



ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT

1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023



Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Our Role.....	3
3. Our Organisation	4
3. Our Board Profile.....	8
4. Our Strategic Equality Plan (Objectives 2022-2024)	9
5. Review of progress against our objectives for the period April 2022 to March 2023 ...	10
Strategic Objective 1: Our Regulatory Work	11
Strategic Objective 2: Our Review and Reform Work.....	13
Strategic Objective 3: Engaging with and Informing the Qualifications System	16
Strategic Objective 4: Workforce and Board Diversity.....	18
Strategic Objective 5: Inclusive Culture	20
6. Looking to the Future	22
Contact us	22
7. Appendices	23
Appendix 1 – Employee Equality Data – as at 31 March 2023	23
Appendix 2 – Board Equality Data as at 31 March 2023.....	26

1. Introduction

This report summarises how Qualifications Wales has fulfilled its equality duties both as an employer and as a regulator. The report covers the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and provides a detailed update on our progress against each of our five 2022-24 Equalities Objectives.

2. Our Role

Qualifications Wales regulates awarding bodies offering qualifications in Wales. We are an independent body focused on publicly funded qualifications, including GCSEs, A levels and vocational qualifications. We work with others to review and reform qualifications.

Degrees are not part of our work, but we work with universities and colleges to make sure they understand qualifications so that learners can progress into higher education. We want qualifications to be the best they can be for learners, teachers, and employers, helping people adapt in a rapidly changing world. We work with awarding bodies to extend the availability of qualifications through the Welsh language.

Under the *Qualifications Wales Act (2015)* we have two principal aims:

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

We place the learner at the heart of our activities.

We also have a responsibility to look across the qualification system to check that it is working in the interest of learners, and to act or advise others to do the same, if necessary. Part of our work is to ensure that qualifications within the system are valued. We have powers and duties to regulate awarding bodies and we can make positive interventions to secure improvements to qualifications or the qualification system.

We protect the value of qualifications, make sure that they are awarded fairly, and review and develop them as the needs of the learner change. As trusted experts in qualifications, we provide Welsh Government with advice on relevant issues. We also consider the needs of employers, the higher education (HE) sector and professions.

Qualifications Wales is required by law, under the Equalities Act 2010 and Wales 2011 Regulations, to report its activity against its equality objectives on an annual basis. This report covers the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and is the fifth Annual Equality Report from Qualifications Wales.

We want to involve people in our work, so we engage, communicate, and collaborate to strengthen our ability to promote public confidence in the Welsh qualification system, and to meet the needs of learners in Wales. Our approach to our work and role is summarised on our [website](#) and how we regulate is set out in our

[Regulatory Framework and Approach](#), which is underpinned by the principles of better regulation and by our [values](#).

Our purpose is met when regulated qualifications taken in Wales are trusted and valued by learners, employers, and education providers, and are recognised throughout the UK and internationally – this is our overarching vision, which is set out in our regulatory outcomes:

- Regulated qualifications taken by learners in Wales are valid, reliable, and awarded to an appropriate standard
- Regulated qualifications in Wales are inclusive and promote equality of opportunity for learners
- Regulated qualifications and the qualification system are responsive to changing needs and circumstances, particularly regarding the long-term benefit of Wales and its learners
- Regulation is proportionate, transparent, consistent, and targeted, to support a qualification system that is sustainable in the long term
- Information reasonably required to deliver consistent and quality-assured regulated qualifications is available and accessible
- Appropriate governance is in place to ensure accountability and regulatory compliance

3. Our Organisation

Qualifications Wales is an organisation with just over 100 employees. We recruit based on merit and ensure that our recruitment panels have gender balance. Recruitment is generally via external schemes, and we advertise on our website as well as other sites that might be suitable or appropriate for the role. In the last twelve months we have run 17 recruitment schemes which were all externally advertised opportunities, some for multiple roles.

We promote flexibility and will consider alternative working patterns to fulfil a role's requirements, so whilst a position may be the equivalent of full-time hours (37 per week) we will consider applications for part-time working and job share.

Since the organisation was established, we have adopted an approach that guarantees an interview for a candidate who meets the minimum criteria at shortlisting. In 2022 we held Disability Confident employer status. During the year we have also trialled a different approach to interviews by sharing the themes of the questions we wanted to ask with candidates during one recruitment, with a view to rolling this out longer term. This is with a view to improving experiences for neuro-divergent applicants.

