



Policy Statement on Conducting Reviews of Qualifications and the Qualification System

SEPTEMBER 2017



Version control

This version (1) of Qualifications Wales' Policy Statement on Conducting Reviews of Qualifications and the Qualification System was approved on 12 September 2017.

Section 47(1)(f) of the Qualifications Wales Act 2015 ("the Act") requires us to publish a statement of our policy with respect to the exercise of our functions under Section 46(1) (Review and research). We will keep policy statements prepared under Section 47 of the Act under review, and if we consider it appropriate in consequence of a review, prepare revised statements. We will review this document at least every 3 years. Such a review may consider the effectiveness of the policy statement and its ongoing applicability. The next review is due to take place no later than September 2020. Feedback on this policy is welcomed at any time. Please send any comments to policy@qualificationswales.org. Please note that only comments regarding the generality of this document, rather than specific situations will be considered as part of that review.

This statement replaces the Interim Monitoring Statement that was published on 11 December 2015 on our interim approach to monitoring reviews.

General Principles of the Policy Statement on Conducting Reviews of Qualifications and the Qualifications System

Awarding bodies recognised by Qualifications Wales are responsible for the quality of their qualifications and delivery activities, with Qualifications Wales, as the regulator, holding them to account. To do so, we may conduct reviews in accordance with Section 46 (1) of the Act which states that Qualifications Wales may keep under review:

- the awarding of approved qualifications by a recognised body;
- the awarding of forms of qualification designated under section 29 by a recognised body;
- any other activities of a recognised body which Qualifications Wales considers are relevant to the body's recognition;
- any other aspect of qualifications.

Our review activities will focus on meeting our principal aims of:

1. ensuring that qualifications, and the Welsh qualification system, are effective for meeting the reasonable needs of learners in Wales, and
2. promoting public confidence in qualifications and in the Welsh qualification system.

This policy statement explains how we exercise our functions in relation to qualifications, the qualification system and reviewing the activities of recognised awarding bodies and their compliance with the Standard Conditions of Recognition, as well as any other regulatory documents or special conditions of recognition that may also apply to specific awarding bodies or qualifications.

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Indicative types and definitions of reviews that could take place

1. We use review to describe a wide range of activities. Examples include:
 - i. Monitoring and compliance activities, which are to ensure that recognised awarding bodies and the qualifications that they offer comply with our regulatory requirements.

- ii. Sector reviews, through which we undertake review[s] of qualifications and the qualification system within a specific employment sector. Our VQ Strategy outlines our rationale, aims and objectives, lines of enquiry and methods for sector reviews.
- iii. Thematic reviews; we undertake reviews of cross-cutting issues related to aspects of qualifications and the qualifications system which are of interest to us and/or brought to our attention by stakeholders which may result in recommended action such as changes to a particular qualification's structure and/or assessment arrangements, or can inform future monitoring activities in particular areas. Our GQ Strategic Plan outlines that we will undertake technical reviews and engage with stakeholders in our thematic reviews.

Conducting monitoring and compliance activities

2. We will aim to adhere to the following principles when conducting monitoring and compliance activities:
 - a. Our monitoring and compliance activities will be proportionate, consistent and targeted;
 - b. Our monitoring and compliance activities will be focused principally but not exclusively on risk;
 - c. We will inform recognised awarding bodies of our requirements for information through written notices, in line with our Standard Conditions of Recognition;
 - d. Information we collect through our monitoring and compliance activities will be managed in accordance with our data governance

Conducting thematic and sector reviews

3. Due to the wide range of activities that could take place as part of a thematic or sector review, there is no single approach to conducting reviews. We will aim to adhere to the following principles when conducting reviews:
 - a. Recognised awarding bodies and other relevant stakeholders will be informed about a review at a time deemed appropriate by us.
 - b. We will inform recognised awarding bodies of our requirements for information through written notices, in line with our Standard Conditions of Recognition
 - c. Each review will clearly set out its aims and methodology as well as whether/how the outcomes will be reported. Depending on the type of review this information may be shared with relevant stakeholders or published on our website at an appropriate time.

- d. Should we identify, in undertaking our review work, any cases of non-compliance with the Standard Conditions of Recognition or any other applicable regulatory documents as outlined on our Regulatory Documents List, we will consider what action to take in line with our Taking Action When Things Go Wrong policy.

Outcomes of reviews

4. The outcomes of our reviews and plans for any proposed actions may be published and/or communicated to relevant stakeholders.
5. As outlined in Taking Action When Things Go Wrong, where appropriate, awarding bodies will be given an opportunity to comment on the outcomes of a review relating to them prior to any publication.
6. If we propose significant changes as a result of a review, then a Regulatory Impact Assessment may be undertaken where appropriate, in order to assess the impact of any options that are available.
7. In determining whether to publish the outcomes of a review we have undertaken, we will consider whether it is in the public interest to do so.
8. We will report on our review activity in our annual report to the National Assembly for Wales.

Related regulatory documents

- The [Standard Conditions of Recognition](#) can be found on our website.
- This policy does not include information about how we might use our enforcement and sanctions powers in cases of non-compliance. These powers are contained within our policy [“Taking action when things go wrong”](#).
- This policy statement does not include information about our specific approaches to monitoring vocational qualifications (VQs) and general qualifications (GQs). These are contained within our [VQ Strategy](#) and [GQ Strategic Plan](#).