

Qualified for the future
Cymwys ar gyfer y dyfodol

Qualified for the future:

The right choice for Wales

This consultation document is part of our wider Qualified for the future work to shape the next generation of qualifications for learners aged 14 to 16 in Wales.

January 2021



qualificationswales.org

Contents

Foreword	3
Overview	4
Background	6
Next steps	9
How we developed this consultation	10
Assessing potential impact	10
Proposals	12
1. Expressive Arts	13
2. Health and Well-being	18
3. Humanities	22
4. Languages, Literacy and Communication	27
5. Mathematics and Numeracy	40
6. Science and Technology	45
7. Integral Skills	52
Impact assessment questions	55



Foreword

We are keenly aware of the major challenges to learning and assessment posed by the continuing Covid-19 pandemic, and of the pressures placed on learners, their families and their teachers. Our immediate priority is to do everything we can to make sure learners are assessed as fairly as possible in these difficult circumstances.

However, despite the pressures of the here and now, we cannot lose sight of longer-term aims and responsibilities. The draft Curriculum Bill is making its way through the Senedd, and we want to continue the important debate about its impact on qualifications. Through this consultation, we hope to give learners and schools a better idea of what the main qualifications in Wales could look like, to help them think about and prepare for the future.

At this stage, we want to hear your views on the range of made-for-Wales qualifications that should be available, including which GCSE subjects.

This is an important step towards shaping what the future range of qualifications will look like, but it is not the end of the journey.

Once we have agreed on which made-for-Wales qualifications are required, we will move on to consider how they should be designed and assessed. For example, whether they should be still be assessed by examinations or use different methods. In the coming months we will work closely with stakeholders to gather and test ideas about different ways of doing things. As we do so, we will consider how the changes to qualifications in response to the Covid-19 pandemic can help us to think differently and consider new possibilities.

We also have more work ahead to agree how other qualifications from across the UK can be made available to schools and learners in Wales. Here again collaboration with stakeholders will be central to our approach.

For now, however, we encourage you to have your say on the proposals in this consultation.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Blaker'.

Philip Blaker
Chief Executive



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Jones'.

David B Jones OBE DL
Chair

Overview

Our role

Qualifications Wales is the independent regulator of awarding bodies¹ that offer qualifications in Wales, including GCSEs, A levels and vocational qualifications.

As the regulator, we set requirements for awarding bodies and check that they meet those requirements. We do this to meet our statutory aims of ensuring that qualifications and the system which supports them meet the needs of learners and command public confidence².

We are an independent organisation, which means we set our own priorities and programme of work. We are, however, directly accountable to the Senedd, whose members can ask us at any time to give evidence about our work. In everything we do, we must take account of Welsh Government policy, and Ministers can ask us for independent advice on matters relating to our work.

To achieve our aims, we have a range of legal powers and responsibilities. For example, we can set detailed requirements for how the main qualifications taken in Wales should be designed and assessed. In this consultation we refer to these as 'made-for-Wales' qualifications. We are also responsible for deciding which qualifications can be publicly funded for learners under the age of 19.

Focus of this consultation

This consultation seeks your views on the future range of subjects that should be available as GCSEs and which other made-for-Wales qualifications should be available alongside them.

This is the second in a series of consultations called *Qualified for the future* aimed at agreeing the next generation of qualifications for learners aged 14 to 16 in Wales.

Following our first consultation we agreed that the main qualifications taken by 14 to 16-year-olds should still be called GCSEs, but that the content and assessment of GCSE qualifications should change to meet future needs.

Now, we want to hear your views on the GCSE subjects and other qualifications that should be available to schools³ to help them deliver their curriculum and meet the needs of learners.

Once we have agreed on the main made-for-Wales qualifications that will be available, we will then be able to consider what other qualifications should be available to schools and learners.

1 Awarding bodies are organisations who develop and offer qualifications. They set and mark assessments and issue results and certificates to learners.

2 For more information, please visit: <https://qualificationswales.org/english/our-work/our-regulatory-role/>

3 In this consultation, we use 'school' to mean all publicly-funded providers of education to 14-16 year olds; this includes all maintained school settings, pupil referral units (PRU), and providers of education other than at school (EOTAS).

How to respond

We want to hear from anyone with an interest in the education of young people in Wales. This includes learners, parents, carers, learning providers and employers.

This consultation document gives you the background to the proposals and explains the thinking behind them, before setting out the questions we are asking about each proposal. If you prefer, you can read a shorter and simpler version of this consultation document [here](#).

To tell us what you think about the proposals, please use the online survey, which you can access by [clicking on this link](#).

The online survey lets you choose whether to answer questions about all of the proposals or just to focus on those which are of most interest to you.

Where possible, please submit your answers using the online survey. If you need to provide your responses using a different format please send it to: Opinion Research Services at QWconsultation@ors.org.uk, or ORS, The Strand, Swansea, SA1 1AF

How we will use your feedback

After carefully considering all responses to the consultation, we will decide whether to adopt, amend or reject each proposal. This will decide which made-for-Wales qualifications will be available in future to schools and learners.

Once we have made our decisions, we will publish a summary and analysis of all responses to the consultation. We will also publish the reasons for our decisions, including how we have considered the consultation feedback.

You can read more about how we will use any information that you provide as part of this consultation by clicking on this [link](#)

What happens next

Once we have confirmed the outcomes of this consultation, we will turn our attention to two parallel strands of work:

1. Developing and consulting on detailed proposals for each made-for-Wales qualification, including the content and assessment methods for each one.
2. Taking steps to make sure that a suitable range of other qualifications remains available to schools and learners, alongside any made-for-Wales qualifications.

Background

A new curriculum for Wales

The Welsh Government is introducing a new curriculum for Wales that will apply to all learners from the ages of 3 to 16.

The Senedd is currently considering draft legislation that will establish a new Curriculum for Wales Framework ('Framework').

The Framework requires each school in Wales to design its own school curriculum ('School Curriculum') and explains what each School Curriculum must cover.

A School Curriculum must enable learners to realise the Four Purposes of the Curriculum for Wales. This means supporting them to become:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

A School Curriculum must be broad and balanced and reflect the six Areas of Learning and Experience ('Area'/'Areas') as described in the Curriculum for Wales Guidance ('Curriculum Guidance'). The six Areas are:

- Expressive Arts
- Health and Well-being
- Humanities
- Languages, Literacy and Communication
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Science and Technology.

In addition to these Areas, a School Curriculum must also include the following mandatory elements:

- Religion, values and ethics
- Relationships and sexuality education (RSE)
- Welsh
- English.

It must also have embedded within it the following cross-curricular skills:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Digital competence.

The Curriculum Guidance sets out in more detail what a School Curriculum should cover in relation to the Areas, mandatory elements and cross-curricular skills. It is worth noting that each of the Areas refers to individual subjects or disciplines. For example, the Expressive Arts Area refers to the disciplines of art, dance, drama, film and digital media and music.

A School Curriculum should offer learners aged 14 to 16 a choice to specialise more in some Areas than others, while still ensuring that they experience some learning in each Area.

It is important to note that the Framework does not directly refer to qualifications. It will be up to schools to select the qualifications they want to offer based on their School Curriculum and the needs of their learners.

Qualified for the future

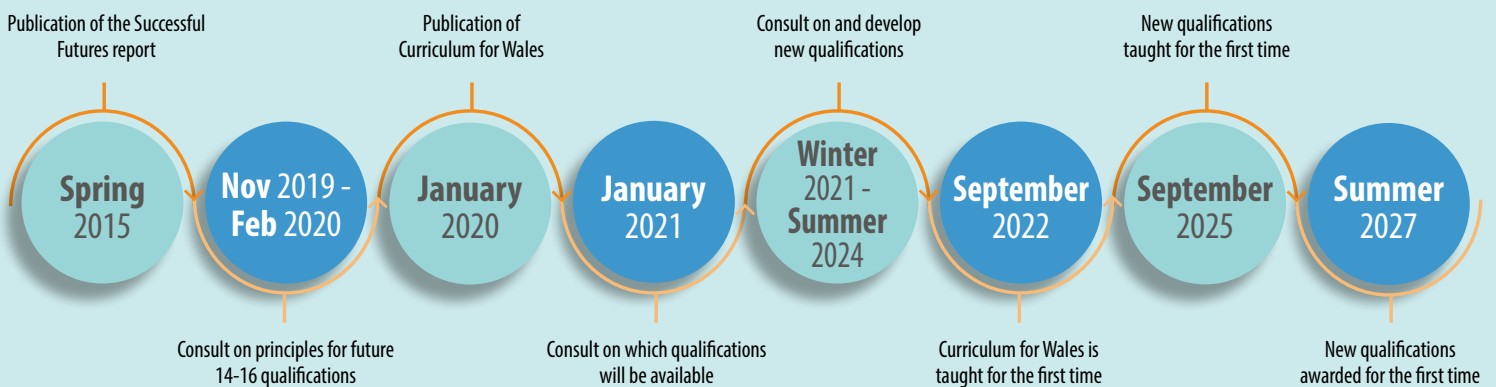
Qualified for the future describes the work Qualifications Wales is doing to agree how qualifications should change to support the Curriculum for Wales and meet the future needs of learners.

Our vision is for learners to take qualifications that inspire and prepare them for life, learning and work, qualifications that:

- command public confidence in Wales, the UK and globally
- secure an equitable, coherent and bilingual choice for schools and learners
- make the most of digital technology
- can be introduced in a managed and sustainable way.

Welsh Government proposes to introduce the new Curriculum for Wales in stages; from September 2022 it will apply to all learners in Year 7 and below. This timeline would mean that the first full cohort to experience the new Curriculum for Wales will start Year 10 in September 2025 and finish Year 11 in summer 2027. Our aim is for schools to be able to offer these learners the right choices about the qualifications they will be studying when they reach Year 10.

Qualified for the future: the right choice for Wales



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Made-for-Wales qualifications

When considering whether a qualification should be designed specifically for learners in Wales, it is important to consider what the likely demand for it will be. The number of learners in Wales is relatively small compared to other UK jurisdictions and there is a limit to how many made-for-Wales qualifications the system here can support.

We have carefully considered the likely future demand for each qualification proposed in this consultation. We only propose a made-for-Wales qualification where we anticipate that there is likely to be enough demand from schools and learners to make it viable.

Bespoke, made-for-Wales qualifications cannot by themselves meet the needs of all 14 to 16-year-old learners in Wales. As is the case now, the future range of available qualifications will continue to include a mix of qualifications made for Wales and other qualifications designed for and taken by learners across the UK and internationally.

Inclusive GCSEs

The proposals in this consultation reflect our belief that a more inclusive range of GCSEs can help eliminate the often unhelpful distinction between academic and vocational subjects for learners aged 14 to 16.

GCSEs are sometimes described as academic qualifications, with more emphasis on theoretical knowledge and less opportunity to develop practical skills. There is a perception that they are aimed solely at supporting progression to further study at A level. This is a perception we want to change.

GCSEs can be designed to assess different kinds of knowledge and skills and to support broad progression along academic, technical and vocational pathways.

In fact, many GCSEs already include substantial proportions of practical and skill-based content. For example, GCSE Music requires learners to perform and compose music. Learners taking GCSE Design and Technology must design and make a product. Speaking and listening skills are an important part of GCSEs in Welsh, English and international languages.

Whether or not a subject can be offered as a GCSE does not depend on whether it relates to academic or vocational content. What is important is whether it can support a relevant, coherent and appropriately challenging course of learning that can be assessed in accordance with our requirements.

This is reflected in the fact that learners in Wales can now take the following GCSEs:

- Digital Technology
- Built Environment
- Health and Social Care, and Childcare.

Next Steps

New content and assessment

At this stage, we want to agree the range of subjects that should be available as GCSEs and other made-for-Wales qualifications. We are not proposing the detail of how these qualifications should be assessed or what content they will cover.

These are questions that we will address in the next stage of our work as we develop and consult on detailed design proposals for each made-for-Wales qualification.

As part of that work, we will be engaging and conducting extensive research with stakeholders on how qualifications are currently assessed and on how assessment could be done differently in future. We will explore several themes, including:

- how digital technology can improve the experience and delivery of assessment
- how qualifications can be designed to offer more choice and flexibility in the content they assess
- the timing of assessments, including the balance between timetabled examinations and other forms of assessment
- the role of teachers in designing and delivering assessment.

Qualifications for all learners

The proposals in this consultation focus on GCSEs and other made-for-Wales qualifications. Once we have agreed these, we will move on to focus on the other qualifications that should be available so that the needs of all learners can be met.

These include qualifications available at Entry Level and Level 1 of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW)⁴, as well as qualifications at the same level as GCSEs⁵. These qualifications are taken in a wide range of settings, by different learners for all kinds of reasons. They play an important part in meeting learners' needs and recognise achievement across a wide spectrum of progression.

Following the first *Qualified for the future* consultation we agreed that all publicly-funded qualifications for learners aged 14 to 16 should:

- relate to, and support, the aims and purposes of the Curriculum for Wales
- be available in Welsh and English
- contribute to a coherent and inclusive range of qualifications that meets the needs of all learners.

4 The [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales](#) (CQFW) describes the qualifications system in Wales. It encompasses a wide range of qualifications across all levels from the initial stages (Entry Level) to the most advanced (Level 8 e.g. Doctoral). It aims to help learners make informed decisions about their learning and potential progression opportunities.

5 GCSEs span Levels 1 and 2 of the CQFW.

A key focus for us this year will be to work with schools, awarding bodies and others to agree how we can apply these principles to the future range of qualifications. In doing so we will make sure that schools and learners continue to have a choice of qualifications that recognise achievement at earlier progression steps and support learners in developing at a pace that is right for them.

How we developed this consultation

Our engagement with stakeholders throughout this year has helped us to shape and refine the proposals in this consultation. We are grateful to all those who gave their time to help us with this work.

Our approach to developing these proposals is in line with the sustainable development principle⁶ and our objectives⁷ as described in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Assessing potential impact

As a public body, we are required to assess the likely impact, both positive and negative, of regulatory decisions we take. This includes assessing potential impact on the Welsh language and on persons who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

We expect the proposals in this consultation to have an overall positive impact on the Welsh language. We will require all of the new qualifications proposed to be available in both Welsh and English, including any teaching and learning materials that are essential to support their delivery. In terms of equalities impacts, all the qualifications proposed in this consultation would have to meet our standard conditions for regulated qualifications. This means they would need to be designed to assess learners fairly, reliably and without bias, to be as accessible as possible, and to be manageable for schools and learners.

Our impact assessment of each proposal has confirmed that the potential benefits for each one outweighs any potential increase in costs. Where we have identified potential increases in costs, we believe that these are justified as they aim to ensure that the range of made-for-Wales qualifications support the Curriculum for Wales and provide opportunities for innovation and more effective use of digital technology in the assessment process. In our discussion of the proposals where we believe any proposal has a potentially negative impact, we have discussed the impact and how it could be managed or mitigated effectively.

