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sent via e-mail

Buffy Williams MS
Chair of Children, Young People and Education Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

28 November 2025

Dear Buffy

Made for Wales GCSE Geography

Thank you for your letter dated 20th October 2025 about the Made for Wales GCSE Geography.

You noted that you had heard concerns about WJEC's new Made for Wales GCSE Geography which has started to be taught in schools this academic year. In particular, you had heard concerns that the qualification no longer includes plate tectonics or ecosystems in its content.

WJEC developed the qualification to meet the requirements of Qualifications Wales' Approval Criteria. We worked with a range of stakeholders in the development of our qualification, ensuring that the qualification supports the Curriculum for Wales and offers learners a relevant learning experience as well as meeting the requirements of the Approval Criteria. In addition to working with external writers and reviewers, we established a Qualification Development Advisory Group which consisted primarily of subject teacher and we engaged with this group at key stages during the development process to inform our design.

During the development of the qualification, we were mindful of the significant manageability of content concerns raised by teachers across Wales during the lifetime of the legacy qualification and were careful not to overload the qualification. We were also conscious that we needed to allow sufficient time to teach the skills for conducting a high-quality fieldwork investigation and complete one piece of fieldwork in depth.

In the context of the above, there were therefore some difficult decisions to be made about the content that should be included in the new qualification.

The Approval Criteria do not require either tectonics or ecosystems to be included in the subject content, but require coverage of broad concepts such as place, diversity and environment.



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Although plate tectonics is included in our legacy GCSE Geography, it is an optional topic and approximately half of schools in Wales currently do not select it. We understand from discussions with teachers that both plate tectonics and ecosystems are currently taught in the earlier years of secondary school, and in many cases also at primary school. Tectonics is then covered in great depth in the current WJEC AS Level, and again in the A2 course, and ecosystems are in two from four optional themes in A2 Unit 4. We therefore felt that there was more value in covering different content in the GCSE as opposed to teaching the same topics throughout a learner's educational journey to provide greater breadth. The AS and A level accounts for the fact that not all learners will have studied tectonics at GCSE and therefore its removal from the new GCSE does not have a negative impact on progression.

Plate tectonics and to a lesser extent ecosystems do not give the same fieldwork opportunities as the topics included in the new qualification. We have included topics such as Rivers and Coasts for example, that lend themselves to good quality physical fieldwork. In discussion with stakeholders, we were very keen to include both migration and in-depth coverage of climate change and its causes, impacts and management, as these are topics of great relevance to our learners. The final content was selected to give a broad and balanced coverage of key human and physical geography topics that reflected the aims of the Approval Criteria and relevant Statements of What Matter.

We believe the new Made for Wales GCSE Geography is a stimulating combination of key 'traditional' topics such as rivers, coast, settlement and development, and key 'current' topics such as migration, inequality, climate change, and extreme weather and climate. This will serve learners well in terms of a rich and broad learning experience in line with the ethos of the Curriculum for Wales and will provide a solid foundation to further progression in the subject.

In terms of the development of GCSE Natural History, WJEC can only develop Made for Wales GCSEs in subjects specified by Qualifications Wales.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ian Morgan'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'I' and 'M'.

Ian Morgan
Chief Executive

cc Lynne Neagle, MS, Cabinet Secretary for Education