



**Qualified for the future:
The right choice for Wales
Consultation summary
report**

**Produced for Qualifications Wales
by Opinion Research Services
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1. Glossary

Acronym / Key word	Definition
ALN	Additional Learning Needs
Area	Area of Learning and Experience
BSL	British Sign Language
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
DCF	Digital Competence Framework
EAL	English as an Additional Language
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
NEA	Non-Examination Assessment
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
Welsh Bacc	Welsh Baccalaureate

2. Introduction

2.1. Background

Qualifications Wales commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to host the second consultation in the Qualified for the future series as part of its review of the main qualifications taken by 14 to 16-year-olds in Wales. The consultation ran between 27 January and 16 April 2021 (documents are available [here](#)).

The consultation gathered views on the main made-for-Wales qualifications that should be available to schools. Qualifications Wales will subsequently consult on the content and assessment methods for these qualifications and will ensure that other qualifications are available alongside them.

Qualifications Wales developed specific proposals for the consultation which spanned the six Areas of Learning and Experience ('Areas'), as described in the Curriculum for Wales Guidance ('Curriculum Guidance'¹).

2.2. Methodology

Qualifications Wales promoted and circulated the consultation and conducted online webinars². Youth Cymru held some online events for young people. Consultation responses were mainly collected via an online survey. Online and PDF youth-friendly (summary) versions of the survey were also available. All versions of the consultation included the same core closed and open questions and some questions about the impact of the proposals.

Overall, there were 1,501 responses to the consultation, comprising:

- 1,033 (84%) responses to the main consultation;
- 203 (16%) responses to the youth-friendly consultation; and
- 12 responses received by email, and 253 virtually identical responses from members of Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Gymraeg³ which addressed the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area consultation questions.

¹ Curriculum for Wales - Hwb (gov.wales)

² Further details and recordings of the webinars can be found here: [Qualifications Wales / Consultation Webinars – Qualified for the future – the right choice for Wales](#)

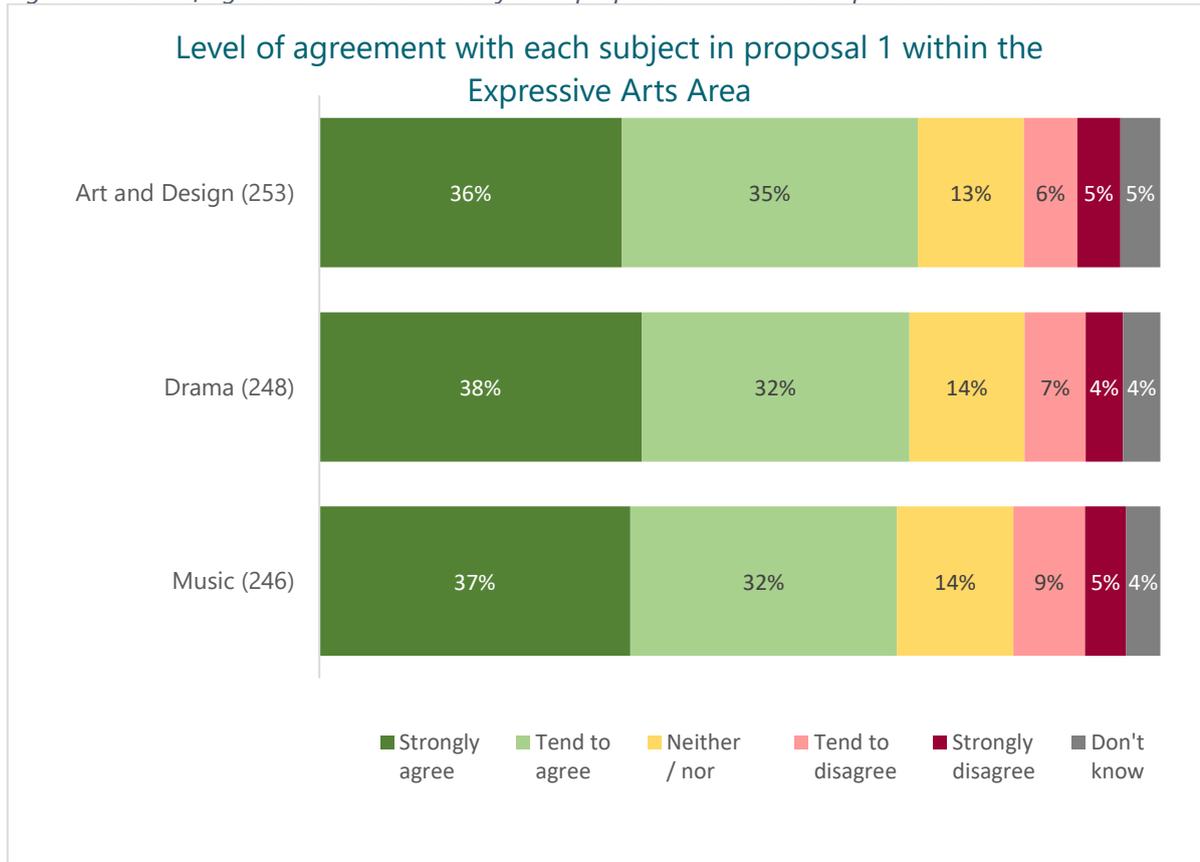
³ [Hafan | Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg](#)

3. Expressive Arts

3.1. Proposal 1

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to review and reform GCSEs in: Art and Design, Drama and Music?

Figure 1: Level of agreement with each subject in proposal 1 within the Expressive Arts Area



Around 250 people answered questions on each of the subjects in this proposal, ranging from 246 for Music and 253 for Art and Design. Around seven in ten agreed with the proposal to review and reform the three GCSEs discussed. Just over one in ten disagreed with the proposal to reform Art and Design (11%) and Drama (11%), although this rose to 14% for Music. 60% (150 people) of those who answered this question provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are as follows.

- Many respondents emphasised the need to retain GCSE Art and Design, GCSE Drama and GCSE Music as separate qualifications. They felt that this would encourage interest in expressive arts subjects; prevent the subjects from being side-lined; and would help the subjects to retain their value and identity.

- Keeping separate GCSEs in the Expressive Arts Area would also support learners to gain broad experience; develop valuable skills; and prepare for post-16 qualifications and careers in their chosen fields, respondents noted.
- There was some feeling that the assessment models for the proposed new qualifications within the Area should be more practical than written to avoid discouraging less able learners and to reflect practice in further or higher education and in work.
- Some respondents felt that qualifications in this Area need to be updated. Suggestions for achieving this included incorporating music technology into GCSE Music or making it available as a separate GCSE; incorporating contemporary and traditional works into GCSE Drama; and increasing continuity in curriculum and pedagogy⁴ from *“Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4”*⁵.
- A few respondents felt that the proposal is not sufficiently aligned to the new curriculum, suggesting that a more radical review of the qualifications within the Area is needed.
- Some respondents felt that modern technology and software should be incorporated into delivering expressive arts subjects to enhance learners’ skills and reflect industry practice. A few cautioned that digital technology should not be *“a prerequisite”*. Some noted that all schools need equal access to funding, support, equipment, and/or specialist staff and facilities to ensure that all learners can access qualifications in the Area.
- A few respondents said that the current GCSE Music is more suited to learners from *“middle-class”* backgrounds, and that the curriculum and assessment approach should be reconsidered to include learners from all backgrounds.
- One respondent felt that the current GCSE Music listening exam is not suitable for learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Another noted that BTEC⁶ Music is more suitable for lower ability learners than GCSE Music.

⁴ The method and practice of teaching.

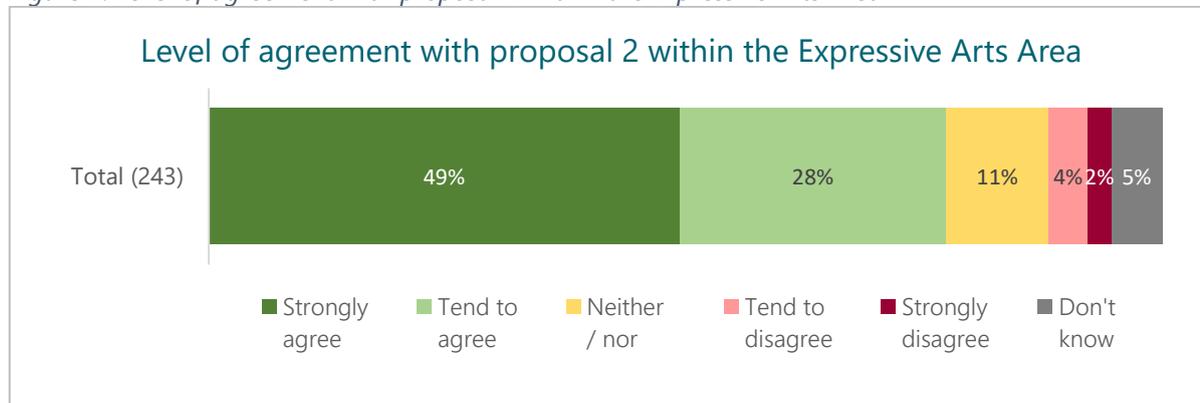
⁵ Many respondents referred to “Key Stages” in their feedback. Key Stages do not feature in the new Curriculum for Wales, although they feature in the current National Curriculum.

⁶ BTEC stands for Business and Technology Education Council. BTECs are specialist work-related qualifications which are available in schools, further education institutions, and training centres in a range of sectors.

3.2. Proposal 2

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to create a new GCSE in Film and Digital Media?

Figure 2: Level of agreement with proposal 2 within the Expressive Arts Area



A total of 243 people responded to this question and the majority (77%) agreed with the proposal. Parents and carers, and members of the public, were particularly supportive whilst education professionals were the least likely to agree strongly with the creation of this new GCSE. Just over half (51%, 125 people) of those who answered this question provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are outlined below.

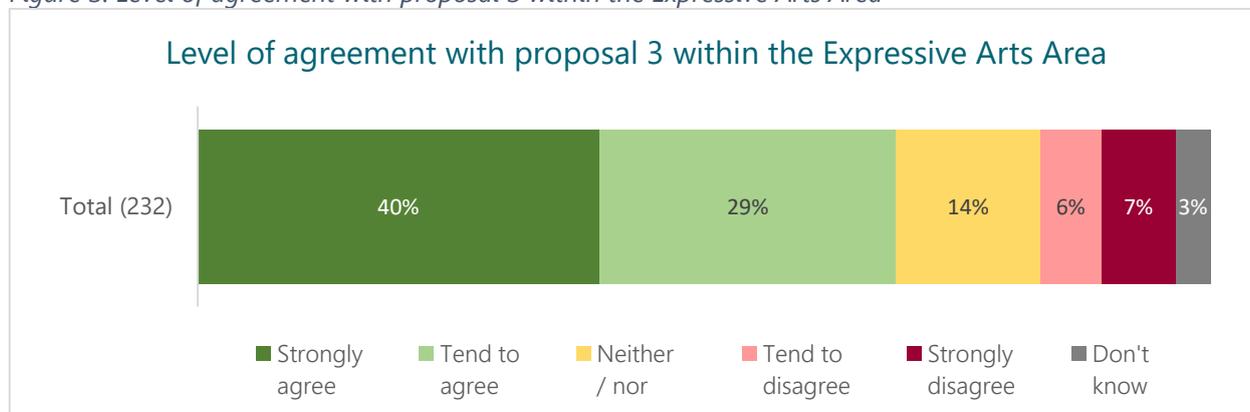
- Most respondents said that a GCSE in Film and Digital Media would enable learners to develop specialist skills to support future studies and careers in film and digital media industries. A few emphasised that progression routes to further qualifications must be considered if a new qualification is developed.
- There was some feeling that the proposed qualification is well aligned with the new Curriculum for Wales and with the design of the Expressive Arts Area, but a few felt that the proposal does not go far enough.
- Some respondents felt that schools may struggle to provide the software, technology, equipment, and specialist staff needed to deliver the proposed GCSE.
- A GCSE in Film and Digital Media would be of great interest to learners, according to some respondents. It may attract those who are not performers, those who do not excel in subjects such as the sciences, and those who would prefer to study multiple aspects of media studies, it was said.
- A few emphasised that the qualification would need to be designed to ensure it is equally valued and respected relative to similar qualifications available elsewhere in the UK. Others emphasised that care would need to be taken to avoid duplicating existing qualifications or combining incompatible subjects.

- Suggestions for the proposed qualification included making it available alongside complementary subjects within the Expressive Arts Area; ensuring that it fosters knowledge and skills development; involving subject specialists and employers in its development; ensuring its availability in Welsh and English; making it modular to increase its suitability for lower ability learners and to enable learners to specialise in their preferred subject(s); and focusing on more practical as opposed to theory-based learning.
- Regarding content, respondents suggested that the proposed GCSE should include music (including composition, production, and sound effects); art and performing arts; varied approaches to using digital media; and that it should link clearly with other Areas.

3.3. Proposal 3

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to make sure that a choice of qualifications that assess dance continues to be available to learners and schools?

Figure 3: Level of agreement with proposal 3 within the Expressive Arts Area



A total of 232 people rated this proposal, and the overall reaction was positive with over two in three people (69%) agreeing. Among education professionals, agreement rose to 72% whilst among learners it fell to 59%.

Just over half (52%, 121 people) of those who answered this question provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are outlined below.

Many of those who agreed with this proposal commented on it based on the misunderstanding that Qualifications Wales proposed to make available a made-for-Wales GCSE in Dance. Conversely, most of the others who commented on this proposal reflected on Qualifications Wales' intention to discontinue GCSE Dance.

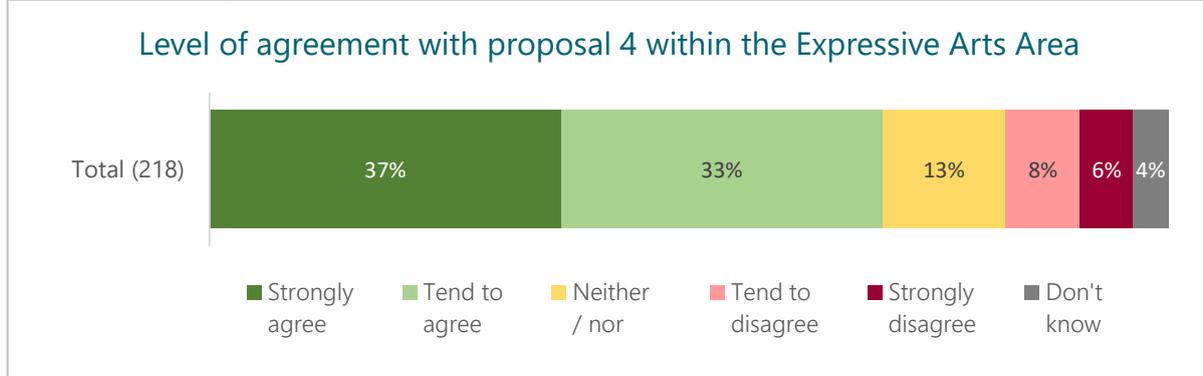
- Most respondents felt that GCSE Dance should continue to be offered to learners in Wales. Removing it would make the subject less accessible for learners whose families are unable to pay for dance lessons outside of school, they felt. Many emphasised that a made-for-Wales GCSE Dance should be available in Welsh and English.
- A few respondents were concerned that offering learners in Wales the GCSE Dance that was designed for learners in England would not reflect the new Curriculum for Wales.
- There was some feeling that the current low take-up of GCSE Dance was because many schools in Wales choose not to offer it; marginalise it within their curriculums; or discourage learners from taking it. This needed to be redressed, it was said.
- Some predicted that demand for GCSE Dance would increase over the coming years. They consequently felt that learners' interest in dance should be monitored and the decision not to create a new made-for-Wales GCSE should be reviewed.

