

# Overview of Consultation Findings

Made for Wales GCSEs and Related Qualifications – Wave 2

Version 1.0



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## Background

In June 2023, Qualifications Wales published Approval Criteria for a suite of made-for-Wales GCSEs and related qualifications (<https://qualifications.wales/regulation-reform/reforming/qualified-for-the-future/made-for-wales-gcses/#approval-criteria>).

Qualifications Wales decided that these qualifications will be introduced in a phased way; WJEC has already produced and published the first wave of qualifications that are available for first teaching from September 2025 and is now developing the second wave of qualifications that are to be available for first teaching from September 2026.

WJEC recruited a Subject Development Advisory Group for each subject and discussed proposals for each qualification. We also developed principles and guidance to help us ensure that the qualifications developed will support the Curriculum for Wales. Based on the Approval Criteria, our principles and guidance and discussions with our Advisory Groups, we developed a qualification outline for each qualification that sets out the high-level focus, structure, unit purposes and assessment approach.

Before using these outlines to form the basis of our detailed specification and sample assessment material development, we wanted to hear from a broader range of stakeholders and held an open consultation on our website in two batches:

Wave 2 Qualifications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• GCSE Dance</li><li>• GCSE Digital Media and Film</li><li>• GCSE Social Studies</li><li>• GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare</li><li>• GCSE Physical Education and Health</li><li>• Level 2 Additional Mathematics</li><li>• GCSE Design and Technology</li><li>• GCSE Digital Technology</li><li>• GCSE Integrated Science (Single Award)</li><li>• GCSE The Sciences (Double Award)</li></ul>

The consultation opened on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024 and closed on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

We are extremely grateful to all of you who shared your views with us as part of our commitment to co-constructing these qualifications.

Since then, we have analysed and considered the feedback in the context of the requirements of Qualifications Wales' Approval Criteria and the Curriculum for Wales and made some revisions.

We also took account of conversations we'd had at suite level with our overarching GCSE and related qualifications Development Advisory Group, Learner Advisory Group, Union Reference Group and Stakeholder Reference Group during the development of the wave 1 outlines.

Many of the comments made apply across subjects – a summary of these issues can be found in the general feedback section. An overview of subject-specific feedback follows, grouped by Area of Learning and Experience.

## General Feedback

Consultation responses were generally positive with respondents broadly agreeing that the qualification structures were appropriate; that unit purposes were appropriate and engaging for learners whilst meeting the qualification purpose and aims; that the approach to assessment was appropriate and that the qualifications would support the Curriculum for Wales. There were some subject-specific exceptions – mainly The Sciences (Double Award). The subject-specific sections of the reports go into further detail around the concerns raised.

Manageability, both for learners and centres, attracted the lowest levels of agreement. Many of these concerns were linked to the proportion of non-examination assessment, but there were also some comments around manageability related to volume of content and specific elements of assessments.

### Non-examination assessment

Concerns about the amount of non-examination assessment, both within individual qualifications and across the suite of qualifications, came through clearly in our consultation responses, including in relation to teacher workload

It must be noted that WJEC cannot change the amount of non-examination assessment, or the proportion to be marked by schools, in the new made-for-Wales GCSEs and related qualifications. Qualifications Wales considered the proportion of non-examination assessment and its marking during their process of developing the Approval Criteria, and their final decisions are reflected in their published Approval Criteria which we must adhere to. Qualifications Wales noted in its June 2023 consultation report that introducing a bigger proportion and variety of non-examination assessments would ‘in turn result in more assessment-related workload for schools’ (<https://qualifications.wales/media/dkcisr1u/made-for-wales-gcse-main-consultation-report-january-2024-update.pdf>). Qualifications Wales has asked us to ensure manageability, within the parameters of the Approval Criteria – we will continue to do so as we develop the detail of the qualifications.

We feel that it’s important that we draw on conversations with stakeholders that we had during the development of the qualifications that have been introduced for first teaching from September 2025. A key theme that emerged from discussions with our overarching stakeholder groups and that was echoed in consultation responses was equity for learners. Welsh Government’s guidance on well-being, equity and inclusion ([Learners’ well-being, equity and inclusion - Hwb](#)) describes equity as meaning equitable access to opportunities to perform in assessments, access to the same materials and spaces, unbiased assessment tasks, preventing prejudice or stereotyping and allowing students to access the assessment regardless of their background. Some stakeholders felt that non-examination assessment can further disadvantage some learners, for example, those who do not have support or access to adequate resources at home. Whilst parents or carers can also provide support for exam revision, the impact of support at home could be greater for non-examination assessment where the requirements of the non-examination assessment are clear in advance and support can therefore be more targeted. Some stakeholders did not consider this to be in line with the aims of Welsh Government’s Education in Wales: Our national mission ([https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-03/our-national-mission-high-standards-and-aspirations-for-all\\_0.pdf](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-03/our-national-mission-high-standards-and-aspirations-for-all_0.pdf)) or its Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (<https://www.gov.wales/anti-racist-wales-action-plan>).

