

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1192
Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/11026/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

20 September 2021

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 2 September drawing my attention to a petition submitted to the Petitions Committee which emphasises the need to support year 10 and year 12 learners who may have concerns with the 2022 qualification arrangements.

I recognise that learners, their families and practitioners are keen to know the detail of the arrangements that will be put in place for those learners taking qualifications in 2022.

To recap and provide a little more context to the concerns of the petitioner, when the decision was made to cancel examinations for the 2021 summer exam series in February 2021, due to the ongoing situation with regard to the pandemic, it was agreed that learners in Year 12 would be awarded an AS grade that was determined by their centre. This was to recognise the hard work and learning during the academic year, to support progression onto the A level course and to support UCAS applications.

However, it was confirmed at the same time that the centre determined AS grades would not contribute to the final A-level award in 2022. The use of AS levels awarded via the adapted arrangements was considered in detail by the [Design and Delivery Advisory Group](#). As A-levels are usually awarded by putting 'marks' from different units together (including AS units) it was decided that there was not a fair or equitable way to combine a 'grade' based approach from centre-determined grades, with a 'mark' based approach in 2022 with

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

the anticipated return to exams. This is the same approach that was taken for learners completing AS levels in 2020 via centre assessment grades.

In March, Qualifications Wales confirmed that it was planning to run exams for 2022 and that adaptations will be made to subject specifications to reduce the content assessed such as the reduction of non-examination assessment, removal of units of assessment and optionality, to reflect the disruption there has been for learners.

To inform these adaptations the WJEC undertook detailed engagement with practitioners on the proposals, using the adaptations made for 2021 as a starting point, and held consultation exercises with the education profession and with learners, parents and carers. This generated positive engagement with over 1,200 responses from teachers, lecturers, senior school and college leaders and over 900 responses to the learner, parent and carer focussed survey. The WJEC published the outcomes of the Learner Survey on 3 September [Report](#).

To support planning for the autumn term, education professionals were notified of the finalised adaptations before the end of the summer term. It is expected that the finalised adaptations will be made publically available on the WJEC website shortly. I would therefore encourage learners to engage with their centres to ensure they are aware what these adaptations mean for their chosen subjects and also visit the [WJEC](#) web pages which will continue to publish the latest details, advice and guidance.

Alongside this, drawing on our experience from 2021, Qualifications Wales is developing contingency plans for alternative assessment arrangements in case of further disruption – this will be informed by learning and reflections from the centre determined grade process, as well as preparations being made by other regulators, to ensure learners in Wales are not disadvantaged. I recognise the importance for schools and colleges, as well as learners, to have an understanding of the expectations around qualifications and associated contingency arrangements as soon as possible and my officials are working closely with Qualifications Wales to enable this.

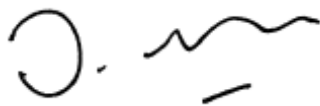
I also recognise the importance of ensuring appropriate support is in place for those learners who may feel anxious at the prospect of taking exams for the first time. During the last academic year we sought to prioritise learner well-being and progression, to ensure learners had the knowledge, skills and confidence to move to their next steps in education, employment or training – this commitment will continue in 2022.

To support teaching and learning we have worked alongside WJEC to develop a range of [resources](#) for different qualifications including knowledge organisers and exam walk-throughs. Further resources are now being developed to support other qualifications. We have also published a collection of resources and guidance to support the provision of blended learning and made resources available for learners and parents to support continuity of learning and progression. <https://hwb.gov.wales/blended-learning>. Alongside this we have put in place a range of support for learners in respect of mental health and wellbeing including the development of a Young Person's Mental Health Toolkit which is available via [Hwb](#).

You will also be aware that in June, I announced a further £150 million investment for 2021/22 through the [Renew and Reform plan](#) for education. £6.25 million of this is to support learner wellbeing and progression in schools, to establish resilience for future COVID-19 outbreaks and longer-term planning and £24 million to continue support and mentoring for learners through the [Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards](#) programme including the specific support that learners in qualification years will need.

I hope this information will be helpful for the Petitions Committee and I would like to thank you for drawing this petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

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