

EDUCATION WORKFORCE COUNCIL
CYNGOR Y GWEITHLU ADDYSG

**MINUTES OF THE THIRTY NINTH MEETING OF THE
EDUCATION WORKFORCE COUNCIL**

DATE: 20 March 2025

LOCATION: EWC Offices

Present:

Members:

Bethan Thomas	David Williams
Kelly Edwards	Eithne Hughes
Nicola Stubbins	Geraint Williams
Dave Edwards	Gwawr Taylor
Jane Jenkins	Sue Walker
Theresa Evans-Rickards	Kathryn Robson
Karl Jones	

Apologies:

Rosemary Jones

Officers:

Hayden Llewellyn	Chief Executive
Lisa Winstone	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Bethan Stacey	Director of Professional Development, Accreditation and Policy
David Browne	Director of Regulation
Amy Pope	Corporate Services Manager (<i>minutes</i>)
Angela Guarno	Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive (<i>observing</i>)

1. Welcome and preliminaries

- 1.1 The Chairperson welcomed members and officers to the thirty ninth meeting of the Education Workforce Council (EWC). She welcomed the simultaneous translator and observers from EWC. The Chairperson welcomed the photographer present and explained to members that she would be taking photographs of Council in action to be used for EWC corporate documents and media. Apologies had been received from Rosemary Jones.
- 1.2 The Chairperson noted that the Cabinet Secretary had been unable to attend the meeting as planned; she had been invited to attend the July Council meeting.
- 1.3 The Chairperson thanked members for completing their review forms in advance of the annual review meetings due to take place the following week.
- 1.4 Members were reminded that the annual members' training day would take place in person at the EWC offices on 10 April 2025; the session would take place face to face and attendance was mandatory. The Chairperson informed Council that the agenda included presentations from officers, Council members and external speakers including the Chair of the Institute of Regulation and the Chief Executive of the General Teaching Council for

Scotland. The training day would be preceded by a dinner for members on 9 April 2025, further details would be provided by officers in due course.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 Kelly Edwards, Geraint Williams and Kathryn Robson declared an interest in agenda item 13, in their capacity as professionals working within the FE sector.

3. Chairperson's correspondence and report

- 3.1 The Chairperson reported that she continued to meet weekly with the Chief Executive. They had recently attended meetings with political leaders, Welsh Government officials including the Director General, middle tier leaders and trade union officials. She noted that a consistent feature of discussions was public trust and confidence and safeguarding, and this highlighted the centrality and importance of EWC within the Welsh education sector. She welcomed the opportunity to influence and to listen to feedback from stakeholders.

4. Draft minutes of the Council meeting of 14 November 2024

- 4.1 The Chairperson introduced the draft minutes of the Council meeting of 14 November 2024. She asked members to approve the minutes as an accurate record of discussions.
- 4.2 There were no matters arising and Council ratified the minutes.

5. To receive notification of any issues which members wish to raise in respect of the 'for information' agenda items

- 5.1 There were no issues notified.

6. Draft minutes of the 21 January 2025 Executive Committee meeting

- 6.1 The Chief Executive presented the Executive Committee minutes and reported that there were no matters arising to draw to members' attention that were not covered later on the agenda.
- 6.2 No queries were raised by members.

7. Draft minutes of the 21 January 2025 Registration and Regulation Committee meeting

- 7.1 David Williams (*Acting Chairperson of the Registration and Regulation Committee*) presented the minutes and reported that there were no matters arising to draw to members' attention that were not covered in Council's agenda.
- 7.2 Nicola Stubbins (*Chairperson of the Registration and Regulation Committee*) thanked him for chairing the meeting in her absence.

7.3 No queries were raised by members.

8. Draft minutes of the 23 January 2025 Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting

8.1 Gwawr Taylor (*Chairperson of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee*) presented the minutes and reported that there were no matters arising to draw to members' attention that were not covered in Council's agenda

8.2 No queries were raised by members.

9. Report from the Chief Executive

EWC 02/25

9.1 The Chief Executive presented the report updating Council on a range of matters not covered elsewhere on the agenda, and invited members' comments and queries.

9.2 It was reported that the Grant Offer letter had been discussed with officials earlier that day, and officers were hopeful it would be agreed by 1 April 2025.

9.3 With reference to paragraph 5, the Chief Executive reported that, following the middle tier review, NAEL would close and its work subsumed into a new national body for professional learning. The outcomes for the regional consortia would vary depending on decisions taken in each region, and these would depend on decisions taken centrally within the Welsh Government education improvement team.

9.4 Members were referred to paragraph 7 and the Chief Executive explained that the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee were undertaking an inquiry into the recruitment and retention of teachers and support staff. EWC officers were developing a response and members would have the opportunity to comment and provide feedback prior to submission.

9.5 With reference to paragraph 23, the Chief Executive reported that the EWC's annual lecture 'Professionally Speaking' had taken place in January with a record number of attendees. Members were informed that the upcoming EWC Masterclass was also expected to generate a lot of interest.

