

WESP 06

Cynlluniau Strategol Cymraeg mewn Addysg - y fframwaith deddfwriaethol sy'n cefnogi Darpariaeth Addysg Gymraeg | Welsh in Education Strategic Plans - the legislative framework that supports Welsh-Medium Education Provision

Ymateb gan Cymwysterau Cymru | Response from Qualifications Wales

Committees

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Are Welsh in Education Strategic Plans working: Senedd Committee Inquiry - Welsh in Education Strategic Plans – the legislative framework that supports Welsh-Medium Education Provision

Dear Colleague,

As the independent regulator for non-degree qualifications in Wales, our principal aims are to ensure that qualifications, and the Welsh qualification system, are effective for meeting the reasonable needs of learners in Wales, and to promote public confidence in qualifications and in the Welsh qualification system. In considering how we will achieve those aims, we must have due regard to the eight matters in the Act, one of which is to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language.

We know that the education sector will be instrumental in helping Wales achieve the ambitious targets set out in Cymraeg 2050: a million Welsh speakers¹. To that end, the work of approving the new 10-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs) to be operational from September 2022; the announcement of a 10-year Welsh in Education Workforce Plan² – a plan for developing the Welsh language workforce in schools; as well as introducing a Welsh-medium Education Bill during this Senedd term will be key contributors to the outcomes and targets set out in Cymraeg 2050.

We also recognise that qualifications and the Welsh qualification system have an important part to play. To support this, and to promote the option for learners to take qualifications in the language of their choice, we published our Choice for All strategy³ - a five-year strategy which clearly sets out our commitment to the Welsh language and to increasing the availability of Welsh-medium and bilingual qualifications to learners in Wales.

¹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/cymraeg-2050-welsh-language-strategy.pdf>

² <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-05/welsh-in-education-workforce-plan.pdf>

³ <https://qualificationswales.org/english/publications/choice-for-all---our-strategy-for-increasing-the-availability-of-welsh-medium-qualifications-2020-25/>

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In this strategy, we set out four strategic areas:

- identifying and prioritising qualifications to be made available in Welsh
- strengthening support and capacity in the system
- revising our Welsh Language Support Grant, and
- improving information for learners, their schools, and colleges.

We are committed to working with a wide range of key stakeholders in the education sector to help achieve the goals of Cymraeg 2050. More specifically, as the independent regulator for non-degree qualifications in Wales, we do have an interest in the publication of the new 10-year WESPS, in as much as we anticipate and work towards a qualification market that is responsive to an increase in demand for Welsh-medium and bilingual qualifications. WESPs report on this area under 'Key Outcome 4: More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh'⁴.

In responding to this inquiry, though we have a limited insight into the operation of WESPs at local authority level, we wanted to take the opportunity to provide the Inquiry with information on our current and future work to support the successful implementation of the WESPs, as well as broader policy aims and objectives relating to the Welsh language.

We believe we can make, and are making a contribution to a number of Cymraeg 2050 outcomes and targets. Our work to secure and adapt the range of qualifications assessing Welsh for 14 to 16 year-olds; our commitment to securing bilingual qualifications for 14-16-year-olds that relate to the new Curriculum for Wales as part of our Qualified for the Future work, and increasing the range of post-16 qualifications that are available bilingually will have a significant effect on Welsh Government's aims.

While currently having taken the decision to create two new distinct Welsh language GCSEs for learners in different educational settings to support the Welsh language continuum, we recognise that those Welsh language qualifications will need to adapt and change to future circumstances. We also see the introduction of a new, small additional qualification to provide stretch and challenge for learners in English-medium settings who are ready to progress further and more quickly in their Welsh language skills as an exciting and important development.

An increase in demand for Welsh-medium qualifications as a result of policy decisions taken by ourselves and Welsh Government is likely to result in the need for additional grant funding to awarding bodies. This is something that will need to be supported in the funding that Welsh Government makes available to us.

⁴ [Guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/guidance-on-welsh-in-education-strategic-plans)

While we are working with awarding bodies to increase the availability of qualifications through the medium of Welsh, the commercial viability of qualifications in a relatively small market, as well as changes to qualifications policy in England, will continue to be a challenge for the Welsh qualification system.

