



GCSE Welsh Second Language

Introduction

GCSE Welsh Second Language is being reformed in Wales for first delivery from September 2017. The reformed GCSE Welsh Second Language will be produced and delivered by WJEC, and will be the only version of the qualifications available to learners on state funded programmes in Wales. As part of the reform process we are asking for views on the proposed content, structure and assessment of the reformed qualification.

In developing our proposals we have considered several reports and reviews that include references to Welsh Second Language as set out below:

- One language for all: review of Welsh second language at Key Stages 3 and 4 (September 2013)[1];
- A living language: a language for living – Bwrw mlaen (2014)[2];
- Successful Futures: Independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales (2015)[3].

Welsh Government has confirmed that its longer term policy for Welsh language teaching and assessment is to move away from the concept of Welsh as a second language and towards a common continuum encompassing all levels of language ability. We are working with Welsh Government and others to agree how that vision can be put into practice as part of the work on reforming the curriculum in Wales. Welsh Government's ambition is that by 2021 schools will be using the new curriculum.[4]

In the meantime, the current programme of reforms to GCSEs and A levels offers an opportunity to review the design of GCSE Welsh Second Language for first teaching from 2017. As part of these reforms, new specifications have already been developed for GCSE Welsh First Language, and for A levels in Welsh First Language and Welsh Second Language.

The changes we propose in this questionnaire are in line with the Welsh Government's aim of introducing a single Welsh language continuum. For example, we propose a clearer alignment of the subject with the Common European Framework for Referencing Languages, a well-established model for assessing language acquisition and proficiency, which could help to provide a basis for the envisaged Welsh language continuum. We also propose an increased emphasis on the development and assessment of practical communication skills. In doing so we aim to encourage teachers and learners to practise and develop speaking and listening skills throughout the course to help build learners' confidence in using the language from day to day.

Our proposals relate to a new full course GCSE Welsh Second Language, planned for first teaching from September 2017. When the reformed specification is introduced, the current full course and short course qualifications will be discontinued. Only the reformed full course will be available from that point onwards. More information is available on the Qualifications Wales website about when legacy GCSE specifications will be assessed for the last time.

[1] <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/130926-review-of-welsh-second-lan-en.pdf>
<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/130926-review-of-welsh-second-lan-cy.pdf>

[2] <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/140806-living-language-moving-forward-en.pdf>
<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/140806-living-language-moving-forward-cy.pdf>

[3] <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150225-successful-futures-en.pdf>
<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150317-successful-futures-cy.pdf>

[4] <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculum-for-wales-curriculum-for-life/?lang=en>
<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculum-for-wales-curriculum-for-life/?lang=cy>



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Referencing the expected level of the new qualification

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)[5] is a tool used around the world to describe learners' language skills. It specifies six levels of proficiency against which different language qualifications can be referenced. The levels also provide a basis for teaching and assessing a learner's language ability.

Currently, GCSEs and A levels in language subjects offered in Wales, England (and elsewhere) are not formally referenced to the CEFR, or to any other reference frameworks. We suggest that this type of framework could provide a useful starting point for developing a learning and assessment continuum for the Welsh language. With that in mind, we propose that the new GCSE Welsh Second language specification should be designed to align with the common reference levels of the CEFR.

We looked at the following levels of the CEFR when considering where to position the new GCSE Welsh Second language qualification.

[5] http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf

CEFR level	Description
A2 Basic user: Elementary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). • Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. • Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
B1 Independent user: Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. • Can deal with most situations likely to arise in an area where the language is spoken. • Can produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. • Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
B2 Independent user: Upper intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. • Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. • Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

We propose that the new GCSE Welsh Second Language should be designed to enable learners to achieve level B1 and to aim for developing some elements of level B2.

Q1a: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the new GCSE Welsh Second Language should be aligned to the CEFR?

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree
- I don't know

Comments (we would encourage you to make a comment, particularly if you disagree with the proposal)

Q1b: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the new GCSE Welsh Second Language should be designed to enable learners to achieve and demonstrate Welsh language ability at levels B1 and B2 on the CEFR?

