

IfL advisory council meeting – 2 December 2011

The Institute for Learning’s advisory council, which focuses mainly on policy matters, held its seventh meeting at 10.00 on Friday 2 December 2011 at Westminster Kingsway College in London. Thirty members of the advisory council attended the meeting, which was chaired by IfL’s elected president, Bea Groves. Having welcomed members, including those who were new to the advisory council, following the November elections, Bea dealt with the administrative matters, including apologies for absence and the minutes of the previous meeting on 13 October 2011.



Bea Groves, IfL president 2011-12

Planning for induction

A formal induction session is planned for 16 February 2011, and proposed topics for this session were discussed by small work groups and then debated in the plenary session. These were some of the topics that members, especially those new to the council, wished to have addressed:

- **About IfL.** Where does IfL see itself in five years’ time? What are its strategic priorities and what is the process for agreeing them? How can IfL seek to influence leadership teams in the sector? Can we have an organisational structure chart, showing who is who and what they do? How should we define professionalism?
- **Roles and responsibilities.** What are the roles and responsibilities of advisory council members, stakeholder members, observers and board members, and what are the relationships between these representatives and officers? What influence does the advisory council have on the non-executive board? How can I best be of value as a stakeholder member?
- **Representing members.** How should advisory council members articulate the voice of IfL members? How can they determine their constituencies, especially if they are general members, without reserved seats? Do views expressed in individuals’ election statements constitute a mandate for them? Will we be able to help shape the agenda of advisory council meetings by proposing items for discussion?
- **Communications.** What other means of engagement are there between formal advisory council meetings? Can we have a demonstration of IfL’s online communities, including the dedicated forum for advisory council members to communicate with each other and with IfL? Can I have a buddy? How can we make the language used by IfL, including on its website, more accessible and concise?
- **Reputation.** How can we as advisory council members help IfL regain the trust of members? Is there a timescale for the president’s proposed reforms?¹
- **Member benefits.** How is the work of IfL Volunteer Connections structured in work-based learning? How can we find out more about using REfLECT (the online personal workspace that IfL provides for members to record, reflect on and share their continuing professional development)?

The IfL staff present introduced themselves and briefly explained their roles in the organisation.

¹ In an interview published in the Winter 2011/12 edition of *InTuition*, the president said she wanted IfL members to have a real sense of identity and to know “that what they say matters”. She is passionate about the success of the organisation, and as a believer in dialectical democracy, she wants to ensure that members’ voices are heard.

Progress update

IfL's chief executive, Toni Fazaeli, and elected chair, Sue Crowley, gave a progress update on discussions at the previous meeting about IfL's policy position on pensions; part-time member subscriptions; and the independent review of professionalism in the further education and skills sector.



Toni Fazaeli and Sue Crowley, IfL

Pensions

At the last meeting, a majority of advisory council members present indicated by a show of hands that they would like the issue of an IfL policy about changes to teachers' pensions to be taken to the next non-executive board (NEB) meeting, scheduled for 15 November 2011, as it is a topic of great concern for current members and those who had not yet rejoined. The NEB had looked at a draft paper on the subject, and had discussed the role of IfL, as the professional body with charitable public benefit responsibilities, in expressing its concerns.

Acknowledging that pensions were primarily a matter for employers and unions, the board had agreed that IfL's comments should be about the potential impact on the profession and on professionalism, and on the sector's ability to attract, recruit and retain the best teachers, as well as the potential consequences for learners. IfL as a professional body should focus on the public interest, rather than on serving members' interests.

While the statement issued to members in *On the Agenda* about why pensions really matter to the sector is quite acceptable, it would not be appropriate for IfL to campaign actively on the matter, through press releases, for example.

Part-time member subscriptions

At IfL's annual general meeting on 13 October 2011, IfL member Dick Cervantes had proposed a motion that membership subscriptions should be calculated on a sliding scale in relation to a member's income from teaching, as this would be fairer for part-time teachers. After Jacki Hughes had explained the NEB's reasons for rejecting that approach when determining the current fee policy, and the issue had been discussed at some length, the motion was carried. Changing the fee structure immediately was not an option, but the issue would be sent back to the NEB to review.



Dick Cervantes, advisory council member

The timescale for the independent review of workforce professionalism, which could have implications for IfL's financial models, had slipped from mid-November, and was unlikely to report until spring 2012, so the NEB is not yet in a position to review the fee structure. It had asked the executive team to present a range of possible models to consider in autumn 2012, and while it could not act immediately, would not allow the issue to drop off the radar.

