



NCGE Management of Guidance Committee (MGC) 2017-2021

Record of the 19th Meeting 30th September 2020

1. Draft Meeting Record

There were no amendments to the Meeting Record of the 16th Meeting, which is uploaded onto NCGE website.

2. Minutes from the last meeting (22nd June 2020) and Matters Arising

There were no amendments to the Minutes.

Matters Arising

Regarding matters arising and actions from the last Minutes the NCGE Director informed the MGC:

- NCGE Director emailing letter to Accenture regarding their report
- Draft report available for Cedefop case study on what is happening in guidance in Ireland
- Skills to Compete discussion paper - NCGE formally welcomed discussion paper and hopes to receive invitation from SOLAS to participate in steering group.

3. Items for Agenda under AOB - Part B – Discussion/Decisions

There were no items suggested for discussion.

4. NCGE Points of Information

The NCGE Points of Information included:-

- The Chair gave a brief update of his and the NCGE Director's meeting with:-
 - Minister Simon Harris on the 15th September. It was emphasised to the Minister that the development work of NCGE has been impacted due to the delay in the Indecon implementation and requested that DFHERIS and DE would address this as a matter of urgency. Minister Harris suggested a stakeholder 'listening' forum in October to look at the issue of FET guidance. It was advised that NCGE's continued situation with Léargas results in a large loss of potential EU funding.
 - Minister Norma Foley on the 16th September. There is no commitment date for the publication of the implementation of the Indecon Report and this is directly impacting guidance going forward.
- NCGE Director added that Minister Harris launched the FET Strategy 2020-2024 during his second week in office (August) but agreed that the strategy noted the lack of cohesive guidance provision across the FET Sector and requirement for the development of strategy for guidance within FET. The NCGE Director expressed NCGE's concern about the level of activities in the Sector with little or no reference to guidance which stresses the need for an urgent decision on the Indecon Report.
- The Chair and NCGE Director sent a letter dated 22nd September to each of the Ministers to cover the discussion at each meeting.
- NCGE Director thanked Léargas/NCGE for the huge amount of work done to convert and adapt the NCGE offices to ensure adherence to return-to-work protocols.

5. Points of Information from MGC Members

- DEASP still dealing with Covid-19 payments and it is predicted that there will be an increase of unemployed people.
- Springboard open since the end June. 11% in receipt of PUP. Courses only starting now but very positive interest in the programme. Under 13,000 Springboard places this year with a notable spike in applications due to the Dublin restrictions.

- Brief update on the European Schools Review: review report currently writing up; good information received from 25 interviews. The system is working well but needs minor adjustments and now is a good time to rejig how it is organised. Schools have commented if there is a small number of Irish students in school, the European Schools Guidance Service is not seen as a priority.
- HEA provided funding for PATH 1 to the Maynooth University, a programme to increase diversity in initial teacher education for disadvantaged students. The project is very successful, 11 students obtained the sufficient standard in Irish to enter primary teaching. The project challenges the notion of disadvantaged students as 'less than and deficient' and recognises their rich experiences and knowledge.
- Minister Simon Harris announced that SOLAS will assist with the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy which will take up much time.
- ETBI met with Minister Foley and Minister Harris. Meetings have also been held with stakeholders on the return to education protocols for FET Centres where plans are being made for blended teaching and learning at Level 5 and 6 provision. An increase in enrolments is also being projected for January.
- An issue with maternity leave in post-primary schools as they are experiencing difficulties in recruitment. Leaving Cert students were happy with their grades. There is so much support in the post-primary setting which cannot be provided in a Higher/Further educational setting. Connecting with them and providing ongoing support. Offer to come back and talk with students/mentoring programme. Engaging parent-teachers will be less online.
- Léargas has announced an extra-ordinary call for Erasmus+ European Network Strategic Partnership to help with issues due to Covid-19 in areas of digital readiness and creativity.

6. Governance & Risk

6.1. NCGE Staffing

NCGE staffing ongoing issue. Two of the NCGE guidance staff due to be on Maternity Leave from the mid-end of November and from the end of March 2021. Under current rules, NCGE is not permitted to recruit without the sanction of DE and if NCGE cannot recruit temporary replacements during this leave, this will put the work of the organisation in jeopardy particularly with regard to providing CPD and guidance resources. The increase in guidance allocations this year requires that NCGE provides crucial and additional supports and recourses to schools. The NCGE Director stressed that the risk factor is mainly to do with the NCGE organisational structure. Currently NCGE has one guidance staff member for FET, one for Post-Primary and one for Euroguidance. Absence of guidance staff members for long periods is a major issue for NCGE programme delivery if permission is not granted to recruit for cover.

NCGE staff are not part of the delegated sanction of staff for Léargas, so to recruit new staff or renew secondments and contracts, NCGE needs to request permission from DE. In the current environment, guidance is critical, and it must be pressed upon CAP the need for resources as NCGE cannot deliver on its Oversight & Performance Delivery Agreement (OPDA). CAP notified of this issue.

6.2. Covid-19 Guidelines

Covid-19 risk in NCGE office diminished as much as possible. NCGE provides an essential service and in order to have the office open daily, in adherence to Covid-19 restrictions, some staff physically in the Centre on a rota basis. All NCGE staff supported to work from home with a forthcoming 6-month IT plan.

7. Report from the Finance Subcommittee

Finance Subcommittee Report (dated 15th July 2020) was viewed. There were no questions from the MGC. The new appointed Léargas Executive Director now a member of Finance Subcommittee replacing the former director who retired this year. The Finance Subcommittee agreed that the Léargas Head of Finance will be a permanent FSC member to inform the Committee. Discussions ongoing regarding the need for a SOLAS representative on the FSC.