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree
- I don't know

Comments (we would encourage you to make a comment, particularly if you disagree with the proposal)



GCSE Welsh Second Language

Aims and objectives

Taking into account the reviews and reports published in recent years on various aspects of Welsh language education, we suggest that the new GCSE Welsh Second Language specification should:

- focus on developing learners' speaking and listening skills;
- prepare learners for using Welsh in further study, in the workplace and in their community;
- focus on developing language skills and strategies to interact confidently in day to day situations and contexts;
- foster curiosity about and enjoyment of the Welsh language;
- prepare candidates for further study of Welsh and in Welsh.

We further propose that the reformed GCSE Welsh Second Language qualification should be designed to:

- Encourage learners to enjoy communicating through Welsh and to practise and develop their confidence and ability to use the language in a range of personal, social and vocational situations;
- Develop the speaking, listening, reading and writing skills required by learners to:
 - express themselves verbally, to respond to everyday situations and to elicit information from others;
 - read and understand a range of routine texts, including complex sentence structures within a familiar subject area;
 - write using a range of different forms on familiar subject matter;
 - select and adapt speech and writing to different situations and purposes;
 - develop language learning skills to allow them to further improve their grasp of the language.

In line with these aims, we propose that the new GCSE Second Language specification should be designed to achieve the following objectives:

Listening: Understand and respond to different types of spoken language in familiar contexts including conversations, presentations, news reports and television programmes;

Reading: Understand and respond to written language in different written forms written for a variety of purposes and audiences, including letters, articles, blogs, emails, web pages, online forums, marketing materials, reference and literary texts;

Speaking: Communicate and interact spontaneously and effectively in frequently encountered situations describe experiences, give reasons and explanations, make plans, give opinions, and relate the plot of books and films, and describe reactions. Use a range of strategies to support and sustain effective communication, including asking questions to clarify meaning and elicit information;

Writing: Write for different purposes and audiences on matters of personal interest expressing opinions, relating information, giving descriptions and explanations, using a range of written forms, including letters, emails, reports, articles and essays.

Q2: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposed aims and objectives for GCSE Welsh Second Language?

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree
- I don't know

Comments (we would encourage you to make a comment, particularly if you disagree with the proposal)



GCSE Welsh Second Language

Subject content

We propose that the content required in GCSE Welsh Second Language specifications must reflect the aims and objectives for the qualification in a way that promotes an integrated approach to the development of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. To that end we propose that the design of content for the new GCSE Welsh Second Language should be subject to the following requirements:

Subject content must be:

- relevant and meaningful to learners across a range of contexts, appropriate to their age and interests;
- and reflect Welsh culture and communities.

Subject content must require students to:

- understand and use language for a variety of purposes and with a variety of different audiences, including for personal, education and employment related use;
- adapt their language, including informal and formal address and register, to suit different audiences and a range of situations, including domestic, social, education and workplace situations;
- understand different types of spoken language, including recorded input from one or more speakers in public and social settings and recorded material from authentic sources and the media, covering a range of conversations, presentations, news reports and television programmes;
- understand, interpret and critically analyse different types of written language, including relevant personal communication, public information, factual and literary texts, appropriate to the level of the qualification, from a range of letters, articles, blogs, emails, web pages, online forums, reports, marketing materials, reference and literary texts for the purposes of explanation, instruction, narration, description, persuasion and information;
- use appropriate grammar, syntax and idiom.

Q3: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposed subject content for GCSE Welsh Second Language?

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree
- I don't know

Comments (we would encourage you to make a comment, particularly if you disagree with the proposal)



GCSE Welsh Second Language

Translingual skills

Translingual skills refer to a learner's ability to operate in two languages, where information is received in one language and is used or communicated further in another.

We propose that the new GCSE Welsh Second Language qualification should encourage learners to develop translingual skills. Specifically we propose that the assessment of reading and writing skills should include at least one translingual task in which students must write a response in Welsh to a writing task set in English.

Q4: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal that translingual skills should be included within the reformed GCSE Welsh Second Language?

