



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Menter a Busnes **The Enterprise and Business Committee**

Dydd Iau, 28 Chwefror 2013
Thursday, 28 February 2013

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Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Remainder of the Meeting

Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Byron Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Keith Davies	Llafur Labour
Alun Ffred Jones	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Eluned Parrott	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Nick Ramsay	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Conservatives (Committee Chair)
David Rees	Llafur Labour
Kenneth Skates	Llafur Labour
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Huw Evans	Cadeirydd yr Adolygiad o Gymwysterau ar gyfer Pobl Ifanc 14 i 19 oed yng Nghymru Chair of the Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales
Kate Crabtree	Pennaeth yr Is-adran Cymwysterau a Dysgu Head of Qualifications and Regulation Division
Jeff Cuthbert	Y Dirprwy Weinidog Sgiliau, Llywodraeth Cymru Deputy Minister for Skills, Welsh Government
Kim Ebrahim	Head of Vocational Qualifications Regulation and Quality Assurance Bra Pennaeth y Gangen Rheoleiddio a Sicrhau Ansawdd Cymwysterau Galwedigaethol

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Ffion Emyr Bourton	Dirprwy Clerc Deputy Clerk
Siân Phipps	Clerc Clerk
Anne Thomas	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.33 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.33 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Nick Ramsay:** I welcome Members and our witnesses to this morning's meeting of the Enterprise and Business Committee. This meeting is bilingual. The headsets can be used

to hear simultaneous translation from Welsh to English on channel 1, or for amplification on channel 0. The meeting is being broadcast and a transcript of the proceedings will be published. I asked Members to turn off their mobile phones. In the event of the fire alarm sounding, would people please follow the directions of the ushers? The microphones will operate automatically, so you do not need to worry about them. We have two apologies today, one from Julie James and one from Dafydd Elis-Thomas. There are no substitutions.

9.34 a.m.

**Adolygiad o Gymwysterau ar gyfer Pobl Ifanc 14 i 19 Oed
yng Nghymru: Sesiwn Graffu
Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds: Scrutiny Session**

[2] **Nick Ramsay:** We are today continuing with our review of qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds. I welcome our three witnesses, who have come to help the committee today. Would you like to give your name and position for the record?

[3] **Mr Evans:** My name is Huw Evans. I was chair of the review.

[4] **Ms Crabtree:** I am Kate Crabtree, head of the qualifications and regulation division.

[5] **Mr Ebrahim:** I am Kim Ebrahim, head of vocational qualifications regulation and quality assurance.

[6] **Nick Ramsay:** Great. We have a large number of questions, so I propose that we do not have any opening statements, but that we get straight into the questions. The first question is from Byron Davies.

[7] **Byron Davies:** Good morning. My question is concerned with the implications of diverging from the three-country approach to qualifications, particularly for learners, employers and higher education institutions. What are your opinions and views on that?

[8] **Mr Evans:** Thank you for that question. When we started the review, this was one of the testing questions that we looked at. We talked to various organisations in terms of taking evidence. We also looked very carefully at developments in England, in particular, and we clearly felt at the time—this is going back about 12 months—that England was diverging from the three-country system in many ways. If you recall, England was proposing to develop the EBas qualifications, which latterly it has dropped as a proposal. We felt from the beginning that this was the wrong direction of travel, and that this did not completely meet the needs of Wales.

[9] When we concluded our work, based on the evidence that we had gathered, we concluded that the only option for Wales was to move towards a unique qualifications system for Wales, which would involve some divergence from the three-country system, but only when the divergence met the needs and was in the best interests of learners within Wales. As you have seen from the report, we are proposing to set up our own regulatory presence within Wales and to strengthen regulation in Wales. At the same time, we intend to keep channels open with the rest of the UK, and we will be using qualifications that are three-country-regulated qualifications, particularly in the vocational domain and also for some general qualifications.

[10] As far as qualifications that are developed within Wales are concerned, we would anticipate and we would expect those qualifications to be developed to a rigour and a standard that are acceptable worldwide.

[11] **Byron Davies:** Given what you have just said, do you think that there is a major challenge in communicating to the public and raising public awareness and understanding of the changes? How do you suggest that that is accomplished effectively?

[12] **Mr Evans:** Communication is one of the most serious challenges that we have within this particular field. The portability of qualifications came through in our evidence as a very strong theme. We appreciate fully that communication is going to be essential. One of the recommendations in the report identifies the need for a communication strategy that will fully communicate the advantages and the essence of the Welsh qualification system as it evolves and moves forward. We will use various groups for that, such as employer groups, as well as traditional areas of communication—be it through the press, the media or briefing sessions, et cetera. Only yesterday, for example, I was at the Institute of Education in London to present the Welsh system, and they were very impressed with what they heard. That was at the University of London, which is one of the leading universities in the UK.

[13] **Byron Davies:** It may be a university, except—. It is a huge step, is it not? How long will it take to change the view of younger people and the public generally?

[14] **Mr Evans:** With regards to employers—because I am sure that that is somewhere behind your question—we feel that we have met the needs of employers. We talked to many hundreds of employers along the way in formulating our recommendations. Virtually to an employer, they said that they needed a far more robust approach to literacy and numeracy. The recommendations that we have come up with for the revised qualifications, particularly the revised GCSEs et cetera, certainly meet that request. Our qualifications system is very much based on tried and tested qualifications. We are continuing with the A-level suite of qualifications, the GCSE suite of qualifications and the vocational range of qualifications. The difference for Wales is that we are wrapping those qualifications into the strengthened Welsh baccalaureate framework, which will hopefully become the skills driver for Wales. That is important. We have researched and listened to employers and have come up with a set of proposals that can hopefully meet the needs of employers as well.

[15] **Byron Davies:** I respect what you say, but I wonder if it is rather a complicated package for young people to understand.

[16] **Mr Evans:** One of the beauties of this is that there is coherence. I could show you an overhead—I do not have anything with me today—of a document that shows that the system we are proposing is a very coherent logical progression. So, every young person can understand what they achieve at the age of 16 and what they will be achieving at either 17 or 18 as they move through the system. Certainly, attacking complexity was at the core of our work.

[17] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Roeddech yn sôn am fframwaith y fagloriaeth Gymreig; beth yw ystyr hynny?

Alun Ffred Jones: You talked about the Welsh baccalaureate framework; what does that mean?

[18] **Mr Evans:** Fel y gwyddoch, mae'r fagloriaeth Gymreig wedi bod yn rhedeg ers dros 10 mlynedd. Mae gennym fframwaith, y mae pawb yn ei ddeall, sy'n edrych ar gymwysterau cyffredinol a galwedigaethol. Mae pawb yn deall y cymwysterau hynny. Dyna'r opsiynau o fewn y fframwaith. O fewn y fframwaith, mae pynciau *core* sy'n edrych ar bethau eraill, fel sgiliau cyfathrebu,

Mr Evans: As you know, the Welsh baccalaureate has been in place for over 10 years. We have a framework, which everyone can understand, looking at general and vocational qualifications. Everyone understands those qualifications. Those are options within the framework. Within the framework, there are core subjects looking at other issues, skills such as communication,

rhifedd, dealltwriaeth o fyd gwaith a dealltwriaeth o fyd *enterprise*. Dyna'r fframwaith. Mae fframwaith ein bagloriaeth yn hyblyg iawn a gellir ei haltro wrth i'r byd, yr economi ac elfennau eraill o fywyd Cymru altro. Gallwn ddatblygu'r fframwaith, a dyna beth sy'n bwysig. Dyna pam, fel pwyllgor, inni benderfynu defnyddio'r fframwaith.

numeracy, understanding the workplace and understanding enterprise. That is the framework. Our baccalaureate framework is exceptionally flexible and can be altered as the world, the economy and other aspects of Welsh life change. We can develop the framework, and that is what is important. That is why, as a committee, we decided to use the framework.

[19] **Keith Davies:** Mae'r sgiliau hynny yn hanfodol yn y fagloraeth ar hyn o bryd. A fydd craidd y fframwaith newydd yn cynnwys papurau newydd mewn mathemateg, Saesneg a Chymraeg iaith gyntaf? A fydd y rheini wedi'u cynnwys yn y craidd?

Keith Davies: Those skills are currently essential in the baccalaureate. Will the core of the new framework include new papers in mathematics, English and Welsh as a first language? Will they be included in the core?

[20] **Mr Evans:** Bydd hynny'n rhan allweddol o'r craidd. Y gwendid gyda'r fagloraeth fel ag yr oedd, fel rwy'n siŵr y byddwch yn deall, oedd y dull asesu gwan. Rydym wedi cynnwys TGAU Saesneg a phynciau rhifedd newydd fel rhan o'r craidd i wneud yn siŵr bod sgiliau allweddol yn cael eu datblygu.

Mr Evans: They are a crucial part of the core. The weakness with the baccalaureate as it was, as I am sure you will understand, was the weak assessment procedures. We have included GCSE English and new numeracy subjects in the core to ensure that key skills are developed.

[21] **Keith Davies:** O ran y fagloraeth uwch, beth fydd yn y craidd?

Keith Davies: What is in the core of the higher baccalaureate?

[22] **Mr Evans:** Yr un peth, ond byddwn yn disgwyl iddo gael ei ddatblygu i lefel uwch—i lefel 3 yn lle lefel 2.

Mr Evans: The same, but we expect it to be developed to a higher level—to level 3 rather than level 2.

[23] **David Rees:** I have a couple of points. If you have a presentation that shows how the framework incorporates them, I am sure that Members would be happy to have a copy of it, because it could be helpful to have a visual image of how it fits together.

9.45 a.m.

[24] **Ms Crabtree:** Right.

[25] **David Rees:** Just on this point, the new qualifications in English language and levels of mathematics have been talked about. Are you, therefore, saying that they should be incorporated into the Welsh baccalaureate? I am concerned about duplication; we want to ensure that duplication does not happen.

[26] **Mr Evans:** One of the weaknesses in the original Welsh baccalaureate was an element of duplication, so you are quite right to identify that. We have addressed that; there will be no duplication in future. So, if a young person is studying numeracy or mathematical techniques, or the English language, which the majority in this country will be doing, that will form an integral part of the baccalaureate. If it is the intention of a young person who is not taking those subjects to progress post-16, they will be offered an essential skills package with an emphasis on communication and numeracy as an alternative, if they are not up to the level of undertaking the GCSEs in numeracy and English. There will be no duplication, however.

[27] With regard to your other point—

[28] **David Rees:** I have a point on that, if I may. Are we talking about two different levels of Welsh baccalaureate, in one sense?

[29] **Mr Evans:** Yes. You have two award stages. The first award stage is at 16, and that is the level of a national baccalaureate. If a young person at 16 does not quite meet the demands of a national baccalaureate—and remember, it is hoped that this will be universally adopted—a foundation award will be given. However, young people will be taught in the same stream and in the same way, and instead of getting the national baccalaureate, they will achieve the foundation award. They can then continue to progress, so that, at 17, they can progress to the national stage, or they could progress to the advanced baccalaureate, which is available at 18. There will be two pathways to achieve the advanced baccalaureate: there will be an academic pathway and a vocational pathway.

[30] The diagram that you referred to, by the way, is on page 34, I think, of the report. There is a flow chart there, illustrating exactly what we are hoping to achieve.

[31] **Nick Ramsay:** Coming back to Byron Davies's original question, you have just explained that now. Is that going to be easily understood by the young people concerned and by those looking in? As you have just put it there, I kind of have it in my head, along with the flow chart, and I am just wondering how long it is going to stay there before I start wondering what is actually happening with that pathway.

