

GBA News - Tuesday 30th January 2024



Operational Plan 2 - Final Call for Proposals

The planning phase for Operational Plan 2: 2024-26 is now well underway and proposals are being finalised for inclusion in the published plan.

If your school is planning any significant change in character or size over the next two years, please bring this forward through the GBA for inclusion in Operational Plan 2.

Please refer to the Departmental [guidance](#) for more information on significant change (section 5.10 specifically refers to post-primary)

We have included an indicative timetable below for a short-term project on Operational Plan 2, i.e. a significant change that will be implemented within the two year life span of the plan (medium-term projects are more complex and can span multiple plans)

Indicative Timeline for Significant Change

Please note that consultations and statutory objection periods may take longer than indicated below

Proposals brought forward by the GBA on behalf of schools via the Area Planning Local Groups	During the 2023-24 planning year/ publication of Operational Plan 2
Agreed proposals published in Operational Plan 2: 2024-2026	June 2024 (until 30th June 2024)
Voluntary Grammar School Consultation with Governors, Staff and Parents/Guardians	From September 2023
Submit a request, with the Case for Change, to the Education Authority requesting publication of a Development Proposal.	On completion of consultation
Education Authority Consultation with other affected Schools Consultation Responses to be forwarded to the Education Authority. Responses will be considered, and the Case for Change updated (Education Authority section) before submission to the Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee.	Time taken: 4 weeks. Can be longer if school holidays.
Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee Case for Change to be taken to the Education Authority's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee for Education Authority comments and note publication in the local newspapers which begins the start of a two-month statutory objection period.	Committee meeting dates to be confirmed
Department of Education - Statutory Objection Period (2 months)	2 months
Department of Education - Await Ministerial/Department of Education Decision	Variable timescale
If approved, the Development Proposal would take effect from the date indicated on the proposal, or as soon as possible thereafter	

Please [contact us](#) to discuss proposals for inclusion in Operational Plan 2.

GBA AGM and Executive Committee Nominations

The GBA's Annual General Meeting is taking place during the afternoon of Wednesday 13th March 2024 at the [Seamus Heaney HomePlace](#). We will shortly be issuing invitations and nomination forms for the GBA Executive Committee. Please look out for this in your inbox.

GBA Executive Committee Nominations

Members are formally elected to the Executive at the AGM and play a

crucial role on behalf of voluntary grammar schools, including:

- Contributing to educational policy development
- Representing the sector on a variety of key stakeholder groups
- Raising emerging issues
- Contributing to the strategic direction of the Association

If you wish to submit a nomination, please complete a [nomination form](#). We will also be issuing the forms directly to schools.

GBA Response to NIAC inquiry into Integrated Education

The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee recently launched an inquiry into integrated education to "*examine the cost and implications of the current two-track system, of an expansion of integrated education, and outcomes for pupils and NI society*". Further information on the inquiry is available [here](#).

The GBA submitted written evidence, challenging the narrative around a dual education system in Northern Ireland and providing an analysis of demand for integrated post-primary school places. A copy of the GBA's response to the inquiry is available [here](#).

The deadline for written submissions to the inquiry has now passed and the Committee is currently organising oral evidence sessions. We will keep you updated on the progress of the inquiry in future newsletters.

Independent Review of Education



As you will be aware, the Panel for the Independent Review of Education concluded last month with the publication of their final report. The report consisted of three volumes and is available [here](#).

The GBA has since received correspondence from Dr Mark Browne, Permanent Secretary at Department of Education, acknowledging the wide ranging and far-reaching recommendations, and highlighting the importance of reviewing these recommendations with a view to preparing a prioritised implementation plan for consideration by an incoming Minister.

The Department has requested that the GBA reviews the recommendations in preparation for further discussions. We have since reviewed and discussed the report findings and recommendations with the GBA Executive Committee and will meet with the Department later in February 2024.

If you wish to forward any comments or discuss any aspect of the review report, please [contact us](#).

Student Mobility on the Island of Ireland - Update

The GBA has recently been engaging with Professor Pol O Dochartaigh, Chairperson of the Universities Ireland Working Group, to look into student mobility and application criteria for undergraduate programmes.

For the last 20 years or so, 4 A-levels at the top grade were required to get maximum points in the Republic's third level entry system. An unintended consequence was that the same A-level grades for, say, medicine at Cambridge, were required for mid-range courses in the Republic.

Proposals from the working group were accepted in December 2023 by Simon Harris, the Irish Government's Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. He also expressed his desire to see the changes adopted for NI students starting studies in September 2024.

