

By email



Angela Fairchild and Lucy Andrew
Deputy Directors
Post-16 Qualifications Review Team
Department for Education
Sheffield
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20 January 2021

Dear Angela and Lucy,

Qualifications Wales' response to the Department for Education's *Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England: Second Stage*.

As the qualifications regulator in Wales, we are responsible for regulating non-degree qualifications and the awarding bodies who offer qualifications in Wales. Although education is a devolved responsibility in Wales, many of the vocational qualifications available in England are also available in Wales and most awarding bodies operating in Wales also operate in England. Therefore, policy decisions made in England have the potential to impact significantly on the vocational qualifications that are available to learners in Wales.

We are concerned that your current proposals for post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England are likely to have a significant impact on the availability of vocational qualifications in Wales. In many cases removing public funding for qualifications in England will have the effect of reducing the number of learners taking them to such an extent as to make them unviable. In these instances, qualifications are likely to be withdrawn which means they will also cease to be available in Wales. Your proposed approach is therefore likely to have a significant impact on the availability of vocational qualifications for learners in Wales. The greatest impact is likely to be felt in niche vocational subjects where the number of learners taking each qualification across the UK is typically low.

There is insufficient detail in the consultation for us to be able to assess the likely impact of your proposals on the availability of level 3 vocational qualifications in Wales. To determine the likely impact on learners in Wales, we must be able to identify qualifications that are at risk of being defunded. We cannot do so without more clarity and information about how you intend to determine whether a level 3 qualification overlaps with a T level qualification. At present, the consultation proposals do not explain how you intend to identify qualifications that overlap with T levels, nor is there any indication of when you propose to notify awarding bodies and other key stakeholders of the specific qualifications at risk of

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being defunded. We ask that you provide further clarity on your proposed approach as soon as possible so that we can assess the potential impact of your proposals on centres and learners in Wales.

We are pleased to read in your impact assessment that you intend to work with the devolved administrations to understand the potential effects of defunding qualifications. We work closely with Welsh Government and have shared our concerns with them. We ask that you engage with us directly as the independent regulator of these qualifications in Wales, as well as with Welsh Government, and share all the relevant information that will allow us to determine the likely impact of your proposed changes on the availability of vocational qualifications in Wales.

As you consider the responses to the consultation, we request that you fully consider the impact of your proposals on Wales and explicitly outline the risks and mitigations within your impact assessment. We also ask that you share the necessary information and evidence with us so that we can determine the likely impact of the proposals on learners in Wales.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these proposals with you in more detail to better understand and manage their potential consequences.

Yours sincerely



Philip Blaker
Chief Executive