[32] **Ms Crabtree:** They are commissioning a piece of work at the moment for a marketing company to look at whether it is an easy-to-follow model, whether it could be improved and whether the titles of the levels are helpful or not. They will use focus groups made up of learners and parents just to double-check that the model proposed in the review is one that will work for stakeholders.

[33] **Kenneth Skates:** Just on that point, you have focus groups to look at the model that you have already designed, rather than having focus groups contribute to how the model should be designed and understood.

[34] **Ms Crabtree:** This is a proposed model, as it says in the document, and the aspect that the Ministers were not particularly sure about was whether the titles were right—that is, the national and the foundation. So, that is the element that they will be looking at. There is a steering group, with lots of different stakeholders looking at the Welsh baccalaureate as a whole, working on that model and designing one that is fit for purpose. Those meetings have already started.

[35] **Mr Evans:** If I could come in, Chair, it is the diagram on page 32 that I was referring to, which is the flow chart.

[36] **Nick Ramsay:** It would help if I was on the right flow chart, really, would it not?

[37] **Mr Evans:** Yes. We felt, as a board, that this clarified the progression routes available to young people. Currently, you have a system that is very confusing for young people, in terms of levels, demands of subjects and what opportunities there are for them as they move through the system. That is further confused, of course, by the institutional offer that is there as well. At least in this way, with a national qualification system, young people, be they academic or otherwise, will know what they will be achieving at 16. If they have not quite achieved that at 16, they have the opportunity to achieve it at 17, or they could continue through to the age of 18 and still achieve it.

[38] **David Rees:** Who will set the criteria regarding what is achievable at each level? Will the new Qualifications Wales body identify the criteria? In other words, there is the foundation and the national; who will be responsible for the specifications for those? Will it be Qualifications Wales?

[39] **Mr Evans:** Yes. It is currently the regulator, but Qualifications Wales will take over that function and work with awarding organisations, in the first instance, to establish those levels. Do you want to add to that, Kate?

[40] **Ms Crabtree:** In the meantime, it will be the regulator within Government that will set those criteria and standards.

[41] **Joyce Watson:** Following on from your comment about vocational or academic qualification, the separation seems somewhat marked in your statement. Do you not think that the two can go together? Do you not think that people who follow a vocation have some element of academic ability?

[42] **Mr Evans:** I would hope that they are equal; that is why, on page 32, we have shown it in such a way that, regardless of which route you take—vocational or academic—you have a unified pathway that leads to the award of an advanced baccalaureate.

[43] Also, we are not discounting the possibility of young people combining an academic approach with a vocational approach. That can be done up to the age of 16, or between the ages of 16 and 18, because that suits some people. So, we are not reducing flexibility here. The diagram in the report is for clarification purposes.

[44] Keith Davies: Wrth edrych ar dudalen 34, ar ôl 16 oed, rydych yn gofyn mwy gan rywun sy'n hŷn na 16 na chan rywun sydd o dan 16.	Keith Davies: Looking at page 34, and at post-16, you are asking more of those who are aged over 16 than of those who are under 16.
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[45] Mr Evans: Ydym. A ydych chi'n edrych ar y <i>national post-16</i> ?	Mr Evans: Yes, we do. Are you looking at the national post-16?
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[46] Keith Davies: Ydw.	Keith Davies: Yes.
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[47] Mr Evans: Ydym, oherwydd erbyn hynny, maent wedi bod yn yr ysgol hyd at 16 oed, ac yn parhau, felly credaf y dylai disgwyliadau fod yn uwch.	Mr Evans: We do, because at that point, they have been in school up to the age of 16 and they are continuing, so I think that expectations should be higher.
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[48] Keith Davies: Cytunaf â hynny, ond, mae'n rhyfedd ei bod yn rhwyddach cael y fagloriaeth dan 16 oed nag yw hi ar ôl 16 oed.	Keith Davies: I agree with that, but it is strange that it is easier to gain the baccalaureate pre-16 than it is post-16.
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[49] Mr Evans: Ni chredaf hynny, achos mae'r un person wedi ymdrechu i'w chael yn 15 oed, felly, os ydynt wedi methu â chyrraedd y safon ddisgwyliedig bryd hynny, mae cyfle iddynt gael y pynciau a'r sgiliau sydd eu hangen arnynt ar ôl hynny. Os nad ydych yn gwneud hynny, y broblem yw y bydd efallai cymaint ag un o bob pump yn	Mr Evans: I do not think so, because the same person has endeavoured to get it at 15, so, if they have failed to achieve the standard expected of them at that time, this is an opportunity for them to get those subjects and the skills that they need after that. If you do not do that, the problem is that perhaps as many as one in five people would drop out of
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cwmpo o'r system yn 16 oed heb y sgiliau priodol sydd eu hangen arnynt.

the system at 16 without the skills that they need.

[50] **Nick Ramsay:** Do you have any further questions on the baccalaureate?

[51] **Keith Davies:** Mae gennyf ddau bwynt arall. Yn gyntaf, mae'n rhaid ei werthu i brifysgolion, a sicrhau bod prifysgolion yn Lloegr yn ei dderbyn. Yr ail bwynt mawr yw eich bod yn mynd i raddio'r craidd yn awr.

Keith Davies: I have two other points. First, we have to sell it to universities, and ensure that universities in England will accept it. The second big point is that you are now going to be grading the core.

[52] **Mr Evans:** Ydym; yn 18 oed ar y funud.

Mr Evans: Yes, we are; at the age of 18 at present.

[53] **Keith Davies:** Dim ond yn 18?

Keith Davies: Only at 18?

[54] **Mr Evans:** Rydym yn edrych ar raddio'r cyfan, ond ar y funud, rydym wedi penderfynu graddio'r fagloriaeth uwch.

Mr Evans: We are looking at grading everything, but for the moment, we have decided to grade the advanced baccalaureate.

[55] **Keith Davies:** Sut y gellir ei werthu i brifysgolion?

Keith Davies: How will it be sold to universities?

[56] **Mr Evans:** Bydd yn her i ni. Roedd yn her i ni ar ddechrau'r fagloriaeth. Fel y dywedodd Kate, rydym yn datblygu strategaeth i symud hyn ymlaen. Rydym wedi dechrau cynnal cyfarfodydd yng Nghymru ac yn Lloegr. Dyna pam roeddwn yn y Sefydliad Addysg yn Llundain ddoe, yn esbonio beth sy'n digwydd. Roedd yn gyfarfod mawr a phwysig gyda nifer o brifysgolion yn bresennol, ac roeddent yn teimlo bod hwn yn rhywbeth unigryw a phwysig i Brydain Fawr.

Mr Evans: It will be a challenge for us. It was a challenge at the outset of the baccalaureate. As Kate said, we are developing a strategy to move this forward. We have started to hold meetings in Wales and in England. That is why I was at the Institute of Education in London yesterday, explaining what is happening. It was a big, important meeting with several universities present, and they felt that this was unique and important for Great Britain.

[57] **Keith Davies:** Mae'r hyn a ddywedoch yn bwysig. O ran y system i gyd a'r hyn y byddwn yn rhedeg yng Nghymru, clywais diwtor o Brifysgol Caergrawnt yn dweud ei fod yn credu ein bod yn gwneud y peth iawn yn cadw'r uwch atodol a'r uwch. Fodd bynnag y cwestiwn wedyn yw a fydd hawl gan y colegau a'r ysgolion yn Lloegr i sefyll arholiadau Cymru yn y dyfodol.

Keith Davies: What you said is important. In terms of the whole system and what we will be running in Wales, I heard a tutor from the University of Cambridge say that he thought that we were doing the right thing in retaining the AS and the A-levels. However, the question then is whether colleges and schools in England will have the right to sit the exams of Wales in the future.

[58] **Mr Evans:** Pwy a ŵyr? Rwy'n gobeithio. Os ydynt o'r safon iawn, pam lai?

Mr Evans: Who knows? I hope so. If they are of sufficient quality, why not?

[59] **Keith Davies:** Rwy'n cytuno.

Keith Davies: I agree.

[60] **Eluned Parrott:** Just before I ask my question, I should put on record that I am a former member of the staff of WJEC and I was also formerly a member of staff at Cardiff University, working in admissions. So, I was involved in discussions with admissions tutors about the introduction of the Welsh baccalaureate, and one of its great failures was the lack of grading, because it meant that universities did not necessarily value it as being equal to an A

grade at A-level in a difficult academic subject, for example. Again, we have a structure here in which we have two A-levels plus the baccalaureate being offered, but the grading, hopefully, will help to overcome that. I see that, at the national level, you have five GCSEs plus the baccalaureate. If that baccalaureate at national level is ungraded, how will employers value the amount of work that goes into achieving the baccalaureate core, because it is a significant amount of work for these young people to put together to gain that qualification?

[61] **Mr Evans:** As a committee and as a board, we fully endorse what you have said about the lack of grading. That was a weakness of the initial baccalaureate and that is why we felt that it was important to support the drive to get the baccalaureate graded at advanced level. We would also hope that at advanced level it is not just the minimum requirement, which is the two A-levels plus the baccalaureate, but three A-levels plus the baccalaureate that will become the norm. At the national level, there is a slightly different challenge, and there we are saying five GCSEs including numeracy and English plus the baccalaureate. The decision has not yet been made as to whether to grade that. It would be wrong of me to second-guess what that decision will be, but there is a fair wind for moving in that direction, because, as the baccalaureate gains momentum and credibility as the skills driver for Wales—remember that in our proposals with regard to performance indicators, we are anticipating that, by 2017, the main judgment will be whether an institution's pupils or students will have gained the national or the advanced baccalaureate—grading may well be inevitable, even at the national stage.

[62] **Kenneth Skates:** Following on from that, what would be considered a greater achievement, four A-levels at grade A or three A-levels at grade A plus the Welsh baccalaureate?

[63] **Mr Evans:** I would hope, at the end of the day, with grading, that if a young person has achieved a grade A in the Welsh baccalaureate, it will be valued, because of the regulatory process, in exactly the same way. However, that is where we still need to do a lot of work in terms of communication right across the UK.

[64] **Kenneth Skates:** So, if I was 16 and choosing A-levels and potentially a baccalaureate, with ambitions to go Oxbridge to study natural science, and the choice was A-level maths, physics, biology and chemistry or A-level maths, physics and chemistry and a baccalaureate, which would look better?

10.00 a.m.

[65] **Mr Evans:** Traditionally, possibly the four A-levels, but increasingly universities are telling us that young people, even very able young people, lack the skill set. Although they may have the A and A* qualifications, they lack the skill set to actually become a doctor or whatever; they have issues to do with communication and working in groups, et cetera. Increasingly, universities—even the top universities—are beginning to look at the wider package. So, these days they may well be looking at three grade As plus a baccalaureate at grade A to give them the rounded package that they are after.

[66] **Kenneth Skates:** They were looking at a rounded package when I was at university; they just called it crossing subject boundaries. I am not sure whether you can offer a guarantee, but my concern is that there is no guarantee that Welsh students will not be at a disadvantage vis-à-vis English students in applying to English universities with the proposed system.

[67] **Mr Evans:** I would say that Welsh students will be at an advantage, to be honest, because good and high-flying Welsh students will have been stretched in Wales. They will have done their three A-levels, sometimes four—although I would not recommend four—but

certainly three A-levels—

[68] **Kenneth Skates:** Why would you not recommend four A-levels?

[69] **Mr Evans:** By and large, it is redundant. Universities will base their offer on three good A-levels. The fourth A-level is not that important in terms of progression. However, with the skills involved, particularly in terms of investigative work et cetera, universities will actually look at that young person and set them apart and say, 'This person has something very special to offer here'.

[70] **Kenneth Skates:** So, you are satisfied that the proposed system will give an advantage to Welsh students.

