



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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# 14 to 16 learning under the Curriculum for Wales

We want your views on draft guidance on 14 to 16 learning under the Curriculum for Wales.

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# Contents

[Overview](#)

[Background](#)

[Why are we publishing draft 14 to 16 Learning Guidance](#)

[Key features of the 14 to 16 Learning Guidance](#)

[Next steps](#)

[Digital Learner Portfolio](#)

[Consultation Questions](#)

[UK General Data Protection Regulation \(UK GDPR\)](#)

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# Overview

In Wales, Education is Our National Mission. Together we will achieve high standards and aspirations for all, tackling the impact of poverty on attainment and ambition. Our aim is that all learners, whatever their background, are supported to be healthy, engaged, enterprising and ethical citizens, ready to play a full part in life and work.

From September 2023, all schools in Wales are teaching under the Curriculum for Wales in all year groups up to Year 8. The curriculum will subsequently roll out to older year groups until, from September 2026, all 3 to 16 learners will be following the Curriculum for Wales. The aspiration of the Curriculum for Wales is that all learners leave education at 16 with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to succeed, and having developed the capacities, dispositions and characteristics described in the four purposes, this represents the first step in supporting young people to thrive as lifelong learners. We want all learners' achievements and progression to be recognised and to support them as they move to the next stage of their education, training or employment.

We know that 14 to 19 pathways can be complex, with a large amount of choice for learners. The Hefin David report ([Transitions to Employment](#)), the [Review of Vocational Qualifications in Wales](#) and the reports on the [Young Person's Guarantee national conversation](#) show that there are a number of barriers that can hinder successful and smooth transitions to further education, training and employment post-16.

In order to meet the aspirations of our national mission and to support all learners to thrive, we need to address these barriers for 14 to 16-year-old learners, building on the foundations of the Curriculum for Wales and the reformed suite of 14 to 16 qualifications that Qualifications Wales are developing.

# Background

Curriculum for Wales framework guidance published in 2022 set out the curriculum requirements for schools and settings under the Curriculum for Wales Act 2021 (the Act). In September 2022 the phased roll-out of the Curriculum for Wales began.

While progress within the Curriculum for Wales is conceived across a 3 to 16 continuum of learning, legislative requirements for a curriculum for 14 to 16-year-olds differ to those for 3 to 14-year-olds. A curriculum at 14 to 16 needs to take account of qualifications and the opportunity for learners to specialise, and to support learners in identifying and realising their chosen 14 to 19 pathways.

Alongside curriculum reform, Qualifications Wales, the independent regulator of qualifications in Wales, are undertaking a programme of work to reform qualifications in Wales, shaping new qualifications to support the Curriculum for Wales. This work covers the full offer of 14 to 16 qualifications, including GCSEs.

Here is a link to the full timeline for the [Qualified for the Future reform programme](#).

In line with this timeline, in June 2023 the final award criteria for the new made-for-Wales GCSE qualifications to be taught from September 2025 were published, confirming the GCSE qualification offer available to support the Curriculum for Wales.

Subsequently, the WJEC have been developing the detailed specifications of the GCSEs, and final versions of these will be available to schools from September 2024, to allow planning and preparation ahead of first teaching from September 2025.

Qualifications Wales published their 'The Full 14 to 16 Qualifications Offer' (the Full Offer) consultation in March 2023, setting out proposals for skills, vocational and foundation qualifications that would be available to support the Curriculum for Wales from 2027. The [decision report](#) for the Full Offer was published in January 2024 and sets out the full range of National 14 to 16 Qualifications that will be available from September 2027.

## Why are we publishing draft 14 to 16 Learning Guidance

With such significant reform, both to the curriculum and to the supporting qualifications, we are publishing draft 14 to 16 Learning Guidance aimed at supporting schools in understanding and delivering their legal obligations under the Act. This will help ensure learners continue to receive a broad and balanced curriculum as they move towards qualifications. The guidance also sets out our policy around the wider aspects of a curriculum offer for 14 to 16-year-olds which we value and consider essential to supporting Our National Mission. We recognise that many schools already offer these wider aspects but want to ensure that there is an equitable curriculum offer to all learners across Wales.

