



# BUSINESS PLAN 2022-23



Noddir gan  
**Lywodraeth Cymru**  
Sponsored by  
**Welsh Government**

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	2
<b>2. Our priorities</b> .....	3
<b>3. Operational plan 2022-23</b> .....	5
3.1. Operational priority 1: Review.....	8
3.2. Operational priority 2: Reform .....	10
3.3. Operational priority 3: Regulate .....	12
3.4. Operational priority 4: Resources – corporate capability.....	14
3.5. Operational priority 5: Reach – effectively connecting, engaging and communicating with our audiences .....	16

---

# 1. Introduction

Qualifications Wales is the independent regulator for GCSEs, AS, A levels, the Welsh Baccalaureate, vocational and technical qualifications. Our purpose is to maintain confidence that the qualifications we regulate are fair, trusted and valuable in Wales and beyond.

We have **two principal aims**:

- *Ensuring that qualifications - and the Welsh qualification system - are effective for meeting the reasonable needs of learners in Wales*
- *Promoting public confidence in qualifications and in the Welsh qualification system.*

We do this by:

- placing learners at the heart of our activities and working in their interests
- setting rules for awarding bodies to provide qualifications that accurately reflect learners' knowledge, skills and understanding
- shaping the range and design of qualifications that can be funded by Welsh Government and made available to meet the needs of learners
- working closely with the wider education community
- involving the people and organisations of Wales in our work

We are outward-looking, so we engage, communicate and collaborate to strengthen our understanding and ability to improve qualifications to better meet the needs of learners. Our role supports the Well-being of Future Generations Act; its purpose and requirements are compatible with how we work, as education necessarily requires a long-term view with the well-being of learners at its heart.

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the functioning of the whole education system. In response, we have had to explore and adopt approaches to the award of qualifications that have not been seen before. As Wales starts to recover, our priority is to support learners to receive fair and accurate grades that reflect their attainment and allow them to progress to employment or to the next phase of their education.

This Business Plan sets out our priorities for the financial year 2022-23, recognising that we will continue to respond and adapt to learner needs as necessary. The plan includes the actions we intend to take to progress our Strategic Equality Objectives.

During the year we will be publishing our long-term vision and 5-year plan for qualifications and the qualification system.

## 2. Our priorities

Education and the qualification system remain of high political and public interest. 2022-23 marks the return to examinations.

**Regulation:** In summer 2022, learners are sitting adapted assessments, and awarding bodies have been asked to secure awarding standards that are broadly midway between the 2019 and 2021 results. We will be monitoring the awarding process closely to secure fair outcomes for learners. What we learn from this year will help us as we consider our approach to standards in the next academic year and onwards.

**Reach:** Throughout the year we will ensure that we provide clear information to our stakeholders about our role and how the system works. We will continue to engage with them and listen and learn before taking decisions that affect them.

**Reform:** This year, we move into a critical phase of our 'Qualified for the future' programme of work to reform qualifications for learners aged 14-16. We will continue with our active co-construction approach, involving academics, subject experts, practitioners, and learners in the design of new qualifications. We will engage widely and listen to feedback so that the qualification aims, content and assessment approaches benefit from everyone within the education system having the chance for their voice to be heard.

Our work will consider the needs of all learners aged 14-16, and will include entry level, level 1 and level 2 qualifications needed for life, learning and work. Qualifications are an important mark of achievement and we are working to achieve a fully inclusive and coherent offer as we move forward on the journey of reform.

Our ambition is to make use of the opportunity to innovate and modernise assessment. This includes making better use of technology and digital tools to transform how assessment takes place. We will work closely with awarding bodies and centres – recognising that any changes need to be manageable and run in parallel with changes in teaching and learning.

Change management remains critical to successful reform. We will continue working with schools, colleges and work-based learning providers to explain changes and provide support. Where we commission awarding bodies to develop new qualifications, we will require them to ensure that learning providers are well-prepared for delivery.