[71] **Mr Evans:** We would not be proposing this system if we did not feel, as a board, that this was in the best interests of Welsh students.

[72] **Kenneth Skates:** So, you are satisfied with it.

[73] **Mr Evans:** We are satisfied.

[74] **Kenneth Skates:** Okay. That is great. With regard to the first recommendation, which was to create a high-quality, robust and distinctive national qualifications system, why did you recommend developing a distinctive national qualifications system? I am thinking about the term 'distinctive' now because of the importance of portability and therefore the universality of recognition. Are the two not competing?

[75] **Mr Evans:** No, we do not think so. We have used the term 'distinctive' because we are meeting the needs of students in Wales. While recognising the need for portability across the UK and beyond, we have also used the word 'distinctive' because we have a distinctive baccalaureate system that is tried and tested within Wales. It does need strengthening and improving, and we are doing this as well. We are trying to capture the best of both worlds. On the one hand, we are trying to capture the need that employers and universities within Wales have identified, which is for those skills in young people, but at the same time, provide universities and employers in England or beyond with that tool for selection. That is why we have stayed with the traditional qualifications, underpinning the baccalaureate. I really must stress that what we are seeing here, in terms of distinctiveness, is very much the baccalaureate being the skills driver.

[76] Employer after employer told us how poor young people were at interview techniques, and about the weaknesses and deficiencies in terms of literacy and numeracy. We feel that by incorporating all of that strongly into the core of the baccalaureate we can achieve those aims while ensuring portability across the world in terms of qualifications.

[77] **Kenneth Skates:** Excellent. With regard to GCSEs, what changes need to be made in order to ensure that they remain fit for purpose; and do you think that they have been damaged at all in terms of prestige by the re-grading issue?

[78] **Mr Evans:** Obviously, the report picks up many issues to do with GCSEs. However, in the end, based on the evidence that we received, we came to the conclusion that the issue was one of design not of product, and that the product itself was strong. That is why we decided to stay with GCSEs when England, at the time, was proposing to scrap them. England has now come back to our way of thinking. However, there are issues with GCSEs. There are issues to do with the robustness of the assessment, and there are issues to do with flexibility and credibility. It has been widely reported that a grade C in English does not necessarily mean that a young person is literate or numerate, at the end of the day. All of those issues are

being addressed and the changes and proposals that we have put in as part of the report will, I hope, create the right direction of travel. It is now up to experts to sit down and decide how that can happen as we move forward. I do not know if anybody else wants to come in on this.

[79] **Ms Crabtree:** Evidence showed that people like the unitised GCSEs. There is a need for tiering in some GCSEs. So, we need to develop them in a way that is not exactly in line with England's proposals, but fits the evidence base that came forward in the review.

[80] **Kenneth Skates:** Could you detail what informed your decision to retain AS-levels when, in England, they will not be retained?

[81] **Mr Evans:** There is still a debate, I think, about AS-levels in England. That is what I am picking up. AS-levels came through very strongly in the evidence that we took. In terms of the consultation, they were widely supported. In terms of the universities that we spoke to—and we spoke to universities in England and Wales—all of them supported the continuation of AS-levels, because they were seen as an important benchmark in terms of assessing progress. In fact, they set as much store by achievement in the AS-level as in the A-level itself. So, that was seen as being very positive, and as a board, we have no doubt that the AS-level, as a qualification and a benchmark in time, has a place in the education system.

[82] **Kenneth Skates:** Just out of interest, how many universities in England have you engaged with thus far?

[83] **Mr Evans:** We have engaged with four, five or six—somewhere around there, and mainly leading universities.

[84] **Ms Crabtree:** Members of my staff also went to meetings with UCAS admissions tutors.

[85] **Kenneth Skates:** Based on the engagement so far, are you satisfied that A-levels taken in Wales will be acceptable as comparable to A-levels taken in England?

[86] **Mr Evans:** Yes. We have no reason to believe that there is an issue there. However, we have to ensure that whatever we utilise within Wales, whatever system of regulation we develop, and whatever courses we develop, have to be robust, and have to be world-class in terms of moving forward.

[87] **Kenneth Skates:** So, you are satisfied in terms of accessibility to universities in England, that we will be comparable.

[88] **Mr Evans:** Yes.

[89] **Eluned Parrott:** Briefly, you said that this system will be the skills driver for Wales. Before the baccalaureate there was the key skills agenda, which was also going to be the key skills driver for the UK, but failed to deliver. What makes this more likely to succeed?

[90] **Mr Evans:** I do not think that the key skills one was seen in quite the same way. It did not have quite the same power and presence and the same place as what we are proposing here. With the baccalaureate, because we are moving it in the direction of being universal, with universal take-up across Wales, we hope that with necessary investment in teaching and learning, and developing the skills base of our staff in Wales, it will be seen as of equal importance to any subject that a young person is studying. The gap in terms of literacy and numeracy, as I am sure panel members here realise, is growing in Wales. We have to do something to address issues of literacy and numeracy, and we will do this by strengthening the core component of the baccalaureate, and by utilising the GCSE infrastructure to help us

to strengthen it. We see this as being important in terms of credibility and moving this agenda forward.

[91] **Joyce Watson:** I would like to probe further your statement on literacy and numeracy. You said that you see this strengthening skills and closing the gap in attainment, which is ever-widening. Could you tell me how you think it will do that?

[92] **Mr Evans:** There are several things at work here. First of all, this has been recognised well before the review of qualifications 14-19, and within Wales we currently have a system that is evolving in terms of a literacy and numeracy strategy that runs from age four to age 14, which will start to address a problem that has been there for many years. What we are trying to achieve for the 14 to 19 age group is a continuation of that strategy by ensuring that our expectations are increased, and, by increasing expectations and prioritisation, attainment levels will also increase, with more and more people coming into the fold. If the system fails and a young person does not achieve the necessary standards by the age of 16 using the baccalaureate approach that we have proposed here, then, of course, there is a very effective essential skills package that can be utilised post-16 to ensure that those young people have the requisite skills. It is completely unacceptable for so many people to reach the age of 16 and beyond with quite acute literacy and numeracy problems. As a board looking at qualifications, we were aware that we could not solve the world's problems, but we felt that we needed to put the infrastructure in place to make this work and improve the situation in Wales.

[93] **Keith Davies:** Gofynnodd Eluned am sgiliau allweddol yn gynharach, ac rwy'n sylwi yn eich papur eich bod yn sôn y bydd dau TGAU mathemateg—un ar rifedd ac un ar fathemateg. Gallwch fynd yn ôl blynyddoedd pan oedd *special arithmetic* ac nid oedd pobl eisiau gwneud mathemateg wedyn. A oes perygl nawr na fydd pobl yn gwneud mathemateg oherwydd eu bod eisiau gwneud rhifedd yn lle?

Keith Davies: Eluned asked about key skills, and I notice in your paper that there will be two mathematics GCSEs—one on numeracy and one on mathematics. You can go back years when there was special arithmetic and people did not want to do maths then. Is there now a danger that people will not do maths because they want to do numeracy instead?

[94] **Mr Evans:** Rydym yn gobeithio y bydd y mwyafrif yn astudio'r ddau—rhifedd a mathemateg—ar lefel TGAU. Bydd yn bwysig bod y rhai sydd yn mo'yn fynd ymlaen i astudio yn y brifysgol yn gwneud y cwrs mathemateg llawn hefyd. Roeddem yn teimlo bod y sefyllfa bresennol, lle nad yw nifer o bobl yn astudio mathemateg o gwbl yn creu problem i ni. Dyna pam gwnaethom benderfynu mynd am y ddau.

Mr Evans: We hope that the majority will study both—numeracy and mathematics—at GCSE level. It will be important that those who want to go on to study at university also do the full maths course. We felt that the current situation, where many people were not studying maths at all was creating a problem for us. That is why we have decided to go for both.

[95] **Joyce Watson:** You have picked up what the employers have said. We have all heard it—every one of us. We have also heard from colleges that they were receiving pupils who they had to teach basic skills, and that the schools had therefore failed. Do you think that what you have done addresses all of those concerns?

[96] **Mr Evans:** I would hope that we are addressing the concerns of employers here and of colleges and schools post-16 and, hopefully, the concerns in relation to the public purse, in that a considerable amount of money is being spent on extra intervention post-16 to bring people up to standard. We hope that the framework that we are putting in will be an enabling one to develop everyone's potential.

[97] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Gofynnaf gwestiynau ar gymwysterau cyfrwng Cymraeg. Fodd bynnag, yn gyntaf, gwnaethoch sylw am y bwlch yng Nghymru o ran safonau rhifedd a llythrennedd. A yw'r darlun yn gyson ar draws Cymru? A yw'r gwendid hwnnw'n bodoli ym mhob man yng Nghymru neu a oes gwahaniaethau sylweddol mewn gwahanol rannau o Gymru?

Alun Ffred Jones: I will ask questions on Welsh-medium qualifications. However, first, you made a comment about the gap in Wales in terms of numeracy and literacy standards. Is the picture consistent across Wales? Does that weakness exist everywhere in Wales or are there substantial differences in various parts of Wales?

[98] **Mr Evans:** Mae gwahaniaethau rhwng gwahanol rannau o Gymru. Ni allaf roi'r ffigurau i chi ar hyn o bryd, ond, wrth edrych ar hyn ar lefel genedlaethol, mae gennym broblemau o gymharu â gweddill y DU. Mae'r sefyllfa yn wannach yma. Fodd bynnag, rwy'n sicr bod hefyd pocedi yng Nghymru lle mae'r sefyllfa yn waeth.

Mr Evans: There are differences between various parts of Wales. I cannot give you the figures at the moment, but, looking at this at a national level, we have problems compared with the rest of the UK. The situation is weaker here. However, I am sure that there are also pockets in Wales where the situation is worse.

10.15 a.m.

[99] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Gan droi at gymwysterau cyfrwng Cymraeg, rydych yn argymhell y dylai'r papurau a'r asesiadau hyn fod ar gael yn ddwyieithog, yn Gymraeg ac yn Saesneg ar yr un pryd. A yw honno yn her fawr i'w chyflawni?

Alun Ffred Jones: Turning to Welsh-medium qualifications, you recommend that these papers and assessments should be available bilingually, in Welsh and in English simultaneously. Is that going to be a big challenge to achieve?

[100] **Mr Evans:** Rwy'n credu y bydd hi, a bod yn onest. Nid wyf yn credu y bydd yn her o safbwynt cyrsiau cyffredinol. Erbyn 2015, rwy'n credu y bydd y mwyafrif o gyrsiau cyffredinol yn ddwyieithog a bydd y cyfleoedd yno yn ddwyieithog. Rwy'n teimlo bod hynny yn bosibl. Lle mae'r gwendid ar y funud yw o ran y cyrsiau galwedigaethol, ac rwy'n gobeithio erbyn 2017—dyma'r bwriad beth bynnag—y bydd y mwyafrif o'r cyrsiau galwedigaethol ar gael drwy'r ddwy iaith hefyd. Gobeithiaf y bydd yr adnoddau gyda ni i wneud hynny.

Mr Evans: I think it will be, to be honest. I do not think that it will be a challenge in terms of general courses. By 2015, I believe that the majority of general courses will be available bilingually and that the opportunities will be available bilingually. I feel that that is possible. Where there is a weakness at present is in the sphere of vocational courses, and I hope that by 2017—this is the intention at least—the majority of vocational courses will be available bilingually as well. I hope that we will have the resources to do that.