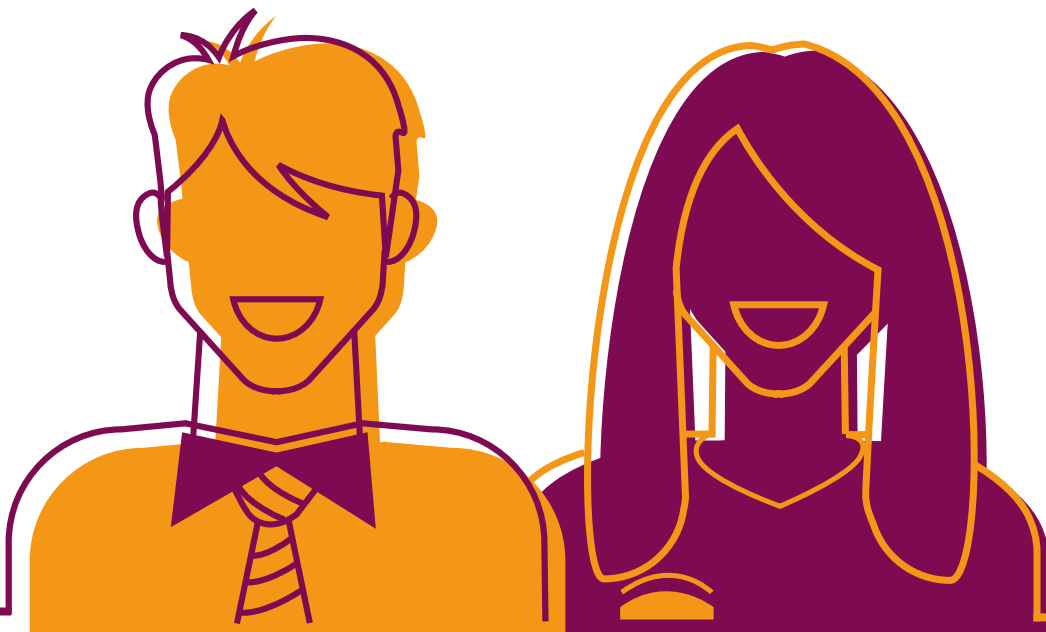
6 The sustainable development principle outlines five ways of working that public bodies should follow to achieve the well-being goals of the Act. These are long-term (balancing short and long-term needs); prevention (prevent problems occurring or getting worse to help public bodies achieve their goals); integration (considering the impact of our objectives on the well-being goals and the objectives of other public bodies); collaboration (working with other relevant people); and involvement (involving others with an interest in the well-being goals).

7 <https://www.qualificationswales.org/media/3337/wellbeing-future-generations-objectives-2018-e.pdf>

We have also considered the potential cumulative impact of adopting all of the proposals in this consultation. Doing so all at once could place unrealistic strain on schools and awarding bodies. To mitigate this, we will introduce new qualifications in stages leading up to September 2025. We have also identified those proposals that could be introduced later than September 2025 without unduly limiting schools' ability to design and adopt their own School Curriculum.

Where we propose, in some cases, that qualifications in closely related subjects should be combined, this is not intended to reduce choice. In the Areas where we propose combining existing qualifications most learners at present take several qualifications in similar or closely related subjects. Creating new, more consolidated qualifications in these Areas would give schools more flexibility to reflect the breadth and balance of their School Curriculum in the combinations of qualifications available to learners.

In the online survey we ask questions specifically about the potential impact of our proposals.

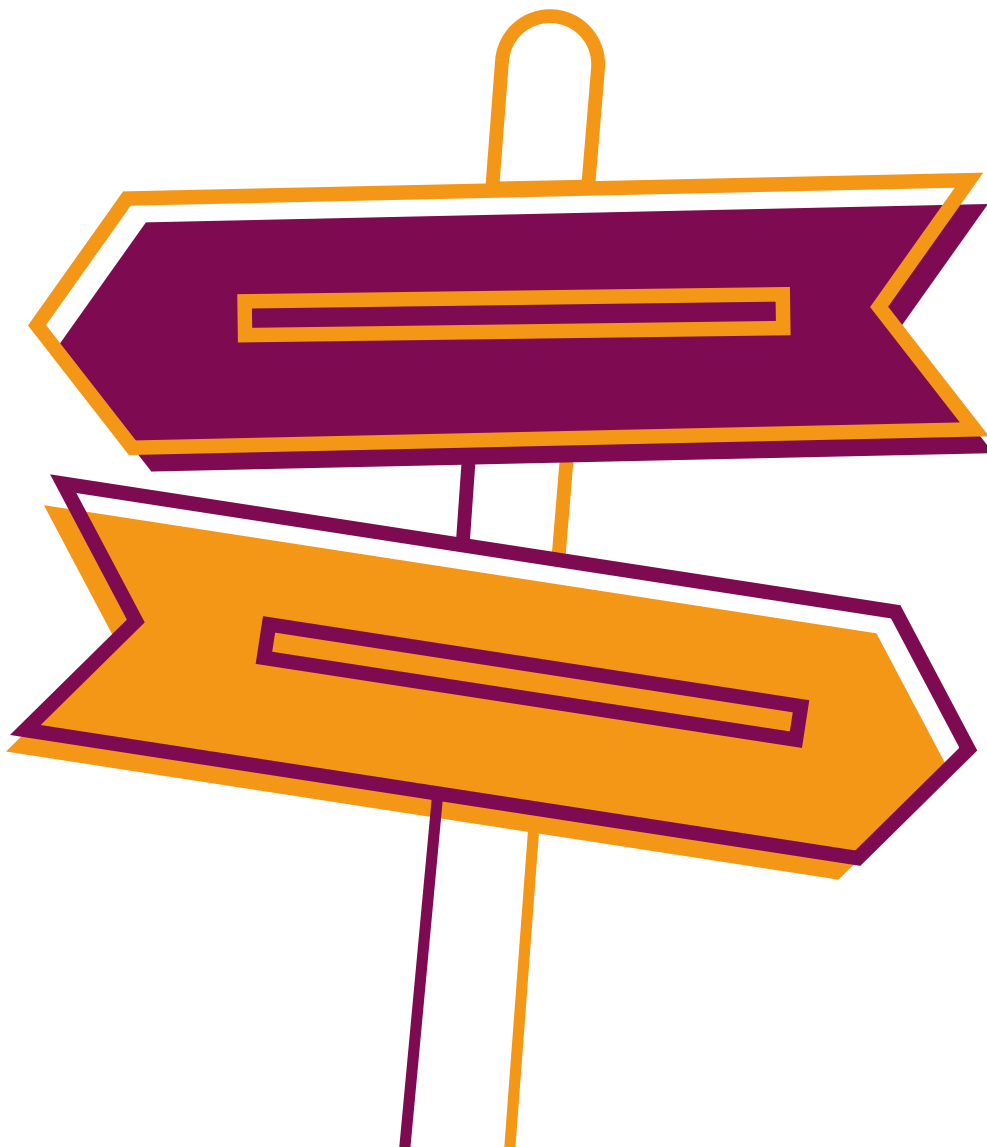


Proposals

We have grouped the proposals in this consultation according to the six Areas of Learning and Experience ('Area'/'Areas') as described in the Curriculum for Wales Guidance ('Curriculum Guidance'). There is also a section on assessing what the Curriculum Guidance refers to as integral skills.

Each section gives an overview of the proposals and the thinking behind them, along with some questions asking for your views.

Using the [online survey](#) you can choose which sections to read and respond to. You do not have to respond to all the questions.



1. Expressive Arts

Curriculum guidance⁸

The Expressive Arts Area of Learning and Experience ('Area') includes the following disciplines: art, dance, drama, film and digital media and music.

The three Statements of What Matters in this Area⁹ are:

1. *Exploring the expressive arts is essential to developing artistic skills and knowledge and it enables learners to become curious and creative individuals.*
2. *Responding and reflecting, both as artist and audience, is a fundamental part of learning in the expressive arts.*
3. *Creating combines skills and knowledge, drawing on the senses, inspiration and imagination.*

Current provision

In this Area at present, there are four made-for-Wales GCSEs available to schools:

- Art and Design
- Drama
- Media Studies
- Music

Alongside these made-for-Wales GCSEs, schools can also choose from a range of other qualifications related to this Area, some of which are only available in English.

Various performing arts and creative media qualifications are offered by a range of awarding bodies. Some of these allow learners to study a combination of disciplines and to explore the creative industries.

Designed-for-England GCSEs¹⁰ are also available to schools in Dance and Film Studies. The number of learners taking these qualifications annually is very low compared to the other GCSEs in this Area¹¹.

Proposals at a glance

- 8 The Curriculum Guidance sets out in more detail what a School Curriculum should cover in relation to the areas of learning and experience, mandatory elements and cross-curricular skills. For a more detailed explanation, see page 6.
- 9 We have listed here the headlines for the Statements of What Matters in this Area. Each statement is described more fully in the Curriculum Guidance.
- 10 Since 2015 there are some differences between GCSEs designed for Wales, England and Northern Ireland. GCSEs for Wales continue to be graded A*-G, GCSEs for England are now graded 9-1, and in Northern Ireland a new C* grade has been introduced. All GCSEs continue to be broadly comparable in size and level of demand.
- 11 Provisional entry numbers show that in summer 2020, there were 15 entries for GCSE Dance (graded 9-1) and 125 entries for GCSE Film Studies (graded 9-1). Source: [Qualifications Wales / Provisional Entries for Summer 2020 GCSEs, AS, A levels, Skills Challenge Certificate, and Level 1/Level 2 Certificates for Wales](#), GCSE Film Studies (graded 9-1) reported in the 'Media / Film / TV Studies' category and GCSE Dance reported under Performing/Expressive Arts. Qualification level data available upon request

To shape the range of qualifications for Expressive Arts, we propose to:

1. Review and reform GCSEs in Art and Design, Drama and Music.
2. Create a new GCSE in Film and Digital Media.
3. Make sure that a choice of qualifications that assess dance continues to be available to learners and schools.
4. Continue to give schools a choice of qualifications in Expressive Arts that offer a multi-disciplinary approach.

Other qualifications related to this Area would continue to be available to schools and learners, provided they meet our guiding principles and do not substantially overlap with the main, made-for-Wales qualifications in this Area.

The thinking behind the proposals

1. Review and reform GCSEs in Art and Design, Drama and Music.

This proposal would continue to give schools and learners a choice of discrete GCSE qualifications in this Area, offering flexibility to focus on one or more aspect of this Area alongside their other studies. This proposal is consistent with the Curriculum Guidance for this Area which acknowledges subject specialism at the later progression steps by outlining the discipline-specific knowledge and skills required for each individual subject.

Stakeholders have told us that they want to see more learners engaging with this Area. They also want to see the current high standards of performance within individual disciplines maintained. Qualifications that focus on individual disciplines allow learners to develop their creativity while gaining the necessary knowledge and skills to support further progression in their chosen discipline.

If we adopt this proposal, we will work closely with stakeholders to agree the content and assessment of the new GCSE qualifications. This would include looking at how the discipline-specific skills and knowledge described in the Curriculum Guidance should be reflected in each qualification, and at how to encourage connections across this Area and with the wider School Curriculum¹².

We would also consider the different ways of assessing both the creative process and the practical and creative application of knowledge and skills. There is an opportunity here for digital technology to play a part in helping to record the process of developing and exploring ideas, as well as recording the final artefact or performance.

¹² When the Curriculum for Wales takes effect, each school in Wales will be required to create its own School Curriculum in line with Curriculum Guidance set by Welsh Government. See page 6 for more details.

2. Create a new GCSE in Film and Digital Media.

The Curriculum Guidance identifies Film and Digital Media as one of the five main disciplines in this Area. This discipline is not fully reflected in the current GCSE Media Studies and GCSE Film Studies¹³ qualifications.

We therefore propose to create a new GCSE Film and Digital Media qualification that would more closely reflect the Curriculum Guidance and replace the existing GCSE Media Studies and GCSE Film Studies qualifications.

If we adopt this proposal, we will work closely with stakeholders to develop proposals for how the skills and knowledge described in the Curriculum Guidance should be reflected in a qualification. The new qualification would focus on the creative use of media technologies for artistic and communication purposes, including a range of digital media such as animation, videography, and podcasting. As with the other proposed GCSEs in this Area, we would look at how the qualification could link to other Expressive Arts disciplines and to the wider School Curriculum.

We expect there will be enough demand from schools and learners to make this proposed qualification viable for an awarding body to develop and deliver. It will be replacing two existing GCSEs, and it offers learners a chance to explore matters that are of increasing interest and relevance to their daily lives.

As we develop the new qualification, we would review the existing GCSE Media Studies and GCSE Film Studies to consider which aspects of content and design to include in the new Film and Digital Media GCSE. As we do so, we would also consider whether any aspects of these qualifications could also be included in other proposed new qualifications.

The proposed qualification would support progression to a range of subjects and career pathways within the expressive arts and wider creative industries. In agreeing the design for this qualification, we would want to ensure coherence with other related GCSEs such as Digital Technology and some of the endorsements within Art and Design such as photography.

3. Make sure that a choice of qualifications that assess dance continues to be available to learners and schools.

At present, GCSE Dance is only offered by one awarding body across Wales, England and Northern Ireland. This reflects the fact that take-up for this subject as a GCSE is relatively low across all three countries. This is a designed-for-England GCSE¹⁴ and the number of learners taking it in Wales is very low, with only 15 learners entered for the summer 2020 exam series¹⁵.

13 GCSE Film Studies is a qualification designed for England and graded 9-1. It is offered by OCR and WJEC under its Eduqas brand. The Eduqas qualification is available bilingually.

14 GCSE Dance is a qualification designed for England and graded 9-1. It is offered by AQA and is only available through the medium of English.

15 Source: Qualifications Wales (2020). *Provisional entries for Summer 2020 GCSEs, AS, A levels, Skills Challenge Certificate, and Level 1/Level 2 Certificates for Wales*. Available from: <https://qualificationswales.org/english/publications/provisional-data-on-entries-for-summer-may-2020/>.

This low take-up means it is unlikely to be viable for an awarding body to develop a GCSE intended only for learners in Wales, as the cost of developing this qualification would be much higher than entry fees could cover. Very small cohorts also present challenges when assessing and grading qualifications if there is not enough work to compare the standard required at each grade boundary from one year to the next.

As it is extremely unlikely we will be able to develop a made-for-Wales GCSE Dance qualification, we will seek to make sure that alternative qualifications that assess dance¹⁶ continue to be available to schools and learners.

4. Continue to give schools a choice of qualifications in Expressive Arts that offer a multi-disciplinary approach.

This proposal would support learners who wish to continue to study and explore the Area without focusing on a particular specialism.

The Curriculum Guidance for this Area encourages schools and learners to explore the Statements of What Matters through the different Expressive Arts disciplines. This reflects that while each discipline has its own specific specialist knowledge and skills, there is also much that is common across them. The Curriculum Guidance recommends that learners should engage with all aspects of this Area until the age of 14 and at least some aspects of it from 14 to 16. While some learners will want to specialise at 14 and focus mainly on just one or two disciplines in this Area, others may want to continue taking a broader, multi-disciplinary approach.