Vocational and skills-based qualifications are as important to us as qualifications that support academic learning. We will support the ambition for vocational qualifications referred to in the updated programme for government. We will use our expertise and data to review the post-16 qualifications' landscape and help to identify opportunities to use our powers to strengthen and secure the offer in Wales. We will continue to deliver our vocational qualifications strategy, helping learners progress and develop skills for employment, thereby improving overall prosperity and economic growth.

This coming year, a focus for our 'Choice for All' Welsh-medium qualifications' strategy will

be post-16 qualifications, where we will work with awarding bodies to secure greater bilingual provision.

Delivering our reforms, we will closely monitor the introduction and awarding of the new qualifications in Health and Social Care, Digital Technology, and the Built Environment. We will complete our Travel, Tourism, Hospitality and Catering sector review, and we will publish our review of Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care. We will also begin our review of Business, Administration and Retail.

Last year, we commissioned a new 'Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales' qualification – this year we will consider it for approval. This new qualification will replace the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (often referred to as the Welsh Bacc) and provide Level 3 learners with the opportunity to demonstrate their integral skills while undertaking projects that reflect current global issues and promote a sustainable future.

**Review/Research:** Underpinning our work will be a full programme of research, and the collection and analysis of data to help ensure that we take well-informed and evidence-based decisions. We look forward to starting research into continuous assessment, supporting our qualifications reform.

**Resources:** This year, we will bring together what we have learned and achieved since we were established and set out our future vision for qualifications and the qualification system, along with our 5-year plan. This will replace our existing strategy documents and set the direction for the next five years to come, demonstrating our focus on the needs of Wales, the well-being of learners and the opportunities to modernise assessment.

In spring/summer, we expect to move into a regular pattern of hybrid working. This will involve changes to how our employees work, our HR policies and our office layout. We are committed to making this a success, building on our inclusive culture, while retaining the benefits of more flexible working. In doing so, we will continue to focus on employee well-being, our equalities and future generations objectives and our environmental impact. We want to continue to make Qualifications Wales a great place to work, where employees can and do make a difference.



**Philip Blaker**  
**Chief Executive, Qualifications Wales**

### 3. Operational plan 2022-23

We are managing programmes of work that span more than one year and this plan naturally builds on previous work and plans for future work. There are five operational priorities for 2022-23:

1. Review
2. Reform
3. Regulate
4. Resources
5. Reach

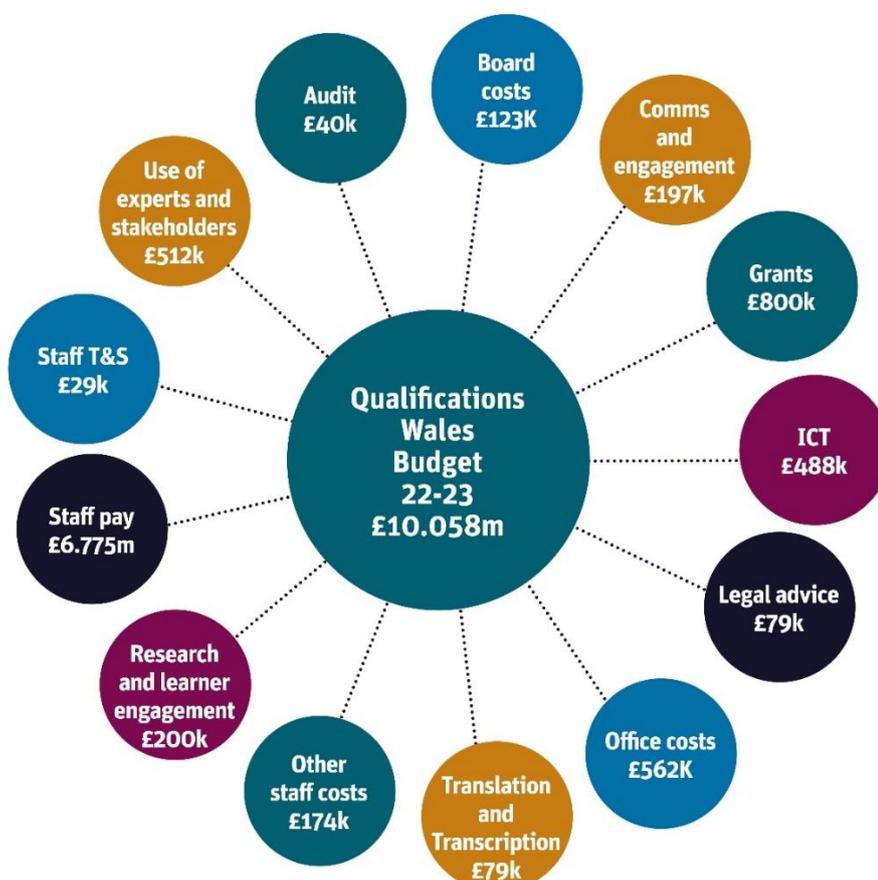
#### **Critical areas of work in the coming year:**