As the regulator, our role is to step in to address market failure – where the needs of the market cannot be met directly by the suppliers (in this case awarding bodies). We have a range of regulatory and policy levers available to us, and both hard and soft powers will need to be utilised if we are to achieve our aims. Whether qualifications are made-for-Wales, adapted for Wales, or simply adopted in Wales, there are ways of addressing the issues that will be encountered, but it will take a collaborative and concerted effort across the education system to do so.

Expectations in relation to our role as the regulator are changing and there is an increased focus and emphasis on closer management of the qualification system, beyond market regulation and intervention to prevent or address market failure. These changing expectations will require additional funding and resources if they are to be met.

We hope that a greater focus on Welsh language provision, driven by the new Welsh Education Bill and improved planning within the WESPs for 2022-2032, will allow an environment for better identification of emerging qualifications needs that we can then work to address. The importance of working collaboratively and strategically to deliver the targets set out in the WESPS and, beyond those, in achieving the outcomes of Cymraeg 2050 cannot be overstated. This is particularly true of the post-16 sector.

To aid cooperation and target interventions, we are in the process of establishing a Stakeholder Group comprising of representatives from key stakeholders including further education colleges to work together to consider ways of increasing the availability of qualifications through the medium of Welsh. We are also committed to working with, and strengthening our relationships with key partners, including the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and, once established, the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER).

Finally, increasing workforce capacity and retaining learners in Welsh-medium settings are systemic challenges that will require collective solutions. The work that the Coleg is undertaking to strengthen staffing capacity through its Towards Cymraeg 2050 Action Plan, the National Centre for Learning Welsh's recent commitment to provide Welsh language learning to teaching staff and the Welsh Government's Welsh in Education Workforce Plan will be critical in that regard. We look forward to working with partners across the education sector to address these challenges.

We would like to thank both the [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee](#) and the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) for undertaking this important inquiry, and for the opportunity to contribute to this significant policy debate.

We hope that the information provided is useful as the Committees begin their work of producing a report of its findings, including any recommendations to the Welsh Government.

Further detailed information on each of the points raised above is provided to members in an Annex to this letter. Should you require further information from us, we would be more than happy to provide this to you.

The Welsh Government in its Cymraeg 2050 strategy recognises that everyone has a part to play in realising its ambition. Qualifications Wales is committed to ensuring that the Welsh qualification system provides the conditions to facilitate an increase in the number of Welsh speakers and an increase in the use of Welsh.

We recognise that there are challenges in achieving our aim and we will need to build on the good working relationships we have already established with key stakeholders and partners. We have taken ownership of this challenge and have made good progress in recent years. However, we acknowledge and recognise that more needs to be done over the next decade as we work towards meeting the targets and outcomes set for 2032 - the next important milestone on our national journey to a million Welsh speakers.

Gyda diolch



David Jones OBE DL
Chair



Philip Blaker
Chief Executive

Annex 1

Our Work

Qualifications to support the new Curriculum for Wales

The Curriculum for Wales will be the basis for learning in all primary schools from September 2022, in some secondary schools for learners in year 7 and for all learners in year 8 from September 2023.

The introduction of the new Curriculum for Wales provides an opportunity to look afresh at qualifications for 14-16 year olds: to modernise them and to ensure that they are coherent with the aims of the curriculum and that they benefit and provide greater opportunities for learners in Wales. We therefore want to make sure that schools have an inclusive and coherent range of qualifications that meet the needs of all our learners.

It is our role to make sure that there is an appropriate range of qualifications available for schools and learners to choose from- allowing schools to select the qualifications they want to offer based on their curriculum, the needs of their learners and any policy established by Welsh Government. However, we recognise that decisions about which qualifications to offer can help contribute to a national approach aimed at increasing the number of Welsh speakers.

It is for this reason that we have committed to increasing the number of made-for-Wales qualifications⁵ within that offer and requiring all publicly funded qualifications for pre-16 settings to be available in both Welsh and English.