At present, schools in Wales can choose from several different qualifications that take a multi-disciplinary and industry-focused approach to this Area. These qualifications are offered by various awarding bodies and are not taken exclusively in Wales, which means they are not wholly reliant on learner numbers in Wales to make them viable. They are well regarded by schools and by those working in the expressive arts. Some of these qualifications also have a focus on working in the arts and creative industries, for example exploring set-design, or events management and marketing.

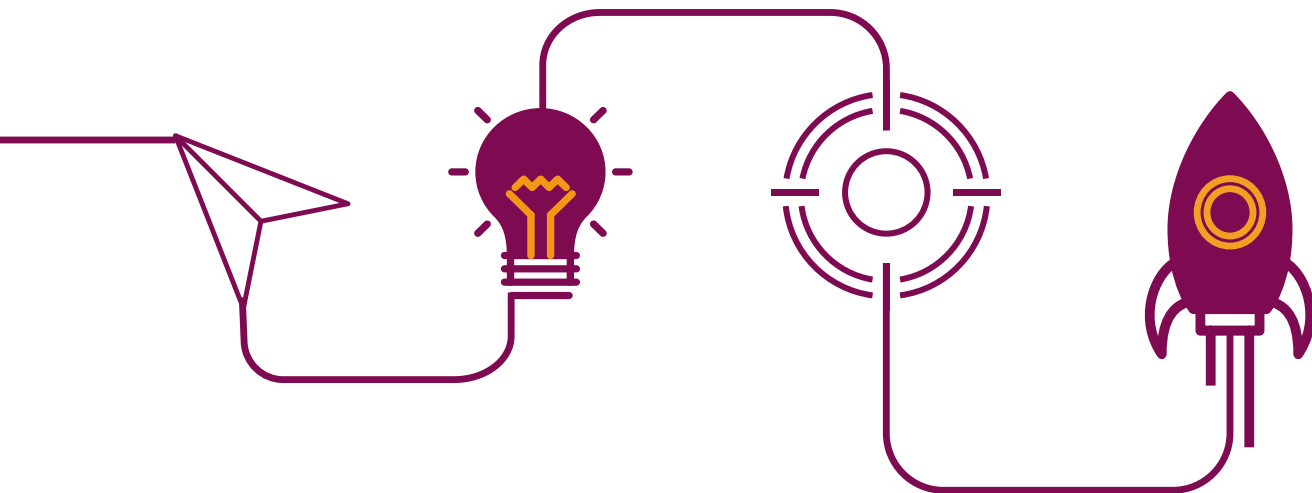
We have decided against proposing a made-for-Wales qualification that offers a multi-disciplinary approach to this Area. Doing so would mean replacing the current range of qualifications with a single qualification, which is unlikely to offer the same degree of choice and flexibility. Any new qualification would take time to establish itself as a credible alternative to the existing qualifications in this Area. It is also not certain that there would be enough demand to make a made-for-Wales multi-disciplinary qualification viable.

Instead, we propose taking steps to ensure that schools in Wales can continue to offer multi-disciplinary qualifications in this Area that meet our guiding principles.

16 For example, the graded dance qualifications offered by ISTD and the Pearson BTEC qualifications in Performing Arts.

Consultation Questions

1. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposals to review and reform GCSEs in Art and Design, Drama and Music?
2. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to create a new GCSE in Film and Digital Media?
3. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to make sure that a choice of qualifications that assess dance continues to be available to learners and schools?
4. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to continue to give schools a choice of qualifications in Expressive Arts that offer a multi-disciplinary approach?



2. Health and Well-being

Curriculum guidance¹⁷

The fundamental components of the Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience ('Area') are physical health and development, mental health, and emotional and social well-being.

The five Statements of What Matters in this Area¹⁸ are:

1. *Developing physical health and well-being has lifelong benefits.*
2. *How we process and respond to our experiences affects our mental health and emotional well-being.*
3. *Our decision-making impacts on the quality of our lives and the lives of others.*
4. *How we engage with different social influences shapes who we are and our health and well-being.*
5. *Healthy relationships are fundamental to our well-being.*

As is the case for other Areas, these statements are intended to support and complement one another, not to be viewed in isolation. They give education professionals a framework through which to identify and approach the topics and issues most relevant to learners and that reflect a school's local curriculum.

There are many different issues, themes and topics that schools and learners could explore as they engage with this Area, including content related to other curriculum Areas.

Current provision

In this Area at present there are three made-for-Wales GCSEs available to schools:

- Physical Education¹⁹
- Health and Social Care, and Childcare
- Food and Nutrition

A designed-for-England GCSE²⁰ is also available in Citizenship Studies, but only through the medium of English.

Qualifications other than GCSEs are available in a range of related subjects, including:

- Personal and social development
- Personal growth and well-being
- Mental health and well-being
- Healthy living and fitness

17 The Curriculum Guidance sets out in more detail what a School Curriculum should cover in relation to the areas of learning and experience, mandatory elements and cross-curricular skills. For a more detailed explanation, see page 6.

18 We have listed here the headlines for the Statements of What Matters in this Area. Each statement is described more fully in the Curriculum Guidance.

19 Available as both a full course and short course GCSE. The full course is similar in size to other GCSEs, the short course covers half the content of the full course.

20 Since 2015 there are some differences between GCSEs designed for Wales, England and Northern Ireland. GCSEs for Wales continue to be graded A*-G, GCSEs for England are now graded 9-1, and in Northern Ireland a new C* grade has been introduced. All GCSEs continue to be broadly comparable in size and level of demand. There are some differences in the GCSE subjects designed for each jurisdiction.

These qualifications are typically designed to support progression and are offered at different levels of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales²¹ ranging from Entry Level to Level 2. Some are available bilingually; others are only available in English.

Proposals at a glance

To shape the range of qualifications in this Area:

1. We propose not to create a new qualification intended to support the delivery of the whole of this Area.
2. We propose to review and reform GCSEs in Food and Nutrition, Physical Education, and Health and Social Care, and Childcare.

The thinking behind the proposals

1. We propose not to create a new qualification intended to support the delivery of the whole of this Area.

This proposal would allow schools freedom to design and deliver their own approach to this Area in line with their School Curriculum²² and the needs of their learners. We believe this would be the most effective way of reflecting the importance this Area is given in the Curriculum for Wales and its equal standing with the other Areas of Learning and Experience.

A qualification spanning this whole Area would not offer the most appropriate way of assessing learners' development of their own health and well-being. We also consider that the potential risks and challenges of doing so would outweigh any potential benefits.

If we create a qualification that covers this whole Area, schools could feel under pressure to offer it instead of adopting their own approach to this Area as part of their School Curriculum. As with any qualification, there would be an inevitable focus on preparing for and passing the assessments, which could divert time and effort away from developing learners' own health and well-being. Meeting the assessment requirements of qualification would likely constrain the range of topics that learners could explore in relation to their own health and well-being development. There is also a risk that formal assessment of this Area could end up assessing only those aspects of learning that can be reliably measured, rather than what is important. Consequently, creating a generic qualification for this Area could inadvertently increase the risk that it is viewed as a bolt-on to a School Curriculum rather than a more integrated part of a learner's experience.

21 The [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales \(CQFW\)](#) describes the qualifications system in Wales. It encompasses a wide range of qualifications across all levels from the initial stages (Entry Level) to the most advanced (Level 8 e.g. Doctoral). It aims to help learners make informed decisions about their learning and potential progression opportunities.

22 When the Curriculum for Wales takes effect, each school in Wales will be required to create its own School Curriculum in line with Curriculum Guidance set by Welsh Government. See page 6 for more details.

Some argue that a qualification is necessary to reflect the equal status of this Area to the other Areas of Learning and Experience. Given the heavy emphasis the current system places on qualifications, this is an understandable point of view. But a School Curriculum is about much more than qualifications. And our engagement with schools and teachers suggests that they are likely to prioritise developing the health and well-being of their learners irrespective of whether they are taking a qualification in it. The absence of a made-for-Wales qualification would give them and their learners the freedom to develop and explore their own approaches to this Area. This kind of whole-school approach is more likely to engage learners and to give them the valuable experiences and skills they need and that will serve them well in the future.

Another reason for not developing a made-for-Wales qualification in this Area is that doing so would present significant assessment challenges, which could have a negative effect on teaching and learning. This Area is about developing behaviours and mindsets to help learners make informed decisions about their own and others' health and well-being. Assessing these types of characteristics and dispositions authentically and fairly across the national cohort would be challenging. Doing so in a way that gives schools and learners a free choice on the topics they want to focus on would be harder still. Some of these topics will be sensitive and personally significant for some learners, for example, discussions relating to identity, bereavement, bullying or substance abuse. In assessing such topics, there is a danger that some learners could be placed at a disadvantage because of the personal experiences explored.

These challenges mean that creating a qualification for this Area risks either placing too much focus on what can be assessed safely and reliably at a national level, or that assessment tasks would be very open-ended and highly predictable, which would encourage formulaic and superficial responses. Either approach could have a narrowing effect on teaching and learning.

In making this proposal not to create a new generic qualification in this Area, it is important to say that qualifications could still form a useful part of a school's approach to this Area. A school could offer the opportunity to take one or even several small qualifications related to this Area as part of its approach. There are qualifications already available to schools in this Area that could be used in this way. We will encourage awarding bodies to continue offering these qualifications in line with our guiding principles. In time, schools and awarding bodies may want to work together to develop qualifications based on what schools are delivering.

2. We propose to review and reform GCSEs in Food and Nutrition, Physical Education, and Health and Social Care, and Childcare.

These qualifications allow learners to develop their interest in a variety of subject areas and support progression to further learning.

Our engagement with teachers suggests these subjects are enjoyed by the learners who study them and that they are well understood by stakeholders. We see no reason to discontinue these qualifications: they support learner engagement, they are viable, and they are valued.

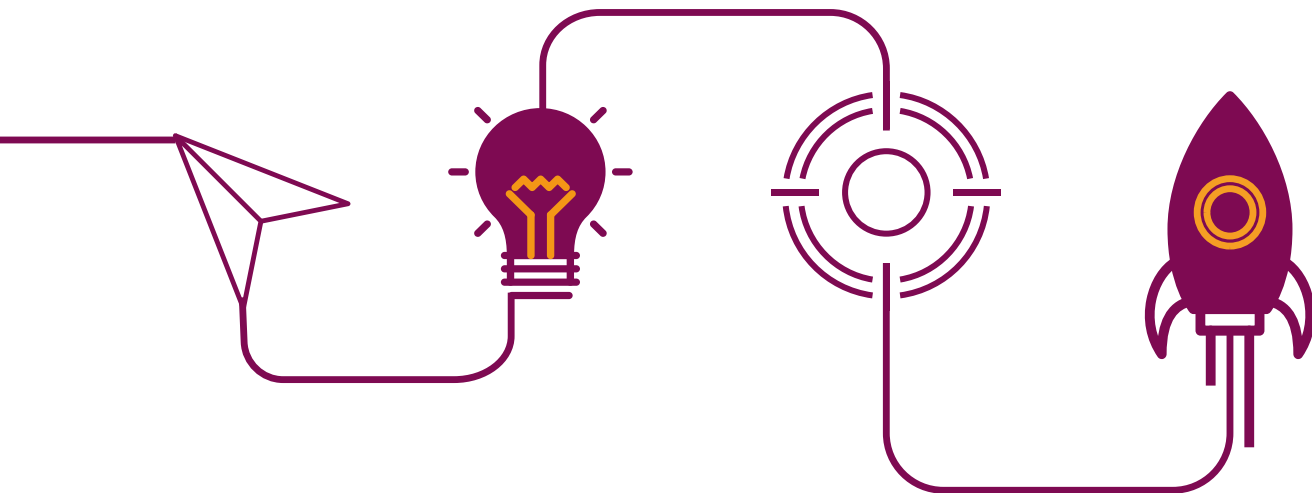
While these subjects are broadly related to Health and Well-being, they also include elements from other Areas of Learning and Experience, including Science and Technology,

Mathematics and Numeracy, and Humanities. They also have clear links to the Four Purposes of the Curriculum.

If we adopt this proposal, we will review the content and assessment of the existing GCSEs in these subjects to consider any changes that may be required. This means the GCSE qualifications in this Area would be updated to better reflect the Curriculum Guidance. We will work closely with stakeholders to consider how the design and assessment of these qualifications can reflect the fundamental components of this Area. We will also look at how these qualifications could include and support other aspects of a School Curriculum.

Consultation Questions

1. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal not to create a new qualification intended to support the delivery of the whole of this Area?
2. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposals to review and reform GCSEs in Food and Nutrition, Physical Education, and Health and Social Care, and Childcare?



3. Humanities

Curriculum guidance²³

The Humanities Area of Learning and Experience ('Area') includes the following disciplines: business studies; geography; history; religion, values and ethics; and social studies. The Curriculum Guidance also notes that the following disciplines are complementary to this Area: classics, economics, law, philosophy, politics, psychology and sociology.

The five Statements of What Matters in this Area²⁴ are:

1. *Enquiry, exploration and investigation inspire curiosity about the world, its past, present and future.*
2. *Events and human experiences are complex, and are perceived, interpreted and represented in different ways.*
3. *Our natural world is diverse and dynamic, influenced by processes and human actions.*
4. *Human societies are complex and diverse, and shaped by human actions and beliefs.*
5. *Informed, self-aware citizens engage with the challenges and opportunities that face humanity, and are able to take considered and ethical action.*

Current provision

In this Area at present, there are four made-for-Wales GCSEs available to schools. These are:

- Business
- Geography
- History
- Religious Studies²⁵

These qualifications were all reformed in 2016/2017. Our research and engagement with teachers indicates that these new specifications are seen as content-heavy and challenging to deliver in the time allocated within schools to teach these subjects.

Alongside these made-for-Wales GCSEs, GCSE qualifications that have been designed for England²⁶ are available in:

Ancient History	Economics
Applied Business	Law
Citizenship	Psychology
Classical Civilisation	Sociology

23 The Curriculum Guidance sets out in more detail what a School Curriculum should cover in relation to the areas of learning and experience, mandatory elements and cross-curricular skills. For a more detailed explanation, see page 6.

24 We have listed here the headlines for the Statements of What Matters in this Area. Each statement is described more fully in the Curriculum Guidance.

25 Available as both a full course and short course GCSE. The full course is similar in size to other GCSEs, the short course covers half the content of the full course.

26 Since 2015 there are some differences between GCSEs designed for Wales, England and Northern Ireland. GCSEs for Wales continue to be graded A*-G, GCSEs for England are now graded 9-1, and in Northern Ireland a new C* grade has been introduced. All GCSEs continue to be broadly comparable in size and level of demand.

With the exception of Sociology, these qualifications are only available in English. The number of learners taking them is generally much lower than for the main GCSEs in this area.

Qualifications other than GCSEs are also available in:

- Business
- Marketing
- Travel and Tourism

Some of these qualifications are available bilingually, others are available in English only.

Proposals at a glance

To shape the range of qualifications for Humanities, we propose to:

1. Review and reform GCSEs in Business, Geography, History and Religious Studies.
2. If feasible, create a new GCSE in Social Studies.
3. If feasible, create a new integrated GCSE in Humanities.

