

## **Cymraeg 2050 - Changes to Welsh Qualifications Webinar**

### **English transcript**

Good afternoon and welcome to you. I am pleased to see that so many of you have taken the opportunity to join us this afternoon.

We hope that by the end of the session you will have a better understanding of the new Welsh qualifications that will come in to support the new Curriculum for Wales.

Including:

- some of the background and logic that sits behind the changes;
- what the new qualifications will mean for learners;
- and the next steps we will take to work closely with teachers, learners, specialists, and others to co-construct the content and assessment for these new qualifications.

We are also keen for this to be an interactive session. We will do our best to keep the opening presentation as short as we can to maximise opportunities for questions and discussions afterwards.

You are welcome to use the 'chat' to raise questions or any points you would like to discuss in Welsh or English. We will try to answer them as we go along in the 'chat' but we will also answer some of the questions of interest after we finish with the presentation.

I hope that that is clear and that is what you expect and that you are in the right webinar. Okay, off we go then.

Annabel, can we have the next slide please?

Before we introduce the three new Welsh qualifications, I want to say a few words to put these changes into context.

Since the Welsh Government announced that a new Curriculum for Wales was on its way, which aims to give learners more opportunities to succeed through a broad and balanced education, we knew that we had to start a wider conversation on what qualifications for 14 to 16-year-olds should look like in the future.

*Qualified for the future* is the name we have given a progressive and participatory programme of work that will give teachers and others across Wales an important

opportunity to be directly involved in shaping a brand new and innovative set of qualifications to accompany the new Curriculum for Wales. And that work has been ongoing for several years now.

Back in the autumn, and following consultation with over 1,500 learners, parents, teachers, lecturers, and employers, we confirmed our vision for future qualifications. This included stating the range of GCSE subjects that will be revamped for the new curriculum. We will be doing these reforms in conjunction with others through the participatory, co-constructive approach I was talking about.

However, in the autumn, we held back our decision on what Welsh language qualifications will be needed, so that we can consider what would be the best course of action in the light of a better understanding of the Government's policy intentions on the Welsh language.

So, we took the opportunity, a short break, to re-evaluate the possible options, in the light of Government policy guidance, and to hold an intensive series of further discussions with stakeholders.

Following that work, we confirmed last month our decisions for the range of Welsh qualifications that will be available for first teaching from September 2025.

We are confident that these new Welsh qualifications will give learners a fair and equal opportunity to achieve in Welsh, no matter what type of school they attend.

We want to see all learners develop their ability to use Welsh confidently within a learning continuum, which includes learners with little or no experience of the language to those who have a demonstrable proficiency in the language.

Welsh qualifications for learners in English-medium settings have already been strengthened, with a new more challenging and relevant GCSE qualification introduced in 2017.

These new qualifications we are discussing today will take a significant further step in the right direction as we strive to create a fully bilingual nation.

We are clear that we will need to continue to adapt and change these qualifications over the next decade, as we work with partners and other stakeholders to realize the objectives of the Welsh Government's policy strategy for 'Cymraeg 2050'.

Ultimately, our aim will be to reach the point where we can offer all learners in Wales one comprehensive qualification in the Welsh language. We're not there yet, but as I mentioned, this is a milestone in declaring the next step on that journey.

Okay, that's more than enough in terms of background from me. So, let's go on to discuss these three new qualifications that we have stated will be needed to align with the new curriculum. So, I'll pass on to Catrin who will explain more about each of them in turn, as well as explain how we are going to work with others to develop the details in terms of progression and assessment.

So Catrin, over to you.

Thank you Emyr and a good afternoon to everyone.

Annabel, can you move onto the next slide please?

In terms of our decision, we will combine language and literature and create one new integrated Welsh GCSE qualification for learners in Welsh-medium and bilingual schools.

Combining language and literature gives more learners the opportunity to study literature, as the numbers studying it have been declining in recent years. So because it seems that some learners are not studying literature beyond the age of 14, we feel that combining language and literature is going to prevent that from happening.

Combining language and literature also helps with progression to A-level as Welsh A-levels already combine them.

We also feel that combining makes it easier to make connections between the two. Teachers have been telling us that there is an overlap between the current courses and that this encourages learners and teachers to make connections across them. And of course, literature gives context to language. The decision therefore helps to make both elements more interesting to study as well.