Future Welsh language qualifications

The Welsh Government wants to see more learners leaving compulsory education as confident users of the Welsh language and this vision is clearly set out in Cymraeg 2050. Achieving this vision will require a range of interventions across education policies. This includes a legislative commitment to strengthen and increase Welsh language education provision to move schools along the language continuum and to develop a growing workforce able to teach Welsh and teach through the medium of Welsh.

The introduction of new Welsh language qualifications for 14-16-year-olds has been a key feature of our reform work. Following extensive consultation and stakeholder

⁵ When we refer to a qualification as 'made-for-Wales', we do so to describe qualifications that have been designed specifically for Wales, and the main qualifications taken by learners in Wales. This is not a new concept; there are many qualifications currently being taken by learners in schools and colleges that have been developed as Wales-only qualifications.

engagement, we announced our decisions in relation to future Welsh language qualifications⁶ earlier this year.

To align with the new curriculum and reflect the continuum for teaching and learning Welsh, we are creating a set of three new Welsh language qualifications. These include a new integrated language and literature GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) in Welsh for learners in Welsh-medium and bilingual schools, a new GCSE for learners in English-medium settings and a new additional qualification for learners in English-medium settings who are ready to progress further and more quickly in their Welsh language skills. In reaching these decisions, we worked with the Welsh Government to ensure that they were consistent with its policy aims for the Welsh language.

We want all learners to be confident users of Welsh within a continuum for Welsh language learning, which includes learners with little or no language experience right through to those who are proficient in the language. Welsh language qualifications for learners in English-medium settings have developed significantly in the past five years, with expectations already having been raised significantly in the revised GCSE introduced for first teaching in September 2017.

However, we know that Welsh language qualifications need to change and that this must be curriculum-led. The Curriculum for Wales Guidance ('Guidance') for the Languages, Literacy and Communications Area of Learning and Experience ('Area') introduces the concept of a Welsh language continuum. It includes a separate set of expectations (expressed as 'descriptions of learning') for the progress learners are expected to make in their Welsh language learning if they are studying in English-medium settings.

This reflects the different pace at which learners can be expected to develop their language ability depending on whether they receive most of their education through English or Welsh. There is a clear relationship between the two sets of expectations allowing learners to progress along a single Welsh language continuum.

The Guidance reflects the fact that it would be difficult for learners in English-medium settings to achieve the same linguistic level as learners in Welsh-medium or bilingual settings as they have less exposure and contact with the language. While the boundaries between different education settings in Wales are softened, the Curriculum for Wales nevertheless recognises and reflects the current differences which remain between Welsh-medium and English-medium settings.

It is in this context that we explored the question of how a Welsh language

⁶ https://qualificationswales.org/media/8316/decisions_future_welsh_language_qualifications_final.pdf

continuum, which sets different expectations and learning outcomes for learners depending on their setting, should be reflected in qualifications.

In doing so, we explained the reasons why it would not currently be possible to design a single qualification that could fairly and reliably assess all learners in all settings. The degree of difference between the curriculum expectations for learners in English-medium settings and for those in Welsh-medium and bilingual settings are currently too great to be encompassed within a single qualification. The introduction of a new Welsh Language Education Bill to strengthen and increase Welsh language school provision across Wales, ensuring the successful delivery of the WESPs and Welsh in education workforce plan, will undoubtedly reduce the degree of difference between settings over time.

Our decision to create two new, distinct GCSEs for learners in different settings is only a part of the picture. To better reflect the principle of a continuum of Welsh language learning, we are also creating a small additional qualification to provide stretch and challenge for learners in English-medium settings who are ready to progress further and more quickly in their Welsh language skills.

We see the introduction of this new qualification as an exciting and important development. Not only will it complement and build on the learning that takes place as part of the main GCSE but will also provide an opportunity for those learners who have previously received their education through the medium of Welsh but who have transferred to an English-medium setting, to continue to develop their levels of Welsh language skills and proficiency.