Qualifications in disciplines related to this Area will continue to be available to schools and learners, provided they meet our guiding principles and do not duplicate the main made-for-Wales qualifications in this Area.

The thinking behind the proposals

1. Review and reform GCSEs in Business, Geography, History and Religious Studies.

This proposal would continue to give schools and learners a choice of discrete GCSE qualifications in this Area, and give them flexibility to focus and combine their interests in this Area and their wider School Curriculum²⁷.

If we adopt this proposal, we will review the content and assessment of the existing GCSEs. Given how this Area is structured and focused, we expect that qualifications in these disciplines will require substantial reform. We will work closely with many different stakeholders to develop proposals for the detailed design of the new reformed qualifications.

Overhauling the content and assessment of these qualifications will allow them to align more fully with the Curriculum Guidance for this Area and to emphasise the links between it and other Areas. Reviewing these qualifications together will also allow for a consistent approach to the elements they have in common, for example in how they assess and encourage the development of enquiry skills.

When reforming these qualifications, we would work closely with stakeholders to consider how the skills and conceptual knowledge described in the Curriculum Guidance for this Area should be reflected in a qualification. We would also explore how assessment design could offer schools more freedom to choose the specific content and contexts for learning that allow their learners to develop and demonstrate the underpinning knowledge and skills.

²⁷ When the Curriculum for Wales takes effect, each school in Wales will be required to create its own School Curriculum in line with Curriculum Guidance set by Welsh Government. See page 6 for more details.

Reformed qualifications in these disciplines will need to support and encourage learners to progress to further studies in Humanities-related subjects, as well as more generally. Post-16 learning providers have told us that although taking a pre-16 qualification in a related subject can help learners who want to go on to study Humanities disciplines, it is not generally viewed as essential.

When reviewing and reforming GCSE Religious Studies, it will be necessary to clarify the relationship between the new qualification and the proposed statutory requirement for all learners to study Religion, values and ethics (RVE) until they are 16. It may be necessary to change the title of the qualification to make the relationship clear; we will explore this when consulting on the proposed design of the new qualification. We will also consider whether a short-course version of this GCSE should continue to be available.

If enacted, the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill²⁸ would require most publicly-funded schools to follow a common agreed syllabus for RVE, while allowing some publicly-funded schools with a religious character to follow a denominational syllabus. So, any reformed qualification intended to support the RVE element of the Curriculum for Wales will need to be flexible enough to accommodate different local approaches. We will work closely with a range of different stakeholders, including representatives of different faiths and worldviews, to make sure we get the balance right.

2. If feasible, create a new GCSE in Social Studies.

At present, there is no Social Studies qualification available to schools and learners. Creating a new Social Studies GCSE would place it on an equal footing with the other main Humanities disciplines.

According to the Curriculum Guidance, this discipline encourages learners to actively participate and engage with social issues in local, national and international contexts, through social enquiry, discussions and social action.

There is clear potential for creating a new qualification in this discipline that supports the Four Purposes of the Curriculum and gives learners an opportunity to engage with current events and with the important questions of our time, while exploring social issues, identity, rights and social organisation.

Creating a new Social Studies GCSE offers many of the same benefits as reviewing and reforming the existing GCSEs in this Area. It is a chance to develop a qualification with content and assessment that supports the Curriculum Guidance for this Area and that can be tailored to a School Curriculum and to a learner's particular interests.

We want to confirm whether there will be enough demand from schools and learners to make this proposed qualification viable for an awarding body to develop and deliver. To help us decide whether to adopt this proposal, we are engaging with schools to gauge the likely take-up for this qualification.

If we accept the proposal, we will work with stakeholders to develop proposed content and assessment for the new qualification. Depending on the final design of the qualification, it may replace some of the existing GCSE qualifications in subjects such as citizenship, sociology and law.

28 For more information on the bill, please visit: <https://gov.wales/curriculum-and-assessment-wales-bill>

Although this would be a new qualification, we would want it to be developed and introduced alongside reformed GCSEs in this Area to reflect the full breadth of the Humanities Curriculum Guidance.

3. If feasible, create a new integrated GCSE in Humanities.

A qualification that takes an integrated and thematic approach could allow learners to develop underpinning common skills and knowledge and to see how the different disciplines in this Area relate to each other.

At this stage, we are only proposing to explore the potential design and viability of this type of qualification. This is because we envisage several potential challenges that would need to be overcome.

Creating a qualification of this kind will require agreement on the common knowledge and skills that should be covered by learners. In theory a more thematic and integrated approach offers the possibility of engaging with all five disciplines and all five Statements of What Matters for this Area. In practice, doing so in a way that ensures the content remains coherent and manageable will be difficult to achieve. It is conceivable that a qualification of this kind will need to be bigger than other proposed GCSEs in this Area, more similar in size to two GCSEs (a double award).

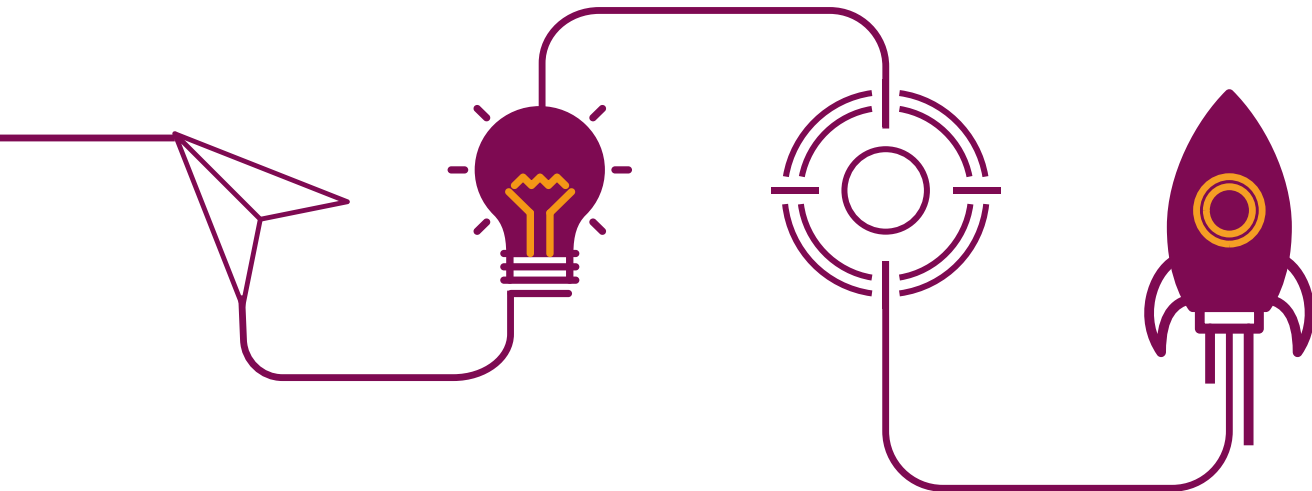
There will also have to be sufficient demand from schools and learners to make it viable for an awarding body to develop and deliver such a qualification. At this stage, we are less confident about the potential viability of a new GCSE Humanities than we are for the proposed new GCSE Social Studies. Integrated Humanities GCSEs offered in the past struggled to gain sufficient take-up to remain viable. While the new Social Studies GCSE could be taken in combination with other GCSEs in this Area, an integrated Humanities GCSE is more likely to be offered as an alternative to other discipline-specific GCSEs, especially if it ends up being bigger than a single GCSE. Engagement with schools suggests that if they were to offer GCSE Humanities, they would most likely do so in addition to the other GCSEs available in this Area, which is likely to reduce its potential take-up further.

Schools have told us they would value a qualification that offers an alternative to discipline-specific qualifications. We would want to allow a genuinely integrated, thematic approach, rather than a mix-and-match of discipline-specific units. Achieving this and overcoming the potential challenges may require a flexible approach to qualification design, for example by exploring whether schools could develop their own assessment tasks that are validated by an awarding body. Adopting this proposal would mean we continue to work with stakeholders to explore the different options for how this kind of qualification could be made to work. We would then test proposals and potential demand for the qualification through further engagement with schools.

The additional work required to explore the different ways a qualification of this kind could be designed and delivered viably will take time. Even if we succeed in finding an approach that works, the new qualification is unlikely to be ready for teaching by September 2025. There is also a chance that we are not able to agree on an approach that works. Although a qualification of this kind would be beneficial to schools and learners, it would not be essential. If this kind of qualification cannot be developed – either at all, or in time for 2025 – then schools would still be able to design and implement their School Curriculum in line with the Framework.

Consultation Questions:

1. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposals to review and reform GCSEs in Business, Geography, History and Religious Studies?
2. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to create a new GCSE in Social Studies, if feasible?
3. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to create a new integrated GCSE in Humanities, if feasible?



4. Languages, Literacy and Communication

Curriculum guidance²⁹

The Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience ('Area') focuses on knowledge and skills in Welsh, English and international languages,³⁰ as well as in literature.

The four Statements of What Matters in this Area³¹ are:

1. *Languages connect us.*
2. *Understanding languages is key to understanding the world around us .*
3. *Expressing ourselves through languages is key to communication.*
4. *Literature fires imagination and inspires creativity.*

The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill 2020³² states that the learning of Welsh and English is mandatory up to the age of 16.

The Curriculum Guidance for this Area includes a separate set of expectations for the progress learners are expected to make in their Welsh language learning if they are studying in English-medium contexts³³. Learners in Welsh-medium and bilingual contexts³⁴ are expected to make the same level of progress in Welsh and in English.

Current provision

In this Area at present, made-for-Wales GCSEs are available to schools in:

- Welsh Language
- English Language
- Welsh Second Language
- English Literature
- Welsh Literature

Learners in Welsh-medium and bilingual contexts typically take four GCSEs in this Area: English Language, English Literature, Welsh Language and Welsh Literature. In English-medium contexts learners typically take three GCSEs in this Area: English Language, English Literature and Welsh Second Language.

29 The Curriculum Guidance sets out in more detail what a School Curriculum should cover in relation to the areas of learning and experience, mandatory elements and cross-curricular skills. For a more detailed explanation, see page 6.

30 International languages in the Curriculum Guidance refers to languages other than Welsh and English that are learned in school; these can include community languages, modern languages, classical languages and British Sign Language.

31 We have listed here the headlines for the Statements of What Matters in this Area. Each statement is described more fully in the Curriculum Guidance.

32 For more information on the bill, please visit <https://gov.wales/curriculum-and-assessment-wales-bill>

33 We use 'English-medium contexts' to mean English-medium schools, settings and streams. Learners in these contexts typically receive most of their education in English, with the Welsh language taught as a subject rather than used as a language of tuition.

34 We use 'Welsh-medium and bilingual contexts' to mean Welsh-medium and bilingual schools, settings or streams. Learners in these contexts typically receive their education mainly through the medium of Welsh.

Made-for Wales GCSEs are also available in:

French
 German
 Spanish

Qualifications in English and Welsh are available at Entry Level and Level 1³⁵ for learners who cannot access the GCSEs. The number of learners taking these qualifications is very small³⁶.

International language GCSE qualifications that have been designed for England are available in:

Arabic	Bengali	Biblical Hebrew
Chinese	Classical Greek	Greek
Gujarati	Italian	Japanese
Latin	Modern Hebrew	Punjabi
Persian	Portuguese	Polish
Russian	Turkish	Urdu

While all these international languages GCSEs are available for schools in Wales to choose from, not all are offered to, or taken by, learners in Wales. These qualifications are only available through English (except for Latin, which is available through Welsh and English).

As well as GCSEs in international languages, schools can choose from a range of Language Pathway qualifications. These are unitised, credit-based qualifications that can be combined flexibly to meet the needs of different learners. They are assessed through a portfolio of evidence which is internally assessed by teachers and externally verified by an awarding body. These qualifications are available from Entry Level to Level 2 of the CQFW in the following languages:

French	Italian	Mandarin
German	Japanese	Spanish

British Sign Language (BSL) is also included within this Area. At present, schools and learners can choose from a range of qualifications ranging from Entry Level to Level 2³⁷.

35 The [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales](#) (CQFW) describes the qualifications system in Wales. It encompasses a wide range of qualifications across all levels from the initial stages (Entry Level) to the most advanced (Level 8 e.g. Doctoral). It aims to help learners make informed decisions about their learning and potential progression opportunities.

36 In 2018/19 only four of these Entry Level and Level 1 qualifications were awarded to more than 100 learners in Wales. The most awarded of these qualifications was WJEC Entry Level Certificate in English, which was awarded to 600 learners. Source: Welsh Government (2018/19) WED/PLASC data.

37 In 2018/19, fewer than ten learners gained a qualification in BSL in Wales. Source: Welsh Government. (2018/9). WED/PLASC data

Take-up of international languages has been steadily falling in Wales for several years³⁸. Several factors have been reported as contributing to this decline, including:

- a reduction in the time available for teaching languages in schools
- a perception that languages are more difficult than other subjects and suitable only for more able learners
- difficulties recruiting and retaining languages teachers
- the UK's decision to leave the EU (Brexit).

In response to these challenges, Welsh Government has created a Global Futures initiative with an aim to 'increase the number of young learners studying languages at all levels and across all sectors'³⁹. Promoting and raising the profile of international languages at GCSE and beyond is a priority area for Welsh Government. The Curriculum Guidance also seeks to reinvigorate the study of languages. Our proposals are offered with similar intent.

Proposals at a glance

To shape the range of available qualifications in this Area, we propose to:

1. Create a new combined language and literature GCSE in English and a new combined language and literature GCSE in Welsh to replace the existing separate GCSE qualifications. These new combined GCSEs would each be roughly the size of 1½ GCSEs.
2. Discontinue GCSE Welsh Second Language and create a new, bigger GCSE designed for learners in English-medium contexts that reflects the expectations of the Curriculum Guidance. The new qualification would be roughly the size of 1½ GCSEs.
3. Create a set of small Welsh language skills qualifications that can be taken in addition to a GCSE to support progression along the continuum for Welsh language learning.
4. Review and reform made-for-Wales GCSEs in French, German and Spanish.
5. Create a set of small, made-for-Wales qualifications in a range of international languages to support engagement and progression in language learning.
6. Make sure learners and schools can continue to access a range of British Sign Language qualifications, including any new GCSE developed for learners in England.

38 Since 2010, GCSE entries have declined by 48%. The data shows a decline of 56% in French, 65% in German and 16% in Spanish. Source: https://wales.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_report_final.pdf

39 [Global Futures: A plan to improve and promote modern foreign languages in Wales 2020 to 2022 \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

Qualifications in disciplines related to this Area will continue to be available to schools and learners, provided they meet our guiding principles and do not duplicate the main made-for-Wales qualifications in this Area.

The thinking behind the proposals

- 1. Create a new combined language and literature GCSE in English and a new combined language and literature GCSE in Welsh to replace the existing separate GCSE qualifications. These new combined GCSEs would each be roughly the size of 1½ GCSEs.**

We propose replacing the four existing GCSEs (Welsh Language, English Language, Welsh Literature and English Literature) with two combined GCSEs, one in Welsh language and literature and the other in English language and literature.

