

14 July 2022



Dear Head of Centre

Qualifications Wales – Summer Update

As we approach the end of the school term, we hope you find time to take some rest, relax and recharge over the summer holidays.

We recognise that the last few weeks have been challenging and unsettling for learners, teachers and centres, as this year was the first-time learners sat formal exams and assessments since before the pandemic. We have an update on exams in this letter.

We also wanted to share an update on some of our main programmes of work before you split for the summer break, so you're up to speed before the autumn term.

Summer 2022

As the summer exam series has now concluded, I am writing to thank you for all your hard work preparing learners for exams and assessments this year. I am pleased that exams were able to take place, and despite a few bumps, which are unfortunately inevitable in the complex system of examinations, things have gone broadly well.

Entries

We published data on the provisional number of [entries](#) for this summer's GCSE, AS and A level exams in May. This data gives us an early indication of changes in entry patterns, which is useful when interpreting the summer results.

Entry figures for GCSEs are lower than those entered for last summer – when grades were awarded using Centre Determined Grades. However, when compared to 2019, the number of GCSE entries has increased. The number of entries from Year 10 learners is larger than in 2021 and is more than double that in 2019 (mainly due to an increased entry into GCSE English Literature from that year group). At AS level, there are fewer

Qualifications Wales

Q2 Building, Pencarn Lane
Imperial Park,
Newport
NP10 8AR
☎ 01633 373 222



www.qualificationswales.org

Cymwysterau Cymru

Adeilad Q2, Lôn Pencarn
Parc Imperial,
Casnewydd
NP10 8AR
☎ 01633 373 222

entries than in both 2021 and 2019. However, this overall picture masks the fact that entries from Year 12 learners are considerably higher than in 2019, but there has been a continued drop in entries from Year 13 learners at AS level.

For the second year running, the number of learners entered for A levels has increased. Most of the increase was a result of entries from Year 13 learners, which increased by 4.4% compared to last summer.

Awarding

With the return of exams this year, WJEC will award learners' grades based on externally set assessments. Marking is now well underway in preparation for the awarding process.

We have previously [announced](#) our requirement for WJEC to award grades this year that are broadly midway between 2019 and 2021. This is a transitional approach as we work towards returning to the "established performance standard".

Approaches to awarding vocational qualifications may differ between awarding bodies and will depend on how the qualification is traditionally assessed, as well as alternative approaches used over the past two years. Awarding bodies will align awarding and setting standards in some vocational qualifications with similar GCSE and A level qualifications, where it is appropriate to do so.

'Have Your Say' questionnaire

As part of our monitoring of the summer series, we ran a 'Have Your Say' questionnaire to give learners, teachers and lecturers the chance to give feedback about this year's exams. Thank you to everyone who took time to respond and share the questionnaire with others. We received 1909 responses, which is a substantial increase on previous years. We have published a [summary document](#) on our website where you can find out more about the key themes of the responses. We'll also be sharing more detailed information in our results day publications.

Results release

We would like to remind schools and colleges that results are confidential until the official results days (**18 August** for AS and A level and **25 August** for GCSE) and must not be shared with any person or organisation outside of your school or college.

Results for vocational qualifications that are used for progression will be released by the same time.

Appeals

The Welsh Government has written to all centres outlining the support available to economically disadvantaged learners that wish to appeal their grade. This support is available for both general and vocational qualifications, to make sure you can fund the appeals for all disadvantaged learners where it is appropriate to do so.

If you or a learner believe that a grade is incorrect, you may wish to consider using the awarding body's *Post Results Service*. Although the appeals process was different last year, this year the grounds for appeal are largely as they were pre-pandemic.

It is important to remind learners that their results will only be changed if an error is found, and the grade could go up, down or stay the same. For more information on appeals, see [JCQ's guide to appeals processes](#).

Appeals processes for vocational qualifications will vary depending on the awarding body. Please refer to the awarding body's website for more information.

Some learners may also want to consider re-sitting a subject, so you should also be prepared to advise learners what re-sit opportunities are available.

Preparing for future exam series

As previously [announced](#), we have confirmed that advance information will be provided for made-for-Wales GCSE, AS and A level qualifications and approved vocational qualifications in health and social care and childcare that are assessed by examination in the next academic year. Any previous adaptations for GCSE, AS and A level qualifications and health and social care and childcare qualifications will no longer apply.

These measures are for the benefit of learners and signal our journey back to pre-pandemic assessment arrangements. WJEC released [advance information](#) for the November exam series at the end of last month. Advance information for the January 2023 series will be released in the autumn and for Summer 2023 in the spring term.

Qualified for the future

We want to thank those of you who have taken part in helping us co-construct the new qualifications as part of our Subject Level Working Groups (SLWGs) and Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) networks.

We are still on track to share the proposals of what the new qualifications could look like this autumn. You will be able to feedback on the proposals and design briefs for each GCSE subject. When the documents are live, we will email centres with a link and the deadline to submit your feedback; please do share this link with colleagues as we want to hear from as many people as possible. We will be looking to reconvene with members of our SLWGS and AoLEs in early 2023 to analyse the findings and discuss ideas from the feedback we receive to the proposals and design briefs. We will get in touch with colleagues nearer the date to arrange future meetings.

In the meantime, please visit our website for the work we've done to date on [Qualified for the future](#).

Wider offer

A thank you to those centres and schools who attended our [workshop events](#) where we discussed early thinking on the [wider offer](#) of qualifications and the implications it may have on schools, colleges and progression. This round of engagement was tailored to specific groups so we could concentrate on ideas and issues raised from our first round of stakeholder engagement.

We will present our findings and ask for your views early next year, as well as providing a full update nearer the time.

Learner voice

Over the last few months, we have completed extensive learner engagement on GCSE assessment methods and will publish the findings in the autumn. The thoughts, opinions and experiences of learners are important to us and this is reflected in the creation of our Learner groups. This September, with the support of centres, we want to recruit more learners to both groups – our Learner Advisory Group and our Vocational & Work-based Learner Group. For more information on how learners can apply, or centres can nominate, please see our [website](#).

We want to thank you again for all your support, not only during exam season, but since the summer term started. We look forward to continuing collaboration with you and your colleagues when you return from holidays. If you're attending the National

Eisteddfod, in Ceredigion next month, please feel free to drop by our stand - at number 23 on the maes - for a chat with our team.

Yours sincerely



Philip Blaker

Chief Executive