Independent review

The independent review of workforce professionalism was confirmed in the government's formal response to its New Challenges, New Chances consultation, *Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan: Building a World Class Skills System*, published on 30 November 2011. As announced by John Hayes, the further education and skills minister, at the AoC conference on 15 November 2011, David Sherlock and Dawn Ward will play leading roles in the independent review.

The government's paper also confirmed that IfL and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) will support an independent commission on adult education and vocational pedagogy, which is being established to ensure a clear, sector-owned policy to support outstanding teaching and learning in further education and skills, including making full use of the potential of technology. IfL has been calling for an independent inquiry into world-class teaching and training in further education and relishes the opportunity to work with LSIS and others on this commission, drawing on its own and Ofsted's evidence.



Dan Taubman, UCU

Stakeholder representative Dan Taubman, national FE officer at the University and College Union (UCU), said it was commendable that IfL had issued its policy document so quickly, following the publication of the government's paper.

One advisory council member expressed concerns about the government's stated policy that every apprenticeship should include level 2 English and mathematics, as this would be devastating for some learners. In his capacity as an observer, Lawrence Fry, FE workforce and leadership policy manager at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), said that he would approach the relevant people in BIS and the Department for Education (DfE) for clarification. Stakeholder representative Jill Lanning, chief executive of the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB), said her understanding was the level 2 target for all apprenticeships was aspirational.



Jill Lanning, FAB

Toni Fazaeli said that IfL will engage constructively with the independent review, and that the advisory council and board will consider its recommendations. The government owns the regulations relating to registration, CPD and professional formation, and has been a key partner of IfL, but that will change in the future as public funding is withdrawn completely.



Shane Chowen, IfL

Member surveys and consultations, led by Shane Chowen and Rachel Organ, represent a growing area of activity for IfL, which strengthens members' opportunity to influence policy in the sector. At the last advisory council meeting, three advisory council members had volunteered to join Shane at a meeting with Ofsted in November, where they had the chance to discuss Ofsted's consultation on proposed changes to the Common Inspection Framework in 2012. More than 2,000 IfL members responded to a survey that informed IfL's response to the consultation, and there was strong support for the suggestion that no provider should receive an overall 'outstanding' grade unless their teaching, learning and assessment has been graded 'outstanding'. Two other key areas of influence are that members overwhelmingly want Ofsted observers to give them constructive feedback directly, in a brief and written format; and that having a fellow subject specialist conduct the inspection results in feedback of higher value and integrity.



Rachel Organ, IfL

ITT funding

Following John Hayes' announcement at the AoC conference about his commitment to bursaries for initial teacher training (ITT) in further education, the press referred to IfL's work in trying to ensure that there would be no barriers to teachers entering the sector.

Stakeholder representative James Noble-Rogers, executive director of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), said that enrolment on ITT courses has decreased considerably and that many courses are being closed because of lack of demand.

Lawrence Fry confirmed that there is no additional money available for ITT bursaries, and that LSIS will need to look at redistributing some of its funds from the government for this purpose.

In response to a question from stakeholder representative Rosemary Sloman at Hoxex, IfL's deputy chief executive Lee Davies confirmed that the ITT grants administered by IfL for BIS are available to trainees in adult and community learning if they are working towards the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS).

Toni Fazaeli said that IfL's policy position is that it matters that higher education providers are part of the mix in teacher training, and that trainee teachers in further education have parity with trainee schoolteachers. Initial teacher training is crucial, and it is important to retain higher education provision. Dan Taubman said that since the news about tuition fee changes had been announced a year ago, IfL, the unions, Hoxex and other sector agencies have adopted a united approach to campaigning for equal funding of ITT in further education.

Non-executive board meeting

IfL's chair, Sue Crowley, gave a report of the last NEB meeting, held on 15 November 2011, as Bea Groves had been absent through illness. Of those present, Sue Crowley, Professor Ed Sallis, Lisette D'Cruz and James Noble-Rogers had attended the meeting.

The role of IfL's president is to act as a link between the advisory council and the NEB. The role of the advisory council is to offer a forum for discussion about policy areas, like teaching and learning, to articulate a different perspective, a practitioner's pragmatic view of policy, which was not available four or five years ago. The role of the NEB is to ensure business probity and set IfL's strategic direction, with the support of co-opted specialists in areas such as finance and law, and regular updates from the audit committee to ensure that processes are robust.

