



NCGE Management of Guidance Committee (MCG) 2017-2020

Record of the 17th Meeting 29th April 2020

1. Draft Meeting Record

There were a few minor amendments to the Meeting Record of the 15th Meeting, which is to be then uploaded onto the NCGE website.

2. Minutes from the last meeting (26th February 2020) and Matters Arising

There were a few minor amendments to the Minutes.

Matters Arising

The NCGE Director advised that most of the matters arising updates are documented in the NCGE Points of Information document which was provided to each member.

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

- The NCGE Director to respond informally to recent Accenture Report.
- With Jim Mullin's resignation from the MGC, Nicki Maguire has been appointed Interim Executive Director of Léargas. The MGC Chair to write to DES requesting they nominate a Léargas representative to replace Jim on the MGC. The NCGE Director explained that once a representative is nominated by DES he or she must then be appointed by the Léargas Board as the new Léargas representative on the MGC. Once confirmed as the Léargas representative, the representative will then be invited to attend the NCGE MGC Meeting on the 22nd June.
- On Jim Mullin's retirement, the NCGE Director informally presented him with a gift for his contribution to the NCGE MGC. The Chair is to write to Jim Mullin in appreciation of his contribution to NCGE.
- The Finance Sub-Committee Report has been drafted by the NCGE Accountant to include a more detailed breakdown of figures. This new style report will be brought to the MGC after the next Finance Sub-Committee meeting.

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

The Teaching Council update was proposed for an item for the agenda under AOB.

4. NCGE Points of Information

The NCGE Points of Information document was made available for each member. The NCGE Director highlighted points:-

- **Covid-19:** An internal post-primary focus group meeting with practising guidance counsellors took place in NCGE as an informal discussion to determine and clarify the current practice and needs of guidance counsellors in schools. Guidance counsellors noted that there were too many guidelines various agencies emerging at the same time which led to some confusion in schools. There was also concern that some schools were not using any guidelines for their guidance counsellors/teachers. NCGE felt that only DES guidelines should be informing practice. JuMcG advised the Committee that IGC guidelines were in response to queries from IGC members only.
- **Teaching Council:** Meeting with Tomás Ó Ruairc, Director (CEO) of the Teaching Council, indicated where a registered FET guidance counsellor is employed in a school but there is confusion about that guidance counsellor's rate. FET guidance counsellors do not need to be registered with the Teaching Council but there are anomalies. Currently, the guidance counsellor registers as a subject teacher and then becomes a guidance counsellor but the guidance counsellor qualifications are not recognised by the Teaching Council. The NCGE Director said that there is a need for NCGE to meet with DES, the Inspectorate and SOLAS to discuss this and other issues but advised the meeting will not be able to take place soon. In response to the Teaching Council it would be helpful to expand the entry criteria to the guidance counselling profession and to be more inclusive and diverse as there is a shortage of available qualified guidance counsellors and while schools do hire they are paying the unqualified rate.

The NCGE Director stated that there is a need to clarify guidance counselling qualifications particularly those in the FET Sector but also in the Post-Primary Sector.

- In response to a query on Guidelines for the DES Supervision Programme for Guidance Counsellors, the NCGE Director advised that the Steering Committee is reviewing the document as it is outdated and will be revising the guidelines for the programme.
- **NCGE communications and publications:** The NCGE Director expressed concern that NCGE communications and publications during the pandemic response had to pass through several sections in the DES rather than with just one section. Currently, all NCGE published materials must be checked in advance by DES Comms/Press Office, CAP and the FE Section. This has directly affected NCGE planning, timing, and delivery of some supports. It was agreed that this is difficult for NCGE to operate but reflects the current situation and that praise was due to NCGE for their website links and support.

With most Leaving Cert students finding it difficult, it was noted that health and wellbeing in schools is of primary concern. And noted too that the world of employment after COVID 19 will be very different with collapsed business and other issues and will be a huge challenge for everyone.

5. Any Points of Information from MGC Members

- A written report was provided to the MGC updating Kathy Finnegan's role as NAPD Regional Ambassador and a written report on the European Schools Guidance Provision Review.
- The NCGE Director provided a written report to the MGC on her Education Doctorate Research at Queens University.

6. Covid-19 Issues and Planning

- Kathy Finnegan advised that schools are under huge stress, lacking clarity urgently required re. the State exams. It was felt that 5th year students are being ignored, have lost focus and while in fact many 6th year students are remaining focused. It was noted that 5th years are looking to repeat the year if they can, and some students completing QQI modules are coping well but some weaker students are falling behind. There is concern as to future opportunities of the weaker students.
- The Committee was advised that there is an issue with the SUSI Grant – the total income from previous tax year might need a referral. There is concern that there are no summer jobs available and so students are deferring university for another year.
- The Chair expressed concern about the perception that NCGE might not be responding appropriately but was reassured that that webinars being organised by NCGE are welcome and that resources from NCGE are very important. It was noted too, the shift for ETBI which has gone very quickly from employment to unemployment. There is a need for the MGC to support the guidance service for the new situation post Covid-19.
- SOLAS is attending a DES meeting twice a week with stakeholders to discuss Covid-19 issues.

7. Governance & Risk

The NCGE Director highlighted certain risks:-

- NCGE is aware of a number of government committees responding to COVID 19 but often only hearing second-hand about their work which is of concern.
- There appears to be a lack of focus on guidance provision in higher policy areas.
- Need to have a formal input on wellbeing from a guidance perspective including a careers and education element.
- The Chair asked if the NCGE MGC has a role regarding these concerns/risks and whether there is merit in writing to DES to highlight issues of concern and offer our support and guidance with policy and practice. It was agreed that communication to the DES to highlight the guidance issues relating to COVID 19 response particularly the career aspect would be helpful.
- Concern was expressed about what kind of employment context awaits graduates.
- The Chair is to write a letter to DES on behalf of the NCGE MGC in support of the DES response to the Covid-19 pandemic and to offer NCGE's support to the DES' COVID 19 response.