- the 'Qualified for the future' reform of qualifications for learners aged 14-16
- ongoing review and reform of qualifications for learners post-16
- increasing bilingual provision through our 'Choice for All' strategy
- our research programme, including research into continuous assessment and exploration of the opportunities to modernise assessment through better use of digital technology
- the award of qualifications in summer 2022 following the return to examinations, and determining the approach to standards in future years
- developing our long-term vision and strategy
- a successful transition to hybrid working by default

We are primarily funded by Welsh Government. Our core revenue funding allocation for 2022-23 is £8.067m, and our core capital funding is £250k; we are also allocated £200k to fund the 'Welsh for Adults' qualification, and we have been allocated a further £1.5m to cover the additional costs we will incur for our 'Qualified for the future' reforms. We also plan to generate income of approximately £41k through the provision of IT support services to two other Welsh Government sponsored bodies. At a summary level, our 2022-23 budget is shown below:

The diagram below further illustrates how we plan to spend our £10.058m budget:

Area	2022-23 Core Budget	2022-23 Qualified for the future Budget	2022-23 Total Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Pay	5,339	1,200	6,539
Grants	600	0	600
Programme Costs	529	385	914
Running Costs	1,554	15	1,569
Accounting Officer Provision for realignment	236	0	236
	<b>8,258</b>	<b>1,600</b>	<b>9,858</b>
Welsh For Adults Grant	200	0	200
	<b>8,458</b>	<b>1,600</b>	<b>10,058</b>
Funded by			
Core WG Grant - revenue			8,067
Core WG Grant - capital			250
Welsh For Adults			200
WG Qualified for the future Funding			1,500
Use of income			41
Total Funding			10,058



In the sections below we outline our plans in more detail. In delivering this work we will make further progress against our Strategic Equalities Objectives. Where we are taking specific actions this year, we have included them in each section:

## 3.1. Operational priority 1: Review

Our work here is about reviewing and evaluating aspects of the qualification system to ensure they are meeting learners' needs and strengthening public confidence in qualifications. We undertake research, engage with stakeholders and keep up to date with wider policy in Wales and other parts of the UK.

In 2022-23 we will:

### **Develop and consult on proposals for reshaping the 'wider offer' of qualifications for learners aged 14-16**

This will cover qualifications to be offered to pre-16 learners in addition to GCSEs, to ensure that we build a coherent and inclusive offer to meet the needs of all learners.

### **Review and strengthen the post-16 qualification offer**

Our strategic approach to strengthening the post-16 vocational qualification offer includes:

- continuing our programme of sector reviews
- publishing our review of Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal care
- beginning our review of Business, Administration and Retail

In doing so, we will work closely with awarding bodies and government to manage possible risks to learners in Wales resulting from policy changes in England.

### **Develop a strategic approach to modernising assessment**

We will establish a small team focused on considering the opportunities, benefits, challenges and risks of the use of digital technology in qualifications and assessment. This will support the development of a longer-term strategy to modernise assessment for learners in Wales.

### **Carry out research to inform strategic thinking and review**

Significant research this year will include:

- talking to stakeholders in further education to understand how they use grades to help us decide on the on future of the GCSE grade scale
- completing the latest cycle of our public confidence survey with key stakeholders
- researching the concepts of continuous assessment and different approaches to standards, and explore opportunities to inform our work on modernising assessment

We will continue to review wider research to identify developments and ideas, supporting teams across the organisation to make best use of research, data and analysis, along with external sharing of our findings and statistics.