Hybrid Working

In June 2022 we launched our Hybrid and Homeworking policy and in doing so outlined our commitment to working in a different way post pandemic to realise the benefits of working from our office base and working from home. The reasons for working together in our office are underpinned by the 4C's:

- **Collaboration/Cydweithio** – a space where our staff/ teams can come together and work collaboratively, internally and with external stakeholders.

- **Creativity/Creadigrwydd** – a space to come together and generate new ideas and solve problems, being creative in our thoughts and what we do.
- **Caring/Caredigrwydd** – a space where staff/ managers can offer support to their teams and to colleagues. Space for staff to build working relationships and friendships.
- **Community/Cymuned** – a space where we can come meet to understand who QW is as an organisation and how our roles all fit together, to maintain a feeling of togetherness and generate the 'buzz' in the office

We have continued to provide equipment and allowed flexibility in our policy to enable our employees to manage their home and work priorities. We have continued to receive positive employee feedback about our approach to flexible working. In our annual survey in October 2022, 89% agreed that they were able to achieve a good balance between their work and private life.

We have not offered work placements during this year as it has taken time for hybrid working to settle in, but this will continue to be an objective which we will explore in the next year.

Inclusion Review

In previous years we have worked with a number of equalities focussed organisations, e.g., Chwarae Teg, Stonewall and Remploy. Some of these organisations charge for their badging or assessment processes and this year we decided to re-allocate the budget for a review of our organisation's approach to equality and inclusion. This contract included the delivery of training to all our employees and Board Members. Active Learning Team were appointed and began the review in Autumn 2022. The review considered our policies and procedures as well as sessions with employees in groups and one-to-one sessions to explore individual employee perspectives.

There were many positive aspects in the review. 75% of those that took part in the one-to-one sessions agreed that Qualifications Wales has an inclusive culture, with a further 10% identifying a balance of both positive and negative comments. The report identified positive behaviours and inclusive attributes and identified areas for improvement which tended to mirror aspects identified in our people survey, one area identified for improvement was to broaden understanding of neurodiversity and neurodiverse employee's needs. Recommendations from the report included training, awareness raising, teambuilding and internal facing policy work.

The equality and inclusion training for all employees started in March 2023 and will run throughout 2023. As well as covering the statutory duties of the Equality Act it focuses on inclusive behaviours, and is highly participative with pre and post work, including role play videos. Initial feedback has been very positive.

Gender Pay

We have transparent pay scales, and employees who perform satisfactorily receive annual increments until they reach the target rate for their pay band. We currently follow the Welsh Government's pay scales. When Welsh Government agrees to a pay increase, we review this for affordability and consult with our recognised Trade Union. We review our gender pay information annually and publish the detail in our [Annual Accounts](#).

At the end of March 2023, our gender pay gap was 14.8% (this compared to 16.3% in 2022).

The median salary at 31 March 2023 (which excludes the CEO's salary) is £45,970 compared to £44,200 in 2022. The ratio of CEO salary (at the mid-point of the pay band) to the median is 2:99 in 2023 compared to 3:00 in 2022.

We have a reduction in our pay gaps at pay band 1 and band 3. In both of these bands, we have more women than men, but a higher proportion of these women are now at the maximum of the pay band. This shift has created an overall decrease in our pay gap. We monitor our gender pay information alongside our recruitment data and have an objective to improve our workforce diversity with a view to positively impact all protected characteristics.

Our equalities objective relating to gender focuses on recruitment and, in particular, ensuring that the roles we advertise are attractive to all genders and to people with other protected characteristics, to encourage a diverse workforce.

We monitor recruitment patterns and pay data to identify any concerns and consider underlying reasons for what we report to ensure our processes are not sustaining inequalities, and we take appropriate action.

The information we hold does not indicate any unequal treatment on the grounds of gender although we typically receive more applications from women than men. The actions to support our objectives relating to workforce diversity and inclusive culture, our ongoing family-friendly HR policies, and our actions on recruitment (to ensure roles are attractive to all genders or people with protected characteristics) positively impact all protected characteristics, including gender. We therefore do not have a separate objective to address pay difference.

