

National Assembly for Wales
Children, Young People and Education Committee
QW 14
Qualifications Wales Bill
Evidence from : Conwy Education Services

Consultation questions

The Explanatory Memorandum prepared by the Welsh Government describes the Bill's main purposes in the following terms:

The Bill provides for the establishment of Qualifications Wales as the independent regulatory body responsible for the recognition of awarding bodies and the review and approval of non-degree qualifications in Wales. Qualifications Wales will also, along with the Welsh Ministers, be responsible for preparing a list of priority qualifications, designated as such by reason of the significance of the qualification, having regard to the needs of learners and employers in Wales. The intention is, through the establishment of Qualifications Wales, to strengthen the oversight of qualifications and of the qualification system in Wales.

The Bill is intended to address the four main limitations of the current system. These are outlined in the Explanatory Memorandum as:

- there is no single organisation that is dedicated to ensuring the effectiveness of qualifications and the qualification system;
- there are no powers to prioritise qualifications and to thereby focus regulatory activity where it is most needed – with the result that there are large numbers of regulated qualifications but limited resources to ensure effectiveness;
- there are no powers to select a single provider of a given qualification to ensure that learners across Wales take the same qualification; and

- the capacity to drive forward the strategic development of qualifications within the current arrangements is too limited – creating a risk that Wales’ qualifications will not be held in as high esteem, nationally and internationally, as those in other nations.

The Bill provides Qualifications Wales with the following principal aims, and it must act compatibly with these when exercising its functions:

- a) Ensuring that qualifications, and the Welsh qualification system, are effective for meeting the reasonable needs of learners in Wales; and
- b) Promoting public confidence in qualifications and in the Welsh qualification system.

Question 1 – Is there a need for a Bill for the purposes outlined above?

There is a need for a Bill in order:

- to streamline the number of qualifications and options within them;
- to provide a more robust benchmark for performance measures if learners in Wales take the same qualification;
- improved understanding of qualifications for learners, parents and employers.

If you believe there is a need for the Bill, what are the main issues that need to be resolved?

Clear communication to learners, parents, employers and HEIs.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

1 – This is a key, urgent problem.

<i>2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	yES
<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	
Question 2 – Do you think the Bill, as drafted, delivers the stated objectives as set out in the Explanatory Memorandum?	
Yes, the objectives reflect the Explanatory Memorandum	
If not, how do you think the Bill should be amended to take account of this?	
How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)	
<i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
<i>2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	
<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	
Question 3 – Are the sections of the Bill as drafted appropriate to bring about the purposes described above?	
Yes the Bill is appropriately set out to achieve its purpose	
If not, what changes do you believe need to be made to the Bill?	
How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)	
<i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
<i>2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	
<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	

Question 4 – Has the Welsh Government correctly identified the four main limitations of the current arrangement, and will the two principal aims the Bill sets for Qualifications Wales, as well as the eight matters which it must have regard when exercising its functions, effectively address these limitations?

Yes

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

1 - This is a key, urgent problem.

2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.

3 - This is a minor problem

4 - Not a problem.

Question 5 – What are your views on the proposals for determining ‘priority qualifications’ and, within these, ‘restricted priority qualifications’?

The proposals for priority qualifications are acceptable for GCSE and A Level; this will ensure that qualifications have increased robustness and vigour as well as improved standardisation of outcomes ie an A in Maths for a Welsh learner is the same A throughout Wales. Vocational qualifications (IVETs) are vitally important for engaging learners who need a curriculum which has a balance of academic and practical, work-related learning. In addition, these courses also give learners a taster which will lead them to staying in Wales and supporting regional economic drivers. It is important that access to the BTEC suite remains unless it is planned that WJEC produce similar courses.

If you think there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

It is important that the gatekeeping process is as a result of consultation with schools and learners and it is not 'done' to them as access to the BTEC suite, for example, is needed unless it is planned that WJEC produce similar/ identical courses.

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

<i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
<i>2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	Yes
<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	

Question 6 – What are your views on the commissioning type process Qualifications Wales would undertake under the Bill, in respect of restricted priority qualifications?

The commissioning process is clear.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)

<i>1 - This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
<i>2 - This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	
<i>3 - This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 - Not a problem.</i>	

Question 7 – How will the Bill change what organisations do currently and what impact will such changes have, if any?	
Organisations will increasingly work with one awarding body for priority subjects which will impact on improved effectiveness, standardisation, performance and professional development for teachers.	
If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?	
How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)	
<i>1 – This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
<i>2 – This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	
<i>3 – This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 – Not a problem.</i>	
Question 8 – What are the potential barriers to implementing the provisions of the Bill (if any) and does the Bill take account of them?	
There are no obvious potential barriers.	
If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?	
How significant is this issue? (Please select one option)	
<i>1 – This is a key, urgent problem.</i>	
<i>2 – This is a problem that needs to be addressed.</i>	
<i>3 – This is a minor problem</i>	
<i>4 – Not a problem.</i>	

Question 9 – Do you have any views on the way in which the Bill falls within the legislative competence of the National Assembly for Wales?

No.

Question 10 – What are your views on powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (i.e. statutory instruments, including regulations, orders and directions)?

In answering this question, you may wish to consider Section 5 of the Explanatory Memorandum, which contains a table summarising the powers delegated to Welsh Ministers in the Bill to make orders and regulations, etc.

No problem with the powers outlined here.

Question 11 – What are your views on the financial implications of the Bill?

In answering this question you may wish to consider Part 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum (the Regulatory Impact Assessment), which estimates the costs and benefits of implementation of the Bill.

An estimated £38m over the next 5 years in the current climate of austerity in local government is expensive although it will give employment to around 70 people? However having priority qualifications may lead to financial savings in schools as examination bills have grown hugely over the last few years.

Question 12 – Are there any other comments you wish to make about specific sections of the Bill?

No.