

## Design and Delivery Advisory Board

16 December 2020

Dear Minister,

Since your 10 November announcement on qualifications in 2021 much has happened in a short space of time. A Design and Delivery Advisory Group, chaired by myself, was established and immediately began working on its identified tasks:

- giving consideration to issues around GCSE, AS and A levels for Qualifications Wales approved qualifications;
- developing proposals on the scope and timescales for teacher-managed assessments and other elements of class-based assessments; and
- developing a model for centre-based outcomes as part of a consistent approach across Wales, including the professional learning that may support this, and the mechanics of the agreed national approach to provide transparency, equity and rigor to support learner progression.

In sharing the outcome of this work with you, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the headteachers and college principals that sat on this group, all of whom were generous with their time, under difficult circumstances, and who gave careful consideration to a range of complex issues to arrive at a consensus. Their skills, knowledge, and experience, developed within a range of settings across the length and breadth of Wales, have ensured the development of an approach that is mindful of the context in which teaching and learning is delivered in Wales on a day to day basis, both in more normal circumstances and, more recently, in the face of the variable and significant challenges presented by the public health crisis.

It is also important to take this opportunity to acknowledge the commitment and contribution of Qualifications Wales and the WJEC who, in acting as observers to our work, added value to our efforts with timely and expert advice on assessment. Finally, we are also grateful to the Independent Review led by Louise Casella, whose interim report and findings were considered in detail by the group, alongside the advice provided to you by Qualifications Wales.

In developing our advice we have reflected on the extraordinary circumstances faced by learners, teachers, lecturers, schools and colleges this year, and have recognised that there are no easy solutions. We have considered all options that we perceived as being available to us, and attempted to futureproof our proposals against continued disruption as far as practicably possible. In doing so we have been careful to strike a balance between what we feel is:

- a) fair to learners - who have experienced significant and variable disruption to their learning this year;
- b) deliverable by schools and colleges – that continue to navigate the impact of the pandemic and deliver teaching and learning to their pupils; and

- c) needed to ensure the credibility and integrity of a qualifications system for Wales - that supports our learners to progress confidently to their next steps, whatever they may be.

It should go without saying, but it is important to reiterate here, that we have placed fairness, equity, rigour, robustness and transparency at the heart of this work. Further, we acknowledge the role that Wales' education system as a whole must now play in delivering it. Ensuring these proposals work effectively requires a system-wide response and collective effort, and we have placed our trust and confidence in the professionalism and expertise of Wales' teachers and lecturers as key agents of its success.

As such, the members of the Design and Delivery Advisory Group remain committed to this agenda and see their role ongoing as these proposals are further operationalised in partnership with the WJEC and Qualifications Wales. We therefore offer our continued support to the further development and delivery of qualifications in Wales in 2021, including through direct engagement with learners and settings, and will work as ambassadors for this process with our colleagues and peers in the Welsh education system in support of this aim.

To help set out the rationale behind our work as a group, and in an attempt to capture our reflections and areas of consensus, I am attaching a document for your consideration that represents the sum total of our proposals at this point in time. These proposals are summarised below.

#### Design and Delivery Advisory Group – Proposals for GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in 2021

As a general principle, and where adapted qualifications structures allow, the evidence to support the awarding of qualifications in summer 2021 should be predicated on a three pillared approach made up of non-examination assessment (NEA), internal assessment, and externally set and marked assessment. Further, and also where qualification structures allow, the internal assessment element (including NEA) should make the biggest contribution to a learner's grade outcome.

To provide equity of experience for learners, assessment activities (both internal and external) are to be provided nationally and cover clearly defined parts of the syllabus.

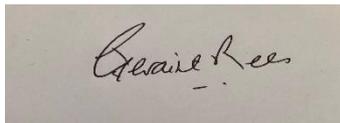
Teacher/lecturer judgement should be used make decisions on when, how and where to use the internal assessment materials and schools/colleges should seek to embed the internal assessment element within their teaching and learning plans in order to reduce additional burdens on the profession (the WJEC board will notify of topics covered in advance to support this). The time window for these assessments should run from 22 February to 23 April (subject to WJEC confirmation) and the teacher/lecturer and school/college would manage the marking and relevant in-centre moderation. The WJEC would undertake a process of checking marking and would refer back to the school/college if there is a notable level of inconsistency.

The external assessments would be externally set and marked by WJEC and the assessment window should run 17 May to 29 June (subject to WJEC confirmation).

This window could be split into 3 sub-windows whereby subjects will be grouped into specific windows. This will help retain flexibility in the model while providing a supported, structured scaffolding to assist the planning of teaching and learning, and help ensure that learners are not over assessed. As with the internal assessments, WJEC would provide guidance in good time on high level themes for these assessments to enable schools and colleges to prepare their teaching plans and timing appropriately.

The assessment model should be mark based to allow the WJEC to award grade outcomes. Schools and colleges would provide marks to WJEC who would deliver a set of grades on results days as in a 'normal' year. The internal assessment, where relevant, should cover distinct areas from the external assessment. Currently expected results days should stand, to ensure that learners in Wales would not be disadvantaged relative to their peers in other nations. Appeals would need to be directed to where the decision on marking/awarding had taken place with a preference of minimising the role of centres in managing appeals. An appeals process will be finalised and agreed in the New Year.

Yours sincerely,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Geraint Rees".

Geraint Rees  
Chair of the Design and Delivery  
Advisory Board