- In the context of retaining GCSE Dance, many respondents emphasised its wider value to learners (especially lower ability and "*less academic*" learners, and those with disabilities), society, and the economy.
- Some felt that not offering GCSE Dance would limit learners wanting to pursue further study and careers in dance. Others stressed that learners in Wales would be disadvantaged relative to those elsewhere in the UK by the proposal not to create a made-for-Wales GCSE Dance.
- Conversely, a few respondents felt that the proposal was "*pragmatic*", largely based on the current low take-up of GCSE Dance.
- Some felt that dance should be offered as a standalone subject. Others expressed that it should be offered as part of other qualifications such as GCSE Physical Education (PE) or as part of an expressive arts or performing arts qualification.
- A few respondents expressed concerns around the staffing of GCSE Dance.

3.4. Proposal 4

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to continue to give schools a choice of qualifications in Expressive Arts that offer a multi-disciplinary approach?

Figure 4: Level of agreement with proposal 4 within the Expressive Arts Area



Slightly fewer people responded to this proposal, with 218 responses received. As with the other proposals within the Expressive Arts Area, there was broad support for this one, with seven out of ten (70%) expressing agreement. Learners and education professionals showed a similar level of support (both 70%).

Just under half (48%, 105 people) of those who answered this question provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are outlined below.

Many of those who commented on this proposal appear to have misunderstood it, believing that the proposal was to create a specific made-for-Wales multi-disciplinary Expressive Arts qualification.

- Many of those who agreed with the proposal emphasised the need to keep offering separate GCSEs in Expressive Arts. They said that this was because existing qualifications already offer cross-curricular opportunities; subjects within the Area were too distinct to be combined; offering discrete GCSE subjects within the Area prepared learners well to specialise post-16; and learners would be less interested in studying a multi-disciplinary qualification compared to discrete GCSE subjects.
- Continuing to offer a choice of subjects within the Area was seen by many respondents as vital in encouraging learners to develop skills, and to support their progress to further study and the world of work.
- A few felt that the proposal could benefit learners who wanted to specialise in subjects within the Area or those who were unsure which subjects to specialise in.
- Some said that the proposal could help to ensure that learners in Wales had equal access to expressive arts curriculums relative to learners elsewhere in the UK. Others highlighted that expressive arts qualifications should be made-for-Wales and have innovative approaches to content and assessment.

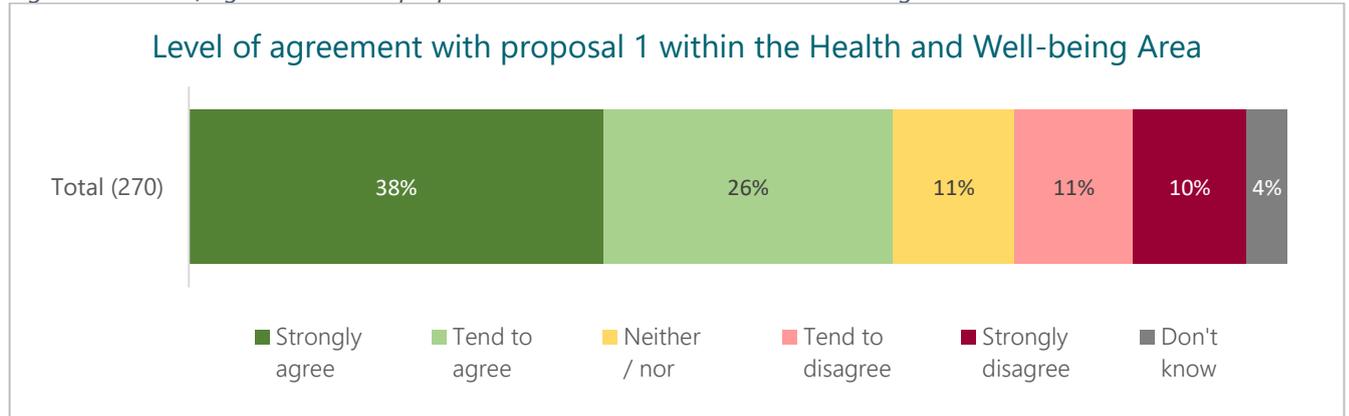
- There was some feeling that a made-for-Wales multi-disciplinary qualification within the Area should be created, in line with the ethos of the new curriculum. A few respondents felt that more extensive reform of all qualifications within the Area is needed.
- Other reasons given for introducing a multi-disciplinary qualification were that it could broaden learners' choice of qualifications within the Area; that it could help keep learners' options open, allowing them to experience multiple expressive arts disciplines and increase their creativity; and that it could suit lower ability learners.
- Conversely, some respondents noted that a multi-disciplinary qualification within the Area may not be valued equally to more established subjects. Others said that it would not support learners well enough to progress to post-16 learning.
- Respondents suggested that qualifications within the Area should cover dance; elements of production; and Wales-specific content and a Welsh focus.

4. Health and Well-being

4.1. Proposal 1

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal not to create a new qualification intended to support the delivery of the whole of this Area?

Figure 5: Level of agreement with proposal 1 within the Health and Well-being Area



A total of 270 people responded to this proposal. Just under two in three (64%) agreed with it overall. There was a notable difference in opinion between education professionals and learners, with learners less supportive: less than half (44%) of learners were in favour of the proposal compared with 70% of education professionals.

Just over half (51%, 138 people) of those who answered this question provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are outlined below.

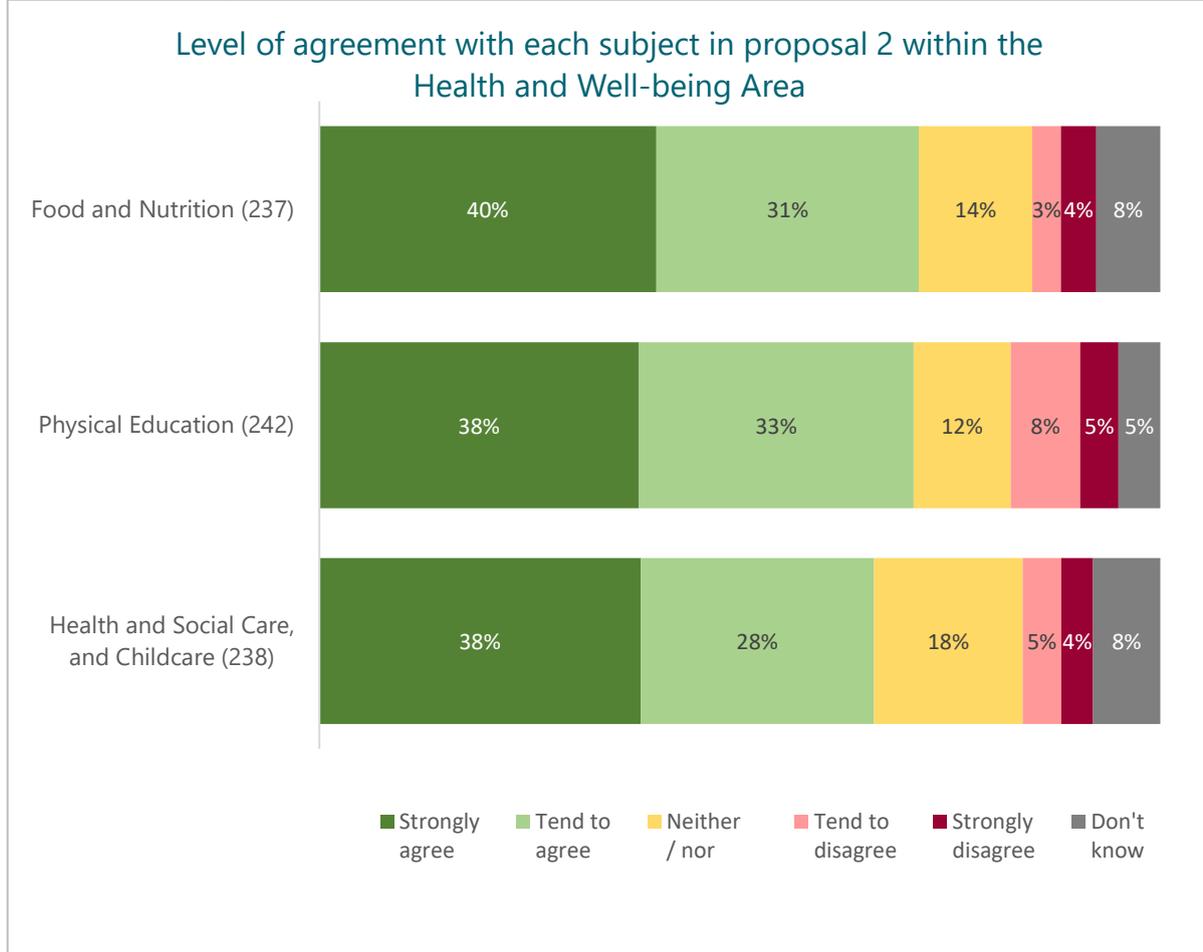
- Some respondents felt that the Area should focus on learners' personal development rather than on a qualification. Others felt that a new GCSE was unnecessary because existing qualifications in the Area could be reviewed and reformed to align with the new curriculum or already offer routes to further learning and careers; and that health and well-being could be integrated into other parts of the curriculum, such as the Skills Challenge Certificate.
- Of those who disagreed with the proposal and expressed that a new qualification should be created, some felt that a new qualification would help learners to progress to further study and careers in the Area; and that it would support their health and well-being.
- Some respondents felt that not having a new qualification could devalue the Area. Others acknowledged that it might reduce learners' interest in and commitment to the Area, although some expressed the opposite opinion. It was also felt that some schools might not update their approaches to teaching and learning if a new qualification was not created.

- Regardless of whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposal, most respondents highlighted the need for a cross-curricular and multi-disciplinary approach to teaching and learning in the Area. Some of those in favour of a new qualification expressed that this would help prioritise health and well-being within schools' curriculums. Similarly, others felt that creating a new qualification would reflect the increased emphasis on health and well-being within the new curriculum.
- Some of those who agreed with the proposal said that the Area of Health and Well-being is too broad to be covered by one qualification. Others emphasised the need to keep the existing qualifications within the Area to foster learners' knowledge and skills.
- Objectively assessing learners' progress in a broad Area like Health and Well-being would be difficult and could detract from learners' health and well-being development, according to some respondents who supported the proposal.

4.2. Proposal 2

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to review and reform GCSEs in Food and Nutrition, Physical Education, and Health and Social Care, and Childcare?

Figure 6: Level of agreement with each subject in proposal 2 within the Health and Well-being Area



Around 240 people answered questions on each of the subjects in this proposal, ranging from 237 for Food and Nutrition to 242 for Health, Social Care, and Childcare. Seven in ten (71%) supported the proposals for Food and Nutrition and Physical Education whilst 66% supported a review of Health and Social Care, and Childcare. The highest level of disagreement was for Physical Education where 13% of respondents disagreed.

94 respondents (39% of those who answered this question) provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are outlined below.

- Some respondents reflected on the need to retain separate GCSEs in Physical Education, Food and Nutrition, and Health and Social Care, and Childcare. They expressed that this would support learners to develop skills and knowledge in their chosen specialisms, and progress to further learning and careers.

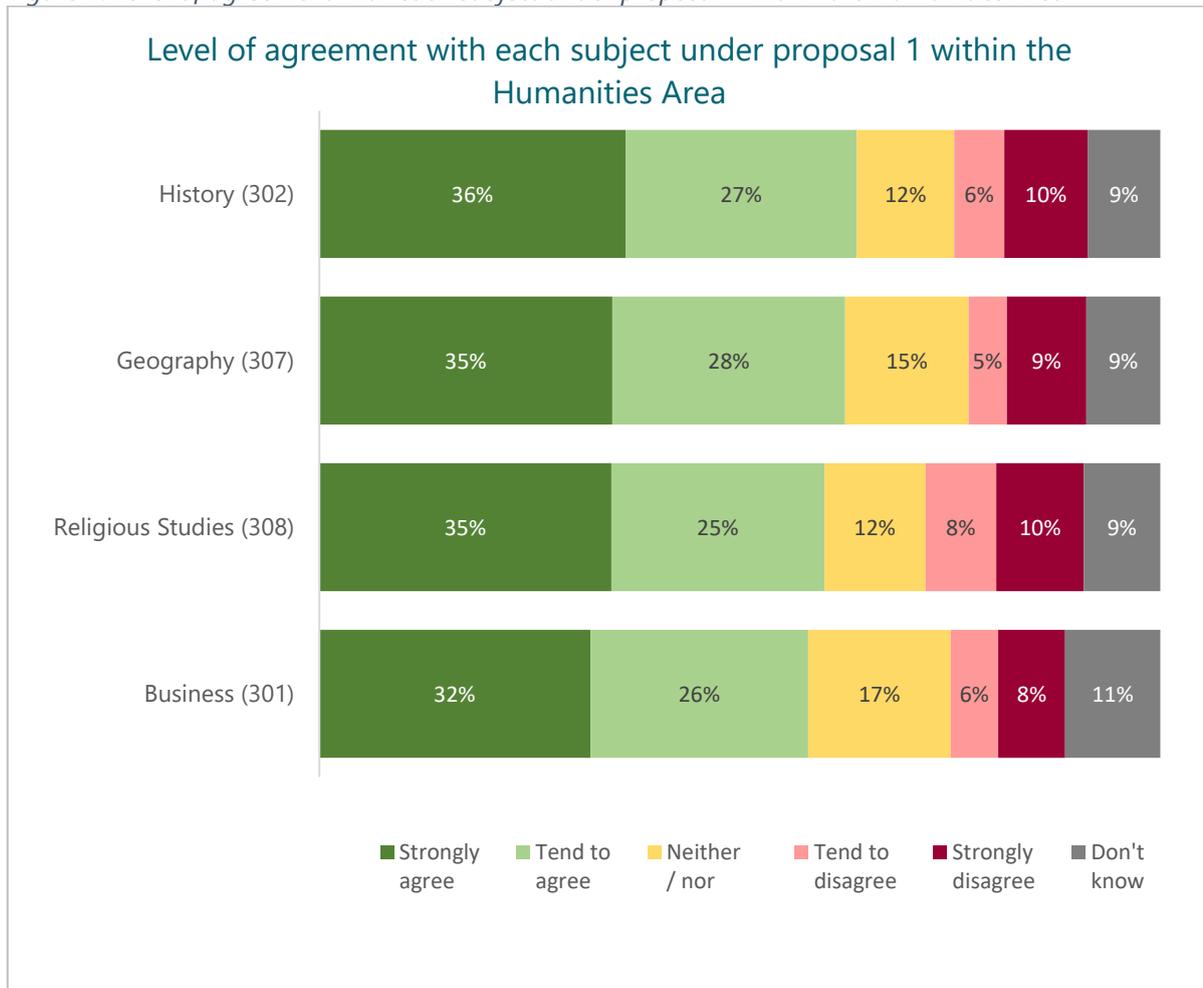
- Most respondents agreed that a review and reform of current qualifications in the Area is needed, although mixed opinions were expressed on the nature and extent of the required reforms. Some pointed out that extensive reform was needed to align the qualifications with the new curriculum. Others said that the extent of the changes would vary from subject to subject.
- A few pointed out that the GCSEs in Physical Education and Health and Social Care, and Childcare, had only recently been reformed. Some disagreed with the need for any review or reform of these qualifications as they felt that the existing qualifications in the Area are adequate. Others felt that broader changes in teaching and learning practice are needed to ensure that learners who do not choose to study qualifications in this Area would still benefit from developing related skills and knowledge.
- Differing views were also shared on learner take-up and interest in the current qualifications in the Area. Some said that they are popular with learners, whereas others disagreed. A few highlighted the need to make the reviewed and reformed qualifications "*academically robust*" to retain interest and maximise take-up, but others felt that, to achieve this, the qualifications should have a more practical focus.
- Specific suggestions for the review and reform of GCSE Physical Education included widening its scope beyond sport, performance, and competition (including removing the compulsory individual activity to avoid negatively impacting learners from more deprived backgrounds); incorporating yoga, aerobics, and dance; and retaining its practical focus. Assessing GCSE Physical Education should be practical and should allow learners to demonstrate their progress in different ways, according to some respondents.
- Regarding GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare, suggestions for review and reform included ensuring that the reformed qualification supported future study and careers; and separating it out into discrete qualifications.
- For GCSE Food and Nutrition, a few highlighted the importance of the subject; the need for it to support healthy lifestyle choices; and to balance the needs of different individuals.