Creating combined language and literature GCSEs in this Area will help to secure equity of provision for learners within and across schools and offer greater flexibility for learners to have more choice about which other qualifications they want to study.

In some schools, GCSE literature qualifications are now offered only as optional subjects⁴⁰. Given the focus on preparing for qualifications in years 10 and 11, it appears some learners are not studying literature beyond the age of 14. Combined literature and language qualifications would ensure that learners continue to engage with literature to the age of 16.

The current Welsh and English language and literature GCSEs were reformed for first teaching in 2015. Some of the changes were intended to make the Welsh and English specifications more similar, although some differences remain. Some significant changes were made to the language GCSEs, such as removing the coursework element. In comparison, the literature GCSEs changed relatively little: coursework continues to feature, and learners are still required to study many of the same set texts as before. Teachers have told us they would like to see the content of these qualifications refreshed to make them more engaging and relevant; this is especially the case for the GCSE literature content.

The current GCSE specifications acknowledge that there is an overlap between the study of language and the study of literature, and actively encourage learners and teachers to make links across them. Combining language and literature in a single qualification will create more opportunities for learners to make links between the two and will help enrich the study of both elements. It will also allow learners up to the age of 16 to engage with all four Statements of What Matters in this Area equally, as envisaged by the Curriculum Guidance.

40 In 2018 there were 14% fewer entries for English Literature than English Language and 32% fewer entries for Welsh Literature than Welsh Language. Source: [Qualifications Wales / Provisional Summer 2018 exam entries for Wales: GCSEs, AS, A levels, Skills Challenge Certificate, and Level 1/Level 2 certificates](#)]

If we adopt this proposal, we will work closely with stakeholders to develop proposals for the content of the new qualifications. There will also be assessment design questions to consider. We will consult further on these aspects before agreeing the final design of the qualifications.

We will design the new qualifications to be accessible to the same range of learners as the existing language and literature GCSEs⁴¹. Currently, Welsh and English literature GCSEs have tiered assessments, which means that learners sit either higher or foundation tier examinations. Language GCSEs are not tiered, which means all learners sit the same examinations. We envisage that the new qualifications will not be tiered.

In terms of size, a combined literature and language GCSE will need to be bigger than either of the single GCSEs it replaces. This increased size will ensure both elements are covered sufficiently. We envisage that each qualification will be roughly the size of 1½ GCSEs.

It should be possible to design them in such a way that they enable learners to progress to study either language or literature at A level.

We will explore how the new qualifications could be linked to an internationally-recognised language-referencing framework such as the CEFR⁴², so that learners can see how their achievements relate to other language qualifications.

Some stakeholders have questioned whether it is possible or desirable to combine the study of language and literature. Internationally, it is common for qualifications taken at 16 and post-16 to combine language and literature. For example, jurisdictions such as New Zealand, Ireland, Scotland and New South Wales all successfully combine language and literature into single qualifications and show stronger performance in PISA reading assessments than Wales.^{43 44}

If adopted, this proposal could have a potential impact on post-16 learners resitting their English or Welsh GCSEs. Bigger GCSE qualifications will require more time to study and teach. This could impact on learners' workload, as well as on staffing and funding for post-16 providers. The broader content of the proposed new GCSEs may mean that some post-16 learners looking to demonstrate their literacy and communication skills may prefer to take alternative qualifications. The potential impact on Learning Area Programmes will also need to be considered. We will carefully consider these impacts and the ways they could be mitigated when developing the new proposed GCSEs. This will include looking at the choice of qualifications available to post-16 learners.

41 The Welsh qualification would be intended mainly for learners in Welsh-medium and bilingual contexts. We have a separate proposal for learners in English-medium contexts.

42 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard for describing language ability. It describes six broad stages of language proficiency and communication which allows learners' progress to be measured at each stage. The stages are described using 'can do' statements and are designed to help learners to recognise and track their own development, as well as to support practitioners, policy makers and awarding bodies to develop courses, materials and assessments.

43 Schleicher, A (2019). *Pisa 2018 Insights and interpretations*. Available from: <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA%202018%20Insights%20and%20Interpretations%20FINAL%20PDF.pdf>

44 Australian Council for Educational Research (2019) *PISA 2018 Reporting Australia's results Volume 1 Student performance*. Available from <https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1035&context=ozpisa>

2. Discontinue GCSE Welsh Second Language and create a new, bigger GCSE designed for learners in English-medium contexts that reflects the expectations of the Curriculum Guidance. The new qualification would be roughly the size of 1½ GCSEs.

We support the Welsh Government's policy of removing Welsh Second Language and establishing a single continuum for teaching and learning Welsh ('Welsh language continuum'). Welsh Government wants to see more learners leaving compulsory education as confident users of the Welsh language and has set out its vision in its Welsh language strategy, *Cymraeg 2050: a million Welsh speakers*⁴⁵.

The Curriculum Guidance for this Area includes two sets of expectations for the progress learners are expected to make in their Welsh language learning. One for learners in Welsh-medium and bilingual contexts and another for learners in English-medium contexts. These reflect the difference in how quickly learners will develop their language ability depending on whether they receive most of their education through English or Welsh. There is a clear relationship between the two sets of expectations, reflecting the notion of a single continuum for teaching and learning Welsh.

At present, most learners in English-medium contexts take GCSE Welsh Second Language. This reformed qualification was introduced for teaching from September 2017 to replace the previous full and short courses in both Welsh Second Language GCSE and Applied Welsh GCSE⁴⁶. The new GCSE has moved away from testing recall of memorised phrases and vocabulary and places more emphasis on learners' ability to communicate effectively and to converse spontaneously. These changes address recommendations from an independent review of the legacy qualification commissioned by the Welsh Government⁴⁷.

Schools have adapted well to the increased demands of the new GCSE and the first results in summer 2019 were encouraging. Removing the short course has led to an increase of almost 60% in the number of learners taking the full course, up from 12,296 in 2017 to 19,509 in 2019⁴⁸. This means significantly more learners are now benefiting from taking a strengthened, full-course GCSE that offers a more challenging and worthwhile course of learning.

From speaking to teachers and other stakeholders, we know there are several challenges to improving learner engagement with and attainment in Welsh in English-medium schools. There is often not enough time allocated to Welsh language teaching and learning to allow learners to make consistent progress, as recognised in key stakeholders' research and reports⁴⁹. A lack of opportunity to practise and develop their skills means that many learners lack confidence in speaking Welsh, which can inhibit their learning. Across the system, more suitably qualified teachers are required in schools to deliver more Welsh language teaching.

45 [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/cymraeg-2050)

46 Short course GCSEs are half the size of a single-award GCSE. They are comparable in level of difficulty and the same grading scale is used.

47 Welsh Government, Department for education and skills (2013). *One Language for All: A review of Welsh second language at Key Stages 3 and 4*. Available from: <https://gov.wales/review-welsh-second-language-key-stages-3-and-4-final-report>

48 Source: [Examination results - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

49 Welsh Government, Department for Education and Skills, (2013), *One language for all – Review of Welsh second language at Key Stages 3 and 4*. Available from: <https://gov.wales/review-welsh-second-language-key-stages-3-and-4-final-report>

The benefits of speaking Welsh and of being multilingual could be more widely and effectively communicated to all learners. Decisions about which qualifications to offer and how they should be designed and assessed cannot by themselves address these challenges, but they can help contribute to a national approach aimed at achieving Welsh Government's longer-term policy aims for increasing the number of Welsh speakers.

Working with stakeholders, we have considered several possible options for removing and replacing the current GCSE Welsh Second Language. We have arrived at a proposal that builds on the strength and success of the current qualification and offers an equitable choice for all learners in all contexts.

The new qualification will not be called Welsh Second Language to reflect the fact that it will be substantially different from the existing qualification of that name. We will work with stakeholders to agree an appropriate title for it.

The qualification will be designed to be equal in size to the proposed new Welsh and English combined language and literature GCSEs. We expect this will be roughly the size of 1½ GCSEs. This will offer parity of provision for all learners in all contexts.

The qualification will be mapped onto an internationally-recognised language-referencing framework such as the CEFR⁵⁰, so that learners can see how their achievements relate to other language qualifications, including post-16 Welsh language qualifications.

Creating a bigger qualification than the current GCSE Welsh Second Language will encourage schools to give more time to Welsh language teaching and experiences. This would give learners the chance to attain a higher level of proficiency and allow the new qualification to assess more challenging content than the current qualification does. All this could help achieve the Welsh Government's policy aim of increasing the proportion of learners who leave school as confident users of Welsh.

In developing our proposal, we considered and discussed with stakeholders several possible approaches. Some have called for a new overarching GCSE qualification to replace the existing GCSE Welsh Language and GCSE Welsh Second Language qualifications. Having looked carefully at this idea we concluded that it would not currently be possible to design a single GCSE (or any other qualification) that could fairly and reliably assess all learners in all contexts. In terms of assessment design, the degree of difference between the curriculum expectations for learners in English-medium contexts and for those in Welsh-medium and bilingual contexts is too great to be encompassed within a single qualification. It would also be unfair to require all learners to sit the same qualification because learners in English-medium contexts would typically receive lower grades than their peers in Welsh-medium and bilingual contexts. This would have the effect of demotivating and disengaging learners in English-medium settings.

50 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard for describing language ability. It describes six broad stages of language proficiency and communication which allows learners' progress to be measured at each stage. The stages are described using 'can do' statements and are designed to help learners to recognise and track their own development, as well as to support practitioners, policy makers and awarding bodies to develop courses, materials and assessments.

We know that, for some stakeholders, our proposal will appear too similar to the current approach and may be seen as Welsh Second Language by another name. However, we believe this would be a substantial change for schools and a significant step in helping learners to become confident users of Welsh. If we adopt this proposal, we will keep the case for having multiple Welsh GCSEs under review. In doing so, we will take account of Welsh Government policy and any changes in the wider system, including changes in Welsh language teaching capacity and learner attainment. We remain open to the possibility of introducing a single Welsh GCSE in future.

Having assessed the potential impact of our proposal, we consider that it will have an overall positive effect on the Welsh language. It will mean all learners in Wales, in all contexts, will have access to Welsh language qualifications of equal size and status that appropriately reflect the level of proficiency they are expected to achieve.

In developing and introducing the new qualification we will work closely with Welsh Government and other stakeholders to make sure that the qualification remains supportive of, and closely aligned to, the policy of a single continuum.

We will also consider how the content and assessment of the new qualification can support learners who want to continue studying and engaging with Welsh after 16. This will include looking at whether changes may be required to the current AS and A level qualifications in Welsh and Welsh Second Language. We will also look at how the new qualifications would link to other post-16 Welsh language qualifications, including the Welsh for Adults framework of qualifications.

3. Create a set of small Welsh language skills qualifications that can be taken in addition to a GCSE to support progression along the Welsh language continuum.

Unlike the proposed new Welsh GCSEs, these qualifications would focus on specific language skills, such as reading, writing, listening and speaking, without trying to address all the Statements of What Matters for this Area.

These would be small, single-unit qualifications, designed to be taken by learners alongside the proposed new Welsh GCSEs. They could be taken to support progression along the Welsh language continuum.

In Welsh-medium, bilingual and English-medium contexts they could support learners to strengthen specific Welsh language skills, helping to develop their confidence as users of Welsh. Incremental and manageable assessment would offer learners regular feedback on their success and areas to improve, helping them to see the progress they are making. Moreover, these benefits could help to improve their attainment in whichever Welsh GCSE they are taking.

Schools could use these qualifications to help measure learners' progress and possibly help decide which Welsh GCSE a learner should take.

These qualifications could help support progression for learners who want to continue studying Welsh beyond 16. They could also be made available for post-16 learners who are keen to continue developing their Welsh and could be made available in Further Education settings.

The results from these proposed qualifications could help describe learners' language profile, indicating their level of proficiency in reading, writing, speaking and listening. The qualifications should be mapped onto an internationally-recognised language-referencing framework such as the CEFR⁵¹, so that learners can see how their achievements relate to other Welsh qualifications, including the proposed new Welsh GCSEs and post-16 Welsh language qualifications. This should support and encourage more learners to continue to use and develop their Welsh language skills after 16. Using the CEFR also helps to link achievement in one language to achievement in other languages and to encourage learners to see themselves as plurilingual.

We want the new qualifications to make effective use of digital technology to help make the assessment more engaging for learners and more manageable for schools. Digital technology could also help make these qualifications flexible to deliver, with on-demand assessment where possible, or, if not, through regular assessment windows.

If we adopt this proposal, we will work with stakeholders to develop the detailed design, including addressing the questions of their size and their assessment methods for further consultation. Initially, we would focus on creating just one or two qualifications, to help trial the approach and agree a design that is manageable for schools and viable overall. The full set of small qualifications could be developed and introduced later than September 2025 without impacting on schools' ability to design and adopt their own School Curriculum⁵².

4. Review and reform made-for-Wales GCSEs in French, German and Spanish.

This proposal would give schools a choice of reformed GCSEs in the three international languages that are most taught in Wales.

Feedback from stakeholders suggests that there is a case for substantially revamping the content and assessment of the current made-for-Wales GCSEs in these languages. The approach to international languages described in the Curriculum Guidance also suggests there is a case for reconsidering the model for teaching and assessing languages.

51 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard for describing language ability. It describes six broad stages of language proficiency and communication which allows learners' progress to be measured at each stage. The stages are described using 'can do' statements and are designed to help learners to recognise and track their own development, as well as to support practitioners, policy makers and awarding bodies to develop courses, materials and assessments.

52 When the Curriculum for Wales takes effect, each school in Wales will be required to create its own School Curriculum in line with Curriculum Guidance set by Welsh Government. See page 6 for more details.

The long-standing decline in the number of learners studying international languages up to 16 is well documented. Some additional challenges that schools face in reversing this trend include:

- limited availability of qualified teachers for languages other than French, German and Spanish
- decreasing learner demand making it less viable for schools to maintain language-teaching departments
- relatively high assessment costs per candidate for awarding bodies

Continuing to offer schools a choice of reformed GCSEs in French, German and Spanish will build on existing capacity and competence in the system to teach these languages. It also offers an opportunity to fundamentally rethink how language GCSEs are designed and assessed.

We will work with practitioners to make sure the new qualifications are more accessible, relevant, engaging and appealing. In doing so we will make sure they continue to represent meaningful achievement and support progression for those learners who want to go on to study these languages at AS and A level. Introducing better use of digital technology to enhance language acquisition and assessment could also have a positive effect on the perception and experience of learning and exploring languages.

The qualifications should be mapped onto an internationally-recognised language-referencing framework such as the CEFR⁵³, so that learners can see how their achievements relate to other language qualifications.

Viability of language GCSEs is not a challenge unique to Wales. Similar difficulties are faced in England, where the majority of language GCSEs are only offered by a single awarding body, owing to the relatively low numbers of learners taking the qualifications. Having carefully explored the possibility, we have concluded that it will not be viable to increase the range of languages available as made-for-Wales GCSEs. French, German and Spanish remain the most certificated international language GCSEs in Wales, and the declining numbers of learners already poses a potential risk to their long-term viability. The relatively low demand for GCSEs in other languages would not be sufficient to support the development of a made-for-Wales GCSE in those languages.