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree
- I don't know

Comments (we would encourage you to make a comment, particularly if you disagree with the proposal)



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Assessment objectives

The current assessment objectives for GCSE Welsh Second Language [6] are:

Assessment Objectives		Current weighting towards final mark
A01	Oracy – use language in various and realistic situations; deal with a range of constructions for oral communication and respond to various stimuli and situations as individuals and members of a group, using an appropriate register and with attention to linguistic standards and fluency;	40%
A02	Reading - read and understand a variety of appropriate materials; select relevant material for specific purposes and convey the meaning of texts to others; respond to reading materials, express an opinion on their content supported by reference to the text	30%
A03	Writing - write using a variety of formats and for different purposes; candidates should demonstrate their ability to make effective use of a range of vocabulary, sentence structures and phrases and to choose an appropriate style; they should demonstrate an increasing command of paragraph, syntax, spelling and punctuation.	30%

[6]http://www.cbac.co.uk/uploads/publications/7942.pdf?language_id=2

The assessment objectives for the new AS and A level in Welsh Second Language are:

Assessment Objectives		Weighting
AO1	Use of spoken language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak the language correctly and confidently, while demonstrating a range of linguistic resources; adopt a context appropriate linguistic register. • Listen attentively; respond sensibly / intelligently by raising questions and develop relevant viewpoints and ideas in a balanced manner. • Interact, summarise and come to balanced conclusions. 	25%
AO2	Responding to texts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate knowledge of specific texts and their background, by means of a critical analysis which discusses and evaluates other interpretations. • Appreciate and respond to different literary genres. • Respond coherently to literary, visual and factual subjects, orally and in writing, by selecting and interpreting relevant material. • Refer specifically to the original text and provide justification for the reference. • Translanguaging by understanding and interpreting the text. Additionally, each A Level candidate will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate, compare and evaluate information presented in various media, cross reference other materials, summarise and come to balanced conclusions. 	25%
AO3	Using written language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write correctly, clearly and proficiently, demonstrating a range of linguistic resources. • Use knowledge of grammar effectively within various contexts. • Demonstrate awareness of various linguistic registers and make effective use of Welsh in different situations and for different purposes. 45%	50%

We propose that the assessment objectives for GCSE Welsh Second Language should be:

Assessment Objectives		Weighting towards final mark
AO1	Listening – understanding and responding to different types of spoken language in familiar contexts	25%
AO2	Reading – understanding and responding to a variety of written language about contemporary matters, expressing particular attitudes or opinions and descriptions of events, feelings and preferences	25%
AO3	Speaking – communicate and interact effectively in a range of contexts, including formal and informal settings	25%
AO4	Writing - communicate in writing about matters of personal interest expressing opinions and relating descriptions and explanations for different purposes and audiences	25%

The balance of examination and non examination assessment

The Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19 year olds in Wales recommended that new GCSEs should “allow the use of controlled assessment only where there is a clear case for doing so due to the nature of the learning which is to be assess”.

Non examination assessment is important to language based qualifications to ensure that the assessment rewards and encourages learners to communicate confidently in day to day situations. The assessments should therefore be designed to reward candidates for applying appropriate strategies and techniques for comprehending and conveying meaning in unscripted/spontaneous situations.

The proportion of non examination assessment for the current GCSE Welsh Second Language is 40%. We propose that the non examination assessment weighting for the reformed GCSE Welsh Second Language should be 50%, reflecting the combined weighting of the assessment objectives for speaking and listening.

We further propose that at least 15% of the marks available for listening must be allocated to an externally set listening assessment.

Q5a: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal that non examination assessment will contribute to 50% of the total reformed GCSE Welsh Second Language assessment weighting?

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree
- I don't know

Comments (we would encourage you to make a comment, particularly if you disagree with the proposal)

Q5b: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal that at least 15% of marks for the new GCSE Welsh Second Language assessment should be allocated to an externally set listening examination?

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree
- I don't know

Comments (we would encourage you to make a comment, particularly if you disagree with the proposal)



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Tiering

In some GCSEs, some or all of the qualification is assessed through tiered examination papers. In tiered assessments different grades are available at each tier; in most GCSEs the grades available are A* to D are the higher tier and grades C to G in the foundation tier.

The Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19 year olds in Wales recommended that “tiering should only be allowed where there is a clear case for doing so due to the nature of the subject”.

GCSEs in some subjects are tiered because for some subjects the level of difficulty of the assessment is determined more by how candidates respond to questions (essay style questions for example) than by the question itself, whereas in other subjects the level of difficulty is determined more by the nature of the questions asked than on the answer given (such as where there is only one correct answer). Subjects that rely more on the difficulty of the questions to differentiate between candidates tend to have tiered assessment. Tiered assessment avoids the challenges involved in trying to set a single paper to assess the whole cohort. If these subjects were not tiered, then the exam papers would need to be bigger to include enough questions at each level of difficulty, which would increase the amount of assessment required. There is also a risk that the assessment would be less reliable, because research shows that more able candidates often lose marks on the less challenging questions and less able candidates are demotivated by the more challenging ones.

Currently, GCSE Welsh Second Language is tiered. We propose that the assessment of the new GCSE Welsh Second Language should continue to be tiered. This would ensure that assessment materials and tasks, such as texts for reading and listening and topics, purposes and audiences for speaking and writing, can be provided at the appropriate level of demand to evidence the full range of grades available.

As is the case for the new GCSE Welsh Literature and GCSE Modern Foreign Language qualifications, we propose that mixed tier entry should be permitted. This is to ensure that those learners with differing strengths across the four skill areas can be entered for the most appropriate tier of assessment.

Q6a: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal that the reformed GCSE Welsh Second Language should be tiered?

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree
- I don't know

Comments (we would encourage you to make a comment, particularly if you disagree with the proposal)

Q6b: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal that mixed tier entry should be permitted in the new GCSE Welsh Second Language?

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree
- I don't know

Comments (we would encourage you to make a comment, particularly if you disagree with the proposal)



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Assessment structure

Recommendation 24 of the Review of Qualifications states that January as well as June assessment opportunities will be allowed with a limit of one resit per unit and the higher mark counting.

The recommendation therefore allows for a fully unitised approach, a fully linear approach, or a hybrid approach where the availability of some or all of the units is limited to the summer series.

We propose that assessment of the new GCSE Welsh Second Language should be linear because the development of language skills across the different modes is inter-related, i.e. speaking, listening, reading and writing, will develop and improve all skills. Integrated skills development followed by summative assessment at the end of the course will best capture achievement across all modes of communication.

Q7: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposal that the assessment of reformed GCSE Welsh Second Language should be linear?

- I strongly agree
- I agree
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree
- I strongly disagree
- I don't know

Comments (we would encourage you to make a comment, particularly if you disagree with the proposal)



GCSE Welsh Second Language

Continuing professional development/resources

Q8: What support and resources do you feel centres and teachers may require to achieve maximum readiness to deliver the revised specification?

Please provide comments



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Equality impact

The Equality Act 2010 states that public bodies must have 'due regard', when making decisions, to ensure there is no discrimination, harassment or victimisation of individuals or groups, to ensure equality and to foster good relations in relation to protected characteristics (age, sex, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity and sexual reassignment).

Q9: With this in mind, please highlight below if you feel any of this proposal has the potential to have a positive or negative impact on individuals with protected characteristics and whether any of the proposal would cause accessibility issues for learners in Wales.



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Personal details

Participants under the age of 16 are requested NOT to fill in this section.

If you supply contact details, we may contact you for clarification of your answers. Qualifications Wales (QW) will not share these details, or details of your answers with any third party.

Personal details

Name

Company

Email Address

Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of your organisation?

- Individual
- Organisation

Please select the type of organisation or choose 'not applicable' if responding as an individual

- School
- College
- University
- Qualification Awarding Body
- Government (Local, National, UK or EU)
- Non-Applicable
- Other (please specify)

Are you a: (please select as appropriate)

- Teacher
- College Lecturer
- University Lecturer
- Student
- Parent
- Other (please specify)