As part of the co-construction process, the working groups feel that the additional qualification should be smaller in size than a GCSE. They also feel that it should be flexible in terms of content, focusing on oracy and extended writing as these are the skills that will support learners to become more confident users of Welsh and progress further in their Welsh language skills and consequently along the continuum.

We recognise that the position will change over time and we will need to adapt and change these qualifications to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. We will also need to review the qualification offer to see if multiple qualifications continue to be the right approach.

To that end, we are committed to working with other partners and stakeholders in Wales to collectively pursue the ambitions of Cymraeg 2050 and ultimately the aim of a single qualification for all learners in Wales.

Qualifications to support post-compulsory education and training

Ensuring that vocational qualifications meet the needs of learners, higher education providers and employers in a wide range of careers and building public confidence in the range and quality of those qualifications awarded in Wales has been, and will continue to be, a key strategic priority for us.

The Co-operation Agreement (2021)⁷ between the Welsh Labour Government and Plaid Cymru sets out a commitment to:

'...significantly expand the range of made-in-Wales vocational qualifications to fit the needs of our learners and our economy.' (page 10)

Sector reviews are the backbone of how we review the vocational qualifications on offer in Wales, and develop new, made-for-Wales qualifications where we deem it necessary and appropriate to do so. They provide an opportunity to gather useful insight and expertise directly from professional sectors to plan future provision and requirements for vocational qualifications. They are a vital part of how we shape qualifications and the way they are assessed to meet the needs of learners and employers in Wales and drive our future national prosperity.

Sector Reviews are a significant and comprehensive undertaking and can take some time to complete. While they have been the right approach for the largest sectors, we have developed a different more rapid approach for the remaining sectors. Our current programme of sector reviews focus on assessing the current, and likely future availability of qualifications for use on full-time post-16 FE courses, sixth form schools and apprenticeships in key sector areas, and the range and availability of Welsh-medium qualifications in those areas.

In undertaking sector reviews, we work closely with the Coleg. Most recently, we have worked closely with the Coleg and City & Guilds during our review of the Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care sector. We have funded City & Guilds to make their Level 3 Agriculture qualification available in Welsh for two years to overcome concerns from further education colleges about the continued availability of a suitable Welsh-medium Level 3 Agriculture qualification. Work is continuing with City & Guilds and the Coleg to develop a new bilingual qualification for the longer term. We plan to publish our report on our sector review of Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care later this year.

Previous sector reviews in Health and Social Care, and Childcare and Construction and the Built Environment (two priority areas identified by the Coleg in their *Further Education and Apprenticeship Welsh Medium Action Plan*) resulted in the commissioning of new made-for-Wales qualifications which are all available through the medium of Welsh.

⁷ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-11/cooperation-agreement-2021.pdf>

Supporting the Welsh qualification system

Supporting awarding bodies in their work to develop Welsh-medium qualifications, while also strengthening capacity and building resilience within the system is a key focus area for us. We assist and support awarding bodies to make their qualifications and assessment available through the medium of Welsh in a number of ways.

Grant funding

Firstly, we support the qualification system through a grant scheme for awarding bodies to provide financial support to increase the range of qualifications available through the medium of Welsh. Our overarching priority is to support qualifications designed for use by learners aged 14-19 on full-time funded programmes of learning and/or to be used on publicly funded apprenticeships.

For the financial year 2020-21, we allocated a total budget of £840k; £50k to funding reforms and £790k⁸ to funding the availability of qualifications in the medium of Welsh. We awarded funds of around £192k⁹ through our competitive grant funding to support the availability of a variety of general and vocational qualifications, both established and new, through the medium of Welsh. This has included supporting the translation of a number of qualifications within the engineering, agriculture and sports and public services sectors, in response to the findings of our programme of sector reviews. We continue to provide for Welsh for Adults qualifications (£176k in 2020-21) and contribute to WJEC's costs for providing bilingual qualifications (£356k in 2020-21)¹⁰.

To date the funding available through our grant scheme has been sufficient to meet all of the applications we have received. However, an increase in demand for Welsh-medium qualifications, and our requirement that all publicly funded qualifications for 14-16-year-olds will need to be available bilingually from 2027 are both likely to increase uptake of the scheme. This is likely to result in the need for additional grant funding. This is something that we will discuss with Welsh Government as demand increases over the coming years.

