

## **Response to Qualifications Wales' consultation on promoting and facilitating Welsh-medium qualifications**

### **Consultation questions**

#### **1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to require all awarding bodies to publish a Welsh-medium qualifications policy statement?**

Requiring all awarding bodies to publish a policy statement on their provision of qualifications through the medium of Welsh will provide better clarity for centres and learners.

It is unclear whether awarding bodies are expected to list what specific qualifications are available through the medium of Welsh. We know that there is already a requirement for awarding bodies to include accurate and up-to-date information about their qualifications on the Qualifications Wales database, including details of the language medium of qualifications. The requirements for Conditions D9.1 and D9.2 state that awarding bodies should state which aspects of the qualification will be provided through the medium of Welsh. We therefore assume it will also be expected that awarding bodies publish an up-to-date list of all the different qualifications available through the medium of Welsh?

#### **2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to require awarding bodies that make qualifications available through the medium of Welsh, to promote the availability of, and to facilitate access to, those qualifications?**

The requirement for awarding bodies to promote the availability of, and facilitate access to, Welsh-medium qualifications is paramount. We consider that imposing such requirements will be helpful to centres offering qualifications through the medium of Welsh, and to learners wishing to study through the medium of Welsh. It will also contribute towards developing a better understanding of where Welsh-medium provision needs to be developed in the future and will potentially encourage awarding bodies to be more proactive in developing their provision further. We therefore believe that introducing these requirements regarding the promotion and facilitation of access to Welsh-medium qualifications is an important and significant development.

#### **3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to introduce minimum requirements that we consider necessary for an awarding body to ensure compliance with the proposed Conditions?**

We agree with the proposal to introduce minimum requirements, and this is essential to set clear expectations for awarding bodies. We believe that the conditions, requirements and guidance find the right balance between the need to impose specific requirements on awarding bodies whilst at the same time avoiding being overly prescriptive in terms of what activities bodies ought to undertake.

One overarching question is how Qualifications Wales will monitor and keep an overview of the promotion and facilitation activities of awarding bodies. This includes their compliance with the minimum requirements, but also how Qualifications Wales will keep an overview of the additional things some awarding bodies do, that may be useful in terms of sharing good practice. We know that there are specific requirements for awarding bodies to review and report on their compliance with the conditions and requirements, but it would be useful to understand the role of Qualifications

Wales here as well. We accept that this may not need to be included within the guidance, but we would like to understand more about this, particularly as the Commissioner has similar duties in monitoring compliance and sharing good practice in relation to the Welsh language standards.

**4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to include these requirements as part of our Standard Conditions of Recognition?**

We agree that including the Conditions and requirements in the Standard Conditions of Recognition gives the Welsh language greater visibility within the regulatory framework. We therefore welcome this decision.

As the consultation document sets out, the remaining Welsh language regulatory requirements are contained in the Regulatory Welsh-Medium Qualifications Policy. One consequence of placing the new Conditions and Requirements in the main rulebook is that there is some inconsistency in the emphasis placed on different requirements from a Welsh language perspective, and also that there is some overlap in the content of different documents. For example, requirements 16.1-16.4 of the Regulatory Welsh-Medium Qualifications Policy are as important as the proposed Conditions and Requirements regarding the promotion and facilitation of Welsh-medium qualifications. If it were possible, we believe that the requirements on the availability of Welsh-medium qualifications (requirements 16.1-16.4 of the Regulatory Welsh-Medium Qualifications Policy) should also be set out in the Standard Recognition Conditions (possibly in section G). We understand that there may be reasons for not doing this, for example that the requirements in the Regulatory Welsh-Medium Qualifications Policy are qualification-specific, and therefore not suitable for inclusion in the standard conditions. However, requirements 16.1-16.4, together, apply to all qualifications and to all awarding bodies, and having these in the main rulebook may send a clearer and stronger message to awarding bodies.

It also seems that there is some overlap and repetition between the content of the new guidance (section 3 on exceeding the requirements), the Regulatory Welsh-Medium Qualifications Policy (the 'Active Offer' section), and the Guidance for Awarding Bodies – the development, delivery and awarding of qualifications through the medium of Welsh (specifically section 3).

Whilst the above issues are not necessarily problematic, we suggest it might be possible to set out the various conditions, requirements, and guidance in a way that would be more coherent and consistent to awarding bodies.

