

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our
ref:LFHL131214

Ann Jones AM
Chair
Children, Young People and Education
Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

18 December 2014

Dear Ann,

Children, Young People and Education Committee – Stage 1 Scrutiny of the Qualifications Wales Bill

Following my attendance at the Children, Young People and Education Committee on 11 December, I agreed to provide some further information detailing the process by which the WJEC was selected to deliver the Welsh Baccalaureate in response to the following question.

Why new legislation was needed in this area if the Minister had previously taken a decision to select a single provider for a particular qualification.

When the original development of the Welsh Baccalaureate was proposed in 2001, the Welsh Government issued an invitation for expressions of interest to develop the specification, under powers to take forward work to promote the education of the people of Wales and incur expenditure that were set out at the time in sections 40 and 85 of the Government of Wales Act 1998. This work was not directly connected with the regulatory functions of the regulatory body for qualifications in Wales at the time which was ACCAC – the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales. Only WJEC expressed an interest and subsequently worked with the Welsh Government to develop and deliver the specification.

For the revised Welsh Baccalaureate which will be taught in schools from September 2015, the Welsh Government has worked only with WJEC. The Review of Qualifications had recommended that development of a revised Welsh Baccalaureate “should build on the widely respected strengths of the current model and on the work already invested by providers.” (Recommendation 9) and that “Detailed development, delivery and support of the Welsh Baccalaureate should remain the responsibility of WJEC in the short term ...”

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(recommendation 12) before transferring to Qualifications Wales when it is fully established. Involving other awarding bodies at this stage would have created potential instabilities for learners, learning providers and the awarding bodies themselves while the qualifications system in Wales was, itself, under development. If Qualifications Wales wishes to restrict the qualification when it is next reviewed, it will need to do so in an open, fair and transparent way, in accordance with its published scheme.

In developing legislation for a new statutory body, Qualifications Wales, there has been a desire to clearly and transparently set out the functions of the body. The ability to restrict the number of forms of a qualification (including to only one form) and to commission, through a competitive process, an awarding body to develop such a restricted qualification will enable Qualifications Wales to deliver its principal aims and to meet the needs of learners in Wales.

I trust that this information is helpful to Committee Members.

Yours sincerely

Handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Best Regards" followed by "Huw".

Huw Lewis AC / AM

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Minister for Education and Skills