



Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

26 June 2019

Dear Mrs Finch-Saunders,

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

Thank you for your most recent letter on this matter, in which you ask us for more information about how we will secure Welsh- and English- medium provision from the outset where qualifications to support the new curriculum are concerned.

We are currently working with a range of stakeholders to consider the potential implications for qualifications of the draft new curriculum for Wales. In doing so we are taking the opportunity to review the whole publicly funded qualification offer for 14 to 16-year-old students.

In the autumn, we will publicly consult on proposals for the future shape of the 14-16 qualification offer. The evidence from the consultation will inform our advice to Welsh Government on the changes that may be needed to the current qualification offer to support the successful implementation of the new curriculum.

This work offers an opportunity to consider from the outset how we can improve the availability of Welsh- and English-medium qualifications. We will be



considering the changes that may be required to the qualifications we approve and designate as being eligible for delivery on publicly funded courses. Approved qualifications are those for which we publish detailed design requirements. As is currently the case we will continue to require all approved qualifications to be made available simultaneously in Welsh and English, including all essential supporting teaching and learning resources.

We do not set the detailed design requirements for designated qualifications, but we do set the criteria we use to determine whether to designate a qualification as eligible for use on publicly funded courses. Currently, we use the same criteria for all designated qualifications, irrespective of the age of the learners they are aimed at. As part of this work, however, we will be considering whether to introduce more specific requirements for qualifications intended to be taken in schools by 16-year-olds. For example, we could require awarding bodies applying to have such a qualification designated to explain how it supports the Curriculum for Wales. Another change we could make would be to have presumption that designated qualifications used in schools will be offered in both Welsh and English.

As well as considering changes to our regulations, we will be looking at how we can make more targeted use of grant funding to secure a better range of bilingual provision. If we determine that the range of designated qualifications needed is a more coherent and streamlined offer than the current one, we can use our grant-funding to greater effect. A less crowded 14-16 qualification market may also support the viability of the remaining qualifications, which in turn could help reduce some of the barriers to securing bilingual provision. We have more work to do to explore the options available. In developing any additional requirements for designated qualifications, we will need to consider carefully the potential impact of any changes we propose. If we were to require designated provision to be offered bilingually, we would need to consider whether to allow any exceptions and in what circumstances. We would need to consider, for example, how we would treat qualifications taken by very low numbers of students and for which there is no evidence of demand for Welsh-medium assessment. This might be the case for some qualifications in community languages, or that cater to particular learning needs.

We have recently published a high-level timeline showing when any changes we propose to qualifications would be implemented¹. In setting the timeline, we have not made any assumption about the nature or the scale of any changes that may be required. The timeline reflects the key lessons learned from recent reforms to GCSEs and A levels, most notably the need for a substantial lead-in period between a qualification being made available and when it starts to be taught. This extended period is required, in part, to maximise the time available

for supplementary resources and training to be put in place and for teachers to benefit from them, before the first groups of students to take the new qualification start studying towards it.

I hope this letter helps to highlight and explain the opportunities that we see coming from the work to align qualifications to the new curriculum. If you have any further questions about our work in this area, then do please let us know.

Yours sincerely,



Ann Evans
Chair



Philip Blaker
Chief Executive

¹ <https://qualificationswales.org/english/qualifications/qualification-reform/curriculum-reform/new-curriculum-key-milestones/>