[101] Y broblem sydd gyda ni, o safbwynt cyrsiau galwedigaethol, yw'r ffaith bod y mwyafrif o'r cyrsiau hyn yn cael eu darparu gan fyrddau rheoli sydd wedi eu lleoli yn Lloegr. Efallai nad yw'r farchnad alwedigaethol Gymraeg yn ddigon mawr iddynt, a dyna pam rwy'n gobeithio y bydd cyfle, gyda Cymwysterau Cymru, i wneud rhywbeth i gryfhau'r patrwm dwyieithog fel rydym yn symud ymlaen, ac i wneud yn siŵr ein bod ni yn galw ar y byrddau hyn i sicrhau bod y patrwm addysg Gymraeg yn gyson.

The problem that we have, in terms of vocational courses, is the fact that the majority of these courses are provided by examination boards that are located in England. Perhaps the vocational market in Welsh is not quite large enough for them, and that is why I hope that there will be an opportunity, with Qualifications Wales, to do something to strengthen the bilingual pattern as we progress, and to ensure that we demand that these boards ensure that the pattern of Welsh education is consistent.

[102] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Byddech yn derbyn hefyd, rwy'n cymryd, bod prinder pobl i hyfforddi drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg yn llawer iawn o'r meysydd hyn.

Alun Ffred Jones: You would also accept, I take it, that there is a scarcity of people to train through the medium of Welsh in many of these areas.

[103] **Mr Evans:** Dyna'r brif broblem o safbwynt y ddarpariaeth Gymraeg, ac rwy'n credu bod y ddogfen yn egluro hyn. Y '*supply issue*', fel maen nhw yn ei ddweud, yw'r broblem sydd gyda ni yng Nghymru ar y funud, yn enwedig o ran y cyrsiau galwedigaethol, ac mae hynny yn bwysig fel rydym yn symud ymlaen.

Mr Evans: That is the main problem with regard to Welsh-medium provision, and I think the document explains that. The '*supply issue*', as it is called, is the problem in Wales at present, particularly in terms of the vocational courses, and that is important as we progress.

[104] **Alun Ffred Jones:** A fydd angen adnoddau ychwanegol i geisio llenwi'r bwlch hwn?

Alun Ffred Jones: Will additional resources be needed to try to plug that gap?

[105] **Mr Evans:** Rwy'n credu y bydd, o safbwynt hyfforddi a gwneud yn siŵr ein bod ni yn blaenoriaethu ar hyfforddi athrawon a thiworiaid i ddysgu drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, yn enwedig tiwtoriaid yn y maes galwedigaethol. Mae nifer o staff yn gweithio mewn colegau ar draws Cymru sy'n gyfforddus yn siarad Cymraeg, ond nid ydynt yn gyfforddus wrth ddysgu drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, ac mae gwahaniaeth. Mewn ffordd, cam bach sydd eisiau fan hyn i'n symud ni ymlaen, ond bydd yn rhaid i ni gael mwy o adnoddau.

Mr Evans: I think so, in terms of training and ensuring that we prioritise the training of teachers and tutors to teach through the medium of Welsh, particularly tutors in the vocational sphere. There are many staff working in colleges across Wales who are confident Welsh speakers, but they are not confident in teaching through the medium of Welsh, and there is a difference. In a way, it is a small step that needs to be taken to progress this, but we will have to have greater resources.

[106] **Joyce Watson:** You called it a small step. I would think that, for some, it is going to be a huge challenge. You are talking about moving, within four years, into teaching your subject, competently and confidently, in a language that you possibly have no knowledge of. I do not call that a small step; I call that a massive challenge. So, I would like some clarity on that statement.

[107] **Mr Evans:** That is not for everyone. I hope I have not misled you there; that is for a relatively small cohort of people. What we are saying is that, if a young person wants to be taught a level 2 or 3 construction skills course through the medium of Welsh, we believe that, because of the importance of that practical discipline, and the importance to the area, it should be available through the medium of Welsh, if required. What we are saying is that, by 2017, those courses will all be available through the medium of Welsh. By the way, construction skills are probably already available through the medium of Welsh, but there will be areas that are not. It is just about making sure that where gaps have been identified, we can plug those gaps and make sure that we can have provision available to all in both languages.

[108] **Joyce Watson:** I will just probe you further, if I may, on that statement. You say that there are gaps. How much work have you done to identify the extent of the gaps, and how much work would be needed to plug those gaps?

[109] **Ms Crabtree:** There is quite good coverage at the moment. There are some gaps, but not that many when we are talking about vocational qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds.

Also, we are talking about the option to have the qualification bilingually—we are not necessarily guaranteeing that delivery can happen, but that those qualifications will be available in both languages.

[110] **My team** has been working with the awarding bodies for decades in building up the portfolio of bilingual qualifications. We grant-fund awarding bodies to translate qualifications into Welsh. So, there is quite a substantial number in the 14 to 19 arena that are already available in Welsh, and we will be plugging any gaps. It does not necessarily mean that delivery will follow; that is another issue outside the remit of this review. This is about qualifications.

[111] **Kenneth Skates:** Do you have any projections for the demand for this, and any estimates of the cost of the required additional resources?

[112] **Mr Evans:** Perhaps I ought to ask Kate to respond on the estimate of costs. As the review group, we did not get down to that; it was not part of our remit to look at the details of cost. It will now be down to the department to identify the costs and to move forward with a proposal in that particular context.

[113] **Ms Crabtree:** We have that in the evidence. The qualifications, however, were pretty much covered; it was the supply, the learning resources and the teachers to deliver those through the medium of Welsh that we did not look at—

[114] **Kenneth Skates:** Sorry. So, you do have projections for demand, that is, the uptake of vocational qualifications through the medium of Welsh.

[115] **Ms Crabtree:** We work with the Welsh Language Commissioner, the Welsh-language unit and so on, working out which sectoral areas are likely to need bilingual provision.

[116] **Kenneth Skates:** Okay. Is that based on projected figures?

[117] **Ms Crabtree:** Yes, and separate pieces of work are done by those bodies that we then tap into to work on the qualification aspects.

[118] **Mr Ebrahim:** This will also be reinforced with the new gate keeping, by using the sector panels to identify and get better triangulation with providers as well as with employers and sector skills councils, to get a balance of what the requirement is out there. We have an extensive grant programme, with a lot of interest from the large awarding bodies in England. Certainly, Edexcel is very keen on providing Welsh-medium vocational qualifications.

[119] **Nick Ramsay:** The new gate keeping starts in 2013, according to this chart.

[120] **Mr Ebrahim:** Yes. That is just going to be started, to establish different panels through various pilot schemes in key sectors. So, to start off with, we shall be looking at the care sector and working through where we can see any gaps and any needs. Hopefully, as we get better gate keeping and, shall I say, choice of vocational qualifications, reducing the numbers, we should be able to get better quality Welsh-medium provision, rather than having a plethora of qualifications. So, there will be a better focus on what has relevance and value.

[121] **Nick Ramsay:** We are into the last eight minutes or so of this session, so I ask Members to be succinct. I ask the witnesses to feel free to be succinct in your answers as well; that will make my task easier.

[122] **David Rees:** I have a question on Qualifications Wales, but, on the previous point,

there is concern that the concept of bilingualism is what you have been talking about here, but delivery on the ground is the difficult aspect, because it is about the ability of 14-year-olds in particular to say that they would like to take these vocational qualifications. However, if there is no-one there to deliver them, we have a problem.

[123] **Mr Evans:** It is a supply issue.

[124] **David Rees:** Okay. So, it is something that we have not yet resolved. Let us put it that way.

[125] Turning to Qualifications Wales, recommendation 5, which was probably the first recommendation to be accepted by the Government and the Minister, in December, highlighted the need for Qualifications Wales. In fact, you identified the important need to have a regulatory body at arm's-length from the policy making of the Government. I totally agree; I do not think that anyone challenges that concept. However, you then say that,

[126] 'In time, Qualifications Wales should take responsibility for developing and awarding most qualifications'.

[127] What timescale were you thinking of? Also, following that, is it realistic to have a regulatory body regulating itself?

[128] **Mr Evans:** There is a considerable debate over regulation and awarding, and we thought long and hard about this. We also looked at Wales and we saw a country with 3 million people and a relatively small market. We felt that using an examination marketplace in the way that we have historically done it was not the way forward. We looked at Scotland. We looked at how it conducts its affairs and we were quite impressed with what we saw there. Clearly, it undertakes a regulatory function alongside an awarding function. This needs to be very sensitively and carefully handled, and it needs to be built upon. We can move relatively quickly to establish the arm's-length regulatory body. We then need to chart very carefully our way forward in the context of becoming an awarding organisation. There needs to be very clear divides between the regulatory arm and the awarding body in terms of moving forward.

[129] We also have WJEC, which we would see as a key integral partner in terms of moving forward with this agenda. We see the role of Qualifications Wales as being essential to drive the vision that we have for a qualification system for a small country such as Wales.

[130] **David Rees:** What timescale are we looking at?

[131] **Mr Evans:** We are probably looking at a five-year timescale to bring these developments about completely. There will be an incremental approach to setting it up, and different parts will come on board at different times.

[132] **David Rees:** You identified in your previous answer that there needs to be a clear and distinctive line between the regulatory side and the awarding side. Therefore, is there a need to bring them together under one body, or should they be two separate bodies?

[133] **Mr Evans:** In terms of the resource and capability of this body, it would be a more powerful body if it was under one roof. We could do things better under one roof, such as pooling resources. This is a very specialised field and there are clear advantages in terms of pulling this together.

[134] We have commenced a due diligence exercise on this particular area. When that due diligence exercise has reported, we will be clearer about what is possible and what is not possible.

[135] **David Rees:** Going back to the regulatory side, you talk about becoming a regulatory body for external qualifications that are not within Wales, such as Edexcel and vocational aspects. How do you see that working in relation to the roles of external examiners in those types of programmes?

[136] **Mr Evans:** This is what we talk about in the context of gate keeping. We will have to take a soft approach to some of this gate-keeping process, because some of these qualifications that will be gate-kept will be national qualifications that have already been regulated. They will need to come through the Qualifications Wales gateway to make sure that they comply with the demand in Wales. I hope that there will be a lightness of hand in the context of those qualifications, because the last thing that an awarding body needs is another layer of bureaucracy put in its way. We are trying to establish our standards in Wales and to ensure that they become recognised worldwide.

[137] **David Rees:** If the regulatory body indicates that the standards in an area of qualifications are not being met and you are regulating an external body, how will such an issue be resolved?

[138] **Mr Evans:** At the end of the day, that is a matter for the regulator. If a qualification does not comply with the expectations laid down by Qualifications Wales, it will not qualify for funding within Wales.

[139] **David Rees:** You have mentioned the Scottish model, which, I accept, is slightly different. Is that a model that we should look at in more detail, because under the Act they merged the regulatory body and awarding body including the vocational awarding bodies? Is that a route that we should go down? Given the Scottish education system is different and has different levels, is it not worth looking at it?

[140] **Mr Evans:** We are looking at it in some detail. In fact, a team is going to Scotland from Wales to spend several days to look at how its model works. As part of our investigative work, we spent some time in Scotland on behalf of the board to look at its education system. We appreciate that its system is different, but there are lessons to be learnt from it.

[141] **David Rees:** Where do you see the position of the Welsh Government's department of education in relation to qualifications once the new body is up and running?

[142] **Ms Crabtree:** As you can imagine, there is a lot to be decided and talked about. However, I presume that there would be a sponsoring division within Welsh Government that would send an annual remit letter to Qualifications Wales. These sorts of things will emerge as a result of due diligence. There are still issues with where other aspects of work will sit. For example, whether the curriculum et cetera sits within Welsh Government or Qualifications Wales will have to be debated. There is a lot of debate to be had.

10.30 a.m.

[143] **David Rees:** Have you done your costings of the establishment of such a body and the long-term picture?

[144] **Ms Crabtree:** That is part of the due diligence.

