



Mr D Rowlands
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff, CF99 1NA.

18 July 2018

Dear Mr Rowlands

**Petition P-05-783 Ensuring Equality of Curriculum for Welsh Medium Schools
e.g. GCSE Psychology**

Thank you for your letter of 20 June regarding the above petition. You asked us to respond with:

- an update on the current position;
- information about how many GCSE and A level subjects are not available through the medium of Welsh;
- details of the support available to exam boards to encourage them to provide exam papers and supporting materials through the medium of Welsh.

Our answer below deals with each of these points in turn.

Update on current position

Qualifications Wales (we), are committed to the Welsh language and Welsh medium education. As stated in the Qualifications Wales Act 2015¹, in performing our functions we must act in a way that ensures qualifications, and the Welsh qualifications system, are effective for meeting the reasonable needs of learners in Wales. This includes promoting

¹ The Qualifications Wales Act 2015 can be found, [here](#)



and facilitating the use of the Welsh language, including through the availability of assessment through the medium of Welsh. Both our General Qualifications and Vocational Qualifications Strategies clearly state our aims to increase the availability and use of Welsh and bilingual assessments².

Our policy³ for Welsh-medium and bilingual qualifications sets out our requirements and expectations on awarding bodies. We make it clear that we require GCSEs and A levels that have been designed for Wales to be available in both English and Welsh. This is the case for all the GCSEs and A levels offered by WJEC and approved by us.

Our aim is to secure availability of the widest possible range of GCSEs and A levels for learners in Wales. However, there are some subjects for which the number of learners in Wales is too low to make it viable for any awarding body to develop qualifications for award only in Wales. In some of these subjects, GCSEs and A levels have been reformed for England, so we took the decision to 'designate'⁴ these qualifications for use on publicly-funded learning programmes in Wales. Some designated GCSEs and A levels are available bilingually whilst others are only available in English. A full list of designated GCSEs and A levels can be found on our website⁵.

To help students, schools and colleges to make informed choices about qualifications, we have required awarding bodies to publish up front their policy on the availability of designated GCSEs and A levels through the medium of Welsh. We have also published this information on our website⁶.

In developing our policy, we looked carefully at the option of requiring all designated qualifications to be available in Welsh. However, it became clear that such an approach would have led to a significant reduction in the breadth of qualifications that would be available for learners in Wales. We also reviewed past take-up of subjects through the medium of Welsh. Our analysis suggested that all subjects which had historically been sat through the medium of Welsh would continue to be offered bilingually.

In the case of GCSE Psychology, WJEC took the decision not to develop a reformed qualification neither for England nor Wales. Initially, we expected that the demand for the Welsh medium assessment of GCSE Psychology would be met by one of the other awarding bodies developing reformed qualifications for England. When it became apparent that this was unlikely, we discussed with awarding bodies what steps could be taken to secure the provision of the subject through the medium of Welsh. However, we were unable to secure a workable solution. We wrote to schools on 12 March 2018 to explain the decision⁷.

² Our General Qualifications Strategy is on our website, [here](#).

Our Vocational Qualifications Strategy is on our website, [here](#)

³ Our Regulatory Welsh-medium and Bilingual Qualifications Policy is on our website, [here](#)

⁴ Designation means a qualification is eligible for public funding in Wales. Only awarding bodies that are recognised by Qualifications Wales can apply for designation of qualifications.

⁵ A list of all the GCSEs and A levels that have been designated is on our website, [here](#)

⁶ A list of all the GCSEs and A levels that have been designated is on our website, [here](#)

⁷ The letter that we sent to schools can be found on our website, [here](#)

In exercising our regulatory functions, the Qualifications Wales Act 2015 requires us to carry out our activities in a way that is transparent, proportionate, and reasonable. In line with the Act, we considered the only other two actions that were available to us to secure equal availability of English and Welsh-medium provision.

- 1) To remove designation (i.e. to remove eligibility for public funding). The impact of this action would be that GCSE Psychology, and other low take up subjects (see list of subjects on page 3), would no longer be available to any learners accessing publicly funded learning in Wales;
- 2) To require all awarding bodies to offer all their GCSEs and A levels through the medium of Welsh. From the evidence gathered, this action could lead to awarding bodies deciding not to offer any of their qualifications in Wales.

Having considered both options in detail, we decided not to pursue either of them as we do not feel that they are proportionate or reasonable. They would reduce the range of GCSE and A level subjects available in Wales, which would not be in the best interest of learners in Wales.

It is worth noting that when making any future changes to qualifications, for example to support the new Curriculum for Wales, we will plan for equal availability of Welsh and English-medium provision from the outset. In the meantime, we continue to look for opportunities to increase availability wherever we can. We are also in the process of reviewing our policy during 2018-9 and have held preliminary discussions with schools, colleges, awarding bodies and several organisations involved in Welsh-medium education to inform our approach.

