



Buffy Williams MS
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee

14 January 2026

Dear Buffy

Thank you for the opportunity to review our Annual Report for 2024 – 2025 in the Committee scrutiny session in December. We welcome the opportunity for transparency in our work and value all opportunities to engage with the Committee both formally and informally. We would like to provide some further information in relation to points raised at the scrutiny session.

Qualifications data

In the scrutiny session some detailed information was requested about the number and category of qualifications currently available on publicly funded courses in Wales and listed as either 'Approved', i.e. developed to meet design parameters set by us and effectively 'made-for-Wales', or 'Designated'. i.e. usually developed to meet requirements in England but available more widely.

We hope that the following information meets the request for further information (data as at 5/1/2026):

Number of recognised awarding bodies	85
Total number of qualifications listed on QiW (Approved, Designated and Other)	8626
Number of Approved qualifications	195
Number of Approved qualifications anticipated at the end of this academic year (including those for first teaching in September 2027)	372
Number of Designated qualifications for new learners	2631*

*For context, there were 6969 Designated qualifications as at 31/8/2018. The number of Designated qualifications has declined over time as Approved qualifications have replaced them (often on a non-linear basis i.e. a small suite of Approved qualifications can replace a large number of Designated qualifications), also there has been a natural reduction in the number of Designated qualifications over time as redundant or moribund qualifications have been cleansed from the market.

Qualifications Wales

Q2 Building, Pencarn Lane
Imperial Park,
Newport
NP10 8AR
☎ 01633 373 222



www.qualifications.wales

Cymwysterau Cymru

Adeilad Q2, Lôn Pencarn
Parc Imperial,
Casnewydd
NP10 8AR
☎ 01633 373 222

VCSE Nature Restoration and GCSE Natural History

During the scrutiny session there was a specific request for more information in relation to the new GCSE in Natural History which is being developed in England. In our response we highlighted the ongoing development of a VCSE in Nature Restoration. We would like to take this opportunity to provide more information to the Committee about the development of the VCSE in Nature Restoration here in Wales as well as developments in England.

In Wales, we are already developing a VCSE in Nature Restoration, which we expect to be available for first teaching from September 2027. This aims to provide learners with an engaging and practical introduction to the principles and practices of restoring nature. This includes sustainable working practices in either or both marine and terrestrial environments. We have not required any specific content as part of the Approval Criteria but expect to see content set out in draft specification that will be provided to us for scrutiny as part of our approvals process. The Agored Cymru, who are currently the only awarding body developing the VCSE, is required to engage with schools and relevant stakeholders in the development of content.

At least 30% of the qualification's content and final grade must be assessed externally (set and marked by the awarding body) and at least 30% of the content and final grade must be assessed through practical skills. The VCSE will be graded: Level 1 Pass, Level 1 Merit, Level 2 Pass, Level 2 Merit, Level 2 Distinction, or Level 2 Distinction*.

We are undertaking annual surveys with schools to understand their likely uptake of new qualifications including this VCSE.

In June 2020, the awarding body OCR launched a consultation in response to the call for developing a GCSE in Natural History for England. The consultation was to help shape early thinking about what a GCSE in Natural History might look like. OCR sought views on the purpose of Natural History and explored what key themes such as conservation, the early world, and the study of flora and fauna should be included in a qualification.

There was confirmation in March 2025 that development of GCSE Natural History could move ahead. OCR are the only awarding body currently taking this forward and are providing updates here: [GCSE Natural History Hub](#). DfE Westminster will need to consult on the proposed content for GCSE Natural History, no date for this has been set yet. Ofqual will then need consult on design parameters for the new GCSE, so it will be some time before it is introduced in England.

The qualification content is expected to broadly focus on British wildlife, ecosystems, as well as global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity, and sustainability. The assessment model is expected to include a mix of written exams and practical fieldwork assessments, reflecting the subject's emphasis on both theoretical understanding and hands-on engagement with nature.

We hope that the information within this letter is useful and meets the needs of the Committee. However, please let us know if you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely



Paul Bevan
Chair



Philip Blaker
Chief Executive