Guidance

We have also produced guidance to support awarding bodies with the development, delivery and awarding of their Welsh-medium qualifications¹¹, and are currently developing an interactive resource pack for awarding bodies on delivering the 'Active Offer,' emphasising the advantages of a more proactive approach in capturing

⁸ [annual-report-2020-21.pdf \(qualificationswales.org\)](#)

⁹ [annual-accounts-2020-21-eng.pdf \(qualificationswales.org\)](#)

¹⁰ [annual-accounts-2020-21-eng.pdf \(qualificationswales.org\)](#)

¹¹ <https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/publications/guidance-for-awarding-bodies---the-development-delivery-and-awarding-of-qualifications-through-the-medium-of-welsh/>

learner language preference and promoting and marketing the availability of Welsh medium qualifications to learners, schools, and colleges.

Feedback has been positive from all involved and, most significantly for learners, from awarding bodies, who feel that guidance and such resources will help them increase the availability and range of Welsh-medium qualifications.

We also believe that sharing best practice amongst awarding bodies will improve the quality of Welsh-medium and bilingual qualifications. This is why we established our Awarding Body Welsh language support group which meets once a term (2-3 times a year) and provides opportunities to discuss issues relating to Welsh medium and bilingual qualifications and assessment.

Challenges in the planning and development of Welsh-medium provision

Looking ahead to the introduction of the Welsh Education Bill, we outline below specific challenges for the qualification system, the regulatory and policy levers that are available to us as the independent regulator to address those, as well as some of the systemic challenges that will require collective solutions.

The commercial viability of qualifications and changing qualification landscape in England

One of the biggest risks to post-16 vocational qualifications in Wales relates to their viability. While we are working with awarding bodies to increase the availability of qualifications in Welsh, the reality of the qualifications market means that there are issues in terms of commercial viability due to the relatively small numbers of learners taking qualifications in some subject areas.

Historically, Wales has been dependent upon qualifications that have been developed on a UK wide basis, with the majority of learners taking the qualifications in England. As these UK-wide qualifications expire, or come up for renewal, the awarding bodies that offer them have to make commercial decisions as to whether it is viable for them to continue to offer the qualifications to a much-reduced market in Wales. Where the qualifications have forms of assessment that are more expensive for awarding bodies to develop and maintain such as tests and exams, then viability becomes even more of a challenge. And when you add to that a requirement or request that assessment be made available in more than one language, the initial calculations may not seem to add up.

Changes to qualifications policy in England will have an impact on the qualifications that are offered within the Welsh system. The introduction of new T level qualifications will mean that some existing level 3 qualifications will no longer be funded in England. An ongoing review of qualifications at level 2 and below may also lead to similar outcomes. We are liaising and working closely with awarding

bodies over the risks that these create. Some awarding bodies have committed to extending qualifications beyond the date that they are defunded in England. This provides an opportunity for us to work with those awarding bodies to get replacement, modern, qualifications in place to meet the needs of learners in Wales.

We have a wider role than other qualifications regulators across the UK in that, as well as regulating awarding bodies that offer qualifications in Wales, we are also responsible for ensuring that the right range of qualifications is available for young people in the first place. If we find that the right range is not available, we can enter into arrangements with awarding bodies to develop new qualifications through contractual arrangements or otherwise.

Commissioning the development of new qualifications has proven to be a good option for occupations where there are viable learner numbers if a single awarding body is chosen. It has also meant that we can build in a requirement for assessment to be made available in Welsh and English at the same time, promoting the bilingual offer.

We are aware of some calls for us to commission a full range of made-for-Wales qualifications to meet the needs of all post-16 learners in Wales. While we have made good progress in the larger, more viable areas such as Health and Social Care, Childcare, Construction and Building Services and Engineering, this is unlikely to be the solution for all occupational areas, particularly those with relatively low numbers of learners – at least without significant financial subsidy. It's also a time-consuming exercise, once periods of consultation, procurement, development and change management are taken into account.