[145] **David Rees:** So, we await that.

[146] **Ms Crabtree:** Yes; it will be in late April.

[147] **Eluned Parrott:** To return to the subject of vocational qualifications and the complexity of the system that we have at the moment with the range of qualifications, subjects and levels, it is a massive challenge to communicate to young people what they might wish to study. However, it is also a massive challenge to convince employers or to communicate to employers what the value of each qualification is and how they weigh against each other. You talked about tackling that complexity, so how will your proposals act against that?

[148] **Mr Evans:** They will not act against it, I would hope. They will support the clarity that is required. We are proposing several things. First, Qualifications Wales should have a role as a gate-keeping body with expectations about qualifications. Secondly, we are establishing national criteria to establish the relevance of qualifications. Sector skills and employer bodies are being asked to contribute to establish those priorities. Thirdly, we are setting up employer-led advisory bodies that will also have a say in what is relevant for a particular sector. So, all of those together will lead to a simplification of the picture and a qualification package that is relevant, hopefully.

[149] **Ms Crabtree:** We are also going to raise the expectations on awarding organisations that want to offer in Wales. They will have to be clear about the purpose of their qualification and whether it really is appropriate for 14 to 16-year-olds and 16 to 19-year-olds. We will close the door a little, instead of welcoming all qualifications that meet the basic criteria. We will be choosier about the ones that come in. We will raise the expectations on awarding organisations. To use their terminology, initial vocational education and training, and continuing vocational education and training, should help learners know if something is a competence-based or a knowledge-based qualification. Things like that will simplify the complex situation that you described.

[150] **Eluned Parrott:** Is there a danger that, when you bring in employer bodies specific to different sectors to lead the agenda, there will be a greater proliferation of different kinds of qualifications? How will you make sure that there is a balance and a strategic focus to the range of qualifications available?

[151] **Mr Evans:** They will be working to centrally prepared national criteria that they will have to comply with, in terms of priorities for a particular sector. The last thing that we want is a proliferation of qualifications. During this exercise, we have already removed 3,000 qualifications from the database. We hope that the number of qualifications can come down, but, at the same time, we need to make sure that every sector is adequately served, and that includes the remote demands of the slate industry compared with the mass demands of the business and professional sector.

[152] **Eluned Parrott:** Is there a challenge, in looking at the European qualifications—IVET and CVET—in that we will have to communicate yet another set of ideas to potential students and employers?

[153] **Mr Ebrahim:** The introduction of IVET and CVET simplifies things for learners in particular, and for employers. In the past, competence-based qualifications, such as NVQs, have been delivered to the 14-16 age group as well as in the workplace. That has confused employers and learners. Moving to an IVET situation, which is clearly about knowledge and understanding, and CVET, which is about professional-development qualifications that attest competence, would make it easier, rather than harder.

[154] **Nick Ramsay:** We are out of time. I have one final question on the timetabled implementation of five years. On the chart that I mentioned earlier, there are many things that look as though they could potentially slip and which would delay the whole process. Is that a realistic timetable? Are you confident that it will be delivered?

[155] **Mr Evans:** We are confident that that is a timetable that we can work to.

[156] **Nick Ramsay:** Thank you. I thank our witnesses for being with us today for our one-off scrutiny session on this. It has been most helpful.

10.37 a.m.

**Adolygiad o Gymwysterau ar Gyfer Pobl Ifanc 14 i 19 oed yng Nghymru—
Sesiwn Graffu
Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds—Scrutiny Session**

[157] **Nick Ramsay:** Thank you, Deputy Minister for being with us. We are continuing with our one-off scrutiny session on the ongoing review of qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds. I apologise for the slight delay in bringing you in, Deputy Minister, but we covered a lot of ground with our previous witnesses. Would you like to give your name and position for the Record of Proceedings?

[158] **The Deputy Minister for Skills (Jeff Cuthbert):** I am Jeff Cuthbert, the Deputy Minister for Skills.

[159] **Mr Ebrahim:** I am Kim Ebrahim, the head of vocational qualifications regulation and quality assurance.

[160] **Ms Crabtree:** I am Kate Crabtree, the head of qualifications and regulation division.

[161] **Nick Ramsay:** It may be groundhog day for two of you, but I wanted it on the record with the Minister. We have a large number of questions for you, so I propose that we get straight into those, and we will start with Byron Davies.

[162] **Byron Davies:** The first question that I want to ask is about something that we have just discussed, which is the extent to which the qualifications will be unique to Wales and the main challenges for establishing this Welsh qualification system that diverges from the three-country approach to qualifications. Can you give us your view on that, please?

[163] **Jeff Cuthbert:** We have always made it clear that there will be divergence only when we are satisfied that it is in the best interest of Welsh learners. That has been a guiding principle throughout. Since the qualifications board began its work, there were considerable developments in England with regard to statements made about GCSEs and A-levels, but we did not let that deflect us from our evidence-based approach here. It is probably fairer to say that it was England that was diverging from the agreement, rather than us. With regard to what will happen in England, we are not absolutely clear at this point, because they seem to be winding back in a number of respects. We hope that there is still considerable scope for three-country engagement with regard to qualifications, and we will work on the assumption that there is good will and we can achieve that to a degree. However, if it is necessary, in our view, to diverge and have, as you call it, unique qualifications for Wales, that is what will happen. Then, of course, we will have to make sure that what we are doing here is probably understood.

[164] **Byron Davies:** That was a good point, and my next question was on the understanding. How are you going to communicate this to learners and, in particular, to employers?

[165] **Jeff Cuthbert:** The issue of employers is very important and is often ignored. Very

often, there is a focus on higher education as though it is the only route for young people. Of course, it is one route, but it is not the only route. With regard to higher education, admission officers make it their business to understand international qualifications, so we do not anticipate a huge issue where HE is concerned, although we will obviously make it our business to tell the sector what we are doing and why.

[166] One of the outcomes of the review of qualifications is that we need to have a clear communication strategy to ensure that employers in Wales, England and further afield know what we are doing and why. Employers have been heavily engaged; there were employer representatives on the qualifications review board, so that the views of industries were always present, and we communicated with many employers across Wales through a variety of means. However, we recognise that the border between Wales and England is long and porous. Many young people will go to England for work, and vice versa, so it is crucial that we have a good communication strategy, using existing channels, such as the Confederation of British Industry, the Federation of Small Businesses and key anchor companies to ensure that what we are doing and why we are doing it is understood.

[167] **Byron Davies:** Given what you just said, how will you ensure the portability of these qualifications?

[168] **Jeff Cuthbert:** The issue of portability is important. That is why, in terms of general qualifications, we are happy to endorse the view that we fundamentally retain A-levels and GCSEs, because they are well understood on an international basis already. Although, they need some revisions; there is no doubt about that. No doubt, later we will talk about new GCSEs in literacy and numeracy and the reason for that. It is very important that we are aligning our vocational qualifications now—initial and continuing vocational education and training—with European best standards. We will make sure that all the vocational qualifications that we use are aligned with the best European standards. So, portability ought not to be an issue.

[169] There is an implementation group sitting at the moment, which will report to me on the practicalities and methodologies for implementing the qualifications review. That will report to me later in the spring. So, I will be happy to come back then to talk in more detail about the best way forward; these are important matters that will occupy our thoughts.

[170] **Byron Davies:** For the time being, thank you.

[171] **Kenneth Skates:** On qualifications and A-levels, do you think that safeguards need to be put in place to ensure that future A-levels undertaken in Wales are fully comparable to those in England? We heard from Huw Evans that he is satisfied that Welsh students will not be disadvantaged and that they will, indeed, be in a positive, advantageous position when applying to universities. Do you agree with that?

[172] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes. It is not a minor issue. As we say in politics, we are where we are. We cannot undo a lot of the confusion caused, in my view, by Michael Gove and his actions over the last year. As I said, all of that happened after the qualifications review board began its work. We did not allow it to derail us and we are now determined that there will be no question of what we are doing in Wales, and that the qualifications that our young people will achieve, whether they are general or vocational, will not be seen as anything less than what is on offer in England or, indeed, throughout Europe. So, that is why the communication strategy that I mentioned regarding the previous question is so important. We need to get that understood. We will have to work hard through the English media, because of its power and influence, to make sure that the message is properly understood.

[173] **Kenneth Skates:** Communications are often two-way now. The review board

recommended that the Welsh Government should ensure that employer groups in Wales are appropriately involved in the development and accreditation of A-levels, and that higher education institutions in Wales are appropriately involved. Are higher education institutions and employer groups in England appropriately involved in both currently, and do you think that there is space for them to be involved?

[174] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Do you mean in terms of what we are doing in Wales?

[175] **Kenneth Skates:** Yes.

[176] **Jeff Cuthbert:** We will have to make sure that that is the case to the best of our ability. Obviously, we are directly responsible for what happens in Wales; there are no ifs or buts about that. However, without doubt, we must seek to engage with employers, higher education and all other relevant bodies in Wales, so that there is a good understanding.

10.45 a.m.

[177] **Jeff Cuthbert:** In terms of Wales, there is a large section in the review report about improving the gate-keeping process, so that what we offer young people is valuable and that it has the support not just of higher education, but of employers. That particularly applies to vocational qualifications. The exact mechanics of how that revised gate-keeping process will work will be made clear to me in due course and we will take decisions then. However, there can be no doubt that gate keeping will be important to make sure that what we offer in Wales, particularly if the public purse is involved, is as relevant and as focused as it can be to the needs of the Welsh economy.

[178] **Ms Crabtree:** In terms of the creation of any new A-levels, we would certainly have higher education involvement from England and throughout the UK to make sure that the standard of A-levels are comparable.

[179] **Kenneth Skates:** Along with employers groups in England, I presume.

[180] **Ms Crabtree:** Yes, if they belong to big companies. We are not going to pick on small and medium-sized enterprises in England, but big multinational companies.

[181] **Kenneth Skates:** Could you elaborate on that and explain how you intend to engage with companies across the border in this respect?

[182] **Ms Crabtree:** With higher education, it would be a matter of looking at the specification once the qualification development was into that stage. To get in contact with employers, we would use an organisation such as the CBI, or other professional bodies, such as engineering associations et cetera that we have dealt with on a UK basis. Many of the professional groups have UK bodies that are keen to meet with us.

[183] In terms of your earlier point about ensuring standards, we would, again, be commissioning experts to look at benchmarking and comparability. So, before we communicate to the world that our qualifications are of a high standard, we need to have a good look at the developing qualifications to make sure that they are of a comparable, if not better, standard to other countries.

[184] **Jeff Cuthbert:** We will also be using the network of sector skills councils that represent the various occupational groups, and they will be expected to input on behalf of their industries.

[185] **Alun Ffred Jones:** You used the term 'gate keeping' a lot. What do you mean by

‘gate keeping’?

[186] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Basically, it means that there will have to be a system for ensuring that what qualifications we offer that could attract money from the public purse are of genuine value and have been scrutinised by, for example, industry and higher education to show that they are not just qualifications that may be convenient for particular learning centres to deliver, but that they actually have some value. So, any awarding body that wants to submit a qualification for approval will have to provide evidence that there is support for it from the relevant industry, for example, or from higher education and that they see it to be of value. That is the term that we use. Originally, I think that we called it ‘futureproofing’, but ‘gate keeping’ is the terminology that is used now.

[187] **Ms Crabtree:** At the moment, my division, as the regulator within the Welsh Government, gate-keeps. We decide which qualifications come in for accreditation, and of those, which ones get public funding. Having said that, it is a marketplace economy of awarding organisations and it is a three-country system. That is how we have ended up with around 13,000 qualifications on the approved list. Clearly, that is not helpful for learners, employers or anyone else. So, we will gradually limit and restrict those numbers and have tighter gate keeping so that fewer qualifications come in and get approved onto that list.