Currently, schools and learners can access all designed-for-England GCSEs that are available in international languages other than French, German and Spanish. It is encouraging to note that each year nearly all of these qualifications are taken by at least some learners in Wales.

We will seek to ensure that these qualifications remain available so that schools can continue to have the flexibility to select qualifications to reflect their School Curriculum and meet the needs of learners. We know, for example, that for some learners, these qualifications offer an important opportunity to develop skills in, and gain recognition for, a language they use outside school.

53 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard for describing language ability. It describes six broad stages of language proficiency and communication which allows learners' progress to be measured at each stage. The stages are described using 'can do' statements and are designed to help learners to recognise and track their own development, as well as to support practitioners, policy makers and awarding bodies to develop courses, materials and assessments.

5. Create a set of small, made-for-Wales qualifications in a range of international languages to support engagement and progression in language learning.

Creating a range of small qualifications alongside the GCSEs will enable schools to develop flexible programmes of language learning tailored to the needs of individuals or groups of learners.

These qualifications will be offered in a range of languages and will be used to encourage more learners to continue studying international languages up to the age of 16, without having to commit to a full GCSE. This approach could help reverse the decline in the number of learners studying languages by giving them a taste of different languages and igniting their curiosity and enthusiasm for language learning.

Offering learners a chance to study multiple languages post-14 will help them to see and learn from the connections and relationships between different languages. This will offer schools a way of enabling learners to engage with the first Statement of What Matters in this Area (*'Languages connect us'*). It will also help to change perceptions by allowing learners to see themselves as multilingual.

Results could be presented as a language profile to indicate learners' relative strengths in speaking, writing, reading and listening. This could be done through positive statements of what a learner can do in various contexts or for specific purposes. This approach would reflect how the CEFR⁵⁴ describes language acquisition and would allow for a clear mapping of these qualifications on to that framework. This could give learners a sense of the progress they have made and help them consider how to progress further and build on their learning. Studying a broader range of languages is also likely to have a positive impact on learners' Welsh, English and plurilingual⁵⁵ communication skills.

It will be important for schools to continue offering learners the option of taking an international language GCSE, to support the depth of learning required to progress to study at AS and A level. But these smaller qualifications will also help to support progression, by offering learners an opportunity to explore multiple languages. This can help strengthen learners' grasp of how languages work and spark an interest that could offer an alternative route to engaging with international languages post-16.

If we adopt this proposal, we will work with stakeholders to develop proposals for the content and assessment of these qualifications. A useful starting point would be to review the existing Language Pathways qualifications. This will allow us to build on the good practice that already exists. We will engage further with stakeholders on the proposed range of languages and the qualification designs before making any final decisions.

54 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard for describing language ability. It describes six broad stages of language proficiency and communication which allows learners' progress to be measured at each stage. The stages are described using 'can do' statements and are designed to help learners to recognise and track their own development, as well as to support practitioners, policy makers and awarding bodies to develop courses, materials and assessments.

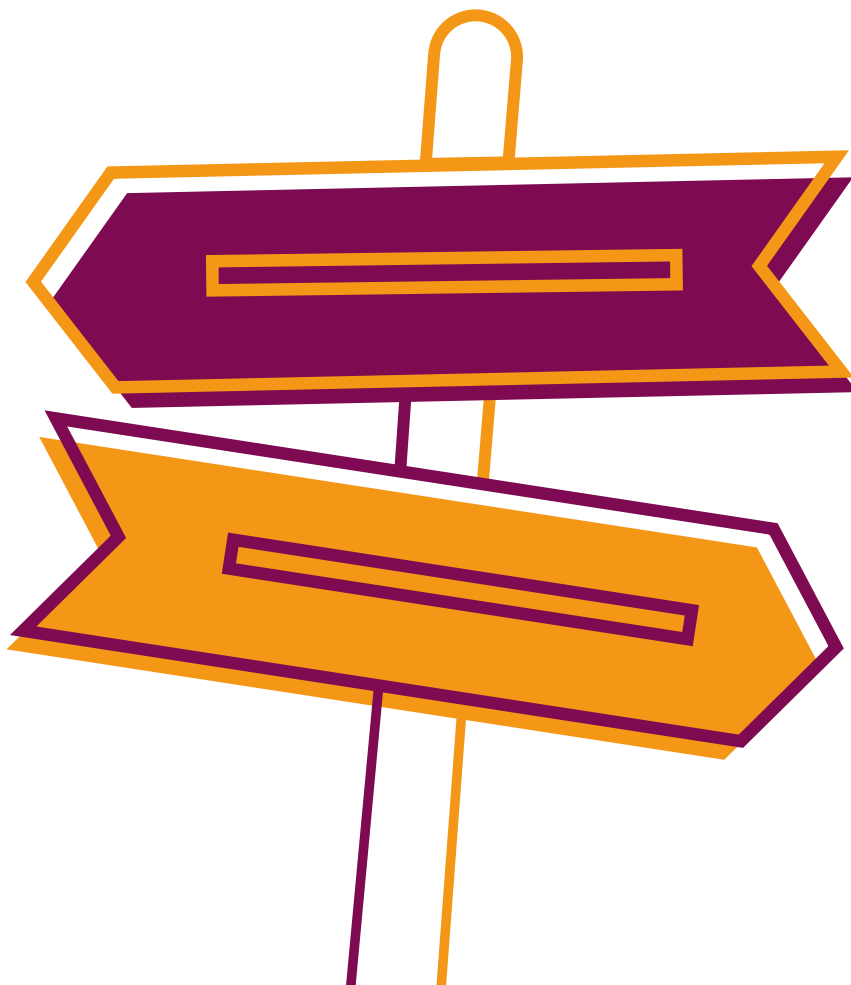
55 The Curriculum Guidance defines plurilingualism (*lluosieithrwydd* in Welsh) as knowing, using and making connections between a number of languages.

Initially, we could focus on one or two languages, to help trial the approach and agree a design that is manageable for schools and viable overall. The full set of small qualifications could be developed and introduced later than September 2025 without in the meantime impacting on schools' ability to design and adopt their own School Curriculum.

6. Make sure learners and schools can continue to access a range of British Sign Language qualifications, including any new GCSE developed for learners in England.

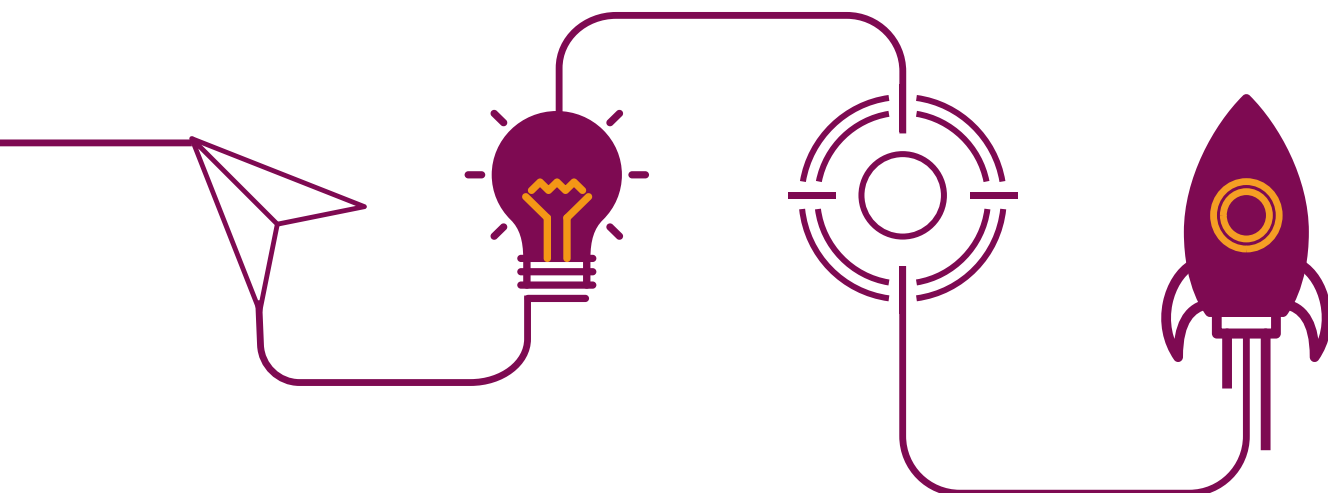
We will make sure that learners and schools can continue to choose from a range of BSL qualifications from Entry Level to Level 2 of the CQFW. This includes qualifications to support those who are starting or continuing to learn BSL, as well as qualifications designed for learners for whom BSL is one of their main languages.

Currently, the Department for Education in England is working with stakeholders, awarding bodies and Ofqual (the qualifications regulator for England) to try to develop a new BSL GCSE. We fully support this development and are keeping in regular contact with colleagues to keep abreast of progress. It will take time and effort to agree the purpose and design of the proposed qualification, and to make sure the end qualification is viable and meets the needs of as many learners as possible. If a BSL GCSE is developed for England, then we will make sure it is made available to learners and schools in Wales.



Consultation Questions:

1. **How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to create new combined language and literature GCSEs in English and Welsh to replace the existing separate GCSE qualifications?** These new combined GCSEs would each be roughly the size of 1½ GCSEs.
2. **How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to discontinue GCSE Welsh Second Language and create a new, bigger GCSE designed for learners in English-medium contexts?** The new qualification would be roughly the size of 1½ GCSEs.
3. **How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to create a set of small Welsh language skills qualifications that can be taken in addition to a GCSE to support progression along the Welsh language continuum?**
4. **How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to review and reform made-for-Wales GCSEs in French, German and Spanish?**
5. **How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to create a set of small, made-for-Wales qualifications in a range of international languages to support engagement and progression in language learning?**
6. **How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to make sure learners and schools can continue to access a range of British Sign Language qualifications, including any new GCSE developed for learners in England?**



5. Mathematics and Numeracy

Curriculum guidance⁵⁶

The Mathematics and Numeracy Area of Learning and Experience ('Area') involves the development of five proficiencies: conceptual understanding; communication using symbols; fluency; logical reasoning and strategic competence.

The four Statements of What Matters in this Area⁵⁷ are:

1. *The number system is used to represent and compare relationships between numbers and quantities.*
2. *Algebra uses symbol systems to express the structure of mathematical relationships.*
3. *Geometry focuses on relationships involving shape, space and position, and measurement focuses on quantifying phenomena in the physical world.*
4. *Statistics represent data, probability models chance, and both support informed inferences and decisions.*

Current provision

In this Area at present, there are two made-for-Wales GCSEs available to schools:

- GCSE Mathematics
- GCSE Mathematics-Numeracy

These qualifications were introduced in 2015 to replace the previous GCSE Mathematics qualification. Most learners in Wales study both GCSE Mathematics and GCSE Mathematics-Numeracy.

The two qualifications have a different emphasis. The GCSE Mathematics-Numeracy focuses on the mathematics that learners will need in their everyday lives, in the world of work and in other general curriculum areas. By contrast GCSE Mathematics extends to aspects of mathematics required for progression to scientific, technical or further mathematical study.⁵⁸

56 The Curriculum Guidance sets out in more detail what a School Curriculum should cover in relation to the areas of learning and experience, mandatory elements and cross-curricular skills. For a more detailed explanation, see page 6.

57 We have listed here the headlines for the Statements of What Matters in this Area. Each statement is described more fully in the Curriculum Guidance.

58 https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/mathematics-gcse/#tab_overview

Alongside these made-for-Wales GCSEs, schools can also choose from a range of other qualifications related to this Area. These include:

- GCSE Statistics (a designed-for-England qualification⁵⁹ only available through English).
- WJEC Level 2 Additional Mathematics. This qualification is taken by approximately 10%⁶⁰ of the cohort in Wales each year and helps support progression to AS Level Mathematics. It is available bilingually.
- Qualifications of differing sizes at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2 of the CQFW⁶¹ in various aspects of Mathematics and Mathematics-Numeracy, including financial education. Some of these qualifications are available bilingually, others are English-only.

Proposals at a glance

To shape the range of qualifications for Mathematics and Numeracy, we propose to:

1. Create a new combined GCSE Mathematics and Numeracy qualification to replace the two existing GCSEs in Mathematics and Mathematics-Numeracy. The new GCSE would be roughly the size of 1½ GCSEs.
2. Create a new small qualification that can be taken in addition to the GCSE to assess a learner's numerical proficiency, using an on-screen assessment method.
3. Create a made-for-Wales Level 2 qualification in Additional Mathematics.

Qualifications in disciplines related to this Area will continue to be available to schools and learners, provided they meet our guiding principles and do not duplicate the main made-for-Wales qualifications in this Area.

The thinking behind the proposals

- 1. Create a new combined GCSE Mathematics and Numeracy qualification to replace the two existing GCSEs in Mathematics and Mathematics-Numeracy. The new GCSE would be roughly the size of 1½ GCSEs.**

This proposal would offer schools and learners a common qualification that provides a firm foundation in this Area and supports progression to a wide range of routes post-16.

59 Since 2015 there are some differences between GCSEs designed for Wales, England and Northern Ireland. GCSEs for Wales continue to be graded A*-G, GCSEs for England are now graded 9-1, and in Northern Ireland a new C* grade has been introduced. All GCSEs continue to be broadly comparable in size and level of demand.

60 For more information on the number of additional mathematics entries, visit [Qualifications Wales / Provisional Summer 2019 exam entries for Wales: GCSEs, AS, A levels, Skills Challenge Certificate, and Level 1/Level 2 certificates](#).

61 The [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales](#) (CQFW) describes the qualifications system in Wales. It encompasses a wide range of qualifications across all levels from the initial stages (entry level) to the most advanced (level 8 e.g. Doctoral). It aims to help learners make informed decisions about their learning and potential progression opportunities.

A single combined qualification would be more consistent with current teaching practice and reflect how the Curriculum Guidance describes this Area. Currently, despite the existence of separate Mathematics and Mathematics-Numeracy GCSEs, the way that teaching of these subjects is timetabled in most schools does not distinguish between them. The Curriculum Guidance for this Area also does not distinguish between mathematics-related content and numeracy-related content.

At present, although the two GCSEs available in this Area have different purposes, there is considerable overlap in the content they cover. This is because the content assessed in GCSE Mathematics-Numeracy is a subset of the GCSE Mathematics content. This creates some duplication of assessment and adds to the overall assessment burden for learners and teachers.

A combined GCSE would not need to be as big as the two separate GCSEs. This would give learners more time for pursuing other subjects. A bigger GCSE in this subject would also reflect the size of the GCSE taken by learners in England and Northern Ireland.

A combined GCSE could allow for more efficient assessment. Procedural mathematics questions and contextualised problem-solving tasks could be combined in the same assessment. This could help teachers to focus more on developing learners' proficiencies rather than preparing for two distinct sets of assessments. A qualification that requires learners both to demonstrate their understanding of mathematical concepts and to apply them to solve problems in real-life contexts will give learners a strong grasp of the mathematical proficiencies they need to progress beyond GCSE.