During our development of the GCSEs for first teaching from September 2025, consultation respondents noted that they felt that appropriate controls should be in place to ensure that all schools assess fairly, or there could be a lack of confidence in qualification results which would consequently mean learner attainment would have less value associated with it. The majority of the stakeholders we engaged with in our overarching stakeholder groups echoed this view, including our Learner Advisory Group, who were very concerned about a potential lack of fairness to all in non-examination assessment.

In our discussions, it was also noted that an increase in non-examination assessment weighting could potentially raise the likelihood and incentive for malpractice, and several respondents noted a concern about Artificial Intelligence and its monitoring, with a fear that low controls could make the use of Artificial Intelligence difficult to monitor, threatening fairness for learners.

However, one stakeholder group had a different view on what impacted equity, requesting that the GCSEs have a range of assessment methods, focusing on competency-based continuous assessment methods, rather than coursework or mini-tests, to maximise equity. This group felt that controls should be low with more faith placed on teacher assessment.

When we submit our qualifications to Qualification Wales for approval, we must stipulate how we have managed the balance of manageability, engagement, reliability and validity. Qualifications Wales' Standard Conditions of Recognition also require that our qualifications, as far as possible, secure validity, reliability, comparability, manageability and minimising bias, and to ensure that we achieve the optimum balance of these factors in the context of that particular qualification.

We will continue to put learner equity at the heart of our design and decision making in relation to non-examination assessments for these qualifications for first teaching from September 2026. Our focus on equity may lead to controls which limit some of the flexibility that could have helped centres balance some of the manageability concerns. Ensuring assessments are sufficiently controlled does not mean that we will take a uniform approach to assessments that feel like an exam taken in the classroom; we are still proposing a range of non-examination approaches, including performances and extended practical tasks. Equity can relate to all of the potentially competing factors noted in the regulations. In line with the views of the majority of the stakeholders we have heard from, we will aim to ensure that our tasks and associated controls minimise any unfair advantage or disadvantage whilst also considering the manageability burden on both learners and centres, the validity, reliability and comparability of the assessments, and learner engagement.

### Digital examinations and digital submission of non-examination assessment

The Approval Criteria require some digital examinations. The Approval Criteria also require us to make it possible for centres to submit non-examination assessment digitally; in our draft outlines, we proposed that digital submission would be the only option, as this would create an equal playing field for all.

We have had some feedback on both aspects from respondents, noting issues around infrastructure in schools, manageability and teacher workload. We are making improvements to our digital submission processes, and we are liaising with Qualifications Wales and Welsh Government colleagues in relation to supporting schools with the roll out of more digital assessment in schools.

## Detail

Some respondents noted that it was difficult for them to comment at this stage due to a lack of detail. We understand this comment; the qualification outlines are not intended to provide the detail that a full specification will include, and we trust that the full specifications will provide stakeholders with all of the information they require in due course.

## Subject Specific Feedback

### Expressive Arts Area of Learning and Experience

#### GCSE Dance

WJEC received five responses, with the majority of responses from practitioners within a school.

The consultation showed that the majority of respondents agreed with the proposed approach to assessment and that the suggested outline meets the qualification purpose and aims, is relevant and engaging for learners, is manageable for learners and supports the Curriculum for Wales.

However, we acknowledge the following concerns:

- One respondent raised a concern about the 30% weighting of Unit 2 (Performance). We are unable to address this as it reflects Qualifications Wales' Approval Criteria requirements for the non-examination assessment to include a performance unit worth 30% of the qualification.
- Following discussions with Qualifications Wales, we have changed the requirement for three set works to be studied rather than two set works. This is to ensure sufficient breadth and coverage of content.
- Qualifications Wales has removed the requirement for a visiting examiner to assess unit 2 from the Approval Criteria. Unit 2 will now therefore be marked by the centre and moderated by WJEC (which is consistent with the approach for GCSE Music).

#### GCSE Digital Media and Film

WJEC received 10 responses, with most being from practitioners within a school.