While our priority through the 14 to 16 Learning Guidance is to provide clarity on our policy for 14 to 16 learning specifically, it will also inform our policy vision for successful 14 to 19 pathways.

We will use the responses to this consultation, alongside our direct engagement with stakeholders, to shape the final version of the 14 to 16 Learning Guidance which we aim to publish in the summer term 2024. This publication timeline aligns with that of the final qualification specifications for 2025 (by WJEC) and seeks to maximise support to schools in planning for and designing their curriculum offer for 14 to 16-year-olds in the 2024 to 2025 academic year, ahead of the first cohort of year 10 learners learning under the Curriculum for Wales

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from September 2025.

We will also use this guidance to inform our proposals on what should be included in the new school information ecosystem, and what information should be used for school self-evaluation and improvement purposes, shaping the information requirements that will replace the interim (capped 9) performance measures.

## Key features of the 14 to 16 Learning Guidance

### 14 to 16 Learner Entitlement

The 14 to 16 Learning guidance introduces the 14 to 16 Learner Entitlement (Learner Entitlement) which articulates the four components of 14 to 16 learning that we, the Welsh Government, consider to be most important for learners in years 10 and 11. The Learner Entitlement affirms 14 to 16 learning priorities under the Curriculum for Wales and articulates the curriculum entitlement for all learners at 14 to 16, with all learners required to be offered teaching and learning across all four components of the profile. We want all learners to be able to demonstrate and communicate their learning, progress and achievements in respect of these components when they complete compulsory education at 16, to support their future transitions into further education, training or employment.

Our vision is that all learners complete compulsory education at 16 having developed the skills, knowledge and wider understanding that, in turn, will have enabled them to develop the capacities, dispositions and attributes described in the four purposes. The Learner Entitlement supports this vision, recognising the continued importance of stretching and ambitious qualifications for learners in years 10 and 11 whilst also reflecting the importance of learning and teaching beyond qualifications. The Learner Entitlement includes the development of

skills, knowledge and understanding, alongside attainment of qualifications, that will equip learners for successful onward transitions to further education, training or employment.

The Learner Entitlement is intended to support schools to understand and to meet the legal requirements of the Curriculum for Wales at 14 to 16, for example, providing a broad and balanced curriculum, securing learning in all Areas of learning and experience (Areas) and in all mandatory elements of the curriculum, including RSE and RVE and in supporting learners' transitions post-16.

Importantly, the Learner Entitlement is a means through which much of the good work that schools already do to develop their learners towards the four purposes, through providing wider learning and experiences and supporting learners to thrive in their onward transitions, is recognised, valued and rewarded.

## **Structure to support self-evaluation and improvement**

The Learner Entitlement sets out a national structure for curriculum design at 14 to 16, as well as providing a structure which schools should use to evaluate and reflect upon the learning, progress and achievements of their learners in years 10 and 11.

Currently, when considering 14 to 16, evaluation and improvement processes can often be dominated by qualification outcomes. However, as we have outlined, our vision is for a school's curriculum offer for learners in years 10 and 11 to go beyond just qualifications, offering a breadth of wider experiences to enrich learning across the curriculum and to support learners to develop the skills to support them as lifelong learners.

We see a critical role for the Learner Entitlement in supporting a school's self-

evaluation and improvement processes. It provides a structure against which a school should reflect on and evaluate their curriculum offer to learners in years 10 and 11, as well as considering the progress made by individual learners across all four components. This will include the qualifications achieved by learners, given their importance to learners and their transitions into further education or employment. However, in line with the importance being placed on wider learning and experience and dedicated time for post-16 planning and self-reflection within a 14 to 16 curriculum offer, the guidance acknowledges that a significant part of any school's evidence should also include the way in which their learners are able to reflect upon their learning and progress, and how confident they feel about their transition to post-16.