5. Humanities

5.1. Proposal 1

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to review and reform GCSEs in: Business, Geography, History and Religious Studies?

Figure 7: Level of agreement with each subject under proposal 1 within the Humanities Area



Just over 300 people chose to respond to this proposal. The majority agreed with the proposal to review and reform the four GCSEs included in the proposal. The lowest level of agreement was for Business at 58%. This subject also showed the highest level of neutral and don't know responses, suggesting that familiarity with this subject may have been lower than with the other three.

More than two in three (68%, 205 people) of those who answered this question provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are outlined below.

- There was strong agreement with the proposal among respondents, with many expressing that existing GCSEs within the Humanities Area should remain

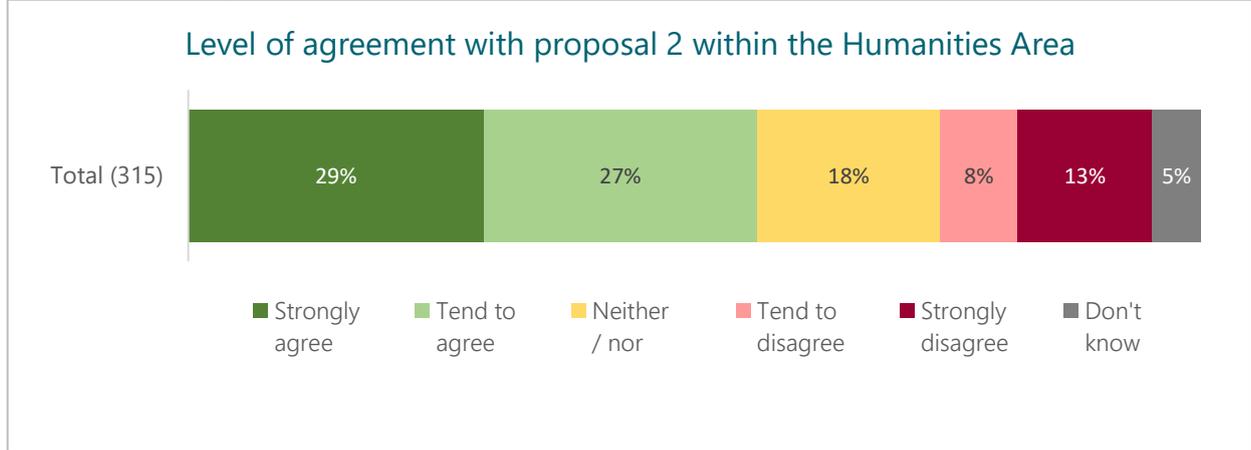
separate. This, it was said, would reflect the importance and value of the individual subjects; maintain discipline-specific rigour; prevent subject dilution; promote learner choice; and foster skills and knowledge to support further learning and careers. Some respondents suggested that a combined or integrated approach to GCSEs within the Area should be considered. Others noted that any reviewed and reformed GCSEs should emphasise cross-curricular links.

- Many respondents expressed concern around the “heavy” content of the current GCSEs within the Area. This affects teaching, learning, and assessment; discourages or disadvantages lower ability learners; and discourages learners from studying A levels in the subjects, it was said.
- Suggestions made for the content of future GCSEs within the Area included increasing diversity and relevance; a focus on developing subject-based skills and global perspectives (GCSE Geography); retaining a knowledge-based focus rather than becoming too focused on skills development (GCSE Religious Studies); and including more self-directed, interactive, and enquiry-based learning.
- Respondents strongly agreed with the need to review and reform GCSEs within the Area to align with the new curriculum and to improve teaching and assessment. However, some felt that the proposal was unnecessary. Reasons given for this included the existing qualifications’ recent reforms and current fitness for purpose; the time and effort needed to prepare to teach new GCSEs; and the impact of COVID-19.
- Many respondents felt that current GCSEs within the Area are too focused on preparing learners for assessments. Learners struggle to complete the current exams (especially in GCSE History), it was said. There was some feeling that assessment for all qualifications within the Area should be comparable in format; recognise teacher assessment to a greater extent; use digital and blended approaches; and capture individual progression.
- There was some feeling that all qualifications within the Area should be structured in a similar way and be consistent with each other to ensure comparability and to challenge learners appropriately. Some respondents suggested that a short course or level 2 qualification in religious studies should be offered alongside the full GCSE.
- Some respondents stated that the content and rigour of qualifications within the Area should be comparable to those offered elsewhere in the UK to avoid disadvantaging learners in Wales and to support further learning.

5.2. Proposal 2

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to create a new GCSE in Social Studies, if feasible?

Figure 8: Level of agreement with proposal 2 within the Humanities Area



315 people responded to this proposal. Just over half (56%) agreed with the proposal to create a new GCSE in Social Studies. Education professionals were slightly less supportive: 53% agreed while more than a quarter (27%) disagreed, including 17% strongly disagreeing. Over half (57%, 180 people) of those who answered this question provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are outlined below.

- Many respondents felt that a GCSE in Social Studies would be relevant and important to learners. They said that the qualification would help broaden learners' knowledge of international issues and help them to become more empathetic and understanding; support them to progress to further related study; and help them to develop useful transferable skills.
- Some predicted that a GCSE in Social Studies would be popular among learners, especially those who want to specialise in or study different subjects in the Humanities Area. However, a few felt that this GCSE would be less popular than more traditional humanities subjects. According to others, the GCSE would be a "watered-down" qualification, which could not cover the necessary topics in enough depth and would not be valued by higher education institutions or employers.
- Many respondents were concerned that the proposed social studies qualification would "side-line" existing GCSEs within the Area. Some noted that social studies is already covered by existing GCSEs. Others felt that the proposed GCSE could replace the Skills Challenge Certificate. A few suggested that gaps in other qualifications in the Area should be addressed instead of introducing a new qualification, or that social studies could be incorporated into existing qualifications. The proposed GCSE in Social Studies should avoid

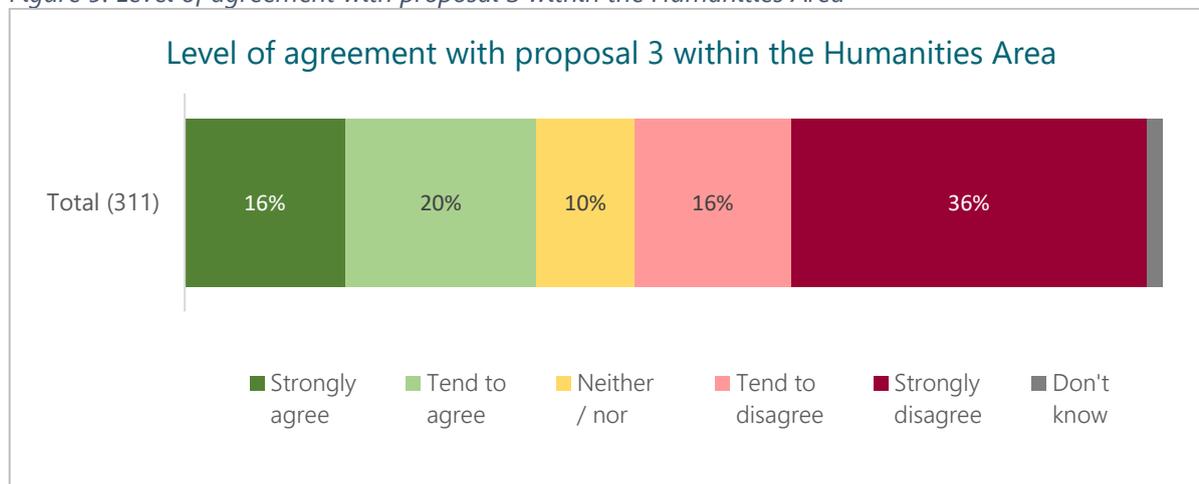
duplication with existing qualifications, it was said, and should also make explicit the links between the humanities subjects.

- There was some feeling that the proposed qualification is strongly aligned with the new curriculum. There was also support for the qualification to be made-for-Wales, designed by Wales-based subject specialists, available in Welsh and English, and include Wales-related context and emphasis.
- Some respondents were concerned that schools may struggle to recruit specialist staff to deliver the proposed qualification. Others expressed that staff would need upskilling, resources, and guidance to prepare them for delivery.
- Several suggestions were made regarding the proposed GCSE's content and assessment. Including community engagement could help to foster cohesion, a few said. It was also stated that a modular structure could enable learners to select topics in line with their own interests. Regarding assessment, ensuring rigour was said to be important, along with incorporating the Digital Competence Framework (DCF) into the assessment criteria, and providing further information about the balance of non-examination assessment (NEA) and exams.

5.3. Proposal 3

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to create a new integrated GCSE in Humanities, if feasible?

Figure 9: Level of agreement with proposal 3 within the Humanities Area



A total of 311 people responded to this proposal, and more than half (52%) disagreed with the idea of developing a new integrated GCSE in Humanities. This included 36% who strongly disagreed. Among education professionals, disagreement was even more pronounced with 61% disagreeing, including 41% who strongly disagreed with the proposal.

Almost two in three (63%, 197 people) of those who responded also provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are outlined below.

- The issue of greatest concern to respondents was that a new GCSE in Humanities could make the subject areas covered too broad; dilute subject knowledge and skills; limit opportunities for specialisation; and seek to incorporate too much content into one qualification. Some also feared that even a double award GCSE would not cover the subjects within the Area sufficiently, and that schools would struggle to decide on and plan the content of the proposed qualification, given the limited space available for it within the curriculum.
- Most respondents felt that the proposed GCSE would not provide learners with the skills and knowledge they need for further study of subjects within the Area. Some felt that learners studying GCSE in Humanities would be disadvantaged compared to those studying separate GCSEs within the Area when progressing to further and higher education.
- A few respondents who supported the proposed GCSE in Humanities suggested that an integrated Humanities A level should also be available to enable progression from the GCSE. Other respondents who supported the

proposal said that the proposed qualification should initially be available and piloted by schools that deliver integrated humanities at “Key Stage 3”.⁷

- Many respondents felt that the proposed GCSE would undermine existing subjects in the Area, reducing their take-up, leading to a loss of specialism among learners, and the marginalisation of other subjects. There was some feeling that subjects within the Area were too distinct to be combined meaningfully into an integrated GCSE. A few feared that the new qualification would duplicate and compete with existing subjects.
- Considerable concern was expressed about the proposed qualification being taught by non-specialist teachers, which could devalue the subjects and reduce learners’ enjoyment of them. Other staffing concerns were that the qualification could be interpreted inconsistently by teachers; that schools could struggle to recruit staff who wanted to deliver it; and that the extra time needed to teach it would be a challenge for smaller schools.
- Some respondents referred to the previous integrated GCSE in Humanities which was available to learners in Wales. They stated that it lacked depth and rigour, and had low uptake, fearing that this could also apply to the proposed GCSE. Others highlighted the need to prevent the proposed GCSE from being seen as a “secondary” or easier option. Conversely, some felt that the qualification could suit lower ability learners or those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).
- Respondents who supported the proposal highlighted its alignment with the new curriculum and with the holistic approach to humanities at “Key Stage 3”; the potential for an integrated approach to the Humanities Area; and the qualification’s potential appeal to learners who wish to study multiple aspects of humanities.
- Regarding qualification design, a few respondents noted that the proposed qualification should be rolled out in parallel with other reforms. Others highlighted that the qualification should be well-designed; carefully planned; include optional or smaller modules; have input from subject experts; and that schools should have enough time to support its roll-out.

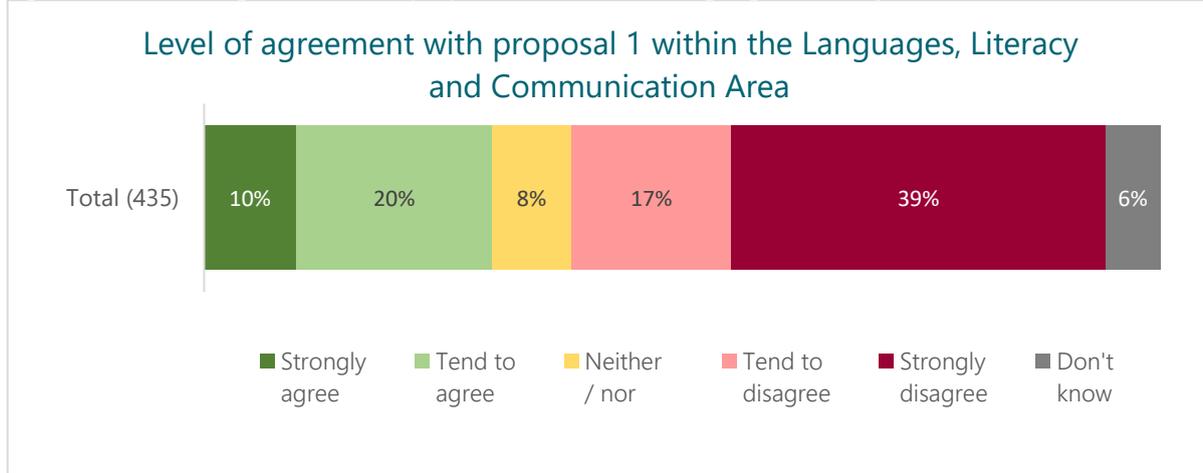
⁷ Throughout the consultation responses, many respondents referred to “Key Stages” 2 to 5 in their feedback. Key Stages do not exist in the new Curriculum for Wales, although they do feature in the current National Curriculum. Key Stage 2 equates to Years 3-6; Key Stage 3, Years 7-9, Key Stage 4, Years 10-11, and Key Stage 5, Years 12-13.

6. Languages, Literacy and Communication

6.1. Proposal 1

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to create new combined language and literature GCSEs in English and Welsh to replace the existing separate GCSE qualifications? These new combined GCSEs would each be roughly the size of 1½ GCSEs.

Figure 10: Level of agreement with proposal 1 within the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area



A total of 435 people answered this question, the largest single group being education professionals (251). More than half (56%) of respondents disagreed with the proposal, with around two in five (39%) strongly disagreeing. Less than a third (30%) agreed. When we consider the data by different stakeholder groups, learners were much more supportive of the proposal, with half agreeing (50%) compared with just under a quarter (24%) of education professionals. Of the 435 people who responded to the proposal, 67% (292 people) also provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are outlined below.

- The most common concern raised by respondents related to the proposed qualifications' size. Due to their size, respondents predicted that the proposed qualifications would devalue Welsh and English as subjects; would not be equal to qualifications offered elsewhere in the UK; would not be widely valued, understood, or recognised; and would impact negatively on learners' literacy levels and on school resources. Those who supported the proposal felt that it could reduce duplication between language and literature qualifications, and free up learners to focus on other subjects.
- Many respondents were concerned that the proposal would negatively affect lower ability learners through increasing their workload and removing tiers. Some were concerned that the proposed qualifications would disadvantage higher ability learners through not preparing them adequately for further

study. Others disagreed, stating that the proposed qualifications could help improve literacy skills and widen access to literature.

