
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, we are independent of the Welsh Government.

Our principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000¹ and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, we must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by those receiving education and training in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers, including whether the financial resources made available to those providing education and training are managed efficiently and used in a way which provides value for money;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Our remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary, secondary, special and all age schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and initial teacher training.

We may give advice to the Welsh Parliament on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, we have set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

¹ This act to be replaced by the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 when the quality provisions are commenced.

This response is not confidential.

Response

Introduction

Overall, we support the proposals outlined in this consultation. We have noted a few aspects for Qualifications Wales to consider. These include:

- Consider ways in which the health and social care and childcare qualifications can enable pupils to develop their practical skills effectively.
- Consider offering both a VCSE and GCSE in engineering.
- Consider if the skills for life qualifications remain fit for purpose and to consider if the components are beneficial for all pupils.

Consultation questions

This survey contains a series of questions about National 14-16 Qualifications in built environment, engineering, and health and social care, and childcare.

You may answer questions on all subjects, or only those that are relevant to you.

Built Environment

- 1. In your view, should the new level 1/level 2 built environment qualification be developed as a VCSE or a GCSE?**

VCSE

GCSE

Either (no preference)

Not sure

Please explain your answer?

Given that a small number of pupils currently take the GCSE Built Environment qualification, we feel it would be more beneficial to offer this to a broader range of pupils by making it a vocational qualification. This offer should be as practical as possible and a vocational approach would provide the best opportunities for pupils to practise, develop and demonstrate their skills.

If the decision is made to move this to a VCSE it will be important to consider the impact it may have on the few that may have wanted to opt for the GCSE qualification.

- 2. Are there any additional impacts (either positive or negative) that we need to consider when deciding if the 14-16 built environment qualification should be a VCSE or a GCSE?**

Being a vocationally-based qualification it will be imperative that teachers who deliver the courses have the required technical knowledge and experience. The availability of resources will need to be closely linked to learning and assessment activities.

If offering as a VCSE the course content will need to be carefully developed to act as a precursor to progression routes in the learning area.

Engineering

3. In your view, should the new Level 1/level 2 Engineering qualification be developed as a VCSE or a GCSE?

VCSE

GCSE

Either (no preference)

Not sure

Please explain your answer?

We feel that it would be beneficial to make this qualification available as a GCSE and VCSE. The GCSE in Engineering has been welcomed by many schools and pupils, but we feel that not having a VCSE may disadvantage a minority of learners who previously would have studied the vocational engineering qualification.

We also need to be careful with the suggestion of changing the VCSE to manufacturing to make a clear distinction between both qualifications. By calling one qualification 'engineering' and another 'manufacturing' may lead to confusion if progressing into Further Education or apprenticeships as the overarching term used is engineering and manufacturing technologies.

4. Are there any additional impacts (either positive or negative) that we need to consider when deciding if the 14-16 engineering qualification should be a VCSE or a GCSE?

It will be important that communication about these qualifications is clear that the qualifications are comparable and have the same status. This will be important for future employment and training for young people. If both a VCSE and GCSE are offered it would be helpful for them both to have engineering in their title.

5. If Engineering remains as a GCSE should there be a new VCSE in manufacturing within the VCSE suite?

No

Please explain you answer?

We believe that splitting engineering and manufacturing could lead to an air of confusion with learners. Currently, in Post-16 qualifications, engineering and manufacturing technologies is the title used, with engineering broken down into disciplines, production, mechanical, electrical etc. As a result, this could lead to confusion at post-16.

- 6. Are there any additional impacts (either positive or negative) that we need to consider when deciding if there should be a VCSE in manufacturing?**

No

Health and social care, and childcare

- 7. In your view, should the new level 1/level 2 health and social care, and childcare qualification be developed as a VCSE or a GCSE?**

VCSE

GCSE

Not sure

Please explain your answer?

We agree that this is a long established and popular qualification with centres and pupils and has clear progression routes. A VCSE qualification would be helpful for pupils to develop and demonstrate practical skills where required. The practical application of this qualification would be helpful in supporting young people to make the next steps in their learning. We would encourage Qualifications Wales to explore how the VCSE could provide opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in practical contexts.

- 8. Are there any additional impacts (either positive or negative) that we need to consider if 14-16 health and social care, and childcare qualification was to remain as a GCSE?**

Integrated impact assessment questions

1. Are there any additional regulatory impacts that have not been identified above arising from these proposals

Yes

2. If yes, what are the impacts?

The consultation mentioned the skills for life qualifications. We have already raised concerns about these qualifications previously and remain concerned about their usefulness to young people.

The 'Looking after Others' unit will not be a sufficient replacement for the practical element of health and social care or childcare. We would discourage Qualifications Wales from promoting the 'Looking after Others' as an approach to provide these skills.

In addition, the course content will need to prepare pupils for progression at post 16. Significant issues exist across the post-16 sector, and there is evidence of low outcomes and high drop-out rates.

3. Are there any additional steps that could be taken to minimise the regulatory impacts of the proposals? If so, please comment on the additional steps we could take?

In order to minimise these impacts, it may be helpful to reconsider aspects of the 'skills for life' qualifications to ensure they will be of benefit to all pupils.

4. Are there any costs, savings or other benefits associated with the proposals which have not been identified? Please provide estimated figures where possible?

Many schools already offer many of these qualifications and therefore are well prepared for them. The built environment change could increase workload initially as schools adapt their approaches.

5. Is there any additional information which should be considered when evaluating the costs and benefits of the proposals?

No

6. In our previous impact assessment on the Full 14-16 Qualifications Offer we identified ways in which the proposals may impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any other potential impacts we have not identified?

No

7. If yes what are the impacts?
8. Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impact on persons who share a protected characteristic resulting from these proposals? If so, please comment on the additional steps we could take.
9. Do you have any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?

No

10. In our previous impact assessment on the Full 14-16 Qualifications Offer we identified ways in which our proposals impacted on the Welsh language. This included the opportunities for people to use Cymraeg and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English. Are there any other potential impacts on Cymraeg we have not identified? If yes, what are the impacts?

No

11. How could positive impacts of our proposals on the Welsh language be increased, or negative impacts mitigated?

It will be important to ensure that all resources and specifications are available bilingually at the same time and that professional learning and support is available bilingually.