As the regulator, our role is to step in to address market failure – in an ideal world, the needs of the market would be met directly by the suppliers (in this case awarding bodies).

So, for other occupations where viability issues remain, we need to look at the challenge in a different way. By building and maintaining good relationships with the development arms of awarding bodies active in Wales, we are working to anticipate and address any potential gaps in the qualification offer. We are encouraging awarding bodies to consider a range of options, including:

- adapting their international qualifications offer;
- updating and then continuing existing qualifications, and
- rationalising the number of optional units to make qualifications more viable.

So whether qualifications are made-for-Wales, or adapted for Wales, or simply adopted in Wales, there are generally ways of addressing the issue of viability, but it will take a collaborative and concerted effort to do so.

Should there be a change in expectations in terms of our role as a regulator moving forward, with an increased focus and emphasis on micro-managing the qualifications market in Wales, this will require additional funding and resource.

Awarding Body Workforce

Cymraeg 2050 states that an increase in the number of assessors, moderators and verifiers who can work through the medium of Welsh will be critical in ensuring that a range of Welsh-medium qualifications, with clear progression pathways, are available to learners.

Our Choice for All strategy also recognises this as a challenge, and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's Action Plan acknowledges that *'if there are no suitably qualified assessors, then the system is unlikely to deliver the growth envisaged.'*

While some awarding bodies are trying to address this challenge, the availability of Welsh-medium assessors and verifiers remains a significant barrier for awarding bodies in increasing the number of Welsh-medium qualifications. This real or perceived lack of appropriate and proficient assessors and verifiers has often led to awarding bodies choosing not to make their qualifications available through the medium of Welsh.

To address this challenge, and over the period of our 5-year strategy, we are exploring ways to support awarding bodies to identify Welsh language skills among assessors and verifiers, including working with partners such as the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol ("the Coleg") and the National Centre for Learning Welsh in order to identify current capacity and develop skills for the future.

Aligning future Welsh-medium post-16 provision with the availability of qualifications through the medium of Welsh

The logical conclusion in terms of the introduction of a Welsh Language Education Bill, and the successful delivery of the WESPs over the next 10 years is that more learners will be leaving statutory education and entering the post-16 sectors with Welsh language skills. This, in turn, increases the potential and the requirement for developing Welsh-medium post-16 provision.

Learners who attend further education colleges are more likely to stay in their local communities¹² so supporting their linguistic progression through the availability of bilingual vocational qualifications is important. This will support the vision of a bilingual workforce, ready to work bilingually and contribute to the national target to:

¹² [towardscymraeg2050.pdf \(colegcymraeg.ac.uk\)](https://towardscymraeg2050.pdf (colegcymraeg.ac.uk))

Develop post-compulsory education provision which increases rates of progression and supports everyone, whatever their command of the language, to develop Welsh language skills for use socially and in the workplace.¹³

Recognising the importance of improving planning and development of Welsh-medium provision in the post-16 sector, we hope to see a strengthening of this area within the WESPs to be implemented during the 2022-2032 period. This will help incentivise and facilitate collaboration between providers across the post-16 sector, and in turn, begin to address the issue of viability of qualifications.

When giving evidence to the CYPE Committee as part of their Stage 1 consideration of the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill¹⁴, the Minister for Education and Welsh language confirmed that it was not the Government's ambition "just to meet the current demand." He said that he wanted to "push" the level of provision "more broadly and encourage more and more people within the system to take advantage of it ...". He also highlighted that one of the new priorities within the Cymraeg 2050 work is to further develop the Welsh medium offer in post 16 education, and expressed his expectation that:

"... responsibilities for taking forward areas of work will be determined reflecting the remit and respective expertise of each organisation to avoid duplication of effort and maximise the impact of interventions. It is envisaged that strategic planning documents will be aligned where appropriate and robust arrangements should be put in place to measure the impact of interventions on increasing opportunities to learn through the medium of Welsh across the tertiary education sector."