Information about how many GCSE and A level subjects are not available through the medium of Welsh

WJEC offers all its GCSEs and A levels through the medium of Welsh, including those that have been developed for England within its Eduqas⁸ branded provision.

The tables below list the GCSEs and A levels that we have designated as eligible for public funding on learning programmes in Wales, which are only available through the medium of English. They also include the number of learners that were entered for each of these subjects in 2017⁹.

The only demand for Welsh medium assessments for these GCSEs and A levels since 2013 was for GCSE Psychology (see pages 1 and 2 for the details about this subject).

⁸ Eduqas is a part of WJEC and offers Ofqual reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels to secondary schools and colleges in England. These qualifications have been designated by Qualifications Wales for use in Wales.

⁹ The numbers have been rounded to the nearest 5. Figures less than 5 but greater than 0 are represented by *

Designated GCSEs	First teaching from	No of learners in Wales entered in 2017
Classical Greek	2016	10
Citizenship Studies	2016	10
Dance	2016	25
Ancient History	2017	*
Arabic	2017	175
Astronomy	2017	45
Bengali	2017	25
Chinese	2017	90
Classical Civilisation	2017	60
Economics	2017	80
Engineering	2017	190
Italian	2017	80
Japanese	2017	5
Modern Greek	2017	5
Psychology	2017	595
Hebrew	2017	0
Polish	2017	185
Punjabi	2017	10
Russian	2017	20
Statistics	2017	195
Urdu	2017	15

Designated AS levels	First teaching from	No of learners in Wales entered in 2017
Classical Greek	2016	0
Dance	2016	*
Latin	2016	10
Accounting	2017	125
Ancient History	2017	35
Chinese	2017	60
Classic Civilisation	2017	55
Environmental science	2017	*
Italian	2017	10
Philosophy	2017	5
Russian	2017	*
Statistics	2017	0

Designated A levels	First teaching from	No of learners in Wales entered in 2017
Classical Greek	2016	*
Dance	2016	15
Latin	2016	10
Accounting	2017	60
Chinese	2017	130
Classic Civilisation	2017	45
Environmental science	2017	*
History of Art	2017	*
Italian	2017	5
Philosophy	2017	20
Russian	2017	15
Statistics	2017	0

Details of the support available to exam boards to encourage them to provide exam papers and supporting materials through the medium of Welsh.

Our primary role is to regulate awarding bodies and their qualifications. The key resources that we look at when we approve qualifications are the specifications and the sample assessment materials (SAMs). These are the resources that ensure that teachers and students know what is expected of them when they sit their exams.

We currently make grants available to awarding bodies to help them meet the cost of offering qualifications bilingually. For example, we have supported WJEC in the delivery of 30 A levels and 50 GCSEs this year alone, which has included the translation and printing of exam papers.

Supporting materials are, in the main, made available through commercial publishers, and they sit beyond our regulatory powers; therefore, we do not have direct control over what is made available for teaching and learning purposes through the medium of English or Welsh. We do, however, have an active interest in this area as we see that it is important to the question of confidence in the qualifications and education system. For example, for the new GCSEs and A levels approved by us, we brought WJEC, Welsh Government, the Regional Education Consortia and Estyn together to agree what additional resources would be required to support each new specification and who would be best placed to produce them.

We used our grant funding to commission or accelerate the production of resources related to specific aspects of new specifications and to fill gaps that would otherwise not be addressed in time. For example, for AS and A level modern foreign languages we supported the production of the resources that were needed for the new set texts and films. For GCSE, AS and A level Media Studies, we supported the production of resources that were needed for the broader range of media that must now be studied, including films, magazines and

news. An overview of the supporting materials that have been produced bilingually to support teachers to deliver the new GCSEs and A levels are on our website¹⁰.

As part of our work on increasing the availability of Welsh-medium qualifications in Wales, we have established an awarding body group to help us identify potential barriers to offering more, good quality Welsh and bilingual qualifications. For example, in response to awarding bodies telling us that they find it a challenge to find individuals with the necessary assessment, subject, and Welsh language skills, we have set up a LinkedIn group for them to access and share this limited pool of resources.

We also liaise with key stakeholders such as schools, colleges, CDAG, UCAC, ColegauCymru and Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to support us and awarding bodies in identifying areas of current and future demand. We will also use this information to improve how we target and prioritise our grants in future years.

The reform of qualifications offers an opportunity to find future solutions to this issue. One of our priorities for any future reform is to ensure equal availability of Welsh and English-medium provision from the outset. For future reforms, we need to work together across the sector to plan from the outset what resources will be needed by when and who will produce them. A coordinated approach is needed from Welsh Government, us, awarding bodies, regional consortia and publishers to develop a strategy that will secure high quality and bilingual resources in a timely manner. We will continue to seek feedback and take any reasonable action to ensure that Wales-specific provision in both Welsh and English meet the needs of learners in Wales.

Yours sincerely



Philip Blaker
Chief Executive

¹⁰ An overview of the resources that have been developed to support the introduction of the new qualifications can be found on our website, [here](#)