The consultation showed that the majority of respondents agreed that the agreed approach supports the aim of the Curriculum for Wales with one respondent stating that the proposal looked very interesting.

However, we acknowledge the following concerns:

- Some respondents noted their concern regarding the digital only examination. We are unable to address this as it reflects Qualifications Wales' Approval Criteria requirement that 'a total of 30% of the qualification will be assessed via a digital-only examination.'
- Some respondents noted their concerns about the high proportion of NEA. We are unable to address this as it reflects Qualifications Wales' Approval Criteria requirements that 'a total of 70% of the qualification will be assessed through non-examination assessment ...which will be marked by the Centre and Moderated by the awarding body.'
- One respondent raised concerns regarding responding to products produced by their chosen Welsh production company in Unit 2, as they felt these could be difficult to source. In making decisions on set products we will ensure that all products are accessible for learners and centres. We will be giving centres extra guidance and support on this as part of our Guidance for Teaching documentation and our Professional Learning events.

- One respondent raised concerns regarding any compulsory film making element being included in the NEA, due to concerns around school resources and the experience of teachers. This aspect has not been stipulated within the outline but we will take manageability into account when developing the NEA tasks.
- A number of respondents raised concerns about the manageability of the qualification for learners and centres. This linked to comments regarding the 70% weighting of centre marked NEA. We will continue to consider manageability as part of the development process.



## Humanities Area of Learning and Experience

### **GCSE Social Studies**

WJEC received 12 responses, with the majority of respondents indicating that they were teachers.

The consultation showed that the majority of respondents agreed that the proposed approach meets the qualification purpose and aims, is relevant and engaging for learners, has an appropriate approach to assessment, supports the Curriculum for Wales and is manageable for both learners and centres.

The majority of respondents also felt that the proposed content is appropriate in terms of the size and challenge of the GCSE, and agreed with the provided definition of Social Studies.

No concerns were raised.

## Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience

### GCSE Health, Social Care, and Childcare

WJEC received 31 responses, with the majority of those being from practitioners within a school.

The consultation showed that the majority of respondents agreed with the proposed approach to assessment and that the suggested outline meets the qualification purpose and aims, is relevant and engaging for learners and supports the aims of the Curriculum for Wales.

The vast majority of respondents noted their intent to deliver the exam on paper only. Qualifications Wales has changed the Approval Criteria for GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare to allow for the introduction of a digital assessment within five years of the qualification being available, in place of a requirement for a digital examination available at the outset.

Respondents were pleased that the content and assessment proposed seems fit for purpose and relevant to Health and Social Care, and Childcare legislation and current practice. Generally, respondents were positive with regards to the focus change allowing for **both** health and social care, and childcare tasks.

However, we acknowledge the following concerns:

- Some respondents raised manageability concerns, for example in relation to the timing of the release of the NEA assignment briefs. WJEC have considered the timing of an earlier release date for the NEA assignment briefs for Unit 2 and Unit 3. However, after careful consideration, the release of both assignment briefs will remain as September to ensure that centres have ample time to deliver the unit content before commencing the assessment.
- Some concerns were raised regarding the amount of content for this unit and the introduction of core principles and values, legislation and service provision at this level. This content is required by Qualifications Wales' Approval Criteria; WJEC will continue to consider the manageability during the development of the full specification and ensure that all content is targeted at the level of a 14-16 aged learner. The Unit 1 content will underpin the knowledge needed for Unit 2 and Unit 3.

## GCSE Physical Education and Health

WJEC received 81 responses, with the majority of those being from practitioners within a school.

The consultation showed that the majority of respondents agreed with the proposed approach to assessment and that the suggested outline meets the qualification purpose and aims, is relevant and engaging for learners and supports the aims of the Curriculum for Wales.

However, we acknowledge the following concerns:

