

By email



8 October 2020

Dear Head of Centre

Update: Awarding 2021, vocational qualifications, November series, Summer 2020 and communications

I hope this letter finds you well. We are aware of the challenging circumstances that schools and colleges continue to face as the coronavirus pandemic affects the delivery of teaching and learning across Wales. We all find ourselves having to navigate uncertain times where there is a need to adapt quickly and be flexible, and even though we face different problems, we share the common goal of protecting the interest of learners.

We know that there are concerns about the viability of conducting exam assessments in 2021 with normal teaching and learning being interrupted and concerns about holding timetabled exams when none of us are sure about what the position will be next summer. We recognise that there is a need for greater certainty about arrangements and please be assured that we remain committed to ensuring that the assessment requirements in 2021 are as fair as possible. This letter outlines some of the work that is underway to provide the clarity that you are seeking.

2021 Stakeholder group

We have established an external stakeholder group including representatives from ASCL (representing the views of school leaders), WLGA, Regional Consortia, UCAS, ADEW, Universities Wales (representing higher education), the Children's Commissioner for Wales, ColegauCymru (representing FE), the National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW), the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, and the

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Federation of Small Businesses (representing employers). This group has met twice over the past two weeks to consider options for next year.

Independent review and Advice to the Minister for Education

You will be aware that the Minister for Education has commissioned an independent review into the award of qualifications in 2020 and that this includes recommendations for 2021. It is expected that the independent review will provide an interim report intended to inform arrangements for 2021 at the end of October.

The Minister has also written to us requesting advice on options for 2021. Our Board will consider the views of the 2021 Stakeholder group when giving this advice. We expect to provide, and publish, advice to the Minister shortly.

Ministerial decision about awarding in 2021

The Minister has written to us requesting advice on options for 2021. We will provide, and publish, advice to the Minister shortly. Our advice, the recommendations from the independent review, and views from stakeholders will help the Minister to decide on the general approach to the assessment arrangements for 2021 at the end of this month. Following the Minister's decision, we will work closely with schools and colleges, teachers, awarding bodies and others to make sure the agreed approach is put into practice as quickly and smoothly as possible.

Vocational qualifications

We continue to work alongside our fellow regulators (Ofqual in England and CCEA Regulation in Northern Ireland) on the assessment arrangements for vocational qualifications this year. We will shortly publish our Extended Extraordinary Regulatory Framework for Vocational Qualifications (Conditions, Requirements and Guidance). The framework sets out the principles awarding bodies must follow when considering what adaptations to make to qualifications to mitigate the impact of disruption to teaching, learning and assessment. Awarding bodies have already communicated the planned approaches to some qualifications to centres with the detail for all other qualifications to be shared with centres no later than 23 October.

November series

The November exam series in Wales for WJEC GCSEs in English Language, Welsh Language, Mathematics and Mathematics Numeracy will continue as planned. We expect this to be used as a resit series given the likely readiness of learners following the significant levels of disruption for the current Year 11. Examinations in these subjects are timetabled to take place between 2 and 11 November 2020.

Summer 2020

Following our appearance before the CYPE committee on 18 August 2020, and to inform the independent review, we are issuing two further official statistic publications this month. The first publication is due to be published on the 12 October and will focus on variation in results at a centre, local authority and regional basis. The second publication, planned for 28 October, is a more detailed equalities impact assessment, which will provide more information of results at a learner level and across subjects.

Communications

We know that there is a need to keep you informed of developments and importantly to let you know when more information will be available, so we are committed to communicating with you more regularly and engaging with stakeholders to help us prepare for 2021. We continue to work with Welsh Government and WJEC to align our communications, mindful of our independent roles and responsibilities.

A good way to keep in touch with developments directly is to follow us on Twitter and Facebook. We publish regular updates on our [website](#), and in our stakeholder newsletter, to which you can subscribe [here](#).

To those of you who are waiting for news on summer 2021, thank you for your patience in these difficult times. I will be in touch monthly to keep you informed of developments over the next few months.

Yours sincerely



Philip Blaker
Chief Executive