**5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal for a lead in period of 12 months for awarding bodies to ensure full compliance with the proposed Conditions and requirements?**

It is reasonable to give awarding bodies adequate time to ensure that they fully comply with the proposed Conditions and requirements. The new Conditions and requirements require considerable planning and implementation, and it is important that awarding bodies have the time to do this thoroughly.

**6. Are there areas not covered in our proposed guidance that you would like to see included?**

There are two issues where we believe further clarity and detail are needed in the proposed guidance:

### **Welsh Language Schemes and the Welsh Language Offer**

Section 3 of the guidance discusses how Awarding Bodies can go beyond the requirements of the new Conditions. In general, we welcome the content here, and in particular the reference to the Commissioner's 'Cynnig Cymraeg' (Welsh Offer) scheme. However, this section should reflect the fact that some skills/qualifications bodies may have a Welsh Language Scheme, and therefore developing the 'Cynnig Cymraeg' is not the appropriate route for them.

Certain skills/qualifications bodies are under statutory duties of the Welsh Language Act 1993 to prepare a Welsh Language Scheme. Some bodies may have prepared a Welsh Language Scheme on a voluntary basis. It is the Commissioner's view that bodies that already have a Welsh Language Scheme (whether statutory or voluntary) should not work towards the 'Cynnig Cymraeg'. For the majority of skills/qualifications bodies that do not have a Welsh language scheme, we agree that developing the 'Cynnig Cymraeg' is the appropriate route.

This section therefore needs to reflect the above situation, and this could be achieved by including one additional point/sentence.

### **The relevance of the Welsh Language Standards (No. 6) Regulations 2017 and the principle of enabling the choice of assessment language**

Standards 90 - 90A of [the Welsh Language Standards \(No. 6\) Regulations 2017](#) place requirements on colleges / universities to enable students to submit written work in Welsh for assessment should they wish, and to ensure that work submitted in Welsh is not treated less favourably than work submitted in English.

Following previous discussions between the Commissioner and Qualification Wales, it has been confirmed that the awarding bodies do not provide on behalf of the colleges/universities in carrying out assessments, but rather that the education institution provides on behalf of the awarding body in this situation. In terms of the Welsh Language Standards, there is therefore no legal requirement for awarding bodies to enable written work to be submitted through the medium of Welsh. However, we believe that there is scope for the proposed guidance to emphasise the principle behind the above standards, which is that learners should be able to submit written work in Welsh if they wish.

We accept that discussing of this principle goes beyond the specific focus of the guidance, which is to promote and facilitate access to qualifications offered in Welsh. We also know that issues of bilingual assessment and the development of elements of qualifications through the medium of Welsh are addressed in the [Guidance for Awarding Bodies – the development, delivery and awarding of qualifications through the medium of Welsh](#). However, we believe there is scope here for cross-referencing and to emphasise that assessment in Welsh goes beyond those qualifications which are formally offered through the medium of Welsh. In other words, awarding bodies should not only be encouraged to promote and facilitate access to Welsh-medium qualifications, but also any opportunities to introduce elements of qualification through the medium of Welsh. This is particularly true in the context of the 'Cynnig Cymraeg' scheme and the importance of enabling

students to submit work in Welsh for assessment. Not only would this be an important step forward in facilitating the ability of institutions such as Colleges to offer Welsh-medium assessment, but also allow awarding bodies to expand their Welsh-medium provision step by step.

In conclusion, we believe that there is an opportunity here to expand on what is already in section 3.4 of the draft guidance, detailing how awarding bodies can go beyond the minimum requirements by promoting and facilitating assessments through the medium of Welsh.

It should also be noted that some of the links in the Welsh medium guidance open English medium pages/documents.

**7. Please provide any comments on the identified Welsh Language impacts. How could positive impacts on the Welsh language be increased, or negative impacts be lessened. Are there any other potential impacts we have not identified? If so, what are they?**

As you're aware, the Commissioner's position is that all qualifications available to learners in Wales should be available bilingually. There is a long way to go to achieve this. We accept that Qualifications Wales has a strategy for expanding Welsh-medium qualifications, and the proposals included in this consultation contribute significantly to this work. However, there is always the potential to do more and to raise the expectations and demands on awarding bodies, and we believe these conditions and requirements will need to be continually reviewed. This is particularly the case to ensure that the regulatory qualifications framework reflects developments in education and Welsh language policy.