

Consultation on the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill

Evidence submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) for Stage 1 scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill.

About you

Organisation: ColegauCymru / CollegesWales

1. The Bill's general principles

1.1 Do you support the principles of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Bill](#)?

Yes

1.2 Please outline your reasons for your answer to question 1.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1500 words)

The principles have the potential to deliver independent learners who are capable of adapting to the challenges of post-16 study.

1.3 Do you think there is a need for legislation to deliver what this Bill is trying to achieve?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

Yes

2. The Bill's implementation

2.1 Do you have any comments about any potential barriers to implementing the Bill? If no, go to question 3.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

The impact of Covid-19 might mean that the set up of schools is somewhat different at the time of first introducing the new curriculum. Some contingency planning might be necessary here.

2.2 Do you think the Bill takes account of these potential barriers?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

This is more a delivery than a legislative challenge.

3. Unintended consequences

3.1 Do you think there are there any unintended consequences arising from the Bill? If no, go to question 4.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

ColegauCymru is strongly of the view that the impact of the proposed bill, which we welcome, is understood in its wider context. While the Bill focuses on the compulsory school age curriculum, there could be unintended consequences for the post-16 education system. Learners will have learnt in different ways, via areas of learning and experience, and the impact this has on their post-16 education needs to be considered. Discussions with Welsh Government officials are ongoing but serious attention needs to be given to ensuring that learners do not experience a sharp difference between pre and post-16 education. This means training post-16 sector tutors in the pedagogical approach but also other staff, such as careers advisors. There are other practical implications, such as the large number of GCSE resits in Maths, English and Welsh undertaken in FE colleges, and adult learners who return to do these qualifications and will have learned under a different system as the new curriculum takes time to become embedded. Colleges also provide access to Essential Skills Wales qualifications and these alongside GCSE resits are an important area that needs to be impact assessed.

Qualifications play an important part in the new curriculum. As Qualifications Wales seeks to reform GCSEs, it is not clear how the new qualifications will work and whether they will retain a similar approach to subjects or follow the broader areas of learning experience. This impacts on A' Levels in particular – there may be some subject specific knowledge that is lacking from, for example, a more general 'science' approach rather than individual chemistry, physics and biology that needs to be addressed at post-16 level in order to

bring learners up to the level necessary for high level study. This may incur additional teaching costs. Likewise, concerns have been raised that as a result of the compulsory curriculum reforms, the A' level curriculum offer may reduce for example in Humanities, as a result of learners not studying discrete humanities subject at GCSE level. This is already being seen in Higher Education providers, where the value and employability of students graduating with these subjects is questioned regarding the skills/knowledge required to support the economy of the future.

Wider reforms are also envisaged alongside the proposals within the bill, and these include the introduction of vocational GCSEs. For vocational learners, it will be important to note that any expansion in vocational GCSEs does not raise expectations of competency to practice and to ensure that the content of post-16 vocational qualifications complements rather than duplicates prior learning. There is potential for schools to partner with colleges on more vocational provision and any vocational curriculum reform at equivalent KS4 needs Further Education input on design and content. To this end the scrutiny of the bill should include an examination of its impact on pre-existing legislation, and in particular the impact it might have on the 14-19 Learning Pathways.

Any expansion of Welsh language skills in learners as a result of the proposed bill is welcomed and an important addition to compulsory schooling. This however, needs to be matched by the ability for learners to study partly or fully through the medium of Welsh at post-16. This means continued investment in the Welsh language skills of the FE workforce to ensure that demand can be met. The Cymraeg Gwaith project, which seeks to develop the Welsh language teaching skills of FE staff should be expanded and its funding secured on a more long-term basis to start addressing this need now. Bilingual teaching methodologies should be part of all PGCE courses delivered by HEIs in Wales. Lecturers who have the skills/ability to deliver bilingually should have this skill set recognised. This should be reflected in extra points on the pay scales to incentivise greater participation and CPD in this area.

4. Financial implications

4.1 Do you have any comments on the financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#))? If no, go to question 5.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

There are financial implications for training the post-16 sector, the potential need for additional teaching hours in some subjects should certain areas of knowledge not be gained from the new compulsory curriculum, and the need to invest in Welsh language skills development in FE. e.g. there may be further need for transition activities to be completed in order to ensure effective preparation onto post 16 courses for specific subjects. These issues do not necessarily form part of the financial scope of the Bill which focuses narrowly on the compulsory curriculum but they are costs that will need to be factored in somewhere in order to make the new curriculum succeed in its aims.

Discussions with Welsh Government officials on these costs and how they are addressed are ongoing. In the session with Senedd Finance Committee on 21 September 2020, the Education Minister said in relation to the RIA that there was ongoing work on “whether there will be minor consequential costs associated with sixth forms or the further education sector, remembering that the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill is three to 16”. This is technically correct as the Bill is drafted to only focus on the compulsory curriculum and costs incurred directly due to changes here. However, there are inevitable consequential costs for the post-16 sector highlighted in Section 3 above which will not be ‘minor’. These costs will need to be addressed and funding provided if a sharp and unhelpful rupture between pre and post-16 learning, that risks disengaging learners, is to be avoided.

5. Powers to make subordinate legislation

5.1 Do you have any comments on the appropriateness of the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (as set out in Chapter 5 of Part 1 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#)). If no, go to question 6.1.

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

No comments.

6. Other considerations

6.1 Do you have any other points you wish to raise about this Bill?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)

The role of successful schemes such as Junior Apprenticeships which cover 14-16 year olds need to be shown to have been taken into account in the Bill, along with other school link provision with colleges. Junior apprenticeships have often been opportunities taken by vulnerable learners, many of whom have thrived outside the school environment. Legislation around the new curriculum must not make it more difficult for colleges to support these learners.