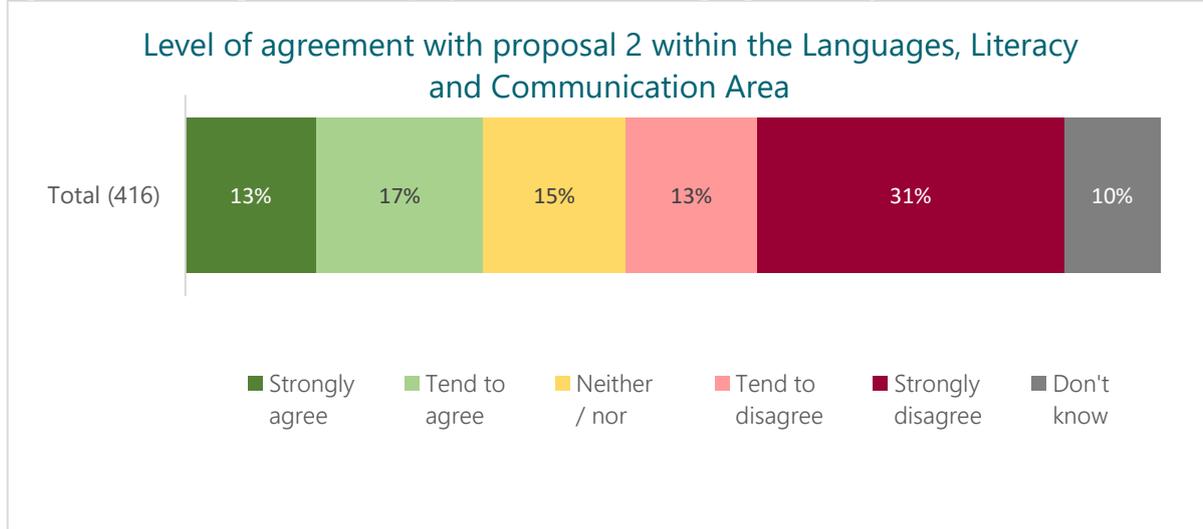
- Many of those who disagreed with the proposal did so because they felt language and literature should not be combined. Some suggested that combining language and literature would reduce the diversity of literature studied. Conversely, some of those who agreed with the proposal felt that combining language and literature was logical, and that it would encourage learners to understand how the disciplines were connected and to develop transferable skills.
- Some respondents were concerned that the proposal prioritises Welsh Government (WG)'s policies relating to the promotion of the Welsh language at the expense of English literacy levels for learners in English medium schools. It was also said that lower take-up of literature qualifications is related to indecision by WG on whether they contribute to school performance measures.
- The members of Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Gymraeg who submitted a response in relation to the proposals within the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area stated that there is a need to ensure that learning Welsh along one continuum leads to one holistic assessment and equal opportunities for all learners to achieve the highest standards in Welsh. They stated that *"...instead, a Language, Literature and contemporary Wales qualification should be created - equivalent to 2 GCSEs to replace the current qualification"*⁸. It is likely that this suggestion relates to the current Welsh language and Welsh literature GCSEs, but this is not explicitly stated.

⁸ "...yn lle dylid creu cymhwyster 'Iaith, Llenyddiaeth a'r Gymru gyfoes' – cyfwerth a 2 TGAU i ddisodli'r cymhwyster presennol"

6.2. Proposal 2

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to discontinue GCSE Welsh Second Language and create a new, bigger GCSE designed for learners in English-medium contexts? The new qualification would be roughly the size of 1½ GCSEs.

Figure 11: Level of agreement with proposal 2 within the languages, Literacy and Communication Area



A total of 416 people answered this question with 30% agreeing and 44% disagreeing. Overall, three in ten (31%) respondents disagreed strongly with the proposal. Among education professionals, 47% disagreed; among parents and carers, and members of the public, this rose to 59%; while among learners it fell to 31%. 54% (226 people) of those who answered this question provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are outlined below.

- While most respondents were positive about the teaching of GCSE Welsh in English-medium schools, there were mixed views about its popularity and success. Many respondents said that learners, parents and carers had negative feelings about the fact that learning Welsh is compulsory up to age 16. Some suggested that the proposal could increase this negativity. Many also did not value the current GCSE Welsh Second Language qualification. There was strong feeling that the proposed increased focus on learning Welsh would create a “two-tier system” where Welsh learners’ literacy skills lag behind those of their English peers.
- As with the previous proposal, some respondents expressed concern at the introduction of a qualification the size of one and a half GCSEs, with most in support of keeping the qualification as one GCSE. They felt that a qualification of the size proposed would not be recognised by higher education institutions or employers. Some felt that schools would struggle to find enough Welsh teachers to deliver a larger qualification.

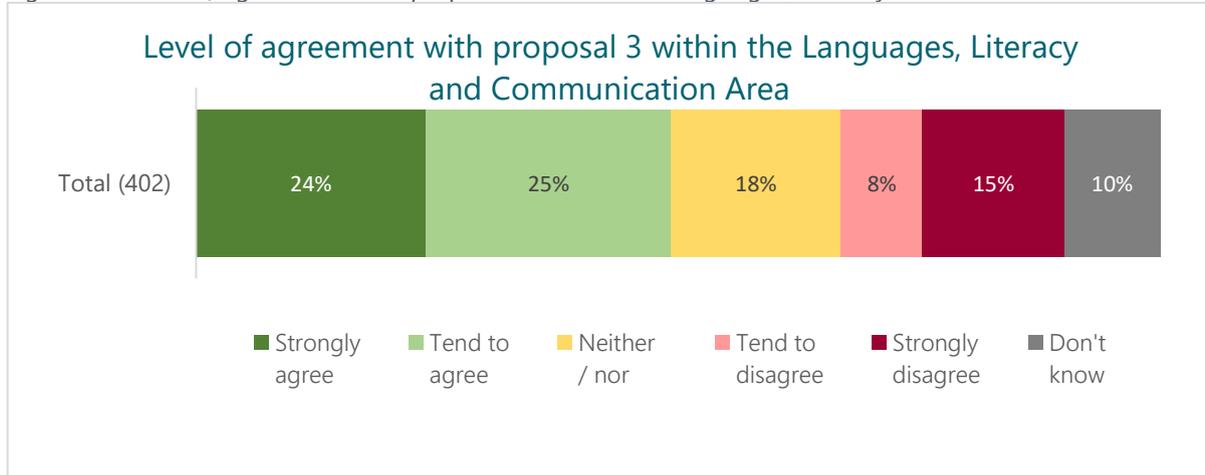
- Some respondents felt that studying a larger GCSE would disadvantage those who already struggled with the subject. To mitigate this, it was suggested that the qualification should be optional and not include an examination, or that schools should offer *“further Welsh”* on top of a *“pared-down”* qualification for those with more advanced Welsh skills.
- Inconsistent Welsh teaching at primary school needed to be addressed to prepare learners for the increased focus on learning Welsh, according to some respondents. It was suggested that this could be achieved through introducing a continuum of learning using an assessment based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR⁹).
- Some respondents did not consider this proposal to be well aligned to the aims of the new curriculum because taking time away from learning English and other languages would make learners less globally aware. Others felt that removing the compulsory learning of Welsh would encourage learners to study other languages, increasing global awareness. Some respondents felt strongly that the proposal is more reflective of political agenda than educational need.
- Members of Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Gymraeg who submitted a response said that they strongly disagreed with proposal 2. They stated that one holistic Welsh GCSE qualification should be created instead of the qualifications outlined in proposals 1 and 2. The holistic Welsh GCSE would comprise two examination papers, leading to a dual award / two GCSEs, it was said.

⁹ The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is a tool which is used to describe learners' level of fluency in languages.

6.3. Proposal 3

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to create a set of small Welsh language skills qualifications that can be taken in addition to a GCSE to support progression along the Welsh language continuum?

Figure 12: Level of agreement with proposal 3 within the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area



A total of 402 people responded to this proposal. Almost half (49%) agreed, whilst just under a quarter disagreed. When looking at sub-groups, a relatively small proportion of learners (7%) strongly disagreed compared with a much higher 22% of parents and carers, and members of the public. Educational professionals fell between the two, with 14% strongly disagreeing. 48% (194 people) of those who answered this question provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are outlined below.

- Those who agreed with this proposal felt that the format suggested would widen options and choice for learners, which was welcomed. They felt that offering small Welsh qualifications would enable higher ability learners and those with a keen interest in learning Welsh to expand their knowledge; improve learner confidence; provide a bridge to further study; and offer alternatives¹⁰ to learners who may find a full GCSE daunting. Some respondents added that the qualifications should incorporate practical life skills, such as using Welsh in the workplace.
- Many respondents also felt that the small qualifications could be particularly useful for lower ability learners or those with very low levels of Welsh. However, some felt that the proposed small qualifications were unnecessary and could be overwhelming for learners. They said that the small qualifications should be offered instead of, rather than as well as, the proposed one and a half GCSE Welsh qualification.

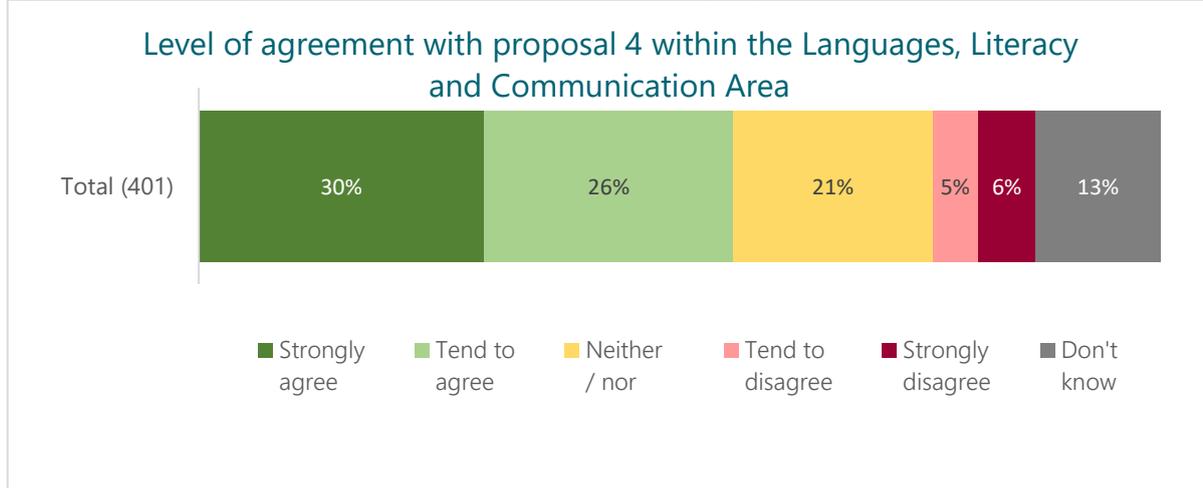
¹⁰ This feedback suggests that some respondents may have misunderstood that the proposal was to create small Welsh qualifications that were to be offered alongside GCSE Welsh, not instead of it.

- There was concern among some respondents that these proposals place more emphasis on the teaching of Welsh than English, with a small minority describing the plans as “*discriminatory*” or linked to a political agenda. This, it was said, could lead to an imbalance in terms of the study of other subjects, and reduce English literacy levels. Some respondents were unclear as to who these qualifications would be geared towards and the extent to which they would complement the other proposed Welsh qualifications.
- Respondents identified several practical issues to delivering the small qualifications. These included understanding the value of the qualifications; how the qualifications would be staffed and timetabled; and their potential for increasing learners’ workload.
- As with proposals 1 and 2 in this Area, the members of Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Gymraeg who submitted a response stated that they strongly disagreed with proposal 3. Instead, they recommended developing additional modules and a set of qualifications as a bridge between GCSE and AS level.

6.4. Proposal 4

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to review and reform made-for-Wales GCSEs in French, German, and Spanish?

Figure 13: Level of agreement with proposal 4 within the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area



A total of 401 people commented on this proposal, with over half (56%) agreeing and only just over a tenth (11%) disagreeing. Looked at by respondent type, learners were most likely to strongly agree, whereas the strongest disagreement came from parents and carers, and members of the public. Twelve per cent of this group disagreed, 10% of them strongly. Learners and education professionals showed similar levels of overall disagreement (14% and 10% respectively) but were more likely to tend to disagree than strongly disagree.

36% (143 people) of those who responded to this proposal also provided a written comment. The main themes identified in respondents' comments are outlined below.

- Respondents were largely supportive of the proposal. Change was welcomed to tackle the recent decline in the take-up of international language GCSEs. The current qualifications were not considered fit for purpose because they include too much content and have a heavy workload.
- The proposed reformed qualifications should focus on communication; increase learners' confidence in speaking the languages; appeal to employers; avoid too much focus on achieving fluency; include an element of immersion; teach in the target language; and foster translingual skills, it was said. Some respondents recommended offering GCSE Italian as another option. Increasing the use of digital technology was also suggested to modernise and widen access to the qualifications.
- The current international language GCSEs were seen to be suitable only for higher ability learners, and for those who have a sound linguistic foundation in place before starting them. The current qualifications are examination-heavy and marked more harshly than other subjects, it was said. The reformed

qualifications should therefore be more accessible to all learners, rely less on exams, and be more enjoyable and contemporary, respondents suggested.

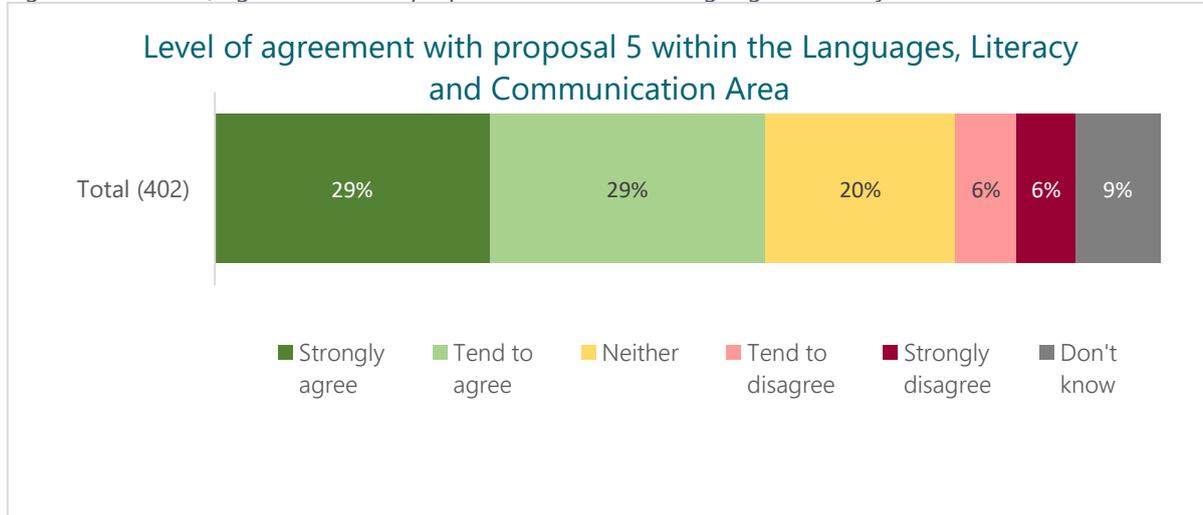
- There was some concern that fewer international language GCSEs would be available to learners in Wales compared to learners in England, affecting further and higher education and employment prospects.
- Other respondents viewed the made-for-Wales element positively, however, as there has been some criticism of changes proposed to international language GCSEs in England, meaning Wales could develop a better offer. It was also felt that this would mean better alignment with the 'Cynefin'¹¹ element of the new curriculum.

¹¹ 'Cynefin' is defined in the new Curriculum for Wales as the local area: the historic, cultural, and social place which shapes the communities that inhabit it.

6.5. Proposal 5

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to create a set of small, made-for-Wales qualifications in a range of international languages to support engagement and progression in language learning?

Figure 14: Level of agreement with proposal 5 within the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area



A total of 402 people gave an opinion on this proposal. Nearly three in five (58%) supported it, with the remainder largely neutral or unsure. Just 12% of respondents disagreed, half strongly. Looked at by sub-group, 57% of education professionals agreed whilst 14% disagreed, including 8% who disagreed strongly. Among learners, there was higher support with 71% agreeing and just 5% disagreeing.

