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Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

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

3 February 2015

Dear Ann,

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

Thank you for your letter of 27 January, seeking further information on the provisions of qualifications in advance of my second appearance before the Committee on 5 February. For ease of reference, I have set out my response underneath each of the points that Members are seeking further information on.

Confirmation that for the qualifications listed on the Qualified for Life website which are being introduced in either a new or revised form in two tranches:

- **all of the GCSEs and A/AS levels listed, will be the only specifications available to the maintained sector in Wales and will be delivered by the WJEC;**
- **for all other subjects, centres will be free to choose from a range of AS and A level specifications from any of the awarding organisations that offer general qualifications.**

I can confirm that, for all GCSEs, AS and A level qualifications for which new or revised specifications are being developed, or are proposed, for first teaching from September 2015, September 2016 or September 2017, only WJEC has chosen to develop specifications that will meet Welsh Government requirements. Consequently, once these revised qualifications have been introduced for first teaching, only WJEC's specifications in those subjects will be approved for use in the maintained sector in Wales.

I should add that the list of qualifications to be revised for teaching from September 2016 has recently been amended. AS and A level qualifications in Mathematics, Further Mathematics and Design and Technology, together with GCSE Design and Technology will now be implemented from 2017, rather than 2016. This is in line with decisions for these subjects in England.

Confirmation of what discussions you have had with awarding bodies (other than the WJEC) about which less common general qualifications they might be able to provide should a need in Wales arise.

It is our intention that, where other awarding organisations continue to offer GCSEs, AS and A level qualifications in subjects where no specific Welsh Government requirements need to be met, centres in Wales will be free to offer them, providing that the qualifications meet the respective regulatory arrangements.

In November 2014, awarding bodies offering GCSEs and A levels for Wales in less common general qualifications received a written request from my officials seeking confirmation as to whether they would, in principle, wish to continue offering GCSEs and A levels where there were no specific qualification principles. We are in dialogue with awarding bodies and to date OCR, who award the majority of minority language qualifications, have confirmed that, in principle, they are content to continue to offer these in Wales.

Confirmation of what communications took place over asking the awarding bodies if they would want to provide those GCSEs and A Levels that have subsequently been announced only the WJEC would provide, including the response to this from those awarding bodies.

Between September 2013 and July 2014 several letters and emails were exchanged between officials and those awarding bodies who currently offer GCSEs and A levels to gauge their interest in offering new GCSEs and A levels in Wales. In addition, those awarding bodies were invited to a seminar in October 2013 at which the Welsh Government's plans for GCSEs and A levels were discussed.

For each phase of development, all awarding bodies currently offering GCSEs and A levels were invited to express an interest in collaborating to produce specifications to meet the Welsh Government's design principles. To this end, letters were sent in February 2014 (for September 2015 qualifications) and May 2014 (for September 2016 and 2017 qualifications) and written responses received.

This approach was taken because the current legislative context does not explicitly provide either for a restriction to be placed on the number of accredited qualifications or for a competitive process to take place. In undertaking to engage with a collaborative process of this nature, awarding bodies would not have been able to develop their own unique qualifications – and in many cases they would have been competing for what might have been a small share of the Welsh market. For each phase, no awarding bodies other than WJEC expressed such an interest.

I trust that this information is helpful to Committee Members.

Best Regards
Huw

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