We also see the Learner Entitlement supporting a school's development of a Shared Understanding of Progression along the 3 to 16 continuum. The Learner Entitlement provides a structure around which discussions between secondary schools, Pupil Referral Units (PRU) and providers of Education Other than at School (EOTAS), supported by school improvement advisers, can focus when evaluating their curriculum offer within year 10 and year 11 as they seek to gain an informed sense of their expectations for learner progress and achievement.

We consider that the process of evaluating a learner's progress across the four components will not be a one-off event at the end of a learner's compulsory education but will need to be a process of reflection and evaluation which spans across year 10 and year 11. Where a school is concerned that a learner has not made progress or achievements in one or more components of the Learner Entitlement by the end of their compulsory education, the guidance advises that the school should work with the local authority to ensure appropriate and adequate support is put in place to support those learners' post-16 transitions.

Given the importance of the Learner Entitlement in supporting learner progress, along with its role in helping schools to shape and evaluate their 14 to 16 curriculum, it should also provide improvement advisers and Estyn with a clear structure when they are considering learner progress and a school's 14 to 16



curriculum offer. In this regard, we would expect that improvement advisers and Estyn will draw on a breadth of evidence and information across all four components of the Learner Entitlement.

In recognition of this, the guidance outlines that the Learner Entitlement will be used to inform part of the proposals relating to a reformed information ecosystem for schools and will inform the information requirements that will succeed the interim (capped 9) performance measures. We have committed to working with practitioners and leaders to develop proposals for the information ecosystem to be shared with the sector in 2024, so that we can finalise new arrangements by summer 2025, in readiness for the first teaching of year 10 learners under the Curriculum for Wales.

## **Continued Importance of Qualifications**

The guidance aims to support schools in determining the qualifications they offer to their learners in year 10 and 11, clarifying that a challenging and ambitious offer will need to be provided for each learner, taking account of their individual needs.

### **Qualifications in literacy and numeracy**

The Curriculum for Wales recognises that literacy and numeracy skills are essential to learner progress across the whole curriculum. They are essential lifelong skills which can equip learners to thrive in the modern world.

Under the Learner Entitlement, literacy and numeracy qualifications should remain a fundamental component of a school's curriculum offer for 14 to 16-year-olds, recognising their importance to successful onward progression. Schools will be required to ensure that all learners continue to make progress and are able to demonstrate their attainment in literacy and numeracy when they

complete their compulsory education at 16.

## **Welsh**

In line with the Welsh Government's Welsh language vision and strategy, Cymraeg 2050, the guidance clarifies the continued importance of learner progress in the Welsh language within years 10 and 11.

The guidance clarifies our policy for what constitutes an ambitious and challenging curriculum offer in respect of Welsh, highlighting the various qualifications that will be available and how these can be used to support all learners to continue to develop their Welsh language skills along the Welsh language continuum, acknowledging how this will differ subject to schools' language category. Our guidance is designed to support the long-term vision for Welsh, recognising the importance of Welsh language skills both to the nation as a whole and to individual learners, supporting them to thrive in Wales in the future.

## **Qualifications to encourage breadth: the continued importance of science**

The Learner Entitlement also includes reference to qualifications that encourage breadth of learning. Schools should offer a broad set of qualifications that support a variety of future education and employment pathways, and that allow learners to begin to specialise while also helping them to maintain a breadth of learning across the Areas in line with the legal requirements.

The guidance sets out our policy in respect of science, within the guidance we acknowledge the importance of all learners following a challenging and ambitious qualification in science within years 10 and 11. This recognises the importance of science to an individual's understanding of the world that we live

in and acknowledges the importance of science as an important qualification for many Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects and careers.

It is important that learners do not close down future pathways prematurely as a consequence of decisions made for year 10. Expecting all learners to take a challenging and ambitious qualification in science at 14 to 16 will help ensure their future options and pathways remain open.

## **Self-reflection and post-16 planning**

Developing the effectiveness of our learners as they progress towards the four purposes is fundamental and forms part of the mandatory elements under the Curriculum for Wales. This key principle of progression seeks to support learners in becoming increasingly effective at learning in a social and work-related context by developing skills to support more effective and informed decision making, this includes supporting learners to become increasingly successful at self-evaluation and identification of next steps.