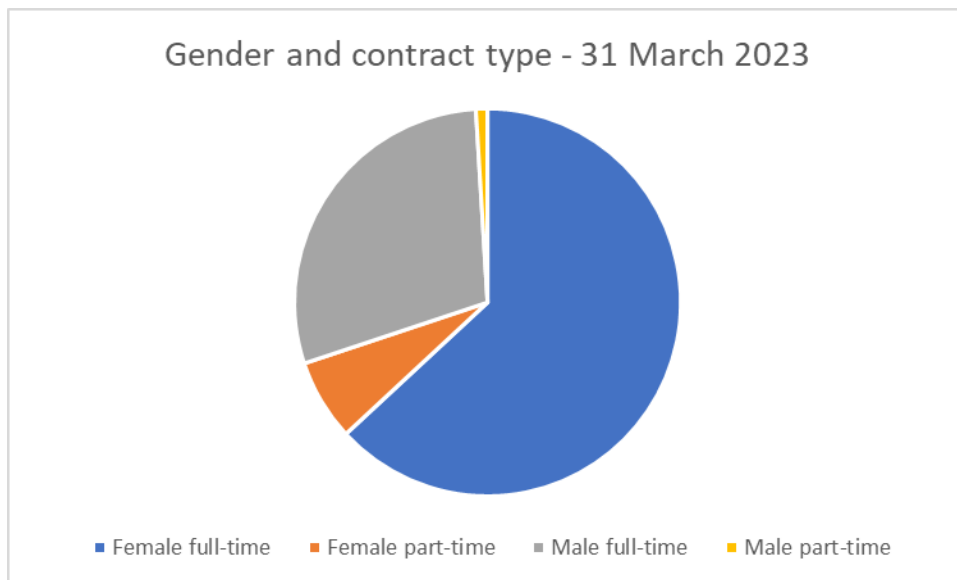
We publish our public sector equality data in an open format on our website.

Applicants are asked to complete an equality monitoring form when they apply for employment with us. This data is recorded by HR and anonymised reports are then produced. If an applicant is successful, they are asked to respond and record their responses to an equalities questionnaire which sits within our HR information system. We seek to capture data about race, faith or belief, sexual orientation, age, marriage and civil partnership, disability, and gender identity. We also hold information about pregnancy and maternity. For the year 2023-2024 recruitment will be managed through our online bilingual application process which is embedded within our HR information system. Applications will be anonymised for shortlisting and the monitoring data will be securely stored and can be reported on anonymously.

Due to our size, we have a number of instances where proportions of staff with a protected characteristic are too small to report. We do not report where there are five or fewer responses to ensure we protect confidentiality and anonymity. We also have some employees who have chosen not to respond to some or all the questions.

The following tables outline our employee composition as at 31 March 2023 by pay band, gender, age, and contract type (full-time hours are 37 hours per week, part-time contracts have agreed hours under 37).

Pay Band	Female full-time	Female part-time	Male full-time	Male part-time	Total
1	4	1	2	0	7
2	7	0	1	0	8
3	15	1	6	0	22
4	23	4	10	1	38
5	6	0	7	0	13
6	2	0	4	0	6
7	2	0	0	0	2
8	0	0	1	0	
Total	59	6	31	1	97



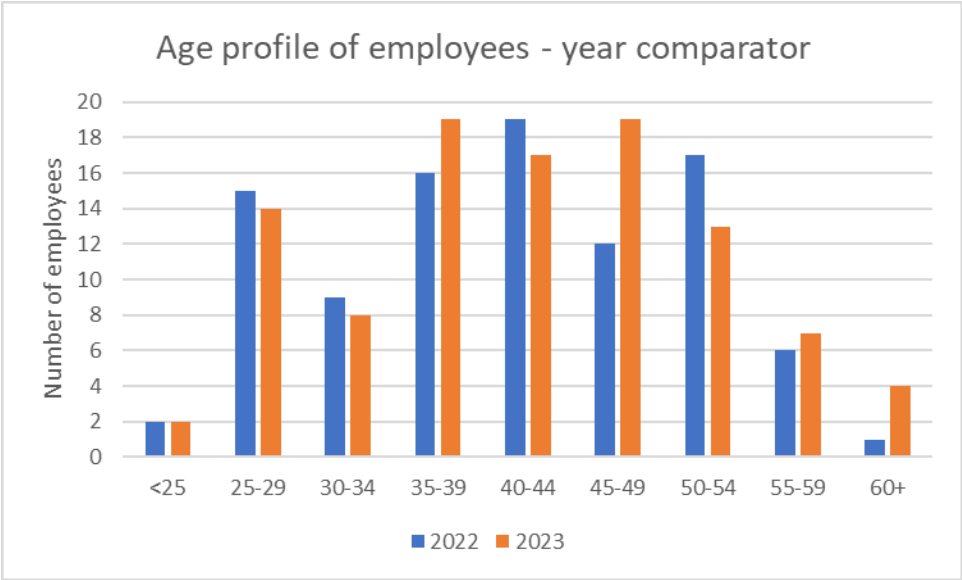
Reflections on the profile of our staff

We have experienