



4 February 2025

Dear CYPE Committee Chair,

QW response to CYPE Committee – questions from 11 December 2024

Following the scrutiny of Qualifications Wales' Annual Report 2023 – 2024 on 11 December, members requested further written information on some points that we were unable to cover in the time allocated for the session.

We have set out answers to the four questions raised in the attached annex.

If there's any further information that you require, then please let us know.

We look forward to working with you during 2025.

Gyda diolch

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Chair

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1. In response to the Steering Group's Report, Qualifications Wales published a report on its approach to increasing the number of Welsh-medium qualifications. Your report highlights a number of challenges around post-16 vocational qualifications, some relating to funding and others to awarding bodies. Have you identified any solutions to these challenges, and how are you working with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to address them?

We have established a strategic partnership with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. Through that partnership, we have agreed to work together on the vital matter of Welsh language qualifications for the benefit of learners and apprentices who choose to study and train in Cymraeg or bilingually. Our aim is to ensure that learners and apprentices who choose Welsh-medium and bilingual provision have accessible bilingual qualifications in relevant subject areas.

While we have made good progress in recent years, and remain committed to our role, we need to work with others who have responsibilities to facilitate an increase in the number of Cymraeg speakers and an increase in the use of Cymraeg in qualifications and assessment.

The Welsh Language and Education Bill recognises the key role that a number of bodies and partnerships have to play in supporting individuals on their journey along the language skills continuum. It identifies the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's important role in ensuring that more learners in higher education, further education and apprenticeships have the opportunity to pursue their education through the medium of Welsh.

We will work closely with Medr and Coleg Cymraeg and contribute to a shared national plan for the Cymraeg in the tertiary education sector. We are committed to working with awarding bodies to extend the range of bilingual qualifications as demand increases.

A specific example of how we are working in partnership with others to address challenges in the post-16 sector is our work with the Federation of Awarding Bodies to build a database of Cymraeg-speaking assessors. The database, launched in September 2024, aims to support awarding bodies by connecting them with Cymraeg-speaking practitioners who are interested in opportunities to undertake Welsh-medium assessor roles. As it becomes more established, this resource will support awarding bodies who need to appoint and train Cymraeg-speaking assessors to ensure valid and reliable qualifications are awarded to Welsh-medium

learners. This will be key for awarding bodies to expand their Welsh-medium qualification provision and to provide an active offer for learners.

In recent years, we have refined our approach to making qualifications available in Welsh. As our recent [progress report](#) highlighted, one of the challenges we face in expanding the range of Welsh-medium qualifications is the funding and capacity constraints. Given the finite budget (£180,000 allocated within our overall budget) of our Welsh Language Support Grant, we need to target our funding to prioritise qualifications in areas of strategic importance to maximise the impact of our resource and capacity. Before engaging with the awarding bodies in our targeted Welsh-medium discussions, we gather feedback on our list of targeted qualifications from key stakeholders, such as the Coleg Cymraeg , Welsh Government, and CYDAG. This feedback allows us to further refine the list to reflect the needs of learners in the post-16 sector.

2. Although the number of incidents notified to you went down in 2023-24, it is still higher than in previous years. Last year, you said that the number of incidents is low in the context of the number of exams being sat and that the errors in papers are small. Has that been the case this year? Are you content that awarding bodies are addressing any identified issues?

Yes, in the context of the number of examinations and assessments that are taken by learners in Wales the error rate in assessment materials remains very small. The vast majority of the assessment error incidents reported had limited or no impact in Wales. A key part of our incident management process is to oversee the actions taken by awarding bodies to mitigate the impact on learners and on the actions, they subsequently take to prevent a recurrence. We do not close cases until we are satisfied that the awarding body has taken the necessary steps to understand the root cause of the error and identified actions to prevent a recurrence.

3. You say in your Annual Report that two awarding bodies declared non-compliance with your standard conditions of recognition. To what extent are there any grounds for concern, particularly in relation to the requirement for publication of a Welsh-medium qualifications policy statement?

Fourteen awarding bodies declared non-compliance with our conditions in 2023. Two of those declarations solely related to compliance in Wales. One was as a result of non-activity in Wales (we have a requirement that an awarding body must award a qualification to a Welsh learner within a two-year period to maintain compliance).

That awarding body has now submitted a surrender notice which is being processed. There is no impact on learners as a result of that non-compliance.

One awarding body declared non-compliance with our new condition regarding the publication of a Welsh-medium qualifications policy statement. The condition was introduced in 2023 but with a lead in period for awarding bodies to become fully compliant by September 2024. The awarding body did not technically need to declare non-compliance at that point in time. As part of their declaration the awarding body provided an action plan on how they would be compliant ahead of September 2024. This action plan is now complete and they are compliant.

Our monitoring plan for 2025-26 includes activity to check awarding body compliance with the requirement to publish a Welsh-medium qualifications policy statement. Of the remaining 12 awarding bodies that declared non-compliance with our and Ofqual's conditions 11 have now completed their action plans and have returned to full compliance. Alongside Ofqual, we continue to monitor one awarding body's completion of their action plan and will follow up on any actions during the 2024 statement of compliance. There is no impact on learners as a result of the ongoing non-compliance.

4. Is there anything else you want to highlight in terms of your own work our Committee's scrutiny work going forward into 2025?

We will soon be publishing our business plan for the period April 2025 to March 2026. This builds upon a number of ongoing priorities that we have set out in our corporate plan.

National 14-16 Qualifications

- Working with Welsh Government and WJEC, who have specific responsibilities in relation to the provision of resources and professional learning, deliver change management activities to support the implementation of new qualifications focusing on system readiness for the first teaching of the first wave of newWave 1 GCSEs in Sept 2025
- Complete the approval of the second wave of GCSEs, and start the approval process for the final set of National 14-16 Qualifications - comprising VCSEs, Skills Suite and Foundation qualifications)
- Start to monitor the new GCSEs and prepare for full monitoring as the full range of National Qualifications becomes available

- Collaborate with partners to support the successful introduction of new on-screen assessments
- Plan and commission evaluation of the 14-16 National Qualifications reforms

AS and A level review

- Oversee WJEC's high-level review of AS and A level qualifications to ensure alignment with the new GCSEs
- Undertake a full review of Cymraeg and Welsh Second Language AS and A levels so that they are able to meet developing policy needs

Strengthen the post-16 qualifications offer

- Continue to monitor and take action to protect the availability of UK-wide vocational qualifications for Wales
- Commence reforms for Essential Skills Wales qualifications in Communications, Application of Number and Digital Literacy
- Approve reformed post-16 further education and work based learning qualifications in travel and tourism, hospitality and catering, and secure the provision of land-based qualifications
- Commence a sector review of hair and beauty

Regulate to support the system

- Oversee standards and continue to monitor the summer and winter examination series
- Maintain regular regulatory oversight of awarding bodies and the qualifications system
- Continue work to investigate opportunities to modernise assessment making better use of technology
- Shape and publish our Cymraeg strategy to support Welsh Government's mission, and manage grants to support bilingual qualifications

Develop our organisation

- Maintain a communications and engagement approach that uses effective channels to share key messages and listen to views
- Implement new legislation into how we operate (well-being of future generations, social partnership and procurement, Welsh language standards, procurement reform)
- Deliver our people strategy to support our employees to develop their skills, working flexibly, efficiently and effectively, within an inclusive workplace and a culture built upon our values

- Deliver our equalities objectives, including our anti-racism plan
- Deliver our carbon reduction plan to support Welsh Government's net zero ambitions.

End