### **We will also undertake these planned Reviews:**

- **Travel, Tourism, Hospitality and Catering Sector Review** - last year we gathered the majority of our evidence for this review. This year we will complete our

programme of learner engagement and develop and test our proposals to address issues identified in the review. We plan to publish the report in January 2023.

- **Essential Skills Wales suite of qualifications** - in addition to overseeing changes to the current suite of Essential Skills Wales qualifications, we will also begin a more substantive review in spring 2022 to inform future reforms. This year we will begin the technical review and will start to engage with stakeholders.

### Support delivery of our Strategic Equalities Objective

'Engaging with and informing the qualification system - we communicate, engage, consult and conduct research with diverse groups, benefiting from a wide range of views.'

To enable ongoing equalities analysis we will work with Welsh Government to secure an enhanced data collection, allowing us to build on our analysis of results and better inform the system. We will also complete a review of our ethics checklist for research.

## 3.2. Operational priority 2: Reform

Once we have completed the review and evaluation of a range of qualifications, or of an aspect of the system, this may lead to changes to the range, content or assessment approach of qualifications offered in Wales.

In 2022-23 we will:

### **Co-construct new GCSEs as part of our 'Qualified for the future' (QFF) project**

Last year, we consulted on and confirmed the subjects in which a new generation of GCSEs and related qualifications will be created to support the Curriculum for Wales. We established a structure of more than 30 stakeholder groups to work with us to co-construct the design of these new qualifications. And we launched a major engagement exercise with learners to give them a strong say on what future qualifications will look like.

This year, using our co-construction approach, we will collaborate extensively with others to develop draft proposals for the aims, content and assessment of new GCSEs. In the autumn term we will publish these proposals for wider views and comment. Stakeholder groups will then use this feedback to further rework and refine proposals so that we can agree the final design requirements for the new qualifications in 2023.

Alongside this collaborative work we will develop and share a detailed plan for developing, approving and introducing the new qualifications to help support schools to realise the benefits of the Curriculum for Wales for learners.

### **Manage reforms in several vocational or skills-based areas including:**

- **Reform of the Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales** – we will monitor contractual performance indicators, change regulatory documents, apply approval processes and ensure effective change management.
- **Essential Skills Wales qualifications** – we will approve the amendments to 'Application of Number, Communications and Employability' in readiness for September 2022 and engage with awarding bodies to identify changes to the 'Digital Literacy' qualifications for introduction in September 2023.
- **Construction and Building Services Engineering Qualifications** - we will continue to support the education and training system with the smooth introduction of these new qualifications for learners in schools, colleges and on apprenticeships.
- **New Digital Technology qualifications** – supporting teachers in schools and colleges with a programme of change management to help effectively deliver the new GCSE (to be first awarded in summer 2023) and GCE and A level Digital Technology qualifications (to be introduced for first teaching from September 2022).
- **Implementing actions from the Engineering, Advanced Manufacturing and Energy sector review** – continuing to engage with awarding bodies to oversee this.

## **Increase the availability of Welsh-medium qualifications by continuing to deliver our 'Choice for All' strategy and managing our grant-funding programme**

This year we will:

- focus on post-16 qualifications and identify priority areas for securing bilingual provision
- work with awarding bodies to strengthen their recording of learner language preferences
- monitor and report on progress against the key indicators set out in our strategy
- continue to award grants so that more qualifications can be assessed through the medium of Welsh and to support the Welsh for Adults qualification
- review our overall approach to grants and develop a longer-term strategy to ensure we make best use of our funding to further bilingual provision

## **Support our Strategic Equalities Objective**

'Regulated qualifications are designed and assessed in a way that is fair for all learners.'

We will establish a dedicated stakeholder forum with a focus on equalities' issues to help inform our review and reform activities and explore innovative ways of improving the accessibility of qualifications and assessments, and participation in our work.