Around two in five (39%, 155 people) of those who responded to the proposal also provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are outlined below.

- Most respondents noted that the small qualifications should prepare learners for the further study of languages. Some felt that they could be a “*stepping stone*” towards international language GCSEs instead of being offered at GCSE level. Others suggested that the qualifications could be offered from “*Key Stage 3*” and throughout secondary school. Referencing the small qualifications and the international language GCSEs against the CEFR would show the progression between both sets of qualifications, it was said.
- Many felt that the qualifications could support progression in other areas for learners who did not want to study international languages at GCSE or A level. The qualifications could also develop learners’ language skills and confidence; cultural awareness, equality, and understanding; wider skills such as reasoning and pattern recognition, it was said. There was strong feeling that the small qualifications should be made available in a wide range of international languages to reflect the diversity of communities throughout Wales.

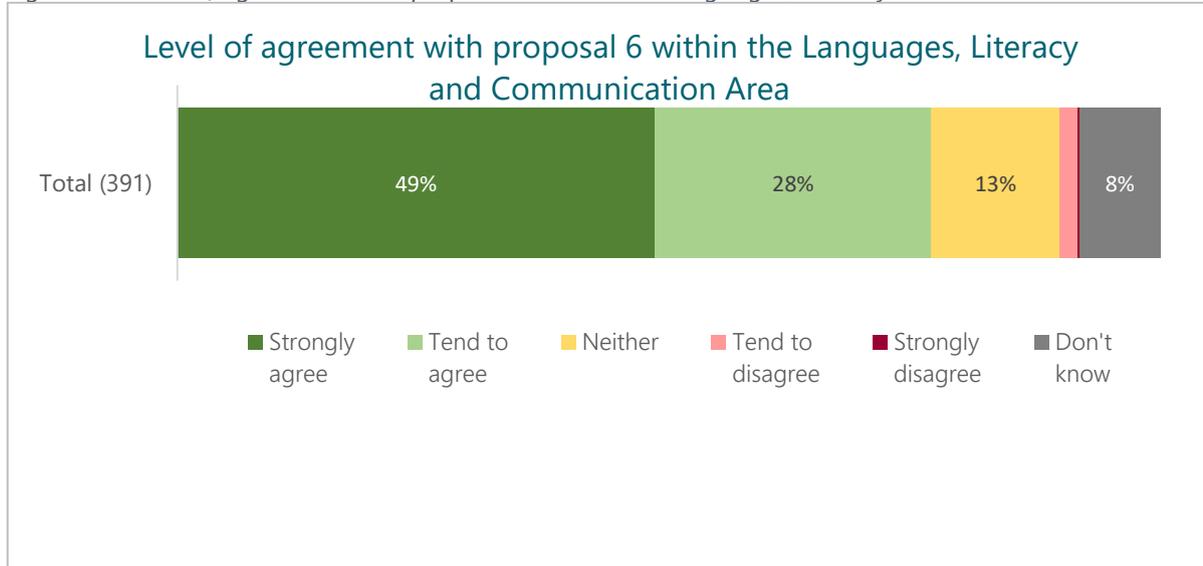
- Many respondents felt that the proposal would increase uptake and interest in international languages at GCSE and beyond, and would encourage learners to take pride in their home communities. Some respondents who disagreed with the proposal felt that, instead of introducing small qualifications, GCSE qualifications should be offered in a wider range of languages to reflect the value of those spoken by all learners in Wales.
- Concern was expressed over whether further and higher education institutions and employers would recognise and value the proposed qualifications. There was some feeling that the small qualifications are unnecessary, and that offering them would disadvantage learners in Wales relative to those in other parts of the UK.
- Some respondents questioned how the small qualifications would be staffed, suggesting that difficulties in recruiting specialist staff could cause skills gaps among learners. Others feared that the qualifications would increase teacher and learner workloads and be difficult to accommodate within school timetables.
- Respondents felt strongly that the small qualifications should not replace GCSE international language qualifications and that they must instead be available alongside them, reflecting the proposal. A few felt that schools may be tempted to offer the small qualifications instead of GCSEs, and others noted that suitable qualifications already exist. Moreover, a few felt that more clarity is needed about the purpose and nature of the qualifications and their relationship to the proposed GCSEs.
- Several suggestions for the content and design of the proposed small qualifications were offered by respondents. These included being designed in an innovative way, moving away from techniques like translation; being modular, allowing learners to accrue credits to put towards a larger qualification; being studied as part of a “*language profile*” like the European Language Passport¹²; developing links with international schools to enrich language learning; and delivery via blended learning.
- Regarding assessment, one respondent noted that rote learning should be avoided, and another suggested that the qualifications should be linked with specific international language assessments.
- There was some feeling that the qualifications would enable lower ability learners and those who struggled with languages to access international languages. Other respondents suggested that the small qualifications should be optional and offered to higher ability learners, those with an interest in languages, and those with English as an Additional Language (EAL).

¹² The European Language Passport or European Language Portfolio is a document in which language learners can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences.

6.6. Proposal 6

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to make sure learners and schools can continue to access a range of British Sign Language qualifications, including any new GCSE developed for learners in England?

Figure 15: Level of agreement with proposal 6 within the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area



391 people responded to this proposal. Just 2% said that they tended to disagree with it. A quarter (25%, 97 people) of those who responded also provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their feedback are outlined below.

- By far the strongest theme arising from respondents' feedback was that continuing to offer learners and schools a range of BSL qualifications would help promote the inclusion of D/deaf¹³ learners, helping to raise awareness of the challenges they face, and to create a more inclusive society.
- Many respondents emphasised that BSL qualifications must be available in Welsh and in English to include all learners and to reflect the ethos of the new curriculum. Mixed opinions were expressed about whether BSL qualifications should be optional or compulsory.
- Some respondents were concerned that there would not be enough staff with the right skills profile to implement the proposal. The need for staff training and the demand for BSL teachers with Welsh language skills were also noted.
- A few suggested that BSL qualifications should be offered as a module of Welsh and/or English at "Key Stage 3" rather than "Key Stage 4" because they would be difficult to accommodate within the "Key Stage 4" timetable.

¹³ "D/deaf" describes those who are Deaf (sign language users) and deaf (who are hard of hearing but who have Welsh or English as their first language and may lipread and/or use hearing aids).

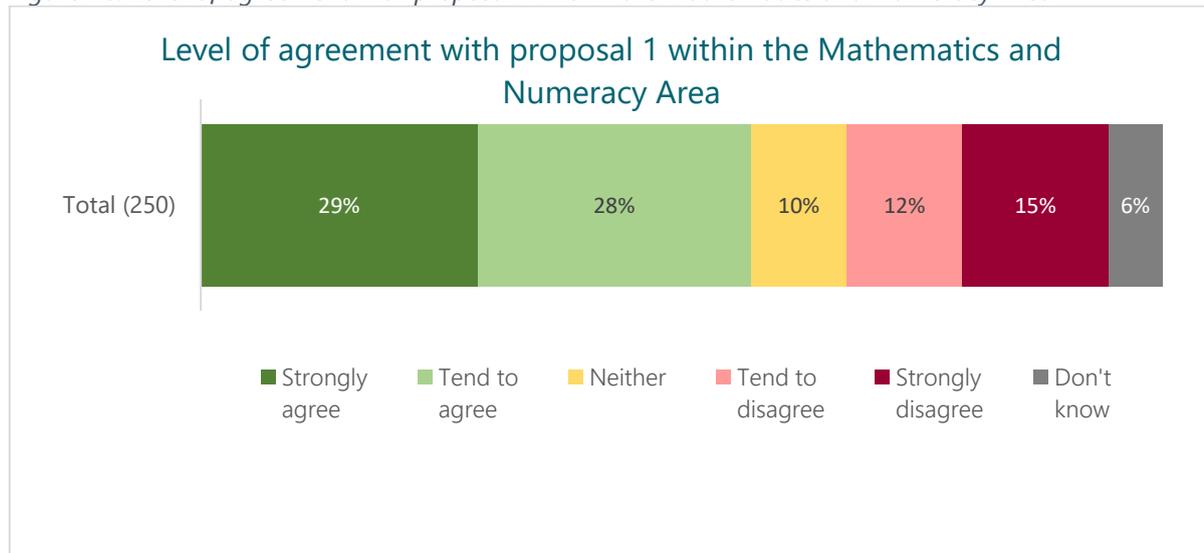
- Many respondents highlighted that the qualifications would be interesting, attractive, and useful to learners and staff. Conversely, a few predicted that take-up of BSL qualifications would be low. Some felt that BSL is valuable for learners, especially those wishing to work in the social care sector. A few emphasised that BSL would boost learners' communication skills and would help develop other related skills and knowledge.

7. Mathematics and Numeracy

7.1. Proposal 1

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to create a new combined GCSE Mathematics and Numeracy qualification to replace the two existing GCSEs in Mathematics and Mathematics-Numeracy? The new GCSE would be roughly the size of 1½ GCSEs.

Figure 16: Level of agreement with proposal 1 within the Mathematics and Numeracy Area



A total of 250 respondents gave their opinion on this proposal. More than half (57%) of those responding to this proposal were in favour whilst just over a quarter (27%) were against it. Among education professionals, the level of support remained the same (57%) although there was a slightly higher proportion against the proposal (32%). This group were less likely to be neutral or to answer don't know than the overall sample.

Of the 250 people who responded, just over half (54% or 134 people) chose to comment further. The main themes from their feedback are outlined below.

- There was considerable support for the idea of combining mathematics and numeracy. Doing so was seen to make sense because of the linked skills and content of the two disciplines.
- The greatest concern raised by respondents was around the qualification's size. Some felt that higher education institutions and employers would be confused by this, disadvantaging learners from Wales compared to those from other parts of the UK. Some respondents were concerned that a smaller qualification size would result in reduced teaching time, and that the proposal might reduce the importance of mathematics.
- Another key area of comment was the qualification's suitability for all learners. Some questioned whether the qualification would prepare higher ability learners for further study; some felt that the qualification could make maths

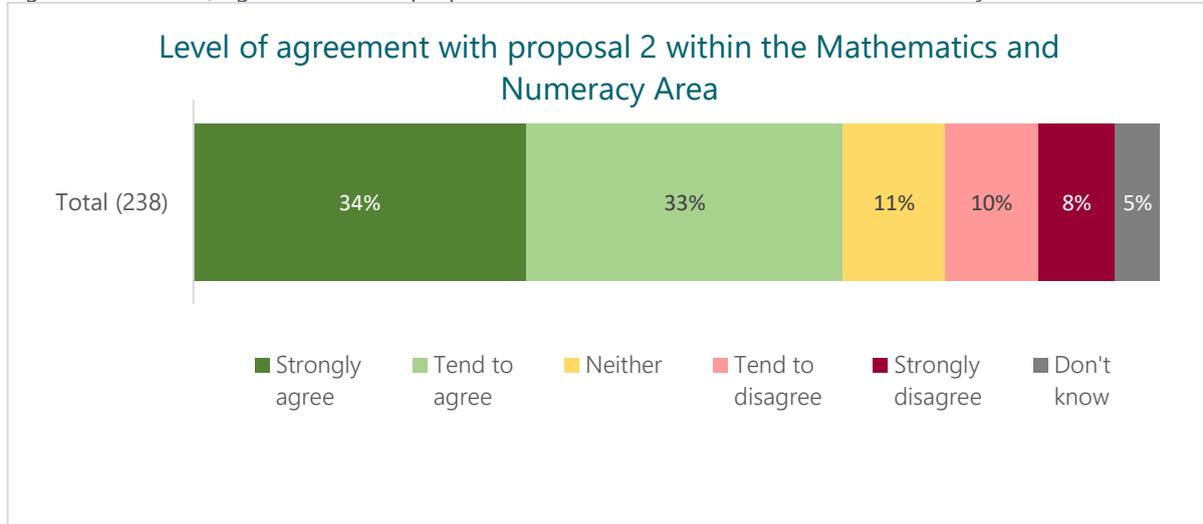
less accessible for lower ability learners; and others felt that the qualification would suit neither higher nor lower ability learners.

- More than a few concerns were raised around the issue of re-sits, especially by further education institutions, some of whom noted that preparing learners to re-sit this proposed qualification would be difficult to accommodate within their timetables.
- Among the other concerns raised was a frustration with the idea of changing the qualifications so soon after the current system was adopted.

7.2. Proposal 2

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to create a new small qualification that can be taken in addition to the GCSE to assess a learner's numerical proficiency, using an on-screen assessment method?

Figure 17: Level of agreement with proposal 2 within the Mathematics and Numeracy Area



A total of 238 people responded to this proposal. Two in three (67%) agreed with this proposal compared with just 18% who disagreed. Looked at by sub-groups, support was even higher among parents and carers, and members of the public, whilst learners were the least likely to agree.

Just over half (51% or 121 people) of those who responded to this proposal also provided a written comment to explain their answer. The main themes from their feedback are outlined below.

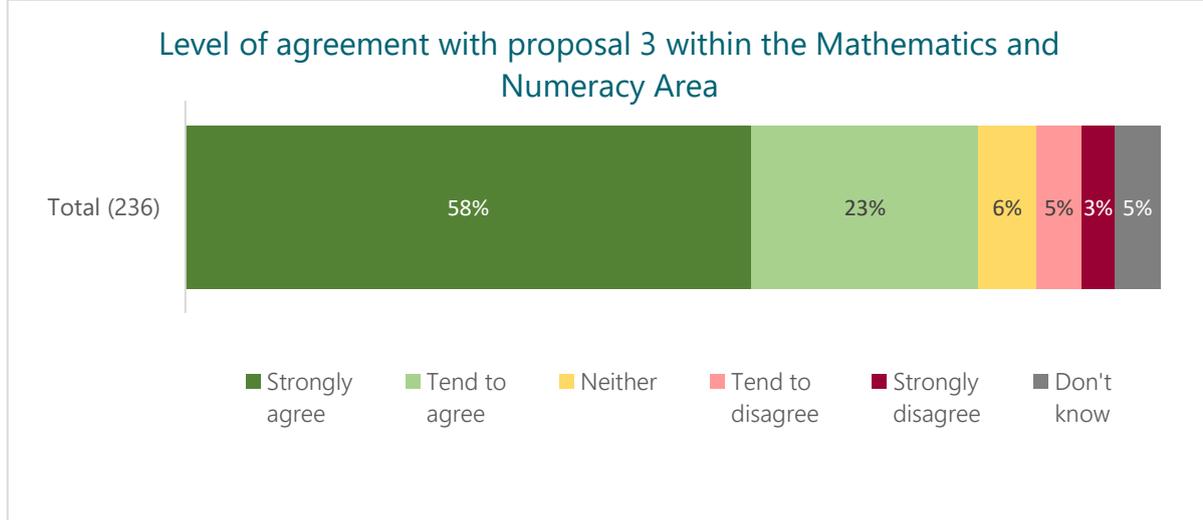
- The most common theme raised was that the small qualification would allow all learners to gain skills, confidence, and a qualification in maths, especially those who struggled with the subject, or had Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Mixed opinions were expressed about the qualification's suitability for higher ability learners, and some suggested that the qualification should be offered to all learners.
- Another main theme in respondents' feedback was concern over whether the small qualification would be recognised by further and higher education institutions and employers. This was mainly linked to the qualification's size. Some felt that the qualification was confusing and unnecessary. A proportion of those who expressed this opinion suggested that good teaching and existing qualifications should be enough to enable and show progression in maths. Others feared that the proposed qualification would devalue the GCSE in Mathematics, and that it would not provide learners with the skills they needed for further study and careers.