The new system has already been adopted by University of Galway, where I am Deputy President and Registrar, and also among the Technological Universities group (THEA). The changes are going through approval processes in other universities.

Some of the new arrangements are as follows:

It will no longer be necessary to take 4 A-levels (one of which must be Maths) in order to achieve maximum points (625) under the Republic's system for third level entry – the Central Applications Office (CAO).

NI students can use their best 3 A-levels, along with a 4th A-level or an Extended Project or an AS subject. This will mean that applicants can attain a score of 600 points with 3 A-levels and 1 AS, and 625 points if one of the A-levels is Maths

NI students will also be considered for a place in a university in the Republic by applying with 2 A-levels and 1 or 2 AS levels.

Professor O Dochartaigh said: "*we see these revised equivalencies as an opportunity to rebuild the proud traditions which University of Galway, Trinity College, UCD and other institutions have had of recruiting from both communities in NI, while keeping those skills on this island and, from a Northern Irish perspective, closer to home.*"

Shared Education News

Peace Plus

The Special EU Programmes Body has announced €45m (£38.5m) of funding for youth projects in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. The money is the first to be awarded from PEACEPLUS, the new cross-border funding programme that is designed to support peace and prosperity across the region.

The funding will be used to support capacity building programmes for young people aged 14 to 24 who are disadvantaged, excluded or marginalised, have deep social and emotional needs and are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour, violence or paramilitary activity.

Funding for the Shared Learning Together Education Programme which builds upon the experience of delivering the PEACE IV Shared education programme, has yet to be confirmed.

Share your Experiences with us

The GBA is keen to showcase examples of positive collaborative practice on our website, to help inform, promote and increase confidence. This may include recent, ongoing or historical Shared Education projects, or other collaborative experiences.

Please [contact us](#) and include a short synopsis of the project, the benefits

you feel it brings and photographs, if applicable (and permissible).



We are also keen to update our website with more photographs of activity in member schools. If you would like to share media with us, and it is permissible to do so, please get in touch using the link above.

Free School Visits to UK Parliament

Visiting the UK Parliament Education Centre, your students can enjoy a unique learning experience and get to see history being made first-hand with a tour of the Houses of Parliament. The sessions are directly integrated with the UK's four curriculums and tailored to the age and attainment of the group of students.

For more information and to sign up for updates and the booking portal, please follow this [link](#).

Free Mental Health Resources and School Workshops Available via Mindwise

Free Wellbeing Workshops for 14-18 year olds

Mind Wise

Mental Health Awareness Calendar 2024

- January 2024** Blues week 15th January - 19th
- February 2024** Time to talk Week 1st - 5th February
Children Mental Health Awareness Week
- March 2024** Self-harm awareness week 1st - 5th March
- April 2024** Stress Awareness Month
- May 2024** ME awareness week 13th-16th
Mental health awareness week 20th-25th
- June 2024** International men's mental health awareness month

How can I help young people with their wellbeing?

MindWise will come to your school, club or community group to deliver FREE 1hour workshops that develop understanding and build resilience, to support the wellbeing of our young people now and into the future.

- September 2024** World Suicide prevention week 9th - 15th
- October 2024** World Mental Health week 7th - 10th
- November 2024** Stress awareness week 4th - 9th
Anti Bullying week 13th - 17th
- December 2024** Talk about money week 6th - 10th

Our workshops

- What is Resilience?
- Managing Studies
- Exam Stress
- Making Decisions
- Anxiety
- Friendship
- Juggling
- Social Pr
- Low Mood Depression
- Me & M

If you are interested in a MindWise wellbeing workshop, Please contact cypprogrammes@mindwisenv.org

Employ a Language Assistant Scheme

The British Council works with partner organisations overseas to recruit and allocate language assistants for schools. The Council provides support to hosts and assistants throughout the placement, including detailed pre-departure briefings, visa sponsorship and Child Protection

training for assistants, along with template documents, guidance and support for hosts.

Deadlines

Applications for the 2024-25 academic year open on 29 February 2024 and close on 30 April 2024 (for Chinese Language Assistants, applications close on 31 March 2024).

For more information and to register your interest now please use this [link](#).

Advertising of Teaching & Non-Teaching Vacancies on the GBA Website

The GBA provides a free advertising service for our member schools. Job vacancies are posted on our website and Twitter page. The Education Authority website also links to the GBA jobs section.

If you would like us to host a vacancy for your school, **please contact us, using our [job template](#) and allow at least **TWO WORKING DAYS for posts to be uploaded.** Thank you for your cooperation with this**