The Curriculum Guidance for this Area includes a focus on financial mathematics. This covers topics such as interest rates, depreciation, currency exchange, taxation and budgeting. A new combined GCSE in this Area could assess learners' financial skills and knowledge using relevant and engaging contexts.

When developing the qualifications, we will work closely with stakeholders, including schools, colleges and employers, to translate the content specified in the Curriculum Guidance into a combined Mathematics and Numeracy qualification.

If adopted, this proposal could have a potential impact on post-16 learners resitting the new Mathematics and Numeracy GCSE. A bigger GCSE qualification would require more teaching time which would impact upon learners' workload, as well as on staffing and funding for post-16 learning providers. The potential impact on Learning Area Programmes will also need to be considered. We will carefully consider these impacts and the ways they could be mitigated when developing the new qualification. This will include looking at the choice of qualifications available to post-16 learners.

2. Create a new small qualification that can be taken in addition to the GCSE to assess a learner's numerical proficiency, using an on-screen assessment method.

Currently, just over one-third of learners each year do not achieve a Grade C or above in either GCSE Mathematics or GCSE Mathematics-Numeracy. A Grade C or above in this Area is often a minimum requirement for many jobs and not achieving it limits the routes that learners can take post-16. It can also leave some learners with a negative attitude towards mathematics.

A small, additional qualification in numerical proficiency could give learners who do not achieve a grade C or above at GCSE a basis from which to progress to further education, training and employment. It could also enable learners to develop their confidence and give them a more positive sense of achievement in this Area as they leave compulsory education.

This additional qualification would not have the GCSE title and would focus on a narrower range of skills and content than the GCSE. It would assess learners' basic numerical proficiency in different contexts and show they have the numerical skills to function effectively in the workplace and in everyday life.

This qualification would be designed to be taken with the new proposed GCSE in this Area, rather than instead of it and learners could study for the two qualifications in parallel. To help support progression, the level of difficulty would be comparable to what is currently expected at the GCSE Grade C and Grade D boundary. The qualification would not be graded but simply indicate whether a learner has demonstrated the expected level of proficiency or not.

A practical focus on the mathematical skills used in everyday life, such as personal finances or statistics in the media, could help emphasise the relevance of the subject and make it more engaging for learners.

This qualification would be assessed using on-screen assessment methods that are available on-demand. This could allow learners to take an assessment when they are ready to do so. Learners would be able to take the assessment multiple times and get their results quickly. We would also explore how those results could give learners information about the relative strengths and weaknesses of their performance so they can focus on how to improve.

This type of approach to assessment has been shown to improve learners' engagement and motivation⁶², even if they have been unsuccessful at their first attempt. As an approach, it also has some similarities to the national assessments taken in Years 2 to 9, which will already be familiar to learners.

This qualification has clear potential to help support the development of learners' functional numeracy. But to help learners progress, it would need to be valued by employers and have currency for learners. We know from our work on the Skills Challenge Certificate that establishing such value and recognition can take time.

If we adopt this proposal, we will work closely with a wide range of stakeholders to consider the precise mathematical content and application this type of qualification should cover. This will include agreeing a definition of what we mean by numerical proficiency in this context. We will also explore how the assessment tasks can be designed to support effective development of the underpinning skills and proficiencies that learners need to help them progress.

Developing and introducing a new and innovative qualification like this will require considerable trialling, evaluation and refinement. This means the qualification would probably not be ready until after the proposed new Mathematics and Numeracy GCSE is introduced, and probably not until after September 2025.

62 Bae, S., & Kokka, K. (2016). Student Engagement in Assessments: What Students and Teachers Find Engaging. Stanford, CA. Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education and Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity

3. Create a made-for-Wales Level 2 qualification in Additional Mathematics.

The current WJEC Level 2 Additional Mathematics qualification is popular with schools and is seen as offering an appropriate challenge to the most able mathematicians within the cohort. It can also provide a useful preparation for learners intending to progress to AS Mathematics, because it introduces them to more advanced mathematical concepts such as calculus. It is offered by WJEC in both Welsh and English, and is taken by around 10% of the cohort⁶³.

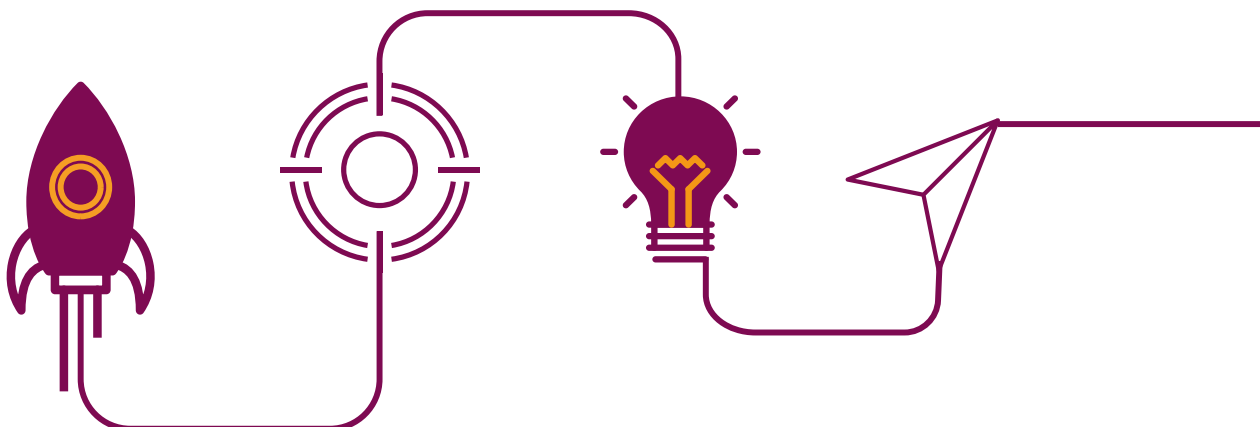
In our engagement with schools, teachers have commented favourably on the content, size and structure of the qualification.

We propose that this qualification should continue to be available in future. This could be done by putting regulatory requirements in place so that it must be offered as a made-for-Wales qualification.

63 In summer 2020 the qualification was awarded to 3,110 learners across Wales.

Consultation Questions:

- 1. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to create a new combined GCSE Mathematics and Numeracy qualification to replace the two existing GCSEs in Mathematics and Mathematics-Numeracy?**
The new GCSE would be roughly the size of 1½ GCSEs.
- 2. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to create a new small qualification that can be taken in addition to the GCSE to assess a learner's numerical proficiency, using an on-screen assessment method?**
- 3. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to create a made-for-Wales Level 2 qualification in Additional Mathematics?**



6. Science and Technology

Curriculum guidance⁶⁴

The Science and Technology Area of Learning and Experience ('Area') draws on the disciplines of biology, chemistry, computer science, design and technology, and physics.

The six Statements of What Matters in this Area⁶⁵ are:

1. *Being curious and searching for answers is essential to understanding and predicting phenomena.*
2. *Design thinking and engineering offer technical and creative ways to meet society's needs and wants.*
3. *The world around us is full of living things which depend on each other for survival.*
4. *Matter and the way it behaves defines our universe and shapes our lives.*
5. *Forces and energy provide a foundation for understanding our universe.*
6. *Computation is the foundation for our digital world.*

Current provision

At present the made-for-Wales GCSEs available to schools in this Area are:

Technology

- Computer Science
- Design and Technology
- Digital Technology⁶⁶
- Built Environment⁶⁷

Science

- Applied Science (Single Award)
- Applied Science (Double Award)
- Science (Double Award)
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics

Alongside these made-for-Wales GCSEs, schools can also choose from a range of other qualifications related to this Area. Some of these other qualifications are only available in English, and the number of learners taking them is generally much lower than for the main GCSEs in this Area.

64 The Curriculum Guidance sets out in more detail what a School Curriculum should cover in relation to the areas of learning and experience, mandatory elements and cross-curricular skills. For a more detailed explanation, see page 6.

65 We have listed here the headlines for the Statements of What Matters in this Area. Each statement is described more fully in the Curriculum Guidance.

66 A new GCSE starting in September 2021, introduced following our review of qualifications in the Digital Technology sector: Qualifications Wales (2018). *Delivering digital – Sector Review of Qualifications and the Qualifications System in Information and Communication Technology*. Available from: <https://www.qualificationswales.org/media/4044/itc-review-2018-e.pdf>

67 A new GCSE starting in September 2021, introduced following our review of qualifications in the Construction and the Built Environment sector: Qualifications Wales (2018). *Building the Future: Sector Review of Qualifications and the Qualifications System in Construction and the Built Environment*. Available from: <https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/publications/cbe-report>

Versions of GCSE qualifications that have been designed for England⁶⁸ are available in:

Astronomy	Engineering	Psychology
Electronics	Geology	

Qualifications other than GCSEs are available in the following subjects:

Agriculture	Engineering	Motor Vehicles
Design and Technology	Horticulture	Science
Electronics	Information Technology	

Some of these qualifications are available bilingually, others are available in English only.

Proposals at a glance

To shape the range of qualifications in this Area, we propose to:

1. Review and reform GCSEs in Computer Science, Built Environment, Design and Technology, and Digital Technology.
2. Create a new Engineering and Manufacturing GCSE.
3. Create a new GCSE Science qualification to replace the existing set of science GCSEs. This qualification is likely to be roughly the size of two GCSEs.
4. Create a set of small science qualifications that can be taken in addition to the proposed new GCSE Science qualification. These units are likely to be equivalent in size to either one-third or two-thirds of a GCSE.

Qualifications in subjects related to Science and Technology would continue to be available to schools and learners, provided they meet our guiding principles and do not duplicate the main made-for-Wales qualifications in this Area.

The thinking behind the proposals

1. Review and reform GCSEs in Computer Science, Built Environment, Design and Technology, and Digital Technology.

The qualifications covered by this proposal support and encourage learners to develop their interest in a variety of subject areas and support progression to further learning.

We have concluded that there is not a case for creating a combined technology qualification that spans a range of different technologies and applications. This is because these subjects are discrete and contain distinct content which needs to be applied in practical contexts. Consequently, they do not readily lend themselves to a combined qualification. There would be a risk that any combined qualification would provide learners with only a superficial understanding of each subject area. This in turn may not prepare them adequately for further study in these subjects post-16.

68 Since 2015 there are some differences between GCSEs designed for Wales, England and Northern Ireland. GCSEs for Wales continue to be graded A*-G, GCSEs for England are now graded 9-1, and in Northern Ireland a new C* grade has been introduced. All GCSEs continue to be broadly comparable in size and level of demand.

Also given the distinct nature of each subject, there is a risk that any combined qualification would lack coherence as there is insufficient commonality between the subjects. Maintaining discrete qualifications in these subjects offers schools and learners the choice to study different aspects of the Area in more depth.

The proposal would mean that we review the content and assessment of the existing GCSEs in these subjects to consider any changes that may be required. We would then consult on any proposed changes.

The GCSE Built Environment and GCSE Digital Technology qualifications are brand new and we have recently consulted on their content and assessment. There is support for having GCSEs in these subjects, and their design is forward-looking. Both qualifications include flexible content that can be shaped by schools, and both include a mix of assessment methods, including digital and on-screen assessment. It is possible, therefore, that a review of these qualifications at this stage would not identify any changes required to their content and assessment. If any changes are identified, we will consider whether they are required immediately or whether they could be introduced later. This could mean that reformed versions of these qualifications might not be available for teaching until after September 2025.

2. Create a new Engineering and Manufacturing GCSE.

This proposal comes from our recent review of qualifications related to the engineering and advanced-manufacturing employment sector⁶⁹.

This new qualification would introduce learners to the rich and diverse opportunities for further study and work in the world of engineering and manufacturing. The content would have a strong focus on assessing practical skills and applying knowledge to real-life scenarios, as well as on theoretical content.

Engineering is also explicitly mentioned in the second Statement of What Matters for this Area and so is a subject that aligns closely to the new curriculum. Additionally, the findings from our sector review suggest that it could offer a valuable lens through which to study and engage with several different aspects of the Curriculum for Wales, and help learners to realise its Four Purposes.

If we adopt this proposal, we will work with stakeholders to develop and consult on detailed proposals for the content and assessment of this new qualification. We will also consult on when the new qualification should be introduced.

Currently there are other qualifications that learners can take in subjects related to engineering and manufacturing; the new GCSE is likely to replace some of these. We will use the consultation to identify the qualifications that are likely to be replaced.

Given that Engineering is not currently a made-for-Wales GCSE, if this proposal is accepted it is possible that the new qualification would have to be introduced later than 2025. If this is the case, existing alternative provision in Engineering would continue to remain available until the new qualification is introduced.

69 Qualifications Wales (2020) *Sector Review of Qualifications and the Qualifications System in Engineering, Advanced Manufacturing and Energy*. Available from: <https://www.qualificationswales.org/media/6722/the-importance-of-engineering-oct-2020.pdf>

3. Create a new GCSE Science qualification to replace the existing set of science GCSEs. This qualification is likely to be roughly the size of two GCSEs.

This proposal needs to be considered in close conjunction with proposal number 4, namely that a set of small science qualifications be created to be taken in addition to a new science GCSE. These small qualifications would complement the GCSE proposed in this section and provide additional opportunities for learners who want to specialise in science.

There are currently several different science GCSEs available to schools. All are designed to assess equally demanding content, but differ in how much content they cover, and how that content is structured and assessed. Some are designed to support progression to science A levels, and some are not. Not all schools offer the whole science GCSE set, and not all learners are given the same degree of choice about which science GCSE they study.

We propose replacing the current GCSE science set (including the separate GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics) with a single GCSE qualification. This would offer all learners a common approach to science. We would design the new qualification to:

- be accessible to the same range of learners as existing science GCSEs
- support progression to A level and equivalent qualifications in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects
- be roughly the same size as two GCSEs.

If we adopt this proposal for a common GCSE science qualification, we will work closely with many different stakeholders to develop proposals for the detailed design of the new qualification. These would include proposals for the content it should cover, including how much content it should contain and how it should be organised. Reflecting the Curriculum Guidance, the qualification would still include content drawn from the disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics.

We would consider which assessment methods are most appropriate for the new qualification, including how best to assess scientific enquiry and practical laboratory skills. Our proposals would be guided by how the qualification design could best support good teaching and positive learning experiences linked to the expectations of the Curriculum for Wales.

The new qualification would need to be accessible to a wide range of learners while also offering them all a suitable degree of challenge and progression. When reforming these science qualifications, we would work closely with stakeholders to consider how the skills and conceptual knowledge described in the Curriculum Guidance for this Area should be reflected within the qualification. Agreeing which content should be mandatory and which could be optional will require some difficult decisions. Working with a wide variety of stakeholders will be key to getting the balance right in the proposed design and to ensure the focus is on supporting positive teaching and learning experiences.

We expect the new qualification would be roughly the size of two GCSEs, similar to the current combined double award. The precise size and coverage of the proposed new qualification would be determined through further consultation.

In developing requirements for the new qualification, we would want to see more emphasis on contexts and applications of science and build on the relative merits of all the current GCSE science qualifications.

Having one common science qualification across schools could reinforce the connections across the whole Area. It could also help to emphasise the relevance of scientific ideas and thinking to the world around us and to learners' futures.