### 3.3. Operational priority 3: Regulate

We regulate qualifications that are developed and delivered by the awarding bodies that we recognise. When recognised, an awarding body must comply with the rules that we set. We monitor for compliance against our Standard Conditions of Recognition and where appropriate, we use our enforcement powers to ensure that the system meets the needs of learners.

In 2022-23 we will:

#### Deliver our core regulatory functions including:

- **Regulating awarding bodies** – we will continue our recognition, monitoring and compliance activities, developing further guidance where needed and keeping an eye on awarding body viability following the impact of the pandemic on revenues.
- **Monitoring qualifications** – including the delivery and award of the summer 2022 and the winter 2022-23 examination series, delivery of the Essential Skills Wales qualifications, and the new approved vocational qualifications in Health, Social Care and Childcare, Construction and Building Services Engineering.
- **Designating qualifications** – as eligible for use on publicly-funded programmes of learning for learners under 19. We will continue to fulfil our role on Welsh Government's Apprenticeship Delivery Partner Steering Groups.
- **Reviewing and updating regulatory policies and documents to ensure they are up to date** – undertaking several policy reviews and continuing to raise awareness of our regulatory framework, policies and approaches with external stakeholders.

#### Support 14-16 qualification reforms with regulatory policies and approaches

We will review and develop policy solutions to underpin and support the 14-16 qualification offer to meet future needs. This will include:

- developing regulatory policy solutions to secure the availability of qualifications to support the new curriculum
- conducting impact assessments and cost/benefit analysis
- planning for the approval and designation processes to support the 14-16 qualification reforms

#### Continue to work collaboratively with the wider qualification system including:

- **Working with other regulators and wider partners** – to minimise regulatory burden on those we regulate and share best practice so that we achieve value for money and ensure qualifications in Wales remain respected and portable.
- **Managing QiW** – we will continue to maintain and continuously enhance this qualifications' database used by us and the wider education system in Wales.
- **Collecting data and producing statistics** – we will manage our collection of data from Welsh Government and awarding bodies to enable regulatory monitoring,

review and evaluation activity – including for the awarding of grades in summer 2022 – and produce regular official statistics.

### **Determine the approach to assessment and regulation of qualifications in 2022/2023**

We will establish regulatory requirements and oversee the award of approved qualifications in the summer 2022, November 2022 and January 2023 exam series by awarding bodies. This includes:

- working with other regulators to ensure that learners in Wales are not disadvantaged relative to their peers elsewhere
- implementing a regulatory framework and guidance to support the arrangements and assist awarding body compliance
- producing informative content so that learners and their families, schools and colleges and the wider public understand our approaches
- maintaining contingency plans in case of disruption to the examination series

### **Determine the approach to assessment and regulation of qualifications in subsequent years**

We will explore the impact of the summer 2022 awarding arrangements to inform our considerations for the 2023 summer awards and future years. We will explore qualification standards in relation to outcomes and attainment during the Covid-19 pandemic (summer 2020 and summer 2021) to understand the impact and implications of relying solely on teacher-awarded grades. We will complement this with research into methods for resetting grading standards and alternative approaches to standards.

### **Support our Strategic Equalities Objectives**

'Regulated qualifications are delivered and awarded in a way that is fair for all learners.'

We will publish an overview of the summer 2022 awarding to include details of how we managed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the awarding of qualifications.

## 3.4. Operational priority 4: Resources – corporate capability

We know that having strong and effective corporate capabilities supports our ability to deliver and enhances our reputation with stakeholders. We strive to take decisions that are balanced and evidence-based. We listen to stakeholders and provide clear information. We aim to continue to earn trust through robust and effective management of our resources and compliant corporate practices. We will continue to support employee well-being as we develop our future ways of working.

In 2022-23 we will:

### **Review and refresh our overall strategic approach**

We will develop our vision for qualifications and the qualification system, develop a medium-term strategic plan for how we can work towards this, and communicate this widely. We will review our corporate capability and people strategies to update them in line with our vision.