[188] **Jeff Cuthbert:** A good example here was, when the process began for the qualifications review, there were roughly 10,500 qualifications that could attract money from the public purse. The great bulk of those were vocational qualifications, which had been developed over a considerable period of time. So, as part of the process, we looked at those qualifications that are not being offered by learning centres—schools or further education colleges—for at least two years, and those were eliminated. That reduced the number by around 3,000, but that is still far too high. I do not believe that all the qualifications that are there are necessarily relevant or needed.

[189] **Nick Ramsay:** Did you say 10,500?

[190] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes, indeed.

[191] **Nick Ramsay:** Do you have an estimate of what would be a reasonable number?

[192] **Jeff Cuthbert:** No. We have not approached it in that way; what we have said is that that number is far too large. We want to make sure that qualifications are, first of all, actually being taken up; that they have some identified value, for example for industry, no matter at what level you come into the industry—whether it is after university or well before; and that there is support for them. Some qualifications are only taken up in a small number because they are highly specialised, and therefore only have relevance to, perhaps, half a dozen a year or something. That is okay if there is support for the qualification, but there are a number of qualifications that are duplications, basically, of many, and so we can start to whittle those qualifications down.

[193] **Keith Davies:** Mae gennym yn genedlaethol y DAQW—*database of approved qualifications in Wales*. Pwy fydd yn penderfynu yn y dyfodol pa gymwysterau a fydd ar y gronfa ddata honno—Cymwysterau Cymru neu'r Llywodraeth? **Keith Davies:** Nationally, we have the DAQW—database of approved qualifications in Wales. Who, in the future, will decide which qualifications go on the database—Qualifications Wales or the Government?

[194] **Jeff Cuthbert:** It will be Qualifications Wales, when it is properly up and running.

[195] **David Rees:** Just on that point, we have a situation where we have—[Inaudible.]—

BTEC and other examining bodies—OCR, maybe—which may offer the same programme, in the sense that there is the same subject matter. Is it going to allow three different programmes for the same subject matter, or is it actually going to reduce the choice that schools or colleges may have?

[196] **Jeff Cuthbert:** In terms of vocational qualifications in the future, once Qualifications Wales is properly established and up and running, there is no reason why qualifications from awarding bodies outside Wales cannot be offered in Wales if they meet the criteria that I have tried to describe. However, we would want to avoid unnecessary duplication, so we would have to be pretty satisfied that there was something distinct and of value in those qualifications. However, in principle, there is no reason why they could not be offered.

[197] **David Rees:** With IT, City and Guilds has foundation level programmes in IT, BTEC and Edexcel have foundation level programmes, and there will probably be some Qualifications Wales programme at that level as well. Will you allow all three programmes, or are you going to reduce the choice for schools? That is a critical aspect of this.

[198] **Jeff Cuthbert:** We would not seek to prevent them from submitting their proposed awards to Qualifications Wales. It would then be for Qualifications Wales to decide whether there was particular value in those qualifications coming through and whether there was competition with existing qualifications that were there, which were considered acceptable. Those are the sorts of factors that they would have to consider.

[199] **David Rees:** So, duplication could happen.

[200] **Jeff Cuthbert:** We would try to avoid duplication.

[201] **David Rees:** If we turn to Qualifications Wales, obviously it was the first recommendation accepted by the Government. In December, the Minister talked about setting up a process to establish Qualifications Wales. I do not think that anyone in this room will actually challenge the concept of an arm's-length regulatory body, because it has already been called for by many people, but the question is whether, in time, it will develop responsibilities for developing and awarding qualifications. I know that WJEC has strongly opposed that. You could argue that it is in its interest because it is an independent body, but does it have a point in making clear the separation of regulation from developing and awarding qualifications?

[202] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I am not sure that it is correct to say that WJEC is opposing that. We are looking at the Scottish model closely, and we think that there is merit in it. I am not saying that we will mirror it exactly, or copy it exactly, but those are matters under consideration. You are quite right that the recommendation—although, strictly speaking, it was the second recommendation, recommendation 5—was accepted in advance by the Minister, and development work is under way now. Indeed, Huw Evans, who you heard from earlier today, will be chairing the steering committee to draw up the actual terms of reference and the processes for Qualifications Wales. There would need to be a separation within it between the regulatory function and the awarding body function, because I can understand how there might be allegations that there was favourable treatment for some qualifications, but we would have to ensure that that is not the case.

[203] **David Rees:** Huw Evans mentioned earlier that there would have to be a clear delineation between the two. I was not convinced by his argument about why these need to be under one roof, so what checks and balances are you looking to put in place to ensure that, if it is going to be under one roof, there are protections and no possibility for any conflict of interest to arise?

[204] **Jeff Cuthbert:** There need to be clear organisational demarcations in there. Those are issues that we would have to be absolutely satisfied were there to the required degree. I cannot say much more than that, because development work is under way, and I do not want to second-guess the outcomes.

[205] **David Rees:** Do you have any indication as to when we might get some more information on this?

[206] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Kate, can you assist in terms of time frames?

[207] **Ms Crabtree:** The due diligence is due to report in late April. Part of their remit is to look at organisational design and they will be liaising with us as officials on that. It will be building in systems, structures and processes to make sure that that demarcation is there, but building on the synergies that you referred to earlier.

[208] **David Rees:** You have talked about the due diligence process going on, but what are the objectives of that process?

[209] **Mr Ebrahim:** The first one is to look at the financial viability of WJEC as it is—its current value—and to look at the future sustainability of the financial model for Qualifications Wales as a whole, whether it has business in England or not, because when we did the specifications, there was a lot of tension about GCSEs in England going to single awarding bodies, but England has now moved back from that position. The reality is seeing whether WJEC could afford to survive on its own just in Wales, and that will be one of the things that the due diligence will come up with. It will also come up with a model for the organisational structure and provide information about issues around conflicts of interest and how they can be managed in governance arrangements. So, it is quite a thorough review. There are two separate aspects: one is the financial due diligence and the other aspect, in a separate report, is the organisational design.

[210] **David Rees:** May I ask a question on the financial aspect? Obviously, there are some serious questions about the financial aspects that you cannot answer at this point, which I accept, but if Welsh qualifications go off in a different direction to England's, and we have seen some separation, what impact will that have on the financial aspect? At one point, WJEC had quite a lot of work in England. Will England want Welsh qualifications?

[211] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I ought to have declared that I am a former employee of WJEC, and I am not the only one around this table, I believe.

[212] You are right that WJEC, at this moment, has more examination centres in England than in Wales. So, all of these developments right across the UK will have an impact on WJEC and I do not want to second-guess exactly how that will pan out. However, we hope and trust that WJEC will become a key component in Qualifications Wales. The WLGA—as you know, WJEC is owned by the local authorities in Wales—seems to be moving in that direction, so we hope that it will be a reasonably smooth process, but we will have to see. If it is helpful, I can ask my colleague the Minister for Education and Skills to provide you with a further note on the development work towards Qualifications Wales. I am sure that that can be provided.

[213] **David Rees:** That would be helpful.

[214] **Ms Crabtree:** In principle, there is no reason why Qualifications Wales and WJEC could not offer in England. Whether the English centres, regulators and Government will want to take up that offer is another matter, but there is nothing to prevent Qualifications Wales from having a trading arm that would deal with those different qualifications in

England or in other countries.

[215] **David Rees:** I feel that my colleague wants to jump in and ask a question.

[216] **Kenneth Skates:** That could be a test of its success or failure, could it not?

[217] **Jeff Cuthbert:** When it was announced—it has now been pulled back—that subjects would be awarded by single awarding bodies, we thought that that ruled out WJEC from almost any role in England. That may not be the case now. So, we will have to see. It may not be as bleak as it was before in terms of offering across the border.

[218] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Hoffwn ofyn cwestiwn ynglŷn â'r ffaith y byddai'r corff newydd hwn yn gweithredu yn ymarferol ac yn un rheoli. A allwch roi enghraifft o gorff arall sydd yn rheoli ei weithrediadau ei hun yn y maes cyhoeddus?

Alun Ffred Jones: I would like to ask a question on the fact that this new body would operate practically and be a regulator. Can you give us an example of another body that regulates itself in the public sector?

11.00 a.m.

[219] **Jeff Cuthbert:** We have looked very closely at the Scottish model and there are going to be similarities. As far as we are aware, that has not created any huge problems.

[220] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Ar wahân i'r corff hwn yn yr Alban, a oes enghreifftiau eraill yn y maes cyhoeddus lle mae corff yn rheoli ei weithrediadau ei hun, ac yn gwneud hynny'n fewnol?

Alun Ffred Jones: With the exception of the Scottish body, are there any other examples in public life where a body manages its own operations and regulates itself, and does so internally?

[221] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Are you referring just to education?

[222] **Alun Ffred Jones:** No.

[223] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Well, that is what I have concentrated on. My responsibilities are within education, so I would not like to comment on matters not within my portfolio.

[224] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Rydym yn sôn am y theori, onid ydym, y gallwch reoli eich gweithrediadau eich hun drwy greu waliau ffals o fewn corfforaeth? Nid yw hynny'n arfer da. Fel arfer, mae corff allanol yn gwneud y rheoleiddio.

Alun Ffred Jones: We are talking about the theory, are we not, that you can manage your own activities by creating Chinese walls within the body? That is not good practice. Usually, there would be an external regulator.

[225] I symud at bwynt arall, rydych wedi dweud y gallai CBAC fod yn *key component* o'r corff newydd, Qualifications Wales. A oes gennych yr hawl, fel Llywodraeth, i ddileu elusen fel y cyd-bwyllgor?

To move on to another point, you have stated that WJEC could be a key component of this new body, Qualifications Wales. Do you as the Government have the right to abolish a charity such as WJEC?

[226] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I will come to WJEC in a moment. On the initial point on the issue about demarcation in a single organisation, we take that point very seriously. We are not flippant about it. We need to have safeguards in there; there is no doubt about that. We will look very carefully at how that is best done. We are not reckless on that point. On the other hand, it has worked well in Scotland without huge difficulties that I am aware of. So, there is something quite close to home for us to look at in some detail.

[227] On the point about WJEC, we are hoping very much that its governing body will decide to work with us. We are hoping that that is the case. There are indications, as I said, from the Welsh Local Government Association that the member county councils are also moving in that direction also. Those discussions will continue.

[228] **Eluned Parrott:** The issue of demarcation is important, because the parts of a body will act to protect the whole. If there is a single head for an organisation, no amount of internal demarcation is, necessarily, going to be adequate. You can anticipate the scenario, can you not? If you were writing your own review on your own performance, you are likely to say something along the lines of, 'We have actively challenged x, y and z problems and have done a fantastic job, but there are more challenges ahead and with a little bit more resource we could do even more'. It is a very predictable scenario. Can you assure us that you are considering the organisational design for two organisations as actively as you are considering organisational design for a single organisation?

[229] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I do not want to repeat myself, but we are aware of these points. It is a serious point that is being made. We are alert to it and we will want to make sure that the structures and safeguards that are in place will not allow that sort of issue to occur. That is the best assurance that I can give.

[230] **Nick Ramsay:** But is the door open on both types of structure—the one body and the two?

[231] **Jeff Cuthbert:** At the moment, we are proposing one body, Qualifications Wales. As I said, we would have to make sure that, within the organisation, there are those safeguards. I mean—

[232] **Eluned Parrott:** So, that is a 'no' then.

[233] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I am not sure. Maybe I did not understand the question properly. I assume that this was about the demarcation and the safeguards to ensure that there is demarcation between the sections of Qualifications Wales.

