

**Priority Qualifications List and Forward Look –
Protocol between**



and



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

November 2018

Priority Qualifications List and Forward Look – Protocol

This document, which has been agreed by Welsh Government and Qualifications Wales, constitutes a protocol regarding the way in which we will come together to jointly prepare a list of qualifications to be included on the Priority Qualifications List (“the List”).

It contains the following sections:

- Parties
- Context
- General Principles of Protocol
- Overview of Arrangements
- Review of Arrangements
- Information Sharing Rights Legislation
- Key Contacts
- Agreement
- Signatories

This document should be read in conjunction with the Qualifications Wales [Framework Document](#) signed on 6th August 2015 by the Welsh Government and Qualifications Wales.

Parties

Welsh Government - The Welsh Government is the devolved Government for Wales.

Qualifications Wales – The independent regulator of non-degree qualifications, in Wales, which was established under the Qualifications Wales Act 2015.

Background and Context

1. Qualifications Wales' [Framework Document](#) sets out the broad framework within which Qualifications Wales operates and details the terms and conditions under which the Welsh Government provide grant-in-aid to Qualifications Wales to perform its statutory duties.
2. One of the requirements in the Framework is that '*Qualifications Wales will need to work with the Welsh Government to prioritise qualifications for approval in terms of their significance for learners and employers*'¹.
3. Given the interdependency of qualifications and the curriculum it is essential that Welsh Government and Qualifications Wales work together to shape the national qualification system for Wales.
4. The List is the means by which Qualifications Wales communicates which qualifications or qualification types are prioritised for approval².
5. Section 13 of the Qualifications Wales Act 2015 requires both parties to jointly publish the List³. The List is a document which sets out the qualifications that have been agreed as priorities for approval at a given time.
6. Qualifications Wales and Welsh Government will come together to arrange joint publication of the List and in so doing will ensure that qualifications are appropriately prioritised for approval and that the List reflects the strategic priorities of both parties. In this regard, Welsh Government will have a role in determining, at a strategic level, qualifications priorities in Wales, whilst also ensuring the separating of regulatory decision making from government, as set out in the Qualifications Wales Act 2015.
7. This protocol describes the arrangements that will take place to publish a List and subsequently to review and revise on a timely basis.

¹ <http://qualificationswales.org/english/publications/framework-document>

² The Priority Qualifications List will comprise of qualifications in a variety of stages of development and approval.

³ <http://qualificationswales.org/media/3507/180705pql-list-and-forward-look-e.pdf>

General Principles of Protocol

8. The aim of this protocol is to outline how both parties will work together to:
 - i. publish a List and keep it under review on a regular and timely basis;
 - ii. identify, discuss and agree on the priorities for qualification approval, and
 - iii. keep each other informed of developments that could lead to a review or revision to the List.
9. A qualification may be included on the List “when Qualifications Wales and Welsh Government are satisfied that ensuring and maintaining public confidence in the qualification is a priority for Qualifications Wales, by reason of the significance of the qualification having regards to the needs of learners and employers in Wales”⁴.
10. In doing so, Welsh Government acknowledge the independence of Qualifications Wales and its statutory duties as detailed in the Qualifications Wales Act 2015. This includes, but is not limited to, the considerations outlined in paragraphs 11-16.
11. Qualifications Wales will adopt a “Forward Look” approach to identifying qualifications that may be included on the List going forward. This will be done at least 3 months before a List and Forward Look is due to be published.
12. Developing and commissioning qualifications, as well as the approvals process, can take considerable time, and therefore sufficient forward planning is required, whenever possible to foresee such future requirements.
13. The Forward Look will enable the early development of approval criteria for these qualifications and may give awarding bodies notice of likely future priorities. This approach will also ensure sufficient time to plan ahead to discuss revisions with appropriate Welsh Government officials and seek approval from Qualifications Wales Board and the Cabinet Secretary for Education.
14. For the purposes of section 13 of the Act, the Forward Look does not constitute a part of the List, and therefore is not jointly prepared. However, Qualifications Wales will invite Welsh Government to provide comments on the development of the Forward Look on a six-monthly basis and as part of regular discussions on priorities, in order to share views on future priority qualifications that could be included in the Forward Look.

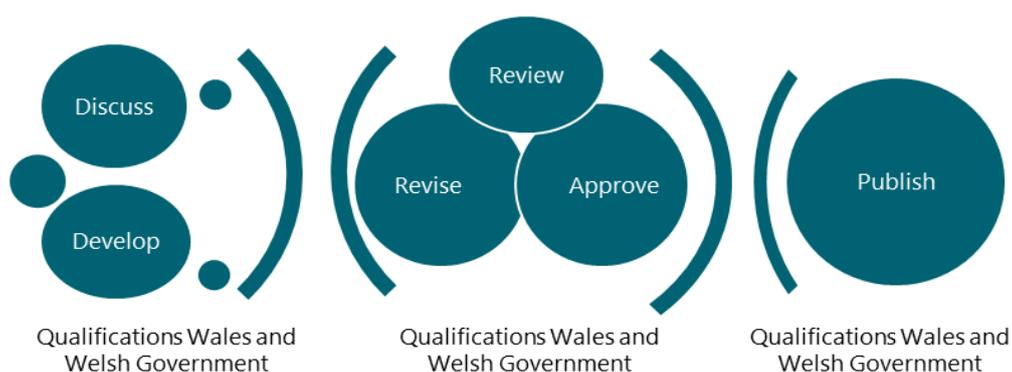
⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/5/part/4/crossheading/priority-qualifications/enacted>

15. Qualifications Wales may determine that it is desirable to restrict the number of forms of the qualification that are approved. Where such restrictions are to be imposed (or under consideration for restriction), Qualifications Wales will notify Welsh Government of the qualifications that are to be included in this section of the List.
16. Where qualifications are moved from one part of the List to another to reflect the end of any priority approval periods, Qualifications Wales will notify Welsh Government of the qualifications that are to be included in this section of the List prior to publishing an updated version of the List.