A single route through science at 14-16 could support more learners to progress onto science and STEM⁷⁰ areas of study and work. It removes the need for decisions to be made at 14 that can sometimes narrow learners' future options. It would also give them an authentic, relevant and engaging experience of science, equipping them with knowledge and skills to succeed and progress post-16, regardless of whatever field they choose to specialise in later on.

This proposal would mean that separate GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics would no longer be available. Contrary to some perceptions, universities do not favour learners who have taken separate sciences at GCSE over those who have achieved a double award. Engagement with universities indicates a clear preference for learners with a breadth of different learning and experiences. This is true for highly selective STEM courses as well as for other courses. By removing the misconception that progression to some courses is only for those who have studied separate science GCSEs, a common approach to science increases equity in learners' experiences and could help to broaden STEM participation post-16.

Our engagement with stakeholders so far suggests that most schools regard science as a central part of the curriculum and therefore allocate it a substantial amount of teaching time. They would welcome a qualification that offers a common approach to the subjects across schools. Other stakeholders, including the major scientific learned societies, also expressed a preference for a more common approach to the sciences for learners aged 14 to 16.⁷¹

Simplifying the range of available science GCSEs allows schools and learners to put together combinations of qualifications that reflect the full breadth of the Curriculum Guidance. Those who want to focus on other Areas would have more flexibility to do so, while learners who want to focus more on this Area would be able to choose from a range of additional science qualifications; we discuss this further in the next proposal.

4. Create a set of small science qualifications that can be taken in addition to the proposed new GCSE Science qualification. These units are likely to be equivalent in size to either one-third or two-thirds of a GCSE.

This builds on the previous proposal to create a new GCSE Science qualification that would replace the existing set of science GCSEs. Taken together, these two proposals could offer schools and learners a balance between equity and choice. The new GCSE would provide a common approach to the fundamentals of science, whilst the set of supplementary qualifications would give schools the flexibility to tailor their curriculum and offer their learners the choice to explore the sciences further and in different ways. These supplementary qualifications could enable learners to apply concepts and skills developed in the GCSE qualification to a different range of relevant, engaging and contemporary contexts.

70 Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

71 SCORE Science Community Representing Education, (2015) *The Sciences at Key Stage 4: time for a re-think?* Available from: https://www.rsb.org.uk/images/score_sciences_at_ks4_final.pdf

To represent a meaningful and manageable course of learning, we envisage these new qualifications would be broadly equivalent in size to either one-third or two-thirds of a GCSE. We would also explore the possibility that a combination of these optional units could be aggregated together to create an additional science GCSE award for learners. This would enable learners with a strong interest in natural sciences to obtain the equivalent of three GCSEs in science subjects.

This set of supplementary qualifications would give learners a choice to engage with broader aspects of science and to explore connections with other parts of their School Curriculum⁷². At the moment, most learners take either the equivalent of two or three science GCSEs. This proposal would give learners more choice and flexibility to decide how much they want to specialise in science and the aspects of science on which they would like to focus.

As supplementary qualifications, they would be designed to build on the content covered in the proposed new GCSE Science qualification without duplicating it. This approach could help to agree the essential content that should be included in the GCSE Science qualification to support progression. These qualifications could also be tailored to a school or a learner's needs, for example by including more flexible approaches to assessment than the main GCSE qualification.

These qualifications would not be designed to be essential for learners seeking to progress in sciences, but they could offer learners a chance to engage with broader aspects of science, to make connections with technology and other parts of their School Curriculum, and to explore the different options and pathways open to them.

In taking forward this proposal we would work closely with stakeholders to consider the different possibilities that a set of supplementary qualifications could cover. For example, they could:

- assess scientific thinking and experimenting, and provide additional opportunities for extended practical work
- look at the different applications of science, such as:
 - science in industry
 - land-based science and agriculture
 - science in society and the media
 - environmental science and climate change
 - science in medicine and human biology
- take a thematic and integrated approach to topics such as:
 - space
 - geological science
 - natural history

Balanced against these possibilities will be the need to ensure that any agreed set of additional qualifications would provide a coherent set of choices for learners, be

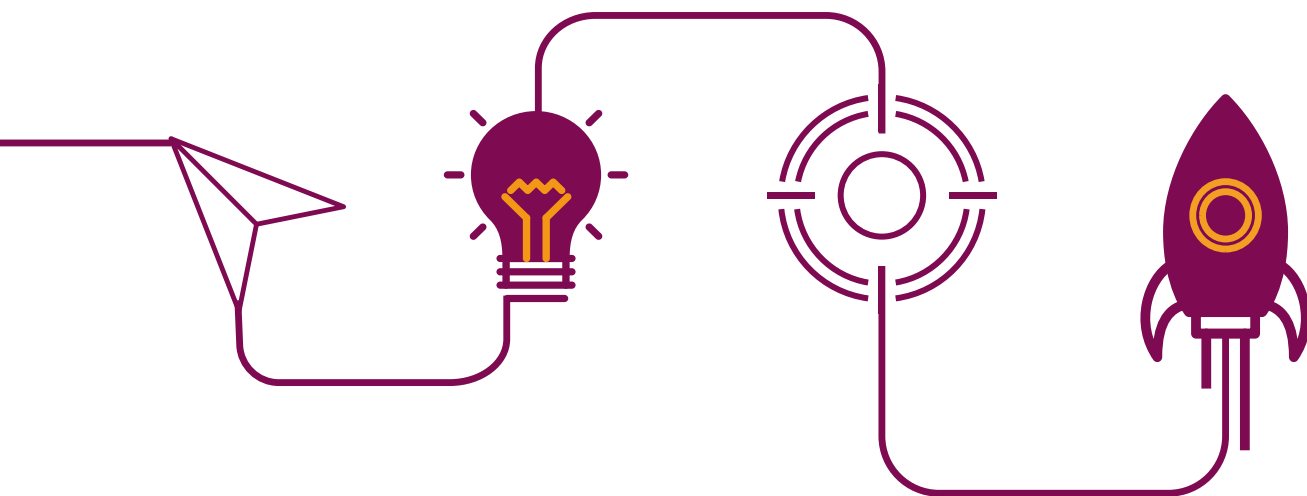
72 When the Curriculum for Wales takes effect, each school in Wales will be required to create its own School Curriculum in line with Curriculum Guidance set by Welsh Government. See page 6 for more details.

manageable for schools to deliver, and viable for awarding bodies to offer. We would consider these challenges when developing and consulting on proposals for the new qualifications.

We would want as many additional science qualifications as possible to be available in readiness for teaching from September 2025, alongside the new proposed science GCSE. Further qualifications could then be added to the set over time.

Consultation Questions:

1. **How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to review and reform GCSEs in Computer Science, Built Environment, Design and Technology, and Digital Technology?**
2. **How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to create a new Engineering and Manufacturing GCSE?**
3. **How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to create a new GCSE Science qualification to replace the existing set of science GCSEs?**
This qualification is likely to be roughly the size of two GCSEs.
4. **How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to create a set of small science qualifications that can be taken in addition to the proposed new GCSE Science qualification?** These units are likely to be equivalent in size to either one-third or two-thirds of a GCSE.



7. Integral Skills

Curriculum guidance⁷³

The Curriculum Guidance notes that the Four Purposes are underpinned by integral skills which should be developed within a wide range of learning and teaching.

The four integral skills are:

- *Creativity and Innovation*
- *Critical Thinking and Problem-solving*
- *Personal Effectiveness*
- *Planning and Organising*

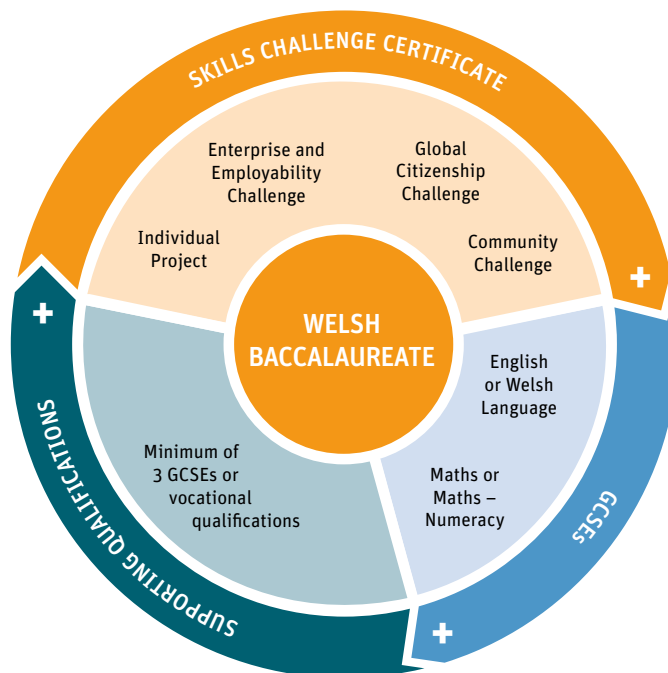
Current provision

The integral skills described in the Curriculum Guidance mirror the skills that are assessed through the Welsh Baccalaureate National/Foundation Skills Challenge Certificate ('SCC') qualification.

The SCC is designed to be similar in size to a GCSE qualification, but the way it is assessed is different. It is assessed through a series of challenges and an individual project that learners complete during the course. It offers schools and learners a lot of choice about the topics they choose to focus on. It does not include any examination-based assessment.

The SCC forms part of the Welsh Baccalaureate framework ('the Welsh Bacc'), which is made up of several different qualifications. The diagram below shows how the SCC fits into the Welsh Bacc.

Diagram 1: Breakdown of the Welsh Baccalaureate National / Foundation Framework



73 The Curriculum Guidance sets out in more detail what a School Curriculum should cover in relation to the areas of learning and experience, mandatory elements and cross-curricular skills. For a more detailed explanation, see page 6.

The SCC and Welsh Bacc is taken by the vast majority of 14 to 16-year-old learners in Wales.

In 2018 we published a review of the Welsh Bacc and SCC⁷⁴. The review found that the SCC is a worthwhile qualification, providing learners with valuable opportunities to gain real-life skills and develop their interests by choosing areas of study that are relevant to them. It also identified areas that could be improved to make the qualification more manageable by reducing complexity and duplication of assessment.

Proposal

We propose that the SCC should be reformed to make it simpler and more manageable, with a focus on assessing the Integral Skills of:

- ***Creativity and Innovation***
- ***Critical Thinking and Problem Solving***
- ***Personal Effectiveness***
- ***Planning and Organising***

The thinking behind the proposal

Following recent consultation, we will shortly be confirming the design requirements for a new Advanced SCC qualification.

We are now consulting on whether to take forward similar work to reform the SCC at National / Foundation level (Levels 1 and 2 of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales⁷⁵). This is the SCC qualification currently taken by learners aged 14 to 16 alongside their GCSEs.

Adopting this proposal would mean that we continue to work with stakeholders to agree a new design for how the SCC qualifications should be delivered and assessed. In this way, we could address the recommendations from previous reviews.

We would expect the new design to continue to offer a lot of flexibility for learners to select topics that allow them to develop and demonstrate their integral skills. This would allow us to explore how the design of the qualification could help schools to deliver their School Curriculum⁷⁶, for example by offering them a flexible way of structuring learning across different Areas of Learning and Experience ('Areas').

If we adopt this proposal, we will still expect other made-for-Wales qualifications to be designed to encourage the development of integral skills. This reflects the fact that the Curriculum Guidance suggests that teaching and learning of integral skills should be embedded in how a school delivers all Areas of its School Curriculum.

74 Wavehill Ltd, (2018). *A review of the design and assessment model of the Skills Challenge Certificate, and its place within the Welsh Baccalaureate*. Available from: <https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/publications/review-of-the-skills-challenge-certificate---welsh-baccalaureate-report/>

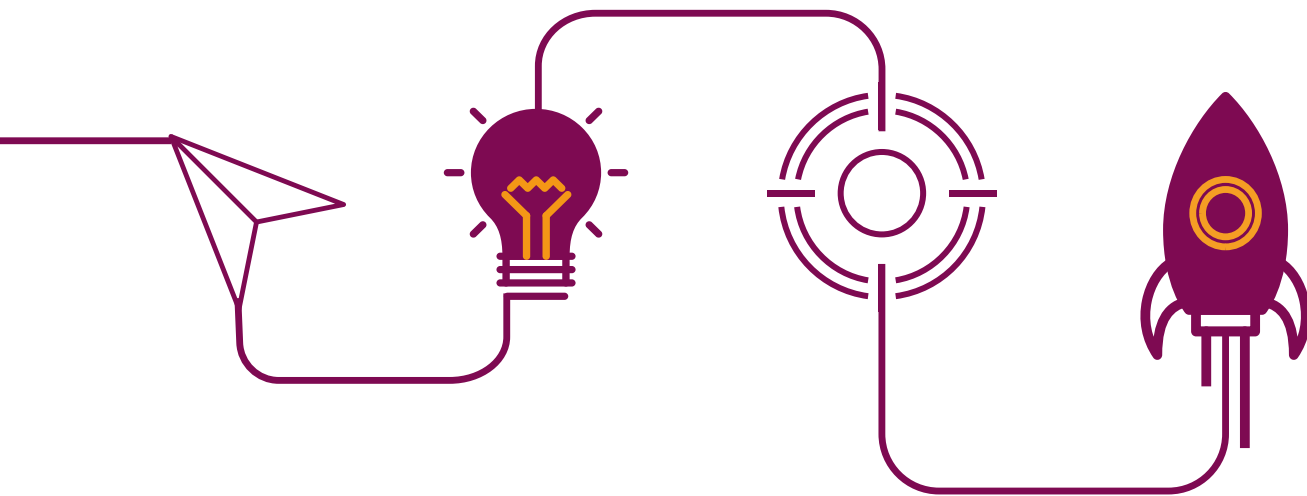
75 The [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales](#) (CQFW) describes the qualifications system in Wales. It encompasses a wide range of qualifications across all levels from the initial stages (Entry Level) to the most advanced (Level 8 e.g. Doctoral). It aims to help learners make informed decisions about their learning and potential progression opportunities.

76 When the Curriculum for Wales takes effect, each school in Wales will be required to create its own School Curriculum in line with Curriculum Guidance set by Welsh Government. See page 6 for more details.

Consultation Questions:

1. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal to reform the SCC to make it simpler and more manageable, with a focus on assessing the Integral Skills of:

- Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Personal Effectiveness
- Planning and Organising



Impact assessment questions

In presenting the proposals in this consultation document, we have considered the key impacts each proposal could have, including on the Welsh language and from the point of view of equalities legislation.

The online survey asks the following questions about the potential impact of the proposals in this consultation.

- 1. In relation to the impacts that we have identified, are there any additional steps that we could take to reduce potential negative effects?**
- 2. Are there any other positive or negative impacts for individuals or groups who share protected characteristics that we have not identified?**
- 3. Are there any positive or negative impacts on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language that we have not identified?**
- 4. Are there any positive or negative impacts in relation to treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language that we have not identified?**
- 5. Are there any other positive or negative impacts that we have not identified?**



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