[234] **Ms Crabtree:** The viability of the model itself will be looked at in terms of due diligence. It is not necessarily proposing a move to a different model. However, if it is not viable, they will have to feed that back to us, if it is felt to be—

[235] **Nick Ramsay:** So, what is proposed is under one roof.

[236] **Ms Crabtree:** Yes.

[237] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes, if you want to view it that way.

[238] **David Rees:** So, you are only looking at one model.

[239] **Mr Ebrahim:** Under the requirements in the Cabinet paper that went out in October, the recommendation was to look at the establishment of Qualifications Wales, to investigate that further, with a financial review, and to come back with a full business case. So, the due diligence work that has just started will form the evidence base for a full business case to be presented, and in any business case there will be checks and balances.

[240] **Nick Ramsay:** What we are trying to get to is that this demarcation, which, clearly, needs to happen, will happen under a structure of one body, and that would not end up with two bodies.

[241] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I trust that it would be done within one body, but I have already said, Chair, that I am happy to ask my colleague the Minister for Education and Skills to provide a detailed note on this matter. It is probably best if I do that in the light of these questions.

[242] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Could we have the reasons why you have not looked at another model that would then create separation? It would be useful to know why you have rejected that idea.

[243] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I am sure that that can be included in the note.

[244] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Yes.

[245] **Nick Ramsay:** I remind Members not to nominate their colleagues to speak next, but to go through the Chair. I do like to have something to do. It makes it a lot easier for me if I know who is going to speak next. Keith Davies is next.

[246] **Keith Davies:** Rydym wedi clywed am yr hyn sy'n digwydd yn yr Alban, a bod gan y corff y ddau gyfrifoldeb. Beth am Ogledd Iwerddon? A yw Gogledd Iwerddon yn wahanol i'r Alban? Onid yw'r corff hwnnw yn gorff sy'n edrych ar gymwysterau a hefyd yn edrych ar—
Keith Davies: We have heard about what is happening in Scotland, and that the body has both responsibilities. What about Northern Ireland? Is Northern Ireland different to Scotland? Does that body not look at qualifications and also—

[247] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes. Northern Ireland is different, and they are very interested in our overall qualifications review, and we have good relationships with them. We think that joint working with Northern Ireland will continue.

[248] **Nick Ramsay:** Keith, do you want to ask any further questions on the Welsh baccalaureate?

[249] **Keith Davies:** Mae'r adroddiad yn cynnig newidiadau sylweddol i fagloriaeth Cymru. Ydy'r bobl sy'n beirniadu'r cymhwyster yn derbyn y newidiadau rydych chi'n eu cynnig ac felly a fyddant yn peidio ag ymladd yn erbyn y fagloriaeth?
Keith Davies: The report proposes substantial changes to the Welsh baccalaureate. Do those who criticise the qualification accept the changes that you are proposing and will they therefore not fight against the baccalaureate?

[250] **Jeff Cuthbert:** You are quite right. I am glad that we have come on to the issue of the Welsh baccalaureate, because the key proposal of the qualifications review is that the baccalaureate should be the wraparound for future qualifications in Wales, but it will be a revised and strengthened baccalaureate. The review is quite clear that the great bulk of evidence is to support the principles of the baccalaureate. However, key weaknesses have been identified, in terms of duplication of assessment regimes, variation in the quality of delivery and those sorts of issues. We also agreed recommendation 10, to grade the core of the advanced baccalaureate. That was a matter on which higher education lobbied strongly; it would aid them to recognise the value of the effort and work put in. So, that has already been agreed.

[251] There is a team looking at the issue of the baccalaureate and at how it is best revised and strengthened, and the branding of the baccalaureate. That steering group had its first meeting on 5 February, and it will report to me in due course with recommendations. Kate may be able to add something about the grading proposals for the advanced qualification, once I have finished my response. However, we need to strengthen it and make sure that what

we are doing is well understood, because it is a unique qualification already for Wales. You could say that it was our first major divergence from the rest of the UK. I bow to your knowledge; I know that when you were at WJEC, you were in charge of that project team and therefore know far more about the history of it than I do, and probably everybody else here. We think that it has a great role to play.

[252] The issue of branding is important, because, as you and the other Members know, currently it is at a foundation, intermediate and advanced level. I have always found those terms quite convenient, perhaps because I have been involved in it for some time, but there are proposals for different titles—national, foundational national, advanced national, et cetera. They are issues that need to be looked at; they are proposals at this stage, as is the model that is contained within the review report. They are a good starting point, I think. I am not saying that we are there yet, completely, but they are good starting points for taking it forward, to make it a more rigorous qualification. Perhaps, Kate, you could add something about the issue of the criteria for grading.

[253] **Ms Crabtree:** Yes. Grading has already been agreed for this coming September, and WJEC has worked with my staff on a proposed model, which has been shared with schools and colleges. It is going down reasonably well; people are quite happy with it. It will be based largely on the individual investigation, which will become the project, because that is felt to be the best aspect of the qualification that differentiates the good learners from the weaker learners, but the key skills will contribute to it as well, in terms of the number and the level of key skills achieved. We are not proposing to grade the key skills, as that would not be a good use of time, now that the key skills are being revised. Also, it will have grading based on A to C, similar to A-levels, as the universities will accept that terminology, but it will not have the D and E grades. This is because, if students have already achieved the key skills, they will have reached a C grade equivalent. Generally, that is going down well.

[254] On the other points, and the weaknesses of the current model, it is largely the Essential Skills Wales assessment approach that people really disliked. They disliked the portfolio-building approach and felt that more time was spent collating that information than in developing their skills. So, that is going to be radically changed. In fact, at 14 to 16, it is going to be replaced altogether with stronger GCSEs in English and mathematics, as we have already heard, and post-16, there will be a revised approach that involves a portfolio and other approaches, with some externality of assessments as well.

[255] **Keith Davies:** Gwnaethoch sôn am raddau A i C, ond nid am A* i'r fagloriaeth Gymreig. A yw A* ar gael hefyd? **Keith Davies:** You mentioned grades A to C, but not A* for the Welsh baccalaureate. Is the A* grade available, too?

[256] **Ms Crabtree:** It will be, yes. I apologise.

[257] **Nick Ramsay:** The next questions are from David Rees and Ken Skates.

[258] **David Rees:** There is an issue with timing, because we have an indication that it is hoped that these will be introduced by September 2015, which seems to be the same date that Qualifications Wales will take over the awarding of qualifications. Will that timescale be kept to? If you want it to take over at that point, it will have to be involved in the development process and everything else. Is that realistically achievable?

[259] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Sorry, are we talking about the Welsh baccalaureate?

[260] **David Rees:** Yes.

[261] **Jeff Cuthbert:** The teaching of the advanced baccalaureate, with its graded core, will

begin this September. We shall also be looking at—because there were recommendations in the review—other levels to be graded as well. That is part of the development work, and we will have views on that at that point. Clearly, that will be done sooner rather than later, whatever the recommendations may be. I suppose that it might be inevitable—though I cannot second guess it—that if we have grading at advanced level or whatever it might be called, we should have the same approach at other levels. We shall see.

[262] **David Rees:** If I can clarify, it was not the grading issue. The national foundation and the national are going to be introduced in September 2015 for courses. As I said, the intention is to introduce Qualifications Wales in September 2015 at the same time. So, if it is going to be involved in developing and awarding qualifications, what will be its role in developing national and national foundation programmes, and is the timescale therefore realistic for establishing the awarding side of Qualifications Wales so that it can deliver qualifications as soon as it starts?

[263] **Ms Crabtree:** It is realistic, based on the presumption that WJEC will be a key player within—

[264] **David Rees:** So, WJEC will do all the hard work. *[Laughter.]*

[265] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Well, that is its job. *[Laughter.]*

[266] A reasonable scenario would be that, if WJEC moves across, then, of course, its expertise comes with it. So, in the awarding of qualifications, that is in-house, in one sense. You could view it that way. It need not involve the seismic shift that had, perhaps, been thought.

[267] **David Rees:** This comes back to my view about whether or not there should be separate bodies.

11.15 a.m.

[268] **Kenneth Skates:** Huw Evans has said on several occasions that the review body is proposing a major shift within Wales from a knowledge-based qualification system to a skills-based qualification system. However, we are told time and again by economists and politicians on the left, right and in-between that the knowledge economy is the future. Do you think that the Welsh Government has to balance the review body's keenness for developing better skills-based qualifications with an equal determination to improve knowledge and research in education?

[269] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I take your point. On the face of it, it could seem that there is a contradiction here. When we talk about skills-based systems, what I understand by that term is the ability to apply knowledge. So, I do not see a contradiction. That is one of the reasons why we are bringing in new GCSEs in literacy in English and Welsh and numeracy, so that it can be applied to everyday situations. That is the biggest single thing that employers tell us is missing in terms of the ability to communicate well. It is the same principle for numeracy—you first have to learn and understand the principles of mathematical techniques, and then have the ability to apply it through whatever you want to call it; the working title of the new GCSE is 'numeracy' at this point. So, I do not see a contradiction. I think that those two things can work well together.

[270] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Rwyf eisiau medium qualifications that are being Cymraeg sydd yn cael eu hargymell. Cyn recommended. Before that, what is the hynny, tua faint yw canran y myfyrwyr sy'n approximate percentage of students following

dilyn cyrsiau galwedigaethol drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg ar hyn o bryd? vocational courses through the medium of Welsh at present?

[271] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I will look to my officials to see if we can give a percentage.

[272] **Mr Ebrahim:** We do not have the figures at this point in time.

[273] **Jeff Cuthbert:** We will send a note to you. A number of vocational qualifications are already offered through the medium of Welsh. These cross a number of occupational areas. However, it is our very firm intention that that situation be significantly improved. The gate-keeping process will tell us in due course what major vocational qualifications are of value in Wales when linked to the needs of Welsh economy. It is our determination to ensure, perhaps by about 2017—I cannot be absolutely precise in terms of dates because there is a lot of work to be done—that they will be offered to young people in Wales through the medium of Welsh. We are determined to do our very best to achieve that.

[274] The issues are not simple. It is not only a question of having written material through the medium of Welsh, because you must also have people who can teach and assess who are not just fluent in Welsh, but are also fluent in the technical skills and the technical language of that occupation. So, there is a lot of work to be done, but we are determined to make it a reality. It is a bit more straightforward for general qualifications—there is no reason why that should not be achieved by about 2015. However, it is harder for vocational qualifications, but in terms of the percentages that are currently doing them, we will have to write to you on that.

[275] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Mae'n ddrwg gennyf—roeddwn yn gofyn y cwestiwn gan wybod yr ateb, achos mae'r canran yn isel iawn. Mewn gwirionedd, ychydig iawn o golegau sydd yn cynnig y cyrsiau hyn drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'n ddwyieithog. Rydych wedi ateb hanner y cwestiwn, felly pa mor realistig ydyw y byddwch yn gallu cynnig yr asesiadau ac arholiadau drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, a hefyd sicrhau bod tiwtoriaid sydd â'r cymwysterau iawn erbyn 2015, a 2017 yn achos cymwysterau galwedigaethol? **Alun Ffred Jones:** I am sorry—I asked the question knowing the answer, because the percentage is very low. In reality, very few colleges offer these courses through the medium of Welsh or bilingually. You have answered half of the question, so how realistic is it that you will be able to offer assessments and examinations through the medium of Welsh, and also ensure that tutors with the right qualifications are in place by 2015, and 2017 in the case of vocational qualifications?