- Mixed opinions were expressed about teaching and assessing the qualification on-screen. Some respondents felt that an on-screen method would help to create an up-to-date qualification. Others noted that this would provide flexibility in terms of when learners could complete their assessments. However, some respondents conveyed that an on-screen method would be too challenging for some learners; was not appropriate for learning maths; would reduce learners' ability to show their workings; could encourage teachers to train learners to pass assessments rather than to understand maths; and could enable or encourage cheating.
- While there was some feeling that allowing re-sits was important as it could increase learners' chances of passing the qualification, some respondents noted that some learners may need to complete the assessment repeatedly in order to pass, affecting their well-being, motivation, and enjoyment of maths. They were also concerned that this could affect the value of the qualification.
- Further clarity was requested by some respondents regarding how the qualification would incorporate essential skills and how it would sit alongside new proposed qualifications such as GCSE Mathematics and Numeracy and the revised Skills Challenge Certificate.
- Concerns were expressed over potential overlap between the small qualification and the current pathways or entry level qualifications, and the need for learners to study the small qualification alongside the proposed new GCSE Mathematics and Numeracy. Some respondents suggested that the small qualification could be offered as part of a set of numerical proficiency qualifications that could be aggregated into a full GCSE, or that it could form part of a double award in maths and numeracy.
- Some respondents were concerned that schools would struggle to deliver the proposed qualification within their timetables because timetables were not designed to accommodate smaller qualifications. Others stated that trying to deliver the proposed qualification within an already full timetable would put teachers and learners under pressure, and that it could reduce the curriculum offer.

7.3. Proposal 3

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to create a made-for-Wales Level 2 qualification in Additional Mathematics?

Figure 18: Level of agreement with proposal 3 within the Mathematics and Numeracy Area



A total of 236 people commented on this proposal. Over four in five people (81%) agreed with the proposal including 58% who strongly agreed. Agreement was broadly similar across the three main sub-groups. Among education professionals, a tenth disagreed overall, with 5% disagreeing strongly.

Four in ten (41%, 97 people) of those who responded to this proposal also provided a written comment to explain their answer. The main themes from their feedback are outlined below.

- Most of those who commented on this proposal expressed that a level 2 qualification in Additional Mathematics would be beneficial for learners who enjoy and excel at maths. They felt that the qualification would help learners to transition from GCSE to A level; extend their abilities and skills; encourage them to pursue maths-related careers; and to progress in other subjects where maths skills are beneficial. However, a few noted that employers would need to be made more aware of the qualification.
- Another key theme in the feedback was that the qualification would ensure that equivalent qualifications were available to learners in Wales and England to make it fair for learners in both jurisdictions. There was some suggestion that the qualification should be made available to all learners in all schools.
- There was quite strong feeling that the new qualification should mirror the existing additional maths qualification which is already offered by some schools. Those who expressed this opinion felt that the existing qualification is fit for purpose. However, most of those who expressed this opinion also felt

that there was no need for the new qualification because they are happy with the existing GCSE in Additional Mathematics.

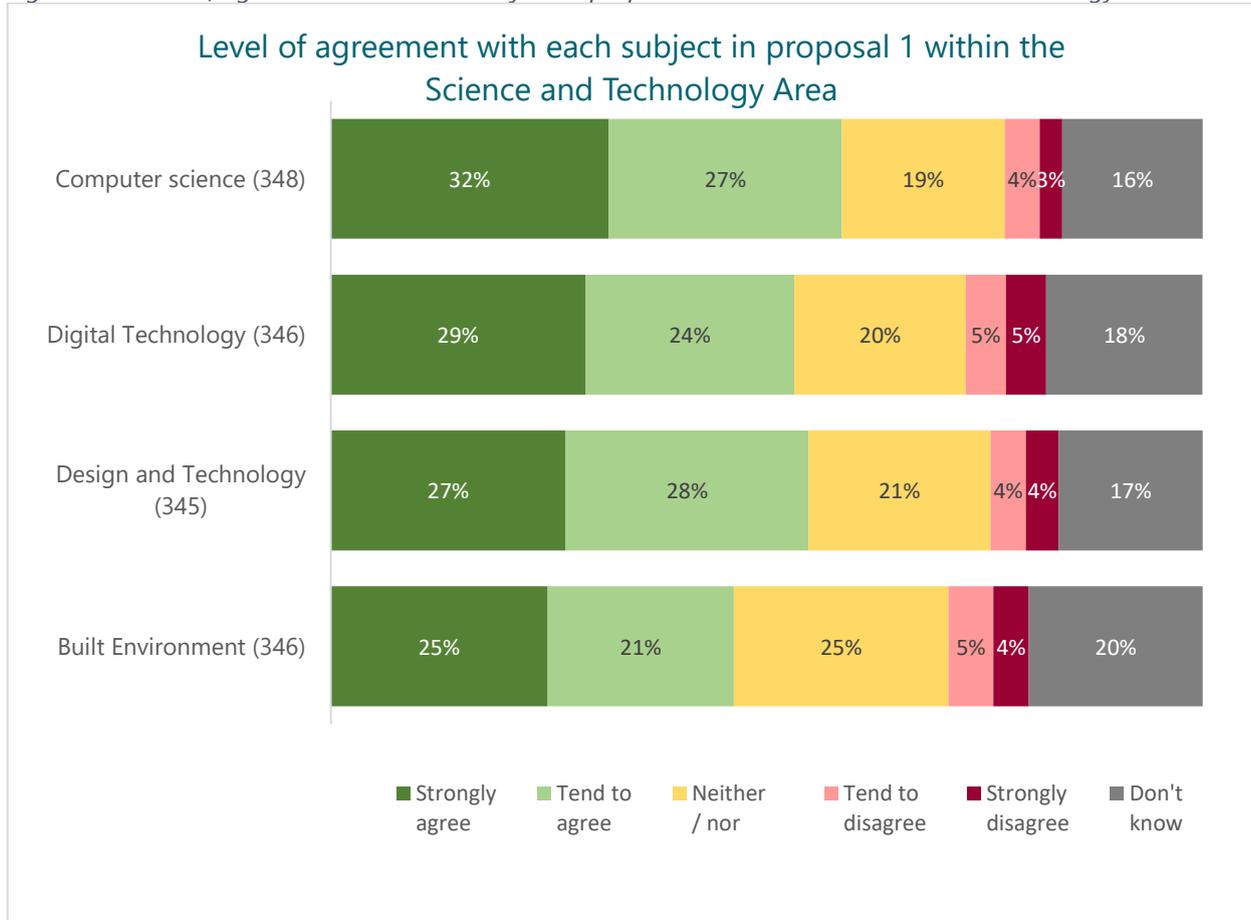
- Some respondents expressed concern that schools would struggle to accommodate this qualification within their timetables. It could therefore end up being taught at break or lunch times or reduce the time available for teaching the maths GCSE. The need to provide appropriate resources to support the roll-out of the new qualification in a timely manner was also highlighted by a few respondents.

8. Science and Technology

8.1. Proposal 1

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to review and reform GCSEs in Computer Science, Built Environment, Design and Technology, and Digital Technology?

Figure 19: Level of agreement with each subject in proposal 1 within the Science and Technology Area



Just under 350 people responded to this proposal for each of the four qualifications being considered for review. The overall picture is one of support, although fairly large numbers gave a neutral 'neither agree nor disagree' response or said they 'didn't know'. The lowest level of agreement but also highest level of neutral scores was for the Built Environment GCSE. This could be due to lower levels of familiarity with the subject. A tenth disagreed with the proposal for Digital Technology and slightly fewer for Computer science (7%), Design and Technology (8%), and Built Environment (9%).

Almost four in ten (39%, 137 people) of those who responded also provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their feedback are outlined below.

- The topic most frequently discussed by respondents was the need to reform the GCSEs covered by the proposal. Some said that this was because the qualifications needed to provide a flexible, tailored, and balanced offer to

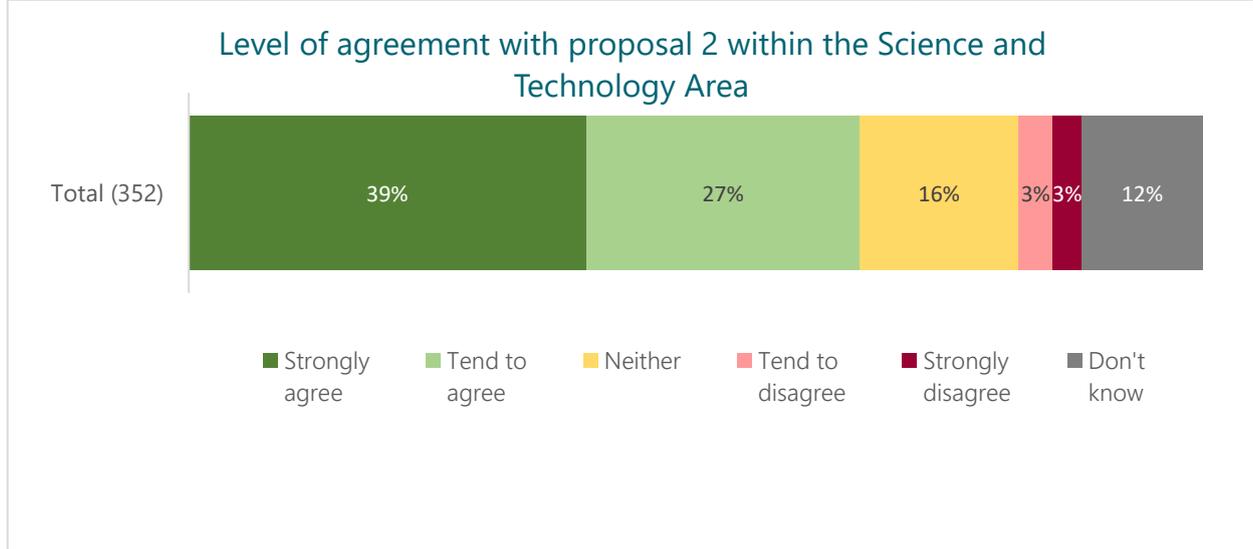
learners. Others felt that reform was needed to replace the outdated content of the existing qualifications (especially GCSE Computer Science); and to align the qualifications with the new curriculum, although to some, the proposals did not go far enough. A few acknowledged that some of the qualifications covered by the proposal needed more in-depth review and reform than others.

- Many respondents highlighted the need to update the qualifications' content regularly to accommodate the fast-paced evolution of their disciplines. The qualifications should be relatively quick and easy to update; incorporate technology; reflect industry; and not duplicate existing qualifications, it was also said. Several specific suggestions were made regarding the content and assessment of the proposed qualifications.
- Some respondents noted that the range of qualifications offered within this proposal would appeal to learners with different interests and facilitate the development of wide-ranging skills which were seen as essential for learners' future lives and careers.
- When reviewing and reforming these GCSEs, some respondents noted that the links between the subjects should be made explicit, although there was some feeling that elements of the current qualifications overlapped too much.
- Some respondents' comments related to the need to keep these GCSEs as separate qualifications and not combine them into a single general qualification within this Area, supporting Qualifications Wales' proposal. This would help to preserve the subjects' integrity, and support learners to progress to further study, they said.
- The current GCSE Computer Science was felt by many respondents to be too difficult, especially for lower ability learners. A few conveyed that all of the GCSEs covered by this proposal should be of a manageable difficulty level.
- Some respondents emphasised the need to ensure that schools have access to the required technology, software, and equipment to enable all learners to access the same qualifications. Teaching staff were said to need training to keep them up to date with developments across the subjects.

8.2. Proposal 2

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to create a new GCSE in Engineering and Manufacturing?

Figure 20: Level of agreement with proposal 2 within the Science and Technology Area



A total of 352 people commented on this proposal. Two in three people (66%) agreed with this proposal whilst just 6% disagreed. Looked at by sub-groups, support was even higher among learners and parents and carers, and members of the public. Among education professionals, 62% agreed with the proposal whilst 7% disagreed. A relatively high proportion (15%) of education professionals answered 'don't know' to this proposal.

Over a third (36%, 126 people) of those who responded also provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their feedback are outlined below.

- Most of those who commented on the proposal emphasised the relevance and importance of offering the proposed qualification. They felt that it would equip learners to progress to further study and careers in engineering and manufacturing; provide everyday practical skills; allow learners to apply skills they have learned in other qualifications; and provide a useful opportunity to study engineering and manufacturing from an earlier age.
- Some of those who commented on this proposal were concerned that schools would struggle to provide the staffing, equipment and technology needed to deliver the qualification. This was linked to the need for schools to upgrade their workshops; purchase materials; recruit and train specialist staff; and provide experiences outside the classroom.
- Some respondents felt that the proposed qualification would enable learners to progress smoothly on to further qualifications in the Area. Schools and further education institutions should collaborate to ensure this was the case, it was

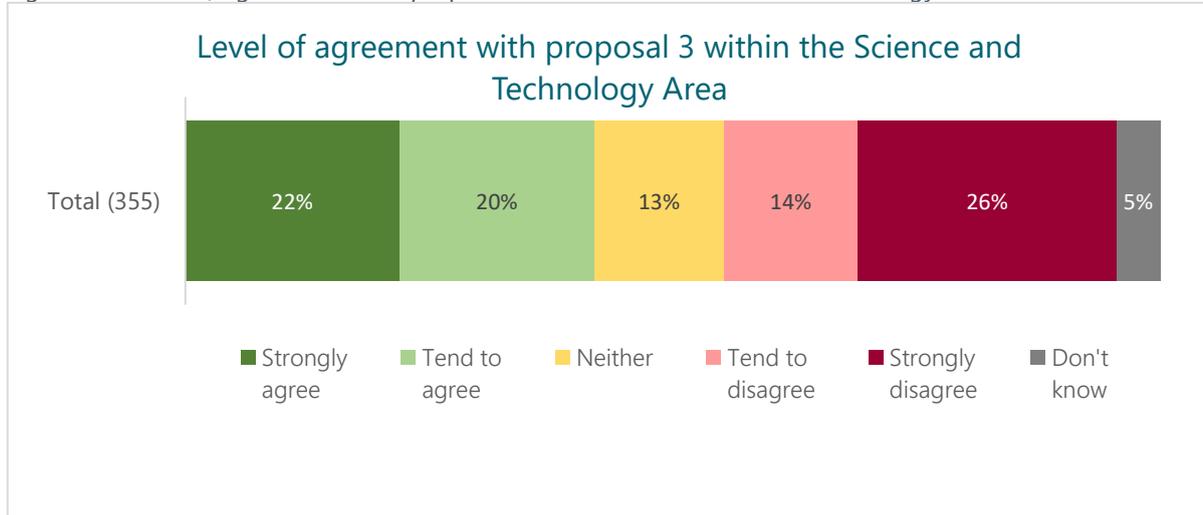
said. It was also suggested that progression routes and links to other qualifications should be carefully considered when designing the qualification.

- There was quite strong feeling that the proposed qualification should be suitable for lower ability and higher ability learners. Respondents suggested that this could mean offering a theoretical approach to higher ability learners and practical experience for lower ability learners; creating two separate GCSEs in engineering and manufacturing; or offering a level 1/2 qualification as well as the proposed GCSE.
- Some felt that the qualification would overlap too much with existing qualifications in the Area, reducing schools' ability to offer the full suite of qualifications, and overshadowing existing qualifications. There was some feeling that the qualification should be an additional option rather than replacing other qualifications in the Area.
- Regarding the qualification's design, respondents suggested that that it should be practical; delivered in workshops rather than classrooms; incorporate new developments in engineering and manufacturing to reflect industry practice; and should be flexible enough to be regularly updated. Several specific suggestions were made regarding the qualification's content and focus.

8.3. Proposal 3

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to create a new GCSE Science qualification to replace the existing set of science GCSEs? This qualification is likely to be roughly the size of two GCSEs.

Figure 21: Level of agreement with proposal 3 within the Science and Technology Area



A total of 355 people responded to this proposal. Among all respondents, 42% agreed with the proposal and 40% disagreed, providing a fairly equal split in reactions. Disagreement was twice as likely among education professionals (49%) than among learners (22%), with parents and carers, and members of the public, falling between the two other groups.

Just 16% (57 people) of those who responded to this proposal provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are outlined below.