In recent months, the NEB had been preoccupied with the consequences of becoming self-financing, focusing on accounts, risk assessments and budgets. Not knowing what IfL's income was going to be had proved very challenging, and the executive team and NEB deserve real credit for producing a range of different scenarios on which they could base their financial plans.



James Noble-Rogers, UCET



Rosemary Sloman, HOLEX



Professor Ed Sallis, NEB member



Lisette D'Cruz, NEB member

As well as discussing the membership numbers and current finances, the last NEB discussed the CPD and regional strategy papers that had been circulated to the advisory council beforehand.

Following the elections in November, there are two vacancies on the NEB, and the assistant company secretary, Natalie Angus, had sent out papers to advisory council members regarding the election of two new members to the NEB. The deadline for nominations is 15 December 2011. A copy of *The Essential Trustee* was included in the information packs given to advisory council members.

Those interested in putting themselves forward for the NEB should allow for up to nine meetings a year, typically lasting three hours, and another three hours or so to read the papers circulated before each meeting. While the role itself is unpaid, NEB members can claim travel expenses. Meetings are usually held in London, because it was thought that only London and Birmingham are really accessible for all, but in the interests of representation and diversity, members from further afield are welcomed, accepting that their travel expenses are higher.

Equality strategy

IfL's deputy chief executive, Lee Davies, presented an update on IfL's equality and diversity strategy. IfL has separate legal responsibilities:

- **As an employer.** A draft equalities policy has been produced and the aim is that this should be finalised and approved in January 2012. A review of internal processes, including recruitment, retention and training of staff (impact assessment) will be completed in February or March 2012.
- **As a professional body, membership body and regulatory body.** Following a review of IfL's responsibilities; a determination of its status; a benchmarking exercise with other professional and regulatory bodies; and scenario planning, a report will be prepared for the chief executive and advisory council, to include proposals for any revision of the policy.

Bea Groves will lead a small group of advisory council members, with the support of some dedicated time from IfL staff, to revisit the single equality strategy with a view to ensuring that it was fit for purpose for the next two or three years. Lizette D'Cruz, Penny Petch and David Carpenter volunteered to take part in the meetings. Fiona Joy cannot attend the meetings, but is willing to review the documents.



Natalie Angus, IfL



Penny Petch, advisory council member



David Carpenter, advisory council member



Fiona Joy, advisory council member

Workshop on IfL regional strategy

IfL's Regional Strategy Paper, produced by Michelle Jennings, was presented to the NEB in November and circulated to advisory council members before the meeting so that they could discuss IfL's regional activities in a one-hour workshop session. Michelle explained the role of IfL's 10 regional advisers, who each spend around 40 days a year on IfL work. IfL is beginning to facilitate better contact between them and advisory council members, which is key. Through Natalie Angus, all advisory council members had been sent details of the regional advisers.

Jean Kelly, IfL's director of professional development, said that there is clearly a demand for regional and local support for information, advice and guidance (IAG); CPD support; and support for professional formation [attaining Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) or Associate Teacher Learning and Skills (ATLS) status]. This is a constant refrain in every member survey, reinforced by members and their colleagues asking for more regional and local contact after they have attended a regional event.

Sue Crowley cited as further evidence the fact that more than 700 members had responded to a call for Volunteer Connections, despite the "somewhat stressed circumstances". Toni Fazaeli observed that the demand was similar to that experienced by other professional bodies.

In four regional workgroups, advisory council members discussed the issues, then shared their views in a plenary session. These were some of the themes discussed:

- The South West region was cited as an exemplar for effective regional work being carried out. Those who had attended sessions about QTLS found them very motivational and also felt that they promoted IfL very well.
- People who do not work in educational establishments do not feel sufficiently engaged with IfL. Jean Kelly gave examples of two regional advisers who are doing very well: Mike Smith, in work-based learning, and Ros Foggin, who works in offender learning.
- Seb Schmoller from ALT observed that for each of the 10 regional advisers, there are more than 8,000 IfL members, and suggested that if IfL is serious about its regional network strategy, it is difficult to see how 40 days a year is going to make a difference for a substantial number of members. Care should be taken not to create a demand that cannot be satisfied in a sustainable way. Given the overriding financial constraints, access to regional advice might have to be on a self-service basis. Jean offered another dimension, that teaching and learning do not necessarily conform to business models, and that a blended model for cascading the number of face-to-face meetings is effective. Michelle said that working with partners helps, when funding is really tight.
- Regional advisers should be invited to the next advisory council meeting, and weekend events should be considered, as some people have more time than.



Michelle Jennings, IfL



Dr Jean Kelly, IfL



Seb Schmoller, ALT

- The Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETTs) are very FE-focused – the nine instructors at RAF Cosford were unaware of IfL regional meetings being held there.
- Rather than being bogged down with PR for IfL and compliance, regional advisers should be able to focus on making a difference for members.
- In some colleges, support for CPD, REfLECT and QTLS is embedded in staff development programmes, and does not depend on the involvement of regional advisers. Young people who have completed their DTLLS and attained QTLS are helping drive this forward for others.
- National organisation stakeholders were missing a trick: for example, there is synergy between IfL's and Niace's regional work.

Continuing professional development (CPD)

Jean Kelly gave a presentation on CPD, sharing the feedback from a series of regional focus groups and a “Developing communities of practice” workshop.

Each year, IfL monitors members' CPD, with the overriding aim of sharing what is really working, and will soon publish its third review of CPD. This year, a different approach was adopted: a random sample of members were invited to take part in a regional focus group, led by CPD reviewers, and these were complemented by local focus groups. In all, more than 250 IfL members were involved in the review, and there were 35 focus groups. The messages that emerged from them were consistent:

1. **Collective professional dialogue** is really effective, and it is important that time should be made for this.
2. **CPD is especially important in times of uncertainty**; it helps ensure that you are job-ready, and your career can benefit.
3. **CPD can be responsive, but planning it should be owned by the individual.** Teachers and trainers do not have enough time, but if all the planning of CPD is top-down, it is not effective. The balance between individual needs and institutional needs is key
4. **Involving your learners in your professional learning has the most profound effect**, and changes the dynamic, whereas taking a tick-box approach or theorising devalues CPD.

Toni Fazaeli said that other professional bodies are interested in what IfL is doing with CPD, and want to copy it. There will be more in the next issue of InTuition about how IfL might foster a community of discovery.

Seb Schmoller, the stakeholder representative from the Association for Learning Technology (ALT), agreed that institutions will be very interested in the evidence base that IfL is creating about effective CPD; they should all want improvement in teaching and learning, and IfL is tangential to that.

Alastair Clarke, the stakeholder representative from Niace, said that it is important to be able to distinguish between the development that the employer wants you to do because it helps them (such as administration and equality and diversity); development for teaching and learning; and development for your life and your career. Jean Kelly confirmed that the forthcoming CPD review will make that distinction.



Alastair Clarke, Niace

Any other business

Toni Fazaeli paid tribute to Lee Davies, who will be leaving IfL in February 2012, after six-and-a-half years, to take up the post of chief executive at the Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys.

Close

After a short address by Bea Groves, the meeting closed at 16.30.

Gallery

Meet some of the other advisory council members, stakeholder representatives and IfL staff who were also at the meeting.



Lee Davies, IfL



Lawrence Fry, BIS observer



Rosie Brown, advisory council member



Steve Lane, advisory council member



Sue Banting, advisory council member



Lynda Snowden, advisory council member



Kathryn Gundle, advisory council member



Sue Rhodes, advisory council member



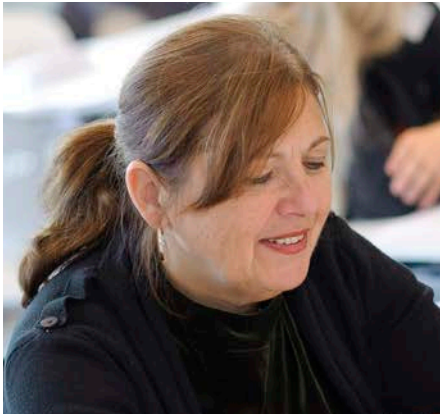
Jan Hanson, advisory council member



Stella Austin, advisory council member



John Grocott, advisory council member



Christine Lewis, Unison



Bob Vesey, ACM-AMiE



Wendy Henwood, advisory council member



Elaine Battson, IfL (head of finance)



Marie Ashton, IfL (head of marcomms)