality of provision post-16 and a variation of experience. Compulsory education age is still 16 in NI with no statutory requirement for 16-18 provision; view is that NI should align with England. The entitlement framework in NI since 2011 is a response to Wolf and what it does is mandate schools to offer a broad range of course pre- and post-16: 21 courses on offer at each school or via partnerships. A third must be general and a third applied general but this has led to divisions and a withdrawing from collaborative provision and there is a shortage of expert

teachers/tutors. Careers falls under Department for the Economy and has led to a lack of perceived opportunities for vocational experiences. There is lack of funds to deliver what is needed. The initiative has created a baseline and from it several actions and workstreams to take forward. This work started in 2019 and in 2021 the baseline document is only just agreed. Pearson welcomed the continuation of work in NI in HE and on progression; it is a major market for them. GR invited MC to engage offline. City and Guilds working closely with centres in NI too.

UCAS link to its report: <https://www.ucas.com/corporate/news-and-key-documents/news/one-five-students-unintentionally-block-themselves-degree-choices>.

7. Apprenticeships, End Point Assessment and Progression from Advanced and Higher Apprenticeship to Higher Education/Degree Apprenticeship – Update from UVAC and Partners including occupational maps project led by IfATE

UVAC provided an update on key themes and developments:

- **The consultation of the ‘Refresh of Degree Apprenticeships’** – still awaited. It will likely propose the following including a distinctive brand:
 - Mandatory qualification policy – recognition of the value of a degree in an Apprenticeship and support for Trailblazers to specify a mandatory degree in an Apprenticeship. Under the last Apprenticeships and Skills minister and last IfATE chief executive the policy was to prevent Trailblazers from specifying a degree in an Apprenticeship unless it was a requirement to practice or not to include a degree would materially disadvantage an individual in the employment market.
 - Degrees within Degree Apprenticeship fully integrate with on-the-job training delivered through the apprenticeship.
 - Degree will reflect KSBs – degrees used to deliver the Degree Apprenticeship will be designed, delivered, and validated based on the KSBs specified in an Apprenticeship standard.
 - All Degree Apprenticeships will be based on the integrated model – that is the integration of the degree and work-based learning, on and off the job learning and the degree will be used to deliver the EPA.
 - Integrated Degree Apprenticeship use modules of the degree to deliver the EPA. Under the reformed model EPA will include assessment by occupational and industry experts.
- **Greater Government interventionist approach** to apprenticeships – with the language going from ‘employers in the driving seat’ to ‘employers being at the centre’ and intervening where there is a role to intervene
- **Apprenticeship Flexibilities** – Here ESFA colleagues are focused on implementing flexibilities, accelerated, front-loaded and flexi-job Apprenticeships (in for example the

creative and digital sectors - consultation out - see UVAC response here: <https://uvac.ac.uk/flexi-job-apprenticeships-uvac-draft-response/>), levy transfers to non-levy payers, raising quality (accountability, provider self-assessment and provider workforce development and provider responsiveness). Interestingly, the occupational areas where ESFA is noting unmet employer demand for Apprenticeship provision are most pronounced at levels 6 and 7. Also there is the relaunch of the ATA Register and funding to develop new ATA models and the HE Sector is interested to see how degree apprenticeships can work within the model.