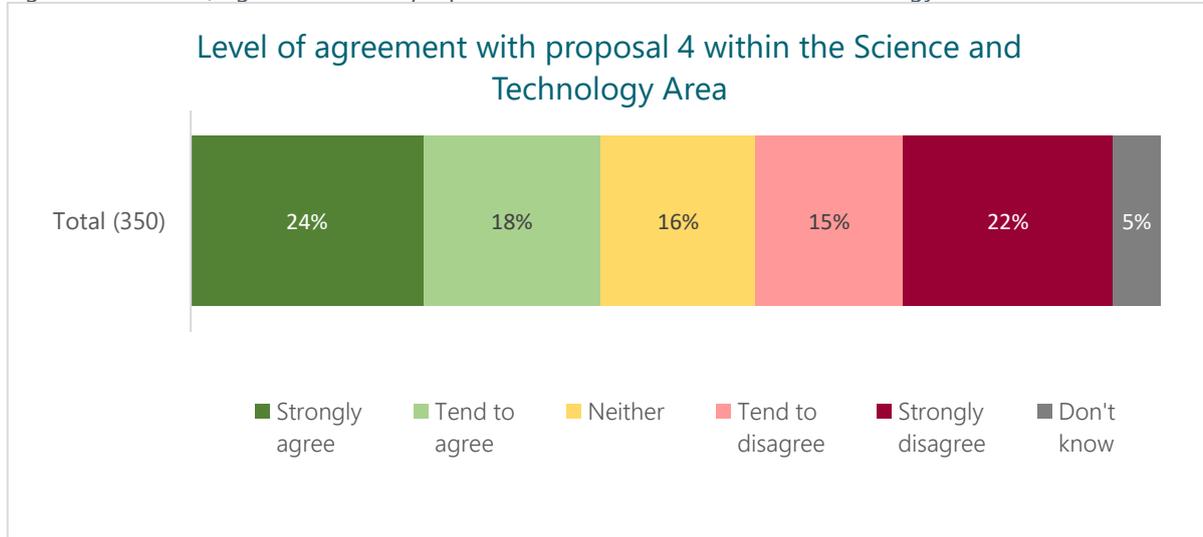
- There was some support for reforming the existing science offer at GCSE. Some felt that the proposed new GCSE would better suit most learners while enabling those who wished to study additional qualifications in science to do so via the additional small qualifications discussed in proposal 4 within this Area. Others who supported the proposal said that it would ensure “*greater equality and consistency*” of offer across Wales and be simpler for schools to offer and for parents and carers, and future employers, to understand. However, many were concerned that the proposed changes would reduce learners’ options.
- A particular worry was that a single GCSE Science would not allow learners to specialise and challenge themselves in a particular discipline. Conversely, a few felt that a single route would ensure that all learners could access the same progression opportunities in science. Some suggested that separate GCSEs in the sciences provide the strongest foundation for further study and careers. The proposed changes could therefore dampen learner enthusiasm for careers in science, and disadvantage learners in Wales relative to those elsewhere in the UK, it was said.

- While a few respondents felt that the proposed GCSE Science would help to make sure that all learners were able to study the same qualification, giving them equal opportunities, some felt that the proposed GCSE Science would disadvantage learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), who were less likely to pass a *“double award”* GCSE than a *“single award”* or similarly accessible qualifications. Similar comments were made in relation to learners in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Higher ability learners may also be disadvantaged by not being able to specialise sufficiently in their chosen science discipline/s, it was said.
- Combining biology, chemistry, and physics at GCSE would lead to a *“dilution”* or *“devaluation”* of the subjects that would disadvantage Wales’ future scientists, according to some. Others who advocated the proposed qualification cautioned that the individual science subjects should not lose their unique identities.
- Some respondents felt there is currently too much focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects at the expense of other subjects. Others disagreed, emphasising that focusing on science is more important than ever. For some, this can only be ensured through specialisation in the sciences.
- Fewer teachers may be needed in future because the proposed *“double award”* science qualification would require fewer teaching hours than *“triple award”*, it was said. The proposal may also affect teacher recruitment and retention; and disadvantage teachers from Wales who are seeking posts in England, according to some respondents. Others noted that the proposed changes are neither required nor desirable at this time. More positively, there was some feeling that the proposed GCSE Science would be far easier for schools to administer, reduce reliance on specialist teachers, and reduce qualification content.
- Further information about the proposal was requested by some respondents, especially in relation to the size of the new GCSE Science; the difference between the proposed GCSE Science and the current double award qualification; around learning time split and delivery; and the offer for lower ability learners.
- Some respondents said that they would only support the proposed GCSE Science if learners were also able to pursue *“triple award”* and *“single award”* alongside it. Other suggestions were: the inclusion of geology within the curriculum as a stand-alone discipline; a single GCSE Science equivalent to three GCSEs for higher ability learners; and introducing the option to undertake AS level science early for those with the appetite and aptitude for it.

8.4. Proposal 4

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to create a set of small science qualifications that can be taken in addition to the proposed new GCSE Science qualification? These units are likely to be equivalent in size to either one-third or two-thirds of a GCSE.

Figure 22: Level of agreement with proposal 4 within the Science and Technology Area



A total of 350 people commented on this proposal. Overall, 42% agreed with the proposal whilst 37% disagreed. Education professionals were less likely to agree (34%) and more likely to disagree (45%) than other sub-groups.

Just over half (51%, 180 people) of those who responded to this proposal provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are outlined below.

- The most prevalent concern raised in relation to the proposal for additional small science qualifications was that it would represent significant timetabling, staffing, and resourcing issues for schools.
- There was some feeling that the idea of small qualifications would be confusing to learners, parents and carers, and employers. Further concerns raised were that the proposed small science qualifications would not be recognised or valued by educational institutions and future employers; and that they would disadvantage learners in Wales relative to those in other parts of the UK.
- Another frequently raised issue was that this proposal would favour larger state and independent schools while disadvantaging smaller and/or rural schools, increasing inequity of science provision across Wales. A few respondents felt that the proposed qualifications would, in combination, be appropriate for lower ability learners if offered as an alternative to the proposed new GCSE Science.
- Some supported the proposed additional small science qualifications because they would offer learners more choice and flexibility, deepen enjoyment and

skills development, and support progression in science. However, others said that the proposal may limit learner choice, and could lead them to choose their specialist options too early.

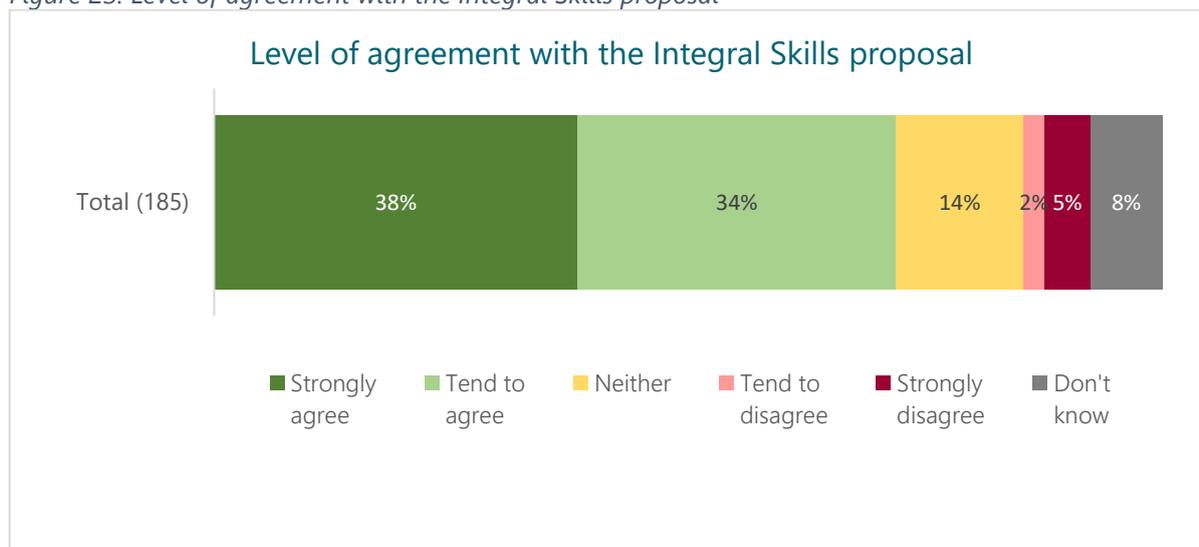
- Further information about the proposal was requested by some respondents in relation to expected teaching hours; exactly what the proposed additional small science qualifications would be worth; whether they could be aggregated to form a whole GCSE; and whether they would be nationally and internationally recognised qualifications.
- Some respondents stressed the importance of the proposed additional small science qualifications if the proposal for the new GCSE Science is taken forward, particularly for those seeking to progress to A level and beyond.
- A few said that the subjects proposed as *"add-ons"* - geology, climate change, natural history, and environmental science, for example - should form part of the GCSE Science offer. Indeed, a few noted that the add-ons should not be needed if the proposed new GCSE Science is robust and properly designed.
- Some respondents suggested that schools should be permitted to combine the additional small science qualifications into whole GCSE *"packages"* or *"units"* for learners. Other suggestions were: offering an optional extra GCSE comprising three choices from six modules; and including further chemistry, physics and biology options.

9. Integral Skills

9.1. Proposal 1

How far do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reform the Skills Challenge Certificate to make it simpler and more manageable, with a focus on assessing the Integral Skills of Creativity and Innovation, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Personal Effectiveness and Planning and Organising?

Figure 23: Level of agreement with the Integral Skills proposal



A total of 185 people responded to this proposal. Among all respondents, over seven in ten (72%) agreed with the proposal. This rose to 75% among education professionals and to 92% among the parent / carer sub-group. It should be noted that overall responses to this proposal were lower than for most other proposals, with just 25 responses from parents and carers, and members of the public.

Four in ten (40%, 74 people) of those who responded to this proposal provided a written comment. The main themes identified in their comments are outlined below.

- Most of the written responses supported the proposal. Respondents supported the focus on and inclusion of these skills in the curriculum; considered the current qualification to be valued by employers; and suggested that a reformed qualification would be useful in highlighting the new curriculum's four purposes¹⁴ and their importance.

¹⁴ The four purposes are the starting point and aspiration for schools' curriculum design. They state that learners should become ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives; enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work; ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society. Further information is available [here](#) on Welsh Government's website.

- The current qualification was also praised for meeting the needs of all learners; supporting transition to the new Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales; promoting learner choice; and for giving learners the opportunity to practise research skills.
- Several respondents felt that the current Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC) needs to be simplified and made more manageable for learners and teachers. Some suggested that the Community Challenge should be dropped. Others felt that it could be evidenced differently or replaced with work experience.
- A few respondents described elements of the current SCC as *“repetitive”* with duplication of skills and tasks meaning that learners lose interest in an otherwise useful qualification.
- Several respondents stated that the SCC needs *“rebranding”*. There were varied views on how this should be done, including ensuring that it was seen as an equivalent qualification to GCSEs, changing its name, or giving it more time within the curriculum.
- Some respondents mentioned assessment as being the aspect of the SCC most in need of reform. One respondent suggested that it could be assessed purely through digital work. A few others also petitioned for a complete rethink of both content and assessment.
- Several other suggestions were made as to how the qualification could be reformed. These included combining the SCC with the Health and Well-being Area, or with human rights education; making the SCC optional; or developing the pre-GCSE curriculum to support the recognition and understanding of the skills assessed in the SCC.
- Some respondents disagreed with the proposal, either suggesting that the SCC be dropped altogether, or that the outcomes should be delivered across the other Areas.

10. Impact Assessment

When developing the proposals in the consultation, Qualifications Wales considered the impacts that each proposal could have. The online survey asked whether there are any additional steps Qualifications Wales could take to reduce the impacts they identified. It also asked questions about the impact of the proposals on individuals or groups with protected characteristics; on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language; and in relation to treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language. The online survey also asked whether the proposals could have any other positive or negative impacts.

10.1. Impact question 1

In relation to the impacts that we have identified, are there any additional steps that we could take to reduce potential negative effects?

A total of 99 respondents provided written comments in response to this open question. The key themes from the comments are summarised below.

- Many respondents made specific suggestions as to how the proposals could meet the needs of all learners, including those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). These included creating entry level qualifications with appropriate progression pathways in all subjects; introducing tiered and ongoing assessment; increasing use of practical qualifications and apprenticeships over written exams; referring to schools' obligations to make adjustments to increase inclusion under the Equality Act 2010 within qualification guidance; and paying more attention to neurodiversity.
- Many respondents explained that they would like to see a reduced workload for teachers. They felt that this could be achieved by making fewer changes to syllabuses; and more certainty and notice of forthcoming changes.
- Some respondents called for greater emphasis on teacher-led assessments over exams to reduce pressure on learners.
- Some criticised the consultation process, stating that it should not have taken place during the pandemic, and that it did not encourage enough debate and input. Others suggested that teachers should be consulted about qualification reform on an ongoing basis.
- One respondent commented that the consultation did not present any findings on the impact assessment undertaken and neither had it identified any specific impacts or equality issues. Another called for qualifications to be designed to limit adverse impacts on learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Some respondents highlighted that all Welsh-medium and English-medium qualification specifications and related documentation should be released

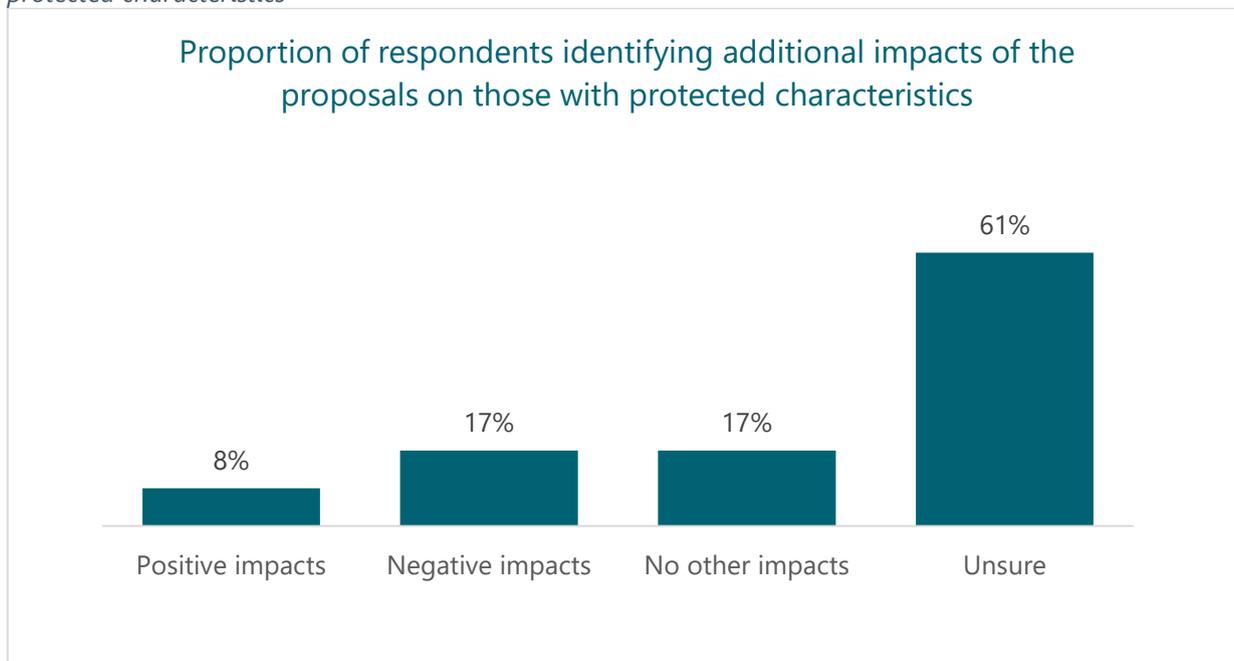
simultaneously. Equality of access to computer equipment and software in schools was also seen as important.

