



By email

Janet Finch-Saunders MS  
Chair, Welsh Parliament Petitions Committee

26 March 2021

Dear Janet,

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to offer our views on the issues raised in the petition.

We have worked with the Design and Delivery Advisory Group (DDAG) set up by the Minister of Education to put in place the arrangements for the award of GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in summer 2021 and to deliver the policy position set out in the Minister's Direction to Qualifications Wales. We have provided guidance for centres on the different aspects of the alternative approach. The latest version of the guidance is available on our [website](#). The guidance also includes a timeline of key dates in the process, with provisional centre determined grades to be submitted to WJEC by 2 July 2021.

We have been aware of queries raised about the assessment evidence that can be used to inform grade judgements and have [written to centres](#) on 23 March 2021 to provide further clarity on the requirements. Our letter included the following clarification in support of our published guidance:

- Contributing assessment evidence could come from a range of activities that include mock exams, past papers provided by WJEC, NEA and other assessed work.
- Historic evidence of attainment can be used as part of the evidence considered when determining a grade, but with caution, as it may not be representative of the learner's current level of attainment.
- Centres can develop their own assessments ensuring that they are valid and fair.
- WJEC past papers should only be used where you are confident that they will provide an authentic assessment that demonstrates the learner's true level of attainment. WJEC past papers can be adjusted to provide a more authentic assessment.

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- Assessed work may need to be completed in the school environment or at home, but centres need to be assured that it is the learner's own work.

A key part of the approach to this summer is that learners should only be assessed on what schools and colleges have taught them. There is flexibility for schools to decide on the assessment approach that works best for their learners and a focus on the quality rather than quantity of evidence generated. If a centre chooses to use a WJEC past paper, they do not have to be completed in one session under examination conditions but can be divided into sections and schools and colleges can decide how and when to use them so that they integrate with their teaching plans. Centres may also provide learners with the topics on which they will be assessed in advance, however they should not provide them with the actual assessment in advance.

These clarifications are intended to reinforce the flexibility available to schools and colleges in the approach for this summer and particularly that a range of evidence can be used; we recognise that the approach has to be flexible for centres to accommodate their local context. These key messages have been reinforced through the recent publication of [8 key facts](#) for schools and colleges.

However, there must be a balance between flexibility and the integrity of results for learners this summer. An approach that does not rely on credible assessment evidence is likely to lead to inconsistency and unfairness for learners and could also put centres at risk of challenge from learners through the appeals process. The approach seeks to balance flexibility for schools and colleges with requirements to provide consistency across Wales. Ultimately, the exceptional arrangements put in place for this summer need a system-wide commitment to valid and credible outcomes that allow learners to have confidence in their results and progress onto their next stages.

We continue to work closely with WJEC and the Design and Delivery Advisory Group to finalise the arrangements for summer 2021 and to respond to concerns raised by learners, schools and colleges.

Please let me know if you would like any further information.

Yours sincerely



Philip Blaker  
Chief Executive