- The majority of respondents raised concerns around manageability for both centres and learners linked to the proposed approach to assessment for Unit 2. In relation to this, a number of respondents referenced potential challenges in managing the coaching assessment for a large cohort of learners. We were already in discussions with Qualifications Wales around this aspect and following the consultation, Qualifications Wales made the following amendments to the Approval Criteria.
- Learners will now be required to:
  - Perform in one team or individual sport or physical activity from the approved list (20%)
  - Perform in a second team or individual sport or physical activity from the approved list **or** provide coaching in a sport or physical activity from the approved list (20%)
  - Plan, deliver and evaluate a personal training activity within the context of a sport or physical activity from the approved list (20%)
  - Coaching is now optional. In most centres, we anticipate this will reduce the number of learners that will be assessed in coaching, which will support manageability of this unit.
  - Personal Training is now a discrete aspect of the NEA.  
These amendments will support the manageability of Unit 2 in accordance with the feedback and comments from the consultation.
  - The majority of respondents raised concerns about the manageability of the qualification for learners and centres. We feel that the amendments made to the Approval Criteria with regards to the coaching aspect will help alleviate these concerns and potential manageability issues for both learners and centres.
  - A large number of respondents noted concerns around the personal training of others and the majority of respondents suggested that it should be personal training of self. Qualifications Wales has changed the Approval Criteria and consequently this element has been changed in our outline to plan, deliver and evaluate a personal training activity. This should make it more manageable, authentic and accessible for learners. The emphasis of assessment for this element will be the practical application of skills, knowledge and understanding and will therefore have a significant practical element.

# Mathematics and Numeracy Area of Learning and Experience

## Level 2 Additional Mathematics

WJEC received 24 responses, with half of the respondents answering on behalf of a school.

The majority of respondents agreed that the unit purposes meet the qualification aims. There was also agreement from the majority of respondents that Units 1-5 would be relevant and engaging for learners. A lower number of respondents agreed that Unit 6: Discrete and Decision Mathematics would be relevant and engaging for learners.

We consulted on the use of calculators in this qualification, proposing that Algebra would be a non-calculator unit, and all others would allow the use of a calculator. This proposal received strong support from respondents, and we have therefore decided to implement this approach to calculators for the new qualification.

We also asked respondents for their views on what assessments will be available for the first time in January and summer 2027. The majority of respondents agreed with our proposal, and we have therefore decided to implement this approach.

Since the consultation, we have reflected on our proposal to make the duration of each assessment 45 minutes. To ensure that learners have a sufficient amount of time to respond to the questions, and to ensure that the number of marks available per paper allows us to write effective questions, we are going to increase the duration of each assessment to be 50 minutes. This means that the total assessment time for a learner will be 2 hours and 30 minutes, which is comparable to the current qualification.

A number of respondents' concerns related to elements of the qualification that have already been set by Qualifications Wales' Approval Criteria for Level 2 Additional Mathematics and we therefore cannot address. These include:

- The six-unit structure, including the topics covered by the six units (Algebra, Calculus, Geometry and Trigonometry Statistics, Mechanics, and Discrete and Decision Mathematics)
- The inclusion of Unit 1: Algebra and Unit 2: Calculus as compulsory units and having four optional units
- Assessing each unit by examination.

## Science and Technology Area of Learning and Experience

### GCSE Design and Technology

WJEC received 37 responses, with most being from subject teachers.

The consultation showed that the majority of respondents agreed with the proposed unit focus for both units and that the suggested outline meets the qualification purpose and aims, is relevant and engaging for learners, supports the aims of the Curriculum for Wales and is manageable for learners and centres.

#### Unit 1: Design and Technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The majority of respondents agreed that the proposed approach to assessment within this examined unit was appropriate. However, a limited number of respondents noted concerns regarding:

- the administrative aspects of a digital examination
- candidates being prevented from sketching within the examination.

Qualifications Wales' Approval Criteria for GCSE Design and Technology note that 'the awarding body must target the provision of a digital-only examination at the outset of the qualification'.

#### Unit 2: Design Project

Overall, the majority of respondents agreed that the proposed approach to assessment was appropriate. However, we acknowledge the following concerns in relation to this unit:

- Many respondents raised concerns regarding manageability for centres, and the validity and reliability of, digital evidence for moderation. We have not yet decided how we will moderate the design project and we will continue to explore options for moderation and submission of evidence as we develop the qualification.
- Some respondents raised concerns relating to the lack of focus on the assessment of initial ideas. We will ensure that the marking criteria rewards the generation of ideas alongside the development, testing and refinement of ideas.

### GCSE Digital Technology

WJEC received 18 responses, with most answering on behalf of schools or other organisations.

The consultation results showed that the majority of respondents agreed that the proposed approach meets the qualification purpose and aims, is relevant and engaging for learners, has an appropriate focus, has an appropriate approach to assessment and supports the Curriculum for Wales.

However, many respondents disagreed that the proposed qualification was manageable for learners and there was a mixed response in relation to manageability for centres.

Concerns raised in the consultation results included:

- a high volume of content in Unit 1
- accessibility for all learners
- focus of administrative tasks over technical creativity in NEA tasks.