Effective strategic working across the education sector will be crucial in delivering the targets set out in the WESPs and, beyond those, in achieving the outcomes of Cymraeg 2050. This is particularly true of the post-16 sector.

It is for that reason that we are in the process of establishing a Choice for All Stakeholder Group. This group will comprise of representatives from key stakeholders including further education colleges to work together to consider ways of increasing the availability of qualifications through the medium of Welsh.

Looking at the draft WESPs and their reporting under Outcome 4 (More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh)¹⁵, we have found a lot of good data and analysis of current

¹³ [Cymraeg 2050: Welsh language strategy | GOV.WALES](#)

¹⁴ <https://senedd.wales/media/aiypcy15/cr-ld14996-e.pdf>

¹⁵ [Guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans \(gov.wales\)](#)

provision and useful intelligence on future demand for post-16 Welsh language qualifications.

Using this information, and working collaboratively and strategically with stakeholders, as well as key partners like the Coleg and the soon-to-be established Tertiary Education and Research Commission, will allow us to collectively plan and align both future provision and qualifications for post-16 learners. To that end, we would welcome the addition of Qualifications Wales within Appendix 3 of the statutory guidance issued under section 87(5) of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013¹⁶, which lists a wide range of organisations and how they can help local authorities when implementing their WESPs.

In establishing a single body with responsibility across the tertiary education sector, the Commission will need to develop effective and meaningful relationships across the sector. The sharing of information between the Commission and ourselves will also be crucial if we are to exercise our respective statutory functions effectively. We look forward to developing a positive working relationship with the new Commission and will seek to formalise that relationship in due course.

Similarly, and as mentioned above, we already work closely with the Coleg on the planning and development of Welsh-medium qualifications and increasing linguistic progression between statutory and further education and apprenticeships. We see the Coleg as a key strategic partner and are actively looking at ways to strengthen this positive working relationship, and work more collaboratively to accomplish mutually beneficial goals.

Retaining learners in Welsh-medium education

There are key points where we see numbers of learners moving from Welsh medium education; transition points between key stages 2 and 3¹⁷, year 9, and when they move into post-16 provision. Both the simplification of how schools are categorised according to their Welsh language provision in order to provide clarity about the expected linguistic progress and outcomes for pupils according to the medium of school teaching, as well as encouraging and supporting schools to increase their provision of Welsh, will in our view, go a long way to improving continuity rates.

We believe that qualifications, and the qualification system also has a significant role to play in terms of promoting learner confidence and parental reassurance, and subsequently retaining learners in Welsh-medium education as they progress.

¹⁶ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-01/guidance-on-welsh-in-education-strategic-plans.pdf>

¹⁷ [Evaluation of the Welsh-medium education strategy - Final report \(gov.wales\)](#) (2016)

Estyn in their 2017 report 'Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching and learning in further education'¹⁸, noted:

The majority of learners who follow their courses through the medium of Welsh or bilingually complete their assignments and final assessments through the medium of English. The lack of examinations and final assessments through the medium of Welsh has the potential for a detrimental effect on the status of Welsh-medium provision.

There are a range of interconnected reasons for this, including family circumstances, cost of school transport and a lack of awareness of Welsh-medium qualifications and assessment options.

Increasing the availability of Welsh-medium qualifications and improving their promotion and advertising will play an important part in allowing learners to complete qualifications and assessments in their language of choice, and in turn, continuing their education through the medium of Welsh.

Our decision to ensure that all publicly funded qualifications for 14-16-year-olds are available in both Welsh and English by 2027 is a significant one in that regard. This will not only lead to a significantly more equitable balance of Welsh and English medium provision than is currently the case but will also help to contribute to the wider national objective. To provide some context to the Committee's inquiry, the number of qualifications currently available to 14-16-year-olds through the medium of Welsh is 562; this equates to around 48% of the qualification offer.

Similarly, our decision to create multiple Welsh language qualifications for learners in English medium settings, is intended to help address the issue of maintaining and recognising learners' language skills acquired from age 3 to 16 by offering suitable linguistic challenge and supporting them to make the best progress they can along the Welsh language continuum.