Whilst important throughout the 3 to 16 curriculum journey, the guidance emphasises how the development of learner effectiveness should be viewed as particularly relevant in year 10 and 11, given that the end of year 11 marks the end of compulsory education for learners in Wales. As, in addition to equipping learners with this life skill, it will also support learners to make effective decisions in respect of their future pathways and next steps.

Evidence from an array of sources including the review by **Dr Hefin David MS on Transitions to Employment**, the **review led by Sharron Lusher MBE of Vocational Qualifications in Wales** and evidence gathered through the three phases of the **Young Person's Guarantee National Conversation** shows a need to support learners' knowledge and understanding of the pathways available to them, and for greater investment in supporting these pathways to

support learners to thrive. We have also commissioned the OECD to undertake independent research by way of a comparative review of education systems for learners aged 14 to 19 and their impacts on learner transitions. Evidence from this research identifies that international good practice in respect of careers and work-related advice and supporting transitions is often closely aligned with learners taking an increasingly independent approach to understanding their strengths, areas for improvement and goals.

For young people to be able to thrive, they need to understand how the range of skills, knowledge, understanding and experiences they have developed under the Curriculum for Wales, as well as their wider experiences outside school, can support and inform their choices and give them the confidence to embark on their next steps. It is fundamental that learners are supported by the 14 to 16 learning offer to:

- understand the full range of options available to them, creating an openness to both vocational and general qualifications post-16
- understand the implications of their choices within and beyond compulsory education
- encounter authentic and meaningful experiences of work
- make the right choices for their individual pathway

The Learner Entitlement therefore highlights how important it is, and seeks to ensure, that all schools provide dedicated time within the curriculum to develop learner effectiveness and to improve learner understanding as to their post-16 choices supported by relevant, meaningful and tailored Careers and Work-Related Experiences.

Dedicating space within the timetable to focus on nurturing and supporting the development of the whole learner, who is able to make informed choices about next steps and longer-term pathways, is a fundamental feature of the Learner Entitlement. We recognise that many schools already value and promote this type of learner progress, however, through this component of the Learner

Entitlement, we want to safeguard equity for all learners by ensuring consistency, and valuing and rewarding this approach in all secondary schools in Wales.

## **The future of the Welsh Baccalaureate**

The guidance sets out that, for learners starting year 10 in 2025, the Welsh Baccalaureate, as an aggregated qualification, will no longer apply.

This is in part a result of the changes to the underlying qualifications that make up the Welsh Baccalaureate. But it also acknowledges that the Welsh Baccalaureate does not represent the full breadth of our policy for 14 to 16 learning under the Curriculum for Wales. Instead, the Learner Entitlement will maintain the core elements of the Welsh Baccalaureate (for example, importance of literacy and numeracy qualifications) whilst also incorporating our broader expectations for 14 to 16 learning (for example, supporting progress in learner effectiveness, including self-reflection and post-16 planning).

The guidance highlights that, in line with Qualifications Wales's Full 14 to 16 Qualifications Offer timeline, the Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC), as a standalone qualification, will continue to be available to learners who begin year 10 in 2025, and those who begin year 10 in 2026. The SCC will then be replaced by the Skills Suite, under the Full 14 to 16 Qualifications Offer, in September 2027 for learners who begin year 10 at that time.

The guidance highlights the continued importance of schools offering the SCC to year 10 learners in 2025 and 2026, recognising how this qualification can support schools in their curriculum provision of wider learning and experiences, as part of the Learner Entitlement.

## Next steps

We recognise that the 2025 to 2026 academic year will be a key transitional period for schools in respect of their Curriculum for Wales offer to learners in years 10 and 11, particularly with the phased roll-out of the Full 14 to 16 qualifications up to 2027. We want to be able to support schools as much as possible so that they feel confident with their curriculum offer over this period and beyond.