- **Funding** – The Treasury is taking a significant interest in Apprenticeship. Affordability is a medium to long-term concern for Degree Apprenticeship. Positively, Apprenticeship is seen as a programme that delivers and Government is supportive of an all level and all age programme. There are, however, tensions especially in the overspend of the Levy point in 12-18 months’ time. The apprenticeship levy is now regarded as a tax and the apprenticeship budget as Government funding. The concept of employers paying ‘their’ levy and using ‘their’ levy to fund the apprenticeships their organisations need is no longer mentioned. While current demand for Apprenticeship provision can be funded from the £2.5bn Apprenticeship budget, officials understand in the context of a post pandemic economic recovery and focus on higher cost and higher-level Apprenticeships in the medium to longer-term the current Apprenticeship budget **may** be overspent. Still waiting on the outcome of the consultation on eligible and non-eligible funding costs. It is linked to the discussion on the process for funding band recommendation.
- **Quality Assurance** – Ofsted has been open to its adopted approach, but they could go further. Ofsted and UVAC have delivered several support webinars. Ofsted moved to inspect all apprenticeship training at levels 6 and 7 from April 2021 while OfS continues its regulatory role. Ofsted has sought and UVAC has offered support to train new inspectors and to work collaboratively with Ofsted to ensure Inspection is successfully implemented and that Degree Apprenticeships continue to be a policy success. In particular UVAC would like to support Ofsted Review the Further Education and Skills Inspection Handbook – ensuring the use of appropriate HE in addition to FE terminology is important, as is reference to differences in delivery. Degree Apprenticeships are delivered in a different context to Intermediate and Advanced Apprenticeships and existing HE quality assurance systems need to be referenced and recognised, the Government’s Teaching Excellence Framework, OfS regulation, Student Satisfaction Survey and the external examiner system provide four examples. HE data sources need to be acknowledged and utilised. The Inspection process needs to have synergy with, rather than duplicate existing HE quality systems and ensure commitments made by ministers on minimising the regulatory burden are delivered. It is also important that inspectors understand the role of PSRBs in quality assurance.
- **End Point Assessment and ESFA Funding Rules re Integrated Degree Apprenticeships** – with EQA of EPA transitioning to 2 bodies, Ofqual and OfS/QAA by April 2022 and there is a need to solve the issue of how the ‘practical learning period’ as defined in statute is adversely impacting on off-the-job learning post Gateway for some integrated degree apprenticeships such as social worker and in defining the role of EQA in end point. Still waiting on QAA to outline its model.

UCAS - GR presented an update on UCAS' changing focus on apprenticeships. Their work is less evident on apprenticeships than on the undergraduate market and it is recognised that 47% of prospective applicants are interested in apprenticeship but struggle to find opportunities. They have recently set up an Apprenticeship Advisory Group with a first meeting scheduled for the early summer. Recent research *Where Next: What influences the choices school leavers make?* found that one third of students in schools and colleges are still not receiving information about apprenticeships and UCAS commissioned research by YouthSight showed that 26% of 17-21-year-olds struggled to find a suitable apprenticeship; while 89% this it would be useful to have centralised platform to help find and apply for apprenticeships. UCAS is taking a 5-pronged approach to implementation of an improved offer: content; product; policy work; perception and reform. Young people are making decisions a long time before they make a UCAS application so requires an earlier careers intervention approach. Exploration is underway of how to get employers closer access to applicants including an employer profile on the UCAS 'Career Finder' site. UCAS wishes to be considered an important partner around the table on apprenticeship policy and practice. Immediate goals/improvement works include raising the visibility of apprenticeships; helping with find an apprenticeship; helping students apply for an apprenticeship and helping employers find an apprentice. Signposting and side-by-side comparison is where value can be added by UCAS. In response to a question from NW there is an intention to work further with HEIs when helping to align employers with apprentices. RB asked about the figure of 17–21-year-olds who struggle to find an apprenticeship and whether there were any further insights. GR agreed to send to MCL offline to send with the minutes. RG commended the work of UCAS. The theme of advice and guidance is an important one as young people don't understand the apprenticeship is a job first and not the same approach when choosing an undergraduate programme.

8. Any Other Business

SW/NCH at Northeastern - how many practitioners in HE are considering the Ofsted inspector role? AM/RG shared that several colleagues have revealed themselves as applicants including Ofsted nominees from faculties such as health. Ofsted have invited interest across specific occupational/sector areas including accountancy, digital technology, cyber security, economist, legal, police etc while already at capacity for health and teaching. HEIs are treating it like a staff commitment as an external examiner - so part of routine duties - and is of huge benefit to the home organisation as it lifts standards. In FE the college would take the fee if staff undertook Ofsted duties during normal working time.

9. Date and time of next meeting

Friday, 15 October at 11h00-13h00

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Outstanding Actions from Previous Meetings

Action: Awarding Organisations to report on numbers of starts (actual and forecast) on T levels by Wave.

Action: Greater collaboration between academics and admissions teams to discuss apprenticeships and technical qualification reforms needs initiating to raise awareness of the impact on applications from 2022 onwards.

Action: UVAC to work on preparing a paper on the educational purpose of qualifications linked to Pearson's soft skills framework currently being designed with ~30 employers.