- A few respondents criticised the consultation because they felt that it promoted the existing suite of GCSEs, and that the proposals were not adequately aligned to the new curriculum.
- Potential issues of inequality of access across Wales were highlighted by a few respondents. These were that the proposed small qualifications risk being offered in some areas and not others; that the proposal not to develop a made-for-Wales GCSE Dance could negatively impact on disabled learners and *“those from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds”*; the importance of making all made-for-Wales qualifications available in Welsh and in English; and that learners in smaller schools may not be able to access the same range of qualifications relative to their peers in larger schools.
- The potential impact of the proposals on GCSE resits in mathematics, English or Welsh seems not to have been considered in the proposals, according to one respondent. Another respondent working in post-16 education was concerned over the impact that the restructuring of GCSEs will have for A levels.

10.2. Impact question 2

Are there any other positive or negative impacts for individuals or groups who share protected characteristics that we have not identified?

Figure 24: Proportion of respondents identifying additional impacts of the proposals on those with protected characteristics



A total of 190 respondents answered this question. Eight percent believed there were additional positive impacts, and 17% believed that there were additional negative impacts. It should be noted that respondents could identify both positive and negative impacts. Three in five (61%) said that they were unsure whether there were any other positive or negative impacts, whilst a further 17% said that there were no other impacts.

A total of 30 respondents provided written comments in response to this question. The key themes outlined in their feedback are discussed below.

- Many respondents felt that the proposals could disadvantage lower ability learners through the lack of level 1 or entry level qualifications in English, the larger size of some of the proposed qualifications, the proposed combining of GCSEs in Welsh language and literature and English language and literature, and proposals within the Science and Technology Area.
- There was also some feeling that learners with disabilities leading to more absence could find it harder to catch up when studying the combined GCSEs, and that lower ability learners could struggle with the combined GCSE in Welsh.
- Some respondents felt that the proposals would help to meet the needs of lower ability learners by offering qualifications which are assessed online, have

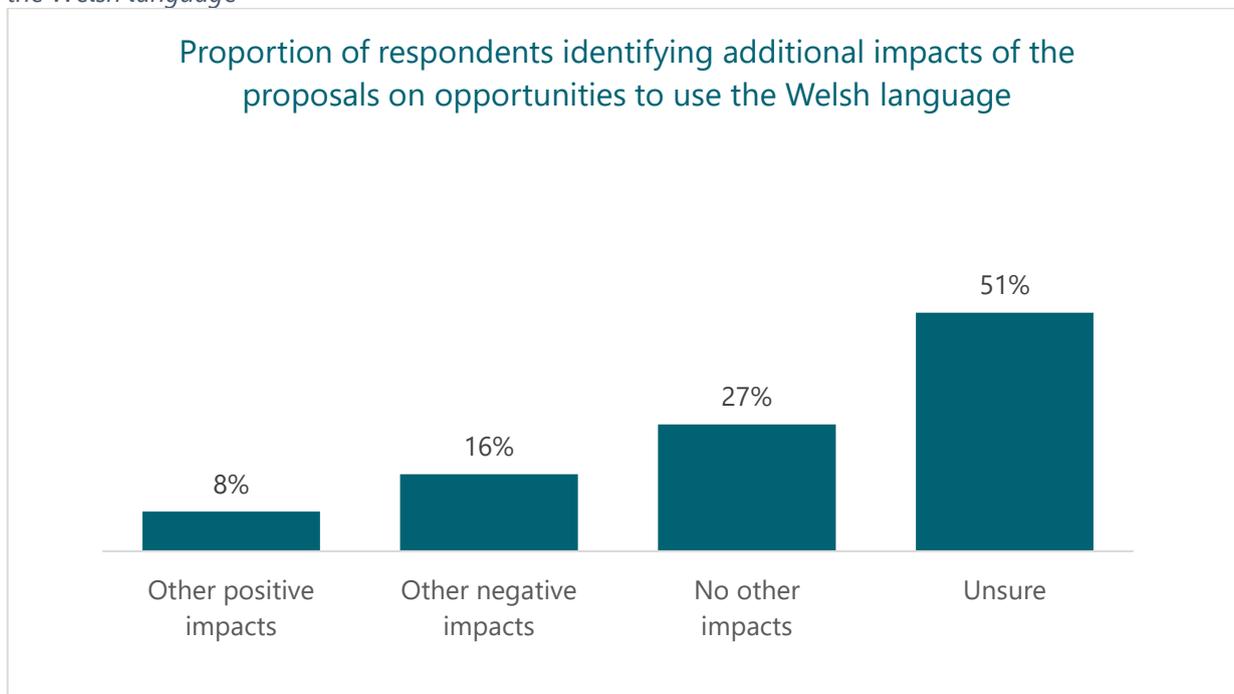
integrated skills approaches, and have a greater breadth of learning, especially in science.

- The need to ensure that all qualifications offer appropriate challenge for learners of all abilities was raised, with a wish to avoid the risk that some qualifications are seen to be more "*academic*" than others.
- A few respondents highlighted the need to ensure that the proposals did not create new barriers or fail to remove existing barriers for learners from less affluent backgrounds.
- Some respondents felt that the proposals did not go far enough to ensure that qualifications in Wales would achieve positive change and be suitable for learners with protected characteristics.

10.3. Impact question 3

Are there any positive or negative impacts on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language that we have not identified?

Figure 25: Proportion of respondents identifying additional impacts of the proposals on opportunities to use the Welsh language



A total of 189 respondents answered this question. Sixteen percent said that there were other negative impacts, and 8% said that there were other positive impacts. It should be noted that respondents could identify both positive and negative impacts. Around half (51%) said that they were unsure whether there were any positive or negative impacts and around one in four (27%) said that there were no other impacts.

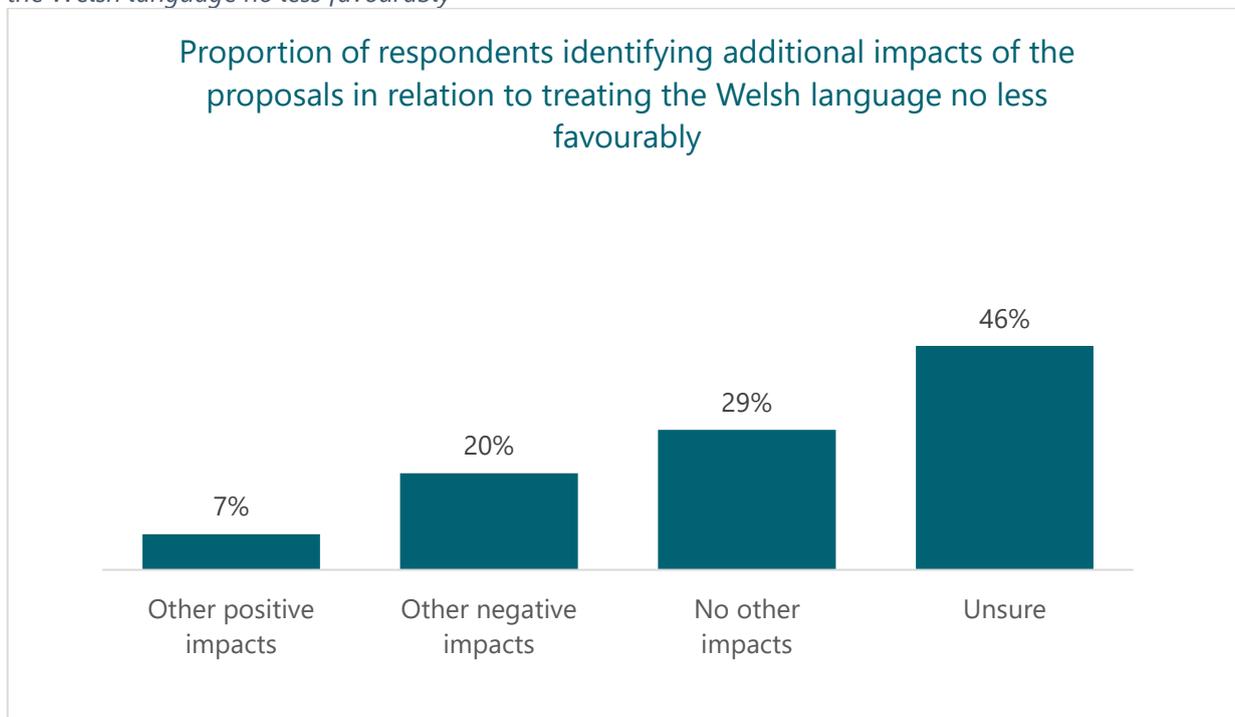
Thirty-two respondents provided written comments in response to this question. The key themes from their feedback are outlined below.

- Some respondents felt that learners from Welsh-medium schools could be disadvantaged by Wales' over-reliance on qualifications designed for England, stating that all qualifications should be available equally in Welsh and English.
- Some suggested that the proposals could increase opportunities to use the Welsh language through immersing learners in Welsh literature; integrating Welsh throughout the curriculum; and ensuring that the proposed qualifications are designed specifically for Wales.
- A few said that they would welcome the introduction of a Welsh-medium integrated Expressive Arts qualification and a suite of small Welsh language qualifications for post-16 learners.

10.4. Impact question 4

Are there any positive or negative impacts in relation to treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language that we have not identified?

Figure 26: Proportion of respondents identifying additional impacts of the proposals in relation to treating the Welsh language no less favourably



A total of 191 respondents answered this question. Seven percent identified additional positive impacts whilst 20% identified additional negative impacts. Just under half (46%) said that they were unsure whether there were any positive or negative impacts whilst a further 29% said that there were no other impacts.

Thirty-five respondents provided written comments in response to this question. The key themes from their feedback are outlined below.

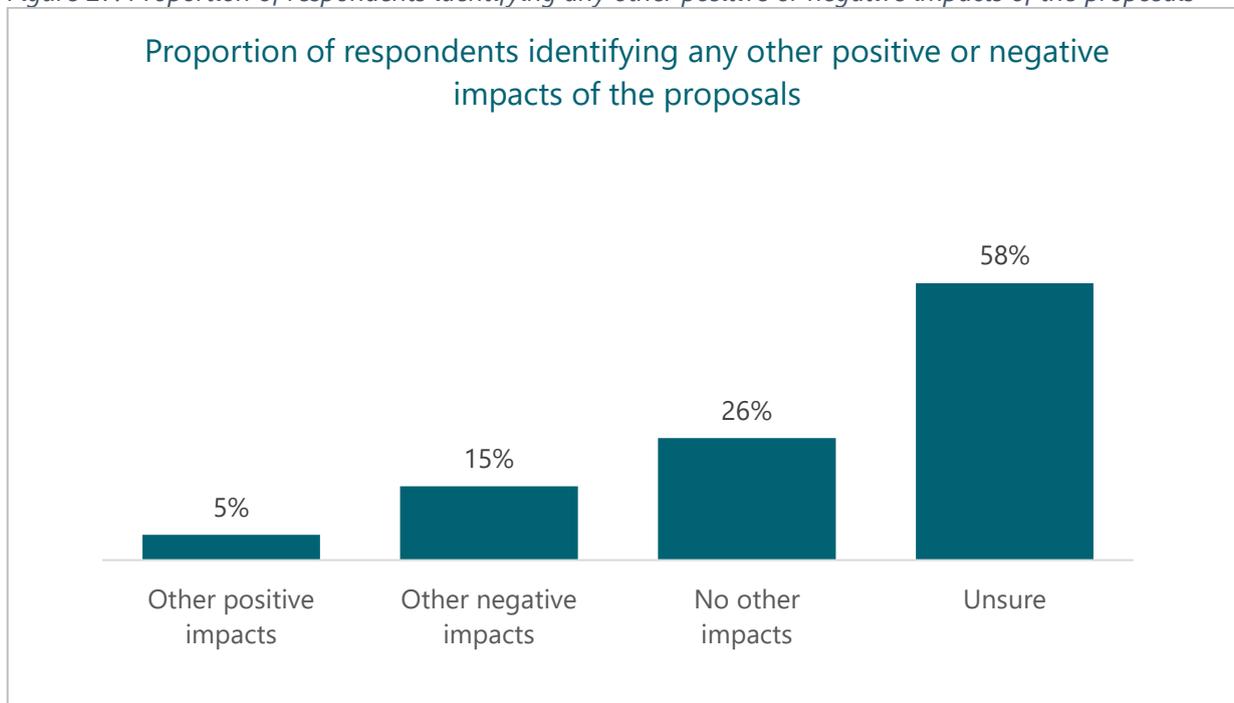
- Two respondents identified additional positive impacts. They said that the proposals could positively impact on, and secure respect for the Welsh language by securing an equal, coherent, and bilingual choice of qualifications for 14–16-year-olds.
- As noted elsewhere, there was some feeling that over-reliance on qualifications designed for England could disadvantage learners in Welsh-medium schools.
- Qualifications and teaching and learning resources in Welsh and English should be developed alongside each other and be available at the same time, according to a few respondents.

- A few respondents felt that the Welsh language proposals within the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area could lead more learners in Wales to opt for English-medium over Welsh-medium schools.

10.5. Impact question 5

Are there any other positive or negative impacts that we have not identified?

Figure 27: Proportion of respondents identifying any other positive or negative impacts of the proposals



A total of 188 respondents answered this question. One in four (26%) did not think there were any other impacts. Five per cent identified other positive impacts and 15% identified other negative impacts. Almost three in five (58%) were unsure whether there were any unidentified impacts.

Twenty-four respondents provided written comments in response to this question. The key themes from their feedback are outlined below.

One respondent highlighted positive impacts: increased collaboration between staff, sharing of good practice, and reinforcement of key skills for learners. All other comments highlighted negative impacts, which are summarised below.

- A few respondents felt that the proposals did not align closely enough with the new Curriculum for Wales. They were concerned that education in Wales will not improve unless all learners can access suitable qualifications and pathways which realise the purposes and principles of the new curriculum.
- One respondent felt that the proposals would create narrow choices that limit options too early rather than fostering broad learning. This respondent argued for more flexible assessment that allows a description of attainment across a wider range of skills, knowledge, and experiences.
- Some respondents were concerned that combining subjects would dilute them and cause them to lose their individual identities.

- Some argued that removing GCSEs in separate sciences and replacing them with the proposed GCSE Science would prevent learners from achieving a higher GCSE grade in one science; limit learner options in science; lead to staff losses; and lower engagement with science.
- The future of dance provision for learners aged 14 and over was a particular concern for one respondent who highlighted access and equalities-related issues if learners could not access dance at school: limiting opportunities for Welsh learners to study dance post-16; disadvantaging female and economically disadvantaged learners; and favouring learners in south Wales where private dance provision is more accessible than in north Wales.
- A respondent also called for careful consideration of reviewing and reforming GCE/level 3 qualifications, in light of the proposed changes to GCSEs, and a need to fully consider the impact of the proposals on the post-16 sector.
- A few criticised the consultation approach, stating that the consultation questions did not allow sufficient debate.
- One respondent was concerned that small schools would be unable to offer the full range of qualifications proposed because they have fewer teaching staff.
- One respondent criticised the proposal to secure made-for-England qualifications for Wales in subjects that attract low numbers of learners, such as dance, multi-disciplinary Expressive Arts, BSL, and Health and Well-being. They stated that the financial implications of creating made-for-Wales qualifications in these subjects should not be the most important factor driving their development. Similarly, another respondent emphasised that learners in schools in Wales would be disadvantaged by made-for-England qualifications and that they would overlook local learning experiences.
- The need to ensure that the proposals result in qualifications that meet the needs of all learners was raised by another respondent.
- Finally, one respondent felt that schools should be able to design their own local assessments and qualifications, drawing on current and past good practice (e.g. Agored Cymru and the former Certificate of Secondary Education [CSE]), and involving local communities, stakeholders, and experts in learning.

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