9.6 Council discussed engagement with stakeholders and the challenges of maintaining active engagement with 13 categories, ensuring relevant parties were aware of the work of EWC and the legal requirements which impacted them. It was reported that the Directors and the Qualifications and Registration Manager spent a significant amount of time working on stakeholder engagement, and this was strengthening understanding and credibility of EWC, particularly for employers. The Chief Executive explained that the Policy and Planning team monitored Senedd related committee debates; increased references to EWC had been noted in political discussions and EWC received an increasing number of external data requests, which demonstrated the effectiveness of its engagement work.

9.7 Members had no further comments and were content to receive the update.

10. EWC draft Strategic, Operational and related plans

EWC 03/25

- 10.1 The Chief Executive presented the suite of draft plans and noted particular thanks to Bethan Stacey (*Director of Professional Development, Accreditation and Policy*) and the EWC's Policy & Planning team for the detailed plans. Members were informed that points raised by the Executive Committee had been incorporated into the documents which were now presented with costings to Council for approval.
- 10.2 Lisa Winstone (*Director of Finance and Corporate Services*) referred members to the forecast deficit budget of £1.1m for 2025-26, which was significantly higher than the previous year. The main reason for this was the uncertainty over fees – an agreement with Welsh Government to keep the fees at £45/£15 would result in a reduction of registration fee income. It was reported that Welsh Government had advised EWC to budget for 3% pay award for staff, and general running costs had increased due to inflation. Lisa Winstone noted that the number of FTP hearings budgeted for and the estimated registrant numbers remained the same as the previous year.
- 10.3 With reference to paragraphs 7 to 9, Lisa Winstone informed members that the General reserve was forecast to decrease to £3.3m. Officers proposed that £300k be transferred from the General reserve to an Accommodation reserve ringfenced for use on either dilapidation costs or increased rent when the lease for the offices in Eastgate House ends in 2028.
- 10.4 One member queried the limit on budgeted hearing numbers, and whether this could impact individual wellbeing and school finances if a case was held over for a long period of time. Officers explained that the budgeted figure was not a limit or target but an informed projection and an increased number of hearings may take place subject to staff capacity; they noted EWC did not have a casework backlog.
- 10.5 Another member commented whether there would be a deficit in 2027-28. Officers agreed it was likely as fees at the current level would not cover running costs; they hoped for a pragmatic decision coming out of the Welsh Government consultation which future-proofed fee levels.
- 10.6 Members had no further queries and were content to approve the suite of draft plans and the proposed budget transfer from the General reserve to an Accommodation reserve.

11. Draft Reserves Policy

EWC 04/25

- 11.1 Lisa Winstone introduced this paper which set out formally the EWC position on its General reserve. The paper had been presented to Executive and Audit and Scrutiny Committees in January. The committees had recommended the policy and it was presented to Council for approval.
- 11.2 She noted that the recommended General reserve level for EWC should be £2 million. Officers had referred to other bodies and regulators and were satisfied that this level was fair and proportionate for an organisation of EWC's size.
- 11.3 Members had no queries and were content to approve the reserves policy.

12. Upgrade of EWC Registration Database

EWC 05/25

- 12.1 David Browne (*Director of Regulation*) introduced this paper which set out the progress to date to upgrade the EWC's Registration Database.
- 12.2 With reference to paragraphs 12 and 13, David Browne reported that the EWC's Risk Register had been updated to reflect concerns around the delay in user acceptance testing. Officers were awaiting an updated project re-plan from the project managers at ClearCourse. They had met in January with ClearCourse directors who had provided assurances that, despite the testing issues, they were set to deliver the registration upgrade project by the June deadline.
- 12.3 One member queried how EWC ensured the registration of those working in alternative education settings. The Chief Executive explained the legal requirement was for anyone working within maintained schools to be registered if they are delivering or supporting the delivery of education – however education settings were increasingly pushing delivery out to third parties. EWC had robust non-compliance procedures, and invested time in engaging with HR leads at local authorities and with head teachers. The Chief Executive noted that this area was the hardest part of registration, and in all cases the individual circumstances had to be examined.
- 12.4 Members had no further queries and were content to receive the progress update.

13. QTS, Registration and Induction progress report

EWC 06/25

- 13.1 David Browne introduced this progress report which updated members on the EWC's work in relation to Registration and administering the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and Induction.
- 13.2 It was highlighted to members that the budget for fee income set by Council had been met, and the fee collection process for 2025/26 was on track. With reference to paragraph 3, officers were following robust non-compliance procedures in respect of the number of practitioners working but not in compliance with legislation. Members were referred to paragraph 9 and informed that the grace period for those youth support workers yet to provide the necessary minimum qualifications was coming to an end, and informed that 81 individuals would be unable to renew their registration as they lacked the level 3 qualification required under the legislation.
- 13.3 With reference to paragraph 11 and the minimum qualifications for FE teachers, David Browne explained that officers were involved in discussions and continued to make progress within the sector and with Colegau Cymru. The Chief Executive explained that officers were trying to clarify which individuals required which qualifications as the schedule was incomplete and needed further amendment by Welsh Government. EWC was attempting to work through the scenarios with the sector and reach mutual agreement before the schedule was communicated more widely.
- 13.4 One member thanked officers for attending his college and provided positive feedback from staff. He noted the importance that registrants understand that the schedule had been developed by Welsh Government and not EWC.