We will take these concerns into account when developing the detail of the specification and sample assessment materials.

We were asked for clarification on our approach to controls by some respondents; we will fully consider the detail during our development process and will clarify our approach in the full qualification.

## **GCSE Integrated Science (Single Award)**

WJEC received 8 responses, with the majority being from a school setting and two others from Learned Societies.

The Learned Societies expressed concern that the qualification might appeal to learners and centres, taking learners away from The Sciences (Double Award) qualification. WJEC, in line with Qualifications Wales and Wales Government guidance, will continue to emphasise that the vast majority of learners should be studying The Sciences (Double Award) qualification. The Single Award has not been designed to support direct progression to GCE Science qualifications and is intended for a small minority of learners who will benefit from studying a science GCSE that has less content than a double award

The majority of respondents agreed that the units meet the qualification purpose and aims and the proposed qualification will support the Curriculum for Wales. Many respondents, including the Learned Societies, acknowledged that a lack of detail in the content meant that they neither agreed nor disagreed that the units were relevant and engaging for learners.

Respondents were in agreement that the proposed qualification will support the Curriculum for Wales.

Respondent did not agree that proposed approach for assessment was appropriate. The approach to assessment is stipulated in Qualifications Wales' Approval Criteria therefore cannot be amended.

There were mixed responses to whether the proposed qualification would be manageable for learners, and for centres.

## **GCSE The Sciences (Double)**

WJEC received 77 responses, with the majority of respondents from a school setting, with other stakeholders including the Learned Societies responding.

Some respondents expressed cautious optimism, suggesting that with adequate detail, balanced assessment methods, and thoughtful implementation, the new qualification could be workable and engaging.

It was noted that the inclusion of topics like sustainability reflects an effort to align the curriculum with modern societal challenges, making science more relevant to learners' lives.

A few respondents welcomed the removal of certain outdated or overly complex topics, particularly in chemistry, which they felt were less relevant for GCSE-level learners.

However, we acknowledge the following concerns:

- Many respondents, commented on the removal of Triple Science as a pathway for learners. We are unable to address this as it reflects a decision made by Qualification Wales; The Sciences (Double) approval criteria is designed to fully support progression to relevant Level 3 qualifications in science, including AS and A levels in Biology, Chemistry and Physics, and Welsh Government guidance notes that the qualification is the most appropriate qualification for most learners. It should be noted that unit grades will be reported. This means that, in addition to their overall qualification grade, learners will know the individual units grades for both assessments in Biology, Chemistry and Physics.
- A few respondents criticised the restructuring as superficial and noted that the outline is very similar to the current Double Award. However, it is important to note that the overall structure of the qualification is stipulated by the Approval Criteria and cannot be altered. We have carefully selected unit weightings and will continue to evaluate their appropriateness, seeking input from our Development Advisory Group to ensure they remain suitable. While the structure may resemble the current Double Award, the new qualification is not a direct continuation. Its content will be updated to be relevant to learners and align with the Curriculum for Wales. Additionally, adjustments to the weightings of Assessment Objectives will place greater emphasis on applying scientific knowledge, understanding, and enquiry skills, with less emphasis on recalling information.
- Many respondents, including the Learned Societies, noted that they neither agreed nor disagreed that the units were relevant and engaging. This was supported in the comments which highlighted the lack of detail of content in the outline. At this stage of the development, it is not possible to give this detail. The updated outline will include proposed topic titles that will give a steer for content that will be included. WJEC is working with a Qualification Development Advisory Group for The Sciences, including sub meetings for Biology, Chemistry and Physics, which includes over 20 practicing teachers. The group will advise us on the breadth and depth of the prescribed topics as we develop the detail of the specifications. We will ask them to be mindful of consultation respondents' concerns about the amount of content, within the parameters of the Approval Criteria. Our specification writers are being guided on the number of Guided Learning Hours per unit to ensure that the content is teachable in the time.
- Some respondents commented on the compressed timeline for Year 11, with a higher exam weighting, raising concerns about teaching feasibility and learner preparedness. WJEC will further engage with teachers on the advisory group to ensure that manageability for centres and learners is carefully considered.
- A few respondents advocate for a higher weighting of coursework or practical assessments to support learner needs. We are unable to address this as it reflects a decision made by Qualifications Wales and reflected in the Approval Criteria. The practical science assessment will be taken early in the spring term so that learners have had the opportunity to undertake numerous science practical assessments as part of their learning.