We know that for centres and learners to feel empowered and encouraged to register for qualifications in Welsh, information needs to be available and easily accessible, as well as proactively disseminated. This is why we are currently exploring how best to strengthen our Welsh-medium data requirements, including recording of the language preference of each learner at the point of registration and the language medium in which the qualification was completed and our requirements around promoting and advertising the availability of Welsh-medium and bilingual qualifications.

Ensuring a sufficient education workforce to deliver Welsh-medium provision

¹⁸<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/www.estyn.gov.wales/files/documents/Bilingual%20Teaching%20in%20FE.pdf>

The success of the statutory sector, particularly in the context of the new arrangements for categorising schools according to the amount of Welsh-medium provision, and the development of new, 10-year WESPs, will be dependent on meeting the challenge of increasing the number of teachers and support workers able to work through the medium of Welsh and teach Welsh.

A July 2020 report on the teacher labour market found shortages in Welsh along with other subjects¹⁹. Additionally, Estyn has previously found that Welsh medium schools face greater recruitment difficulties and have difficulty locating Welsh-speaking supply staff²⁰. The Education Workforce Council's statistics also show that the number of registered teachers able to speak Welsh (33.5% in 2021) or work through the medium of Welsh (27% in 2021) has remained fairly static over recent years²¹.

The Welsh Government also acknowledged that achieving the targets for the education workforce has been challenging. According to their Cymraeg 2050: work programme 2021-2026²², there were 2,789 Welsh-medium primary teachers in the 2019 to 2020 academic year compared to the target in Cymraeg 2050 for 2021 of 3,100, a deficit of 311 (10.0%). In 2019 to 2020 there were 2,339 secondary teachers teaching in Welsh compared to the target of 2,800 for 2021, a deficit of 500 (16.5%).

Improving Welsh-medium provision in the post-compulsory education and training sector will help contribute to increasing the numbers of teachers able to speak Welsh or work through the medium of Welsh. Similarly, securing enough staff who can deliver post-16 programmes of study, including the qualifications themselves, through the medium of Welsh or bilingually is a challenge that will need to be met if the targets and outcomes of Cymraeg 2050 are to be achieved.

The Welsh Government has previously identified Welsh as a priority subject, due to the increased demand for Welsh-medium school education and that Welsh as a subject would be more prominent within the new school curriculum. Its aim was to increase the number of Welsh A-level students to more than a thousand by 2021, in order to increase the number that go on to study Welsh at university and train to become teachers. It is therefore a concern to see a reduction in entries into the two Welsh AS and A-level qualifications for the summer 2022 examination series²³. The table below shows the numbers of examination entries for 2022 compared to the numbers from 2019.

¹⁹ National Foundation for Educational Research, Teacher labour market in Wales annual report 2020, July 2020

²⁰ Estyn, Effective management of school workforce attendance in primary schools, January 2017

²¹ Education Workforce Council for Wales, Annual education workforce statistics for Wales, September 2021

²² <https://gov.wales/cymraeg-2050-work-programme-2021-2026-html>

²³ [Qualifications Wales / Provisional Entries for Summer 2022: GCSEs, AS, A levels and Skills Challenge Certificate for Wales](#) - Entry statistics tables 5 and 6

	2019	2022
AS Welsh first language entries	260	195
A level Welsh first language entries	280	235
AS Welsh second language entries	350	300
A level Welsh second language entries	250	230

Reversing this trend presents a collective challenge to us all working within the education system in Wales.

The work that the Coleg is undertaking to strengthen staffing capacity through its Towards Cymraeg 2050 Action Plan, the National Centre for Learning Welsh's recent commitment to provide Welsh language learning to teaching staff^{24 25} and the Welsh Government's Welsh in Education Workforce Plan will be key strategic drivers in addressing this challenge.

In terms of the latter, we welcome its publication and look forward to working with partners across the education sector to develop any new regulated qualifications.

²⁴ [A rapid review of the National Centre for Learning Welsh \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

²⁵ [Response to the recommendations of the rapid review of the National Centre for Learning Welsh \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)