We therefore intend to publish supporting materials, alongside the final guidance in the summer term, which will seek to support schools in their thinking around curriculum structure, learning and teaching, and how best to meet their statutory obligations.

Alongside this, we will work with Qualifications Wales and WJEC to provide additional information to support schools in understanding how the current SCC challenges can be used as part of their curriculum design, to support provision of wider learning and experiences within the Learner Entitlement, ahead of the Skills Suite becoming available in 2027.

We are very aware of the workload pressures being experienced within schools and gaining a real insight and understanding of the potential impact of our proposals on the profession is an important part of our policy development. We want to ensure that we fully consider the risks and impacts of the 14 to 16 learning policy on the profession and have agreed to be the first to pilot the newly developed 'workload impact assessment'. This will be published as part of the overall Integrated Impact Assessment in the summer. To support this work a specific consultation question has been drafted to capture practitioner views on the implications of proposals on them and on workload and to help establish any professional learning needs.

# Digital Learner Portfolio

In his [written statement](#) on the 28 June 2023 the Minister for Education and Welsh Language set out how he had asked officials to develop proposals for a digital learner portfolio: a tool which could support both learner progression under the Curriculum for Wales at 14 to 16 and, crucially, learners' individual pathways, and how proposals for these would be included in the consultation on 14 to 16 Learning.

Alongside our engagement during the Autumn on the development of the 14 to 16 learning guidance, we have gathered information and evidence to inform proposals for a digital learner portfolio. We continue to recognise the important role a digital learner portfolio could play in supporting schools and learners to consider, evaluate, demonstrate and evidence progress along the 3 to 16 continuum and in particular their 14 to 16 Learner Entitlement. We are therefore committed to further refine and evaluate feasible options for the introduction of a digital learner portfolio. We are aiming to convene a working group to support this work, including practitioners from schools who already have an approach to this and from those who do not, with a view to publishing further detail alongside the publication of the 14 to 16 Learning Guidance in the summer term.

## Consultation Questions

Question 1: To what extent do you agree that the 14 to 16 Learning Guidance helps you to understand your statutory obligations for 14 to 16 learners under Curriculum for Wales?

Question 2: To what extent do you agree that the 14 to 16 Learning Guidance helps you to understand how the qualifications offer should be used to support a 14 to 16 curriculum offer for learners under Curriculum for Wales?

Question 3: To what extent do you agree that the 14 to 16 Learner Guidance helps you to understand how a 14 to 16 curriculum offer should be designed?

Question 4: To what extent do you agree that the 14 to 16 Learning Guidance contains a sufficient level of detail?

Question 5: We would like to know your views on the effects that the policy outlined in the 14 to 16 Learning Guidance will have on the school workforce, including any impact it might have on workloads.

Question 6: We would like to know your views on the effects that the policy outlined in the 14 to 16 Learning Guidance will have on the diverse needs of individual learners, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who share protected characteristics (as set out under the Equality Act 2010).

Question 7: What, in your opinion, would be the likely effects of the 14 to 16 Learning Guidance on the Welsh language in Years 10 and 11? We are particularly interested in any likely effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English.

Do you think that there are opportunities to promote any positive effects?  
Do you think that there are opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects?

Question 8: In your opinion, could the 14 to 16 Learning Guidance be formulated or changed so as to:

- have positive effects or more positive effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English, or
- mitigate any negative effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English?

Question 9: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.



Please use the consultation response form to respond to the above questions.

## **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)**

The Welsh Government will be data controller for any personal data you provide as part of your response to the consultation. Welsh Ministers have statutory powers they will rely on to process this personal data which will enable them to make informed decisions about how they exercise their public functions. Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about or planning future consultations. Where the Welsh Government undertakes further analysis of consultation responses then this work may be commissioned to be carried out by an accredited third party (for example, a research organisation or a consultancy company). Any such work will only be undertaken under contract. Welsh Government's standard terms and conditions for such contracts set out strict requirements for the processing and safekeeping of personal data.

In order to show that the consultation was carried out properly, the Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

You should also be aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation.

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