### **Deliver Corporate Services that support and challenge the organisation to be efficient, effective and compliant, and meet our corporate responsibilities including:**

- publishing corporate reports on time and to a high standard
- delivering our Equality and Well-being of Future Generations Objectives
- delivering actions from our Welsh Language Scheme
- supporting carbon reduction by completing our annual return of carbon footprint data and continuing to monitor our carbon impact and identify actions that we might take to support a reduction in emissions

### **Embed new ways of working to support staff engagement**

As the impact of Covid-19 diminishes we will develop new ways of working to maximise staff effectiveness, well-being and engagement. We will embed our 'Collaboration, Creativity, Caring and Community' guiding principles to inform why and when we come together to work in the office. Work to ensure hybrid working is effective and becomes the expected model will include:

- providing managers and staff with training
- developing our Senior Leadership Group
- enhancing our office environment to support new staff needs
- adjusting our HR, facilities and IT policies
- initiatives to maintain staff engagement and promote and support staff well-being, working with our QWEST well-being group
- continuing our activities to support community social responsibility

In making these changes we will address actions identified from our staff survey and work in partnership with our recognised Trade Union.

### **Work collaboratively with the Welsh Public Sector to improve efficiency and effectiveness**

We will work with partners across the public sector, both to support the qualification system and to make use of opportunities for greater efficiency or effectiveness. This year, we will work with other Welsh Government sponsored bodies to continue to deliver the learning and development programme for managers and leaders, and we will continue to provide IT support to the National Academy for Educational Leadership and the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales.

### **Support Board development**

We will continue to provide an effective induction for our new Board members. We aim for continual improvement in how we operate and will complete a formal Board effectiveness review and start to implement findings.

### **Implement the new Finance and HR System**

We will continue to implement additional HR modules to enable more effective and efficient working and deliver bilingual recruitment. We will continue with our implementation of a new finance system.

### **Support our Strategic Equalities Objectives**

'Our workforce and Board reflect the diversity of the population in Wales that we regulate for and work amongst.'

We will offer a short-term work placement(s) advertised within the local community to provide work experience and to demonstrate the career opportunities available in the public sector. We will support the Pathway to Board Membership project being run by a group of Housing Trusts to encourage more Board membership from people of an ethnic minority background. We will provide Board mentors and allow observation of meetings.

'We continue to build a culture where people feel that the organisation values them as individuals, appreciates their differences and makes good use of the range of experiences and insight available.'

We will obtain a review of our workplace and culture to explore how we can remove unintentional barriers and put in place an action plan to drive forward change. We will use this to develop and launch training for employees and Board members. We will also complete an accessibility review of our proposed changes to the office layout to support hybrid working

### 3.5. Operational priority 5: Reach – effectively connecting, engaging and communicating with our audiences

Promoting and maintaining public confidence in qualifications and the Welsh qualification system is central to our work. We ensure this by continually improving the ways that we communicate and engage with key audiences across the country. We have a range of channels and techniques and work with partners across the education sector and civil society to convey our both our regulation and reform duties.

In 2022-23 we will:

**Build public confidence and understanding of Qualifications Wales and the qualification system** – by planning and delivering effective communications and engagement activity that maintains and grows public confidence and understanding of the role and purpose of Qualifications Wales.

**Focus on continuous improvement to deliver effective communications and engagement activity** – to meet organisational priorities, key objectives and performance indicators.

**Deliver the strategic engagement plan to maintain and develop existing and new stakeholder relationships** – we will focus our engagement activity on maintaining existing relationships and stakeholder groups and identifying and growing new partnership opportunities to widen our reach and increase understanding of our work priorities.

**Deliver the digital channels strategy to effectively reach our key audiences** – we will review the content offer across all our channels and develop a new strategy to improve our digital engagement. This will include ensuring that we target micro-audiences with relevant content and messaging, alongside the development of a new audience-focused Qualifications Wales website.

**Communicate and engage on the post-pandemic return to examinations and assessment** – promoting understanding of decisions we take linked to the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on examinations and assessment.

**Communicate and engage on our 'Review' and 'Reform' priorities** – developing and delivering dedicated plans and performance targets.

#### Support our Strategic Equalities Objectives

'Engaging with and informing the qualifications system.'

We will refresh our website content and usability to support accessibility for all.