

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref :
Ein cyf/Our ref: MA-P/KW/1239/18

Lynne Neagle AM
Chair of Children, Young People and Education Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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13 April 2018

Dear Lynne,

Thank you for your letter of 20 March which raises a number of questions about the provision of text books and learning resources for reformed general qualifications.

May I begin by restating that I am absolutely committed to doing all that I can to ensure that appropriate resources are available to our practitioners and learners, in both Welsh and English and at the same time.

As the regulator, Qualifications Wales is responsible for deciding whether there are sufficient resources available to support the delivery of a qualification but it does not require that those resources are in a specific format. Where there are sample assessment materials, a teacher's guide and additional digital resources available then Qualifications Wales advise me that it may conclude that a textbook is not essential for a new qualification.

WJEC is not required to make sure that textbooks and learning resources are available to support the teaching and learning of its qualifications. Textbooks are produced by commercial publishers that are separate to awarding bodies. WJEC itself is not a publisher of textbooks however publishers do regularly seek WJEC's endorsement of their textbooks. Unfortunately the market for Welsh medium textbooks is limited and often not perceived by them to be commercially viable. Welsh Government has provided WJEC with grant funding to ensure that Welsh versions of textbooks are available.

In the case of subjects where textbooks were not produced in either Welsh or English for the reformed qualifications, WJEC have produced a range of bilingual digital materials which are available free of charge on the resources section of the WJEC's website. Welsh Government has also commissioned additional bilingual and Welsh-medium resources and

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

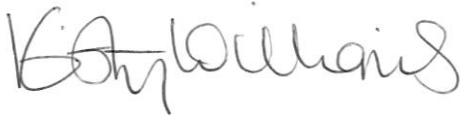
these are available free of charge from the Hwb website. I do appreciate that while textbooks may not be a necessity, learners and teachers feel that they are a valuable resource and have been concerned when they are not available for all subjects or have been delayed.

I have been deeply concerned to hear about delays in the publication of some textbooks, particularly Welsh language versions. As these are produced commercially by specialist educational publishers the Welsh Government has no direct influence over the publication timetables. However, additional funding has been provided to WJEC to enable them to improve the procedures and timescales between Welsh and English versions of textbooks. As a result we have seen instances of the timescales being reduced. For example a GCSE Geography textbook was published within 4 months of the English version being available. Although improvements have been made I want to assure you that I intend to see that every effort is made to improve the situation. This is why I have established a Stakeholder Group to look in detail at the issues, with the aim of advising me on how a new infrastructure can be developed to produce resources to support the new curriculum and qualifications in Wales.

I completely understand that there are concerns about the potential impact on learners of the delays to some text books being made available. As regulator Qualifications Wales is responsible for ensuring that standards are maintained and that learners are not unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged because they are in the first cohort to sit a new qualification.

I hope you find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', written in a cursive style.

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