- 13.5 Another member expressed concern about the schedule and noted that the large omissions in the list of qualifications would have a significant impact on some staff working in the FE sector who were qualified, but whose qualifications did not feature in the schedule. She noted that complications arising would affect the expected timeframes for employers.
- 13.6 With reference to the registration numbers, one member queried whether the numbers demonstrated any trends. Officers responded that it was too early to demonstrate a trend but they were monitoring this. The Chief Executive noted that officers were starting to convey early signs of retention issues and churn with politicians as this was a policy matter. Members discussed their experiences of retention issues across their sectors. The Chairperson reminded members of the draft EWC response to the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee inquiry into recruitment and retention, and urged them to provide information to feed into it when it was shared with Council for consultation.
- 13.7 Members discussed the potential reasons for the use of individuals with QTS as teaching assistants and cover supervisors by agencies and employers. It was noted this had been a point of discussion in Registration and Regulation Committee meetings, and members of this committee noted issues of limited budgets, pay, development, health and wellbeing across diverse registrant groups – all of which could have a negative effect on learning environments. The Chief Executive confirmed that EWC officers were analysing data and developing information in this area. Bethan Stacey (*Director of Professional Development, Accreditation and Policy*) added that this discussion was pertinent to agenda item 16; it was an important subject on which to develop and provide advice within the existing constraints.
- 13.8 Members had no further queries and were content to receive the progress update.

14. Fitness to Practise progress report

EWC 07/25

- 14.1 David Browne introduced this progress report on the Council's Fitness to Practise work and associated procedural matters. He reported that the actual number of activities completed in 2024-25 would meet the number of activities in the budget that was set for the year. He informed Council that the one-year extension to the presenting officer contract had been activated, and a full tender process for the next presenting officer legal services contract would be undertaken in spring 2026. He noted that officers were seeing an increase in the complexity of cases, which increased the risk of High Court challenge and pre-action protocols; this had resulted in a greater need for legal advice. With reference to paragraphs 20 and 21, David Browne reported that EWC was currently undergoing a statutory consultation on the three-year review of Code of Professional Conduct and Practice. The revised draft Code would be presented to Council in July.
- 14.3 Members had no queries and were content to receive the progress report.

15. Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

EWC 08/25

- 15.1 Bethan Stacey introduced this paper which provided members with a progress update on the Council's statutory role to accredit programmes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Wales. Members were referred to paragraphs 3 and 4 and notified that a new PGCE programme for school-based employees had been accredited at Cardiff partnership with one condition stipulated, officers were working with colleagues at the partnership to ensure this was in place prior to course commencement in June 2025.

- 15.2 Members were informed that officers had become aware of the possibility of non-compliance in two programmes as a result of a wellbeing/safeguarding letter from Estyn following inspection. Officers would write formally to the partnerships affected in coming weeks; it was understood they had already taken significant steps to address the issues raised by Estyn.
- 15.3 Drawing members' attention to paragraph 10, Bethan Stacey explained that Estyn had published a consultation on ITE inspection arrangements. Officers had hoped to discuss the consultation with Estyn prior to publication, and that it would address the interrelation between accreditation and inspection, but neither had happened. EWC had prepared a robust draft response which would be circulated to members for consultation before the closing date of 28 March. Members expressed disappointment in the lack of engagement with EWC prior to publication. Bethan Stacey explained that currently the EWC's ITE team attended Estyn feedback sessions, but had no role in inspections. In response to one member's suggestion, the Chief Executive confirmed that these issues would be raised at his next meeting with Medr, which had responsibility for directing inspections in Higher Education.
- 15.4 Members had no further queries and were content to receive the progress report.

16. EWC's Statutory Function to Provide Advice

EWC 09/25

- 16.1 Bethan Stacey introduced this paper which outlined an approach to enable EWC to undertake its statutory function to provide advice effectively. Members were invited to discuss, and if deemed appropriate, agree the approach outlined in the paper.
- 16.2 Bethan Stacey noted that this subject had been discussed earlier under agenda item 13. The EWC had a statutory function to develop and provide advice, however it was required to notify Welsh Government prior to publication of any advice. The Chief Executive added that EWC was unable to publish advice without permission and, to date, it had not been asked by Welsh Government to provide any advice.
- 16.3 Members were informed that consultation feedback from Council members and staff had been incorporated into the approach. The approach proposed that officers create a list of subjects for advice, and a timetable for completion.
- 16.4 Members had no queries and were content to approve the outlined approach.

17 - 21. Information item(s)

Members received "for information" paper(s) on:

- **Quarterly review, 1 October – 31 December 2024** (EWC 10/25)
- **Statutory Induction and Professional Learning Passport** (EWC 11/25)
- **Promotion of Careers in Education** (EWC 12/25)
- **Secretariat to the IWPRB** (EWC 13/25)

- **EWC responses to external consultations** **(EWC 14/25)**

22. Any other business

22.1 No other business was raised and the public meeting was closed.

The Council then moved into private session.