Overview of Arrangements

17. The protocol is broadly made up of three parts: the first is keeping each other informed and developing ideas; the second is drafting revisions to the List and seeking agreement from both parties on them; and finally, to co-publish a revised List. Figure 1 sets out the stages of arrangements.

Figure 1



18. Both parties will **discuss** regularly with a view to keeping each other informed of both policy developments and those in the qualification system that could potentially have implications for the List.
19. Qualifications Wales will keep the List under review at all times and will aim to plan ahead to identify emerging priorities and developments in good time to

identify opportunities for revising the List. Due to findings from research, monitoring, sector reviews, or other sources Qualifications Wales may identify a need to review the List.

20. Welsh Government could also identify the potential for updating the List and can contact Qualifications Wales to discuss a potential review.
21. The List can be **reviewed** at any time in order to provide the flexibility to plan as well as respond to emerging priorities and developments as they occur. At a minimum, both parties will meet annually to review the List.
22. As emerging priorities, or developments occur in the system, and new qualifications or priorities are identified, then initial work will be carried out by Qualifications Wales to **develop** the priority areas further.
23. Qualifications Wales will undertake to revise the List and will present this to Welsh Government for discussion. Once both parties have agreed the document, Welsh Government will arrange for the Cabinet Secretary for Education to **approve** and Qualifications Wales will arrange for its Board to approve the priorities.
24. Once approval is secured from both parties, arrangements will be made to publish the revised List together.

Review of Arrangements

25. The parties will review this protocol as appropriate.

Information Rights Legislation

26. When sharing information with each other we will at all times operate in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation.

Key Contacts

27. The principal points of contact in respect of any communication activity relating to the List in both organisations is as follows:
 - a. Welsh Government – the Qualifications Wales Sponsor Unit
 - b. Qualifications Wales

Head of Corporate Governance

(corporategovernance@qualificationswales.org)

Head of Development and Commissioning

(developmentandcommissioning@qualificationswales.org)

Agreement

28. This protocol has been agreed by both Qualifications Wales and the Welsh Government.

Annex 1 - Roles and Responsibilities

Qualifications Wales

Role	Responsibilities
Qualifications Wales Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing the content of the List and Forward Look to be sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Education
Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing the content of the List and Forward Look (through participation on the Board) and letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Education; and • Reviewing and when content signing the letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Education enclosing the List and Forward Look.
Chief Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing the content of the draft List and Forward Look, and the draft letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Education before it is shared with the Sponsorship Unit (in conjunction with the Chair of the Board); • Approving the final version of the List and Forward Look and letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Education to be sent to QW Board for approval; • Approving the content of the communications to awarding bodies and other stakeholders.
Management Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where appropriate, reviewing and providing comments on the draft List and Forward Look.
Development and Commissioning Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating internal discussions via Policy Group/ GQSDB/ VQSDB and/or Management Board on qualifications to be included on the List and Forward Look; • Drafting the List and Forward Look; • Drafting the accompanying letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Education; • Incorporating changes and/or additions suggested by the Sponsorship Unit to the draft List and Forward Look, and the draft letter; • Drafting and reviewing accompanying text on the Qualifications Wales website and liaising with the Communications Team to make any changes that are necessary;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing communications to awarding bodies and liaising with the Communications Team to ensure that these are sent or published; • Monitoring the List to ensure that it is updated in a timely manner, and notifying the Sponsorship Unit of any updates; • Coordinating other activities necessary to meet the requirements of this protocol.
Corporate Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting discussions with the Sponsorship Unit (or other appropriate Welsh Government officials) on the content of the draft List and Forward Look, and the draft letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Education; • Communicating changes and/or additions suggested by the Sponsorship Unit to the draft List and Forward Look, and the draft letter; • Sending the draft List and Forward Look, with the draft letter, to the Sponsorship Unit for review; • Sending the letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Education, as signed by the Chair, enclosing the List and Forward Look.
Policy Group / Vocational Qualifications Strategic Delivery Board / General Qualifications Strategic Delivery Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where appropriate, members to facilitate and contribute to discussions on qualifications to be included on the List and Forward Look.
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making changes to the text on the Qualifications Wales website, as provided by the Development and Commissioning Team to reflect and publicise the new version of the List and Forward Look; • Uploading the new version of the List and Forward Look, as approved by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and QW Chair, to the Qualifications Wales website; • Sending communications to awarding bodies to publicise the new version of the List and Forward Look.

Welsh Government

Role	Responsibilities
Welsh Government Sponsorship Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conducting and co-ordinating discussions with the Chief Executive/Head of Corporate Governance on the content of the draft List and Forward Look, and the draft letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Education;• Providing comments on behalf of Welsh Government on the content of the draft List and Forward Look, and• Co-ordinating the approval of the List with Cabinet Secretary for Education.• Ensuring that the new version of the List and Forward Look, as approved by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and QW Chair, to the Welsh Government website.
Cabinet Secretary for Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approving the qualifications to be included on the Priority Qualifications List.