[276] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I do not minimise the practical difficulties, but there is a determination to do that. One of the issues is the ability to pursue a logical outcome for those vocational qualifications in working life, so that Welsh can be used in the workplace so that there is a logical flow through. If that is not the case, young people will be dissuaded, even if they are first language Welsh speakers, from learning in Welsh if they do not think that they can take it on into working life in Wales. I have already had preliminary discussions with the Welsh Language Commissioner about how we can improve matters in terms of Welsh being spoken in the workplace as a skill like any other. That work is ongoing.

[277] We are also looking closely at how we can make more apprenticeships available through the medium of Welsh. I do not just mean in hospitality or catering—some of the more traditional subjects—but also in science, technology, engineering and mathematics as well as manufacturing and construction. I do not minimise the practical problems, but we are determined to try to make that a reality. I have had some preliminary informal discussions with some further education colleges that are keen to engage with this and they tell me that they have ideas and will pass those on to me. So, we are certainly looking at this.

[278] May I take a second or two to tell you an anecdote? I was in Bangor not that long ago where I met a number of construction trainees working on the housing quality standard. One young gentleman, who was in his late teens, was a plasterer and a Welsh speaker. I asked him whether, if his apprenticeship had been available through the medium of Welsh, he would have taken it. He said, 'Ideally, yes, but probably, no, because the nature of my trade is that I have to be highly mobile and therefore it is probably better for me to have it in English than in Welsh.' That was just one story. I thought that that might apply in construction, where there has to be a highly mobile workforce, and might be an issue to address. Those are the issues that we will tackle, so we will have discussions with more colleges and the sector skills councils to see what work we can do together to try to make that a reality in terms of the major vocational qualifications.

[279] **Nick Ramsay:** When he said that he had to be highly mobile and that taking his course through the medium of Welsh would be a bar, I presume that he meant that he would be meeting Welsh and English speakers and would be covering a large area, so English would be more useful.

[280] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes. It was not a lengthy discussion, but that is what I took it to mean, and I know the construction industry.

[281] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Yr unig beth y byddwn yn ei ddweud yw nad oes ots ym mha iaith yr oedd wedi ei hyfforddi. Pe byddai wedi ei hyfforddi drwy gyfrwng y Ffrangeg, os yw'n blastrwr da, yna caiff waith unrhyw le ar yr amod ei fod yn siarad rhywfaint o'r iaith frodorol. Felly, efallai bod y myfyriwr wedi camddeall eich cwestiwn neu eich bod wedi camddeall ei ateb oherwydd nid dyna'r pwynt oherwydd rydych yn dysgu crefft yn yr achos hwnnw, ond gwnaf adael y pwynt hwnnw am y tro.

Alun Ffred Jones: The only thing that I would say is that it does not matter in which language he was tutored. If he had been tutored through the medium of French, if he is a good plasterer, then he will get work anywhere as long as he speaks some of the native language. So, perhaps the student misunderstood your question or you misunderstood his answer because that is not the point because you are learning a trade in that case, but I will leave that point for the time being.

[282] Mae gen i gwestiwn pellach ar yr angen i ddatblygu a hyfforddi tiwtoriaid sy'n gallu dysgu drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg. A fydd angen adnoddau ariannol ychwanegol i ddatblygu'r gweithlu hwnnw?

I have a further question on the need to develop and train tutors who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh. Will additional financial resources be required to develop that workforce?

[283] **Jeff Cuthbert:** On tutors, clearly further continuous professional development will be needed. That could be language training, but the answer is: yes, additional resources would be required. There is no doubt about that and that would be part of any development work.

[284] **Joyce Watson:** You have already touched on the effectiveness of the new proposed GCSEs in English language, Welsh first language, numeracy and mathematical techniques and how they will address the current situation in which we find ourselves. Are you confident that the proposed new system being put in place will raise our game in Wales or raise the attainment levels of pupils in Wales?

[285] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes I am, but the issue of literacy and improving the standards of functional literacy and numeracy is a huge one, not only for Wales, but particularly so because it is our responsibility here. I said earlier that it is the biggest single complaint that employers raise with us about the employability of young people, so we must do something. It is a long-term issue as well as a shorter-term one. The new national literacy and numeracy framework, starting with primary schoolchildren will help in the longer term. I am convinced

that as they come through that process, some of the problems that we face now I trust will not be apparent anymore. However, the new GCSEs will certainly help, so much so that we will not be looking to include, within the baccalaureate, the essential skills now up to age 16. We trust that the new GCSEs in literacy and numeracy—that is their working title at least—will fill that gap. People reasonably expect that, if you have a GCSE in English, Welsh or maths, you are literate and numerate, but the evidence is that that is not necessarily the case. So, the answer is ‘yes’, I do think that they can make a significant difference, and they have to.

[286] **Joyce Watson:** How will the changes proposed to Essential Skills Wales and the wider key skills qualification make them more effective, improving literacy and numeracy?

[287] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Essential Skills Wales will be available post-16 and, indeed, into adulthood and likewise key skills. We feel that that is more appropriate. Essential Skills Wales will be strengthened to take account of all the evidence that we are receiving now about how we deal best with poor functional literacy and numeracy. They will remain part of apprenticeship programmes and will continue to have a key role to play, post-16.

[288] **Nick Ramsay:** I remind Members that we are in the last few minutes, so if you could be succinct; that is not directed at you specifically, Eluned.

[289] **Eluned Parrott:** Of course not, Chair. Deputy Minister, in your paper you state that the review of qualifications will impact positively on vocational qualifications in Wales. Can you explain to us what positive impacts you hope to see?

[290] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I suppose that the most important one is that of parity of esteem. Let me qualify this, because I have already said that there are far too many vocational qualifications on offer in Wales, at least in theory, and they present a confusing picture, for the learner, their parents and, indeed, employers. So, they need to be rationalised. We will, through the gate-keeping process, have a much stronger set of vocational qualifications that are seen as relevant to the learner. They will only be offered what is right for them, as opposed to what the learning centre is geared up to offer, and they will have value as far as the young person is concerned, their parents and employers. We need to strengthen that. With regard to all new vocational qualifications, and when existing ones comes up for renewal, evidence will have to be provided, particularly from industry, that it values them, that the qualifications have the right content and that key industrial practitioners are supporting the meat that is on the bones, if you like, so that what we are offering to young people is really relevant to them and to the needs of the economy. In that sense, their value will be strengthened.

[291] There remains, unfortunately, the perception out there that vocational qualifications are somehow a second chance and that the best ones go for general or academic qualifications and that those who are not as well gifted go for vocational qualifications. We must end that. They are different, but equal, and that is why there will be two routes for achieving the Welsh baccalaureate, through a general or vocational route, or there could be a mixture of whatever is right for that young person. We are determined that the true value of vocational qualifications will be seen to be a reality.

[292] **Eluned Parrott:** I am glad that that is the case, but it remains the issue that the complexity of the system, as it is, is vast and that communicating the value of qualifications is very difficult. How is introducing the European convention of categorising things as IVETs and CVETs going to improve that, given that, essentially, what we are doing is introducing two more acronyms to the long list of acronyms that people already have to choose from?

[293] **Jeff Cuthbert:** There are two more acronyms, as you say, but I think that it will help to simplify the system and certainly improve portability. With regard to the initial vocational

educational training, which will be geared mainly at those under the age of 16, not leading to educational competence, but certainly to attainment and understanding of that occupational role, the process of ensuring that the vocational qualifications that we offer in Wales are aligned either to IVETs or CVETs—CVET being the ones post-16—is already well under way. So, that strengthens the process.

11.30 a.m.

[294] **Alun Ffred Jones** referred to a young plasterer who might want to go to France and it is, therefore, important that his qualifications are recognised there. Likewise, if a young person from France wanted to come here, we need to be sure that their qualifications marry in to our qualifications. So, although there are added acronyms, it is important that the young person does not worry too much about that and that they can feel confident that their qualifications will be valued across Europe, in this case.

[295] **Eluned Parrott:** How will this impact on private providers, such as the chartered bodies that offer qualifications here? Obviously, that is an added level of complexity.

[296] **Jeff Cuthbert:** They only need to understand it once, and I do not see why that should be a great problem. If they are offering qualifications that involve the public purse, they would need to comply with those requirements. However, chartered bodies or awarding bodies in vocational areas generally, such as City and Guilds, which was alluded to earlier, will only be offering qualifications that, we trust, meet the needs of industries. That means that the national occupational standards involved are clearly reflected there and that those qualifications are up to scratch. So, I do not see that as a problem.

[297] **Eluned Parrott:** A final point from me on advice that is provided to young people, their parents and advisers, we have a situation in schools where teachers advising young people on their future options have gone through the general or academic pathway, almost invariably, and have less knowledge about the vocational pathways that are available. How will you tackle that?

[298] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Continuous professional development, INSET and the briefing of teachers who are responsible for advising on future careers—all of that will have to be considered. There is no doubt that there will be a cost in implementing the new regime; we will try to keep it as close as we can to existing budgets, but there is an implication, in terms of improving knowledge and awareness. There will also be a crucial role for the new careers service, which is becoming a wholly owned Welsh company—one service in Wales, as opposed to six companies—from 1 April. They will have to work closely with learning providers to ensure that the true range of opportunities is well understood.

[299] **Ms Crabtree:** We also plan to use other media, such as the internet, to advise and guide young people, to complement the careers teacher. That will be kept bang up-to-date.

[300] **Nick Ramsay:** I think that plasterers across Europe will welcome the loud and clear support that they are hearing from us today.

[301] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I also spoke to a young joiner, but I will not go on about that.

[302] **Nick Ramsay:** That is a whole new anecdote. I want to ask you a final question, Deputy Minister. We are halfway through the five-year timetable for implementation of this review of qualifications, and there are many hurdles to be crossed. Are you confident that that is an achievable timetable? It strikes me that, if one of those areas was to slip behind, you would be looking at beyond 2016, 2017, or perhaps even later, before it is fully implemented.

[303] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I believe that it is achievable, but we have to keep that under review. For example, I have described how there have been many changes across the border in England, of which we have had to take account. Some of it is quite unexpected, although we seem to have come back to where we were at the beginning, to a degree. We do not know whether there will be further changes; that is why collaboration with our colleagues in other parts of the UK will be very important. If there are issues that affect that timetable, we will make it clear and explain what those issues are.

[304] **Nick Ramsay:** Does it represent major challenges for the lecturers, teachers and others who are involved in it?

[305] **Jeff Cuthbert:** We are proposing a very major change in the qualifications system in Wales, so I would not be surprised if there were issues along the way. We will deal with those as they arise, but in answer to your question, I think that it is achievable. Incidentally, I have not been asked this, but in terms of AS-level and A-level—because changes have been proposed in England—we are reviewing the potential impact on us here. I will have more information on that during March, when we will make a further statement.

[306] **David Rees:** We asked Huw Evans this question, and I know that Kate will give us an answer: what is the Welsh Government doing to link in with English universities to ensure that portability and that all of the qualifications that we are talking about are recognised by English and Scottish universities?

[307] **Jeff Cuthbert:** It is a two-way process. It is in the interest of universities as well for their admission officers to understand what we are doing in Wales. The information that I have had is that they, by and large, do not see that as a problem. They have to understand qualifications from the far east, South America and so on. So, understanding what we are offering in Wales should not be a problem. However, as part of our communication strategy, we will ensure that we have a good link with HE institutions in England so that there is no real chance of any misunderstandings.

[308] **Nick Ramsay:** I thank the Deputy Minister, Jeff Cuthbert, and also Kate Crabtree and Kim Ebrahim for being with us today. It has been very helpful.

11.36 a.m.

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o Weddill y Cyfarfod

Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Remainder of the Meeting

[309] **Nick Ramsay:** Will a Member move a motion to exclude the public?

[310] **David Rees:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(vi).

[311] **Nick Ramsay:** I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11.36 a.m.

The public part of the meeting ended at 11.36 a.m.