
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

Enw / Name:	Meilyr Rowlands
Rôl / Role:	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales
E-bost / Email:	ChiefInspector@estyn.gov.uk
Rhif Ffôn / Tel No:	02920 446 446

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Background information about Estyn

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

Estyn's 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 2000 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, Estyn 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 education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

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

Estyn may give advice to the Assembly on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, Estyn has 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.

This response is not confidential.

Consultation Response - WJEC Stakeholder Survey 2020

WJEC Stakeholder Survey 2020 – Estyn response

Communication (q7-9)

Here are the main ways in which examination boards generally communicate with our organisation:

- Face-to-face meetings
- virtual meetings
- emails
- subject newsletters
- telephone
- stakeholder events

Estyn welcomes any engagement with WJEC through the means outlined above.

Reasons for communication (q10-12)

Estyn engages with WJEC by responding to consultations, providing feedback and advice, attending external stakeholder meetings and receiving updates about qualifications. We would welcome more routine engagement with subject officers.

Role of WJEC (q13-17)

We have a very good understanding of the role and importance of the WJEC and appreciate inputs that the Chief Executive has provided to HMI. Feedback from our thematic work over time suggests that school leaders and teachers appreciate the opportunity to engage with WJEC officers regularly through direct contact, webinars and professional learning activities.

Specifications (q18-24)

In our thematic report evaluating new qualifications, published in July 2018, we stated:

In a majority of cases, feedback from schools indicates that there has been suitable support from the WJEC in preparing for the new specifications. Feedback about support and training courses for Welsh language and the Welsh Baccalaureate is particularly positive. However, in a minority of instances, departments considered the support and training less effective. In general, their criticisms refer to a lack of clarity around assessment, insufficient exemplification of standards and contradictory advice in consecutive courses. Many schools cite cost of the training courses and staff cover as barriers to full participation in training.

Many schools have made good use of the valuable bank of past questions on the WJEC's website. In a minority of cases, schools thought that the specimen papers offered did not accurately reflect the expectations in the first set of actual examinations. A few schools felt that exemplar materials for the new Welsh Baccalaureate were not provided in time.

The majority of schools appreciate the WJEC subject examiners' reports. They use this information, together item level data, well to identify areas for improvement and make subsequent changes to their teaching.

Feedback from colleges was less positive than that from schools. On the whole, colleges expressed concern that communication and information exchange with the WJEC was slow and lacked clarity. (p.49)

In our evaluation of A levels published in November 2018, we stated:

There is general confusion among teachers and school and college leaders regarding the timely availability of resources and materials in all A level subjects and who has ultimate responsibility for this. Many have expressed concerns over the lateness of the availability of WJEC courses and materials to support their teaching such as examination specifications and specimen papers. This is particularly the case in subjects like religious studies, history, French and physical education and for Welsh-medium materials. There are also complaints about the sparsity of support materials and the vague nature of mark schemes in a few subjects (p.39)

Support Materials (q25-27)

Please see our feedback relating to specifications which also references support materials.

Relationship between organisations (q28-34)

Estyn considers WJEC to be an important stakeholder. Engagement with WJEC is an important aspect of our thematic work. WJEC is suitably proactive in communicating with us about issues relevant to us and appropriately open and collaborative in its approach to stakeholder engagement. WJEC involves us in discussions at the right time and understands the strategic objectives and purpose of our organisation.

Guidance (q35-42)

In general we agree that the information, guidance and advice provided by the WJEC is appropriate in tone, and consistent. It is clear and accessible. We look at, and follow, your official account on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Information and advice we receive from meetings and discussions is helpful although we are not always clear of the best way to contact individuals and who should be part of any discussion. This is particularly relevant as subject officer level.

Future work (q43-47)

We have valued meeting with WJEC officers to discuss professional learning for teachers. To support us in future we would like to explore how we can work together to ensure our staff maintain an up-to-date understanding of key issues relating to qualifications and WJEC as an organisation.

With regards to qualifications and assessments to best equip learners for the future, we feel that assessments for qualifications need to be rigorous and ensure that pupils cannot be trained to succeed for a qualification in a very short amount of time.

Follow-up (q48-49)

Estyn would be happy to take part in a follow-up telephone interview.