Another consideration, of course, is that combining language and literature enables a more holistic approach to language assessment and this could reduce the burden of assessment and allow more time for teaching and learning.

Combining them will also give learners and schools the freedom to choose a mix of qualifications that reflect the breadth and balance of the new curriculum. As we know, we are integrating other subjects as well, such as English, maths and science, so fewer separate qualifications in those subjects will give learners more room for wider experiences across the whole curriculum.

I've just mentioned English there, and of course we've already made the decision to combine English language and literature. It is worth confirming that the new GCSEs

in English and Welsh will be of equal size and challenge, and we feel this will support a more coherent approach to language teaching in schools.

So that's the first decision. Moving on to the second decision now.

Annabel - if you could move onto the next slide please. And to the next please – to the second decision.

We will discontinue the current GCSE Welsh Second Language, and the decision to do so supports the Welsh Government's policy of delivering a single continuum of teaching and learning Welsh.

A new GCSE qualification will be created for learners in English-medium settings.

It must be remembered that Welsh language qualifications for learners in English-medium schools have developed considerably over the last five years.

In 2017, the current GCSE replaced the previous full and short courses – GCSE Welsh Second Language and GCSE Applied Welsh. We said at that time that GCSE Welsh Second Language would be reviewed again to reflect the new curriculum.

And this is where we have reached now. So, the new GCSEs will be based on the expectations in the curriculum, and will build on the progress that has - and will have - been made with the current qualification. The new qualification will continue to develop learners' listening and speaking skills so that they can communicate unprompted and confidently.

We don't know what it will be called yet – this is something we will discuss with teachers and learners as we go about creating it.

So that's our second decision.

And then moving on to the third decision.

Annabel, if you could move onto the next slide please.

We are also introducing a new, additional qualification for those pupils in English-medium settings who are ready to progress further and faster, in terms of their Welsh language skills, along the continuum.

This new, additional qualification will not be the same size as a GCSE, it will be smaller, and its purpose will be to support learners even more with their oracy skills, so that they can converse more confidently and unprompted within and beyond the classroom.

The intention is that this new, additional qualification will be designed to build on and reinforce what learners will be doing as part of the GCSE course to give learners more confidence and enjoyment in using the Welsh language.

We anticipate that this new qualification could be taught alongside the GCSE qualification. So it will be there for those pupils who are progressing further and faster, in terms of their Welsh language skills, along the continuum.

Teachers know their learners best, of course, so they will be able to use that qualification to stretch those who are making good progress.

We are aware that some pupils are capped at the moment - and there is no additional Welsh language provision for them, so we see an opportunity here to introduce a qualification that enables pupils to do something extra and therefore make the best possible progress and, of course, get recognition for that.

And we are also keen to make sure that this new qualification will be as captivating as possible to give pupils that challenge within the same timeframe.

In terms of what these changes mean for learners in Wales – of course all learners are expected to learn Welsh until they are 16, and we believe that this new set of Welsh qualifications will give each one a fair and equal opportunity to achieve in Welsh, no matter what type of school they attend.

We want all learners to be able to use Welsh and this includes learners with little or no experience of the language up to those with proficiency in the language. We want to see learners move along the continuum of learning Welsh so that we produce confident speakers, and we are confident that this proposal helps to start realising that.

And as Emyr mentioned at the beginning of this meeting, we are also committed to continuing to adapt and change these qualifications over the next decade, to meet the 'Cymraeg 2050' goal, but also the longer-term goal of offering one Welsh qualification to every learner in Wales.

So, to sum up, I think we have one more slide.

Annabel, if you could move onto the next slide please.

We announced our full decision yesterday, and for the next steps, we have already recruited teachers and consultants to work with us to start planning the high-level content and assessment of these new qualifications. We'll meet for the first time in just over a week, so we're really looking forward to that.

There will then be an opportunity for you and the public to formally provide us with feedback on our proposals in autumn 2022.

And the idea is that the qualifications will be ready for first teaching in 2025 and assessed first in 2027.

But if you are interested in being part of this work as we move forward over the coming weeks and months, please do not hesitate to contact us, and we would be delighted to have the opportunity to work with you.

So that's all I had to say, so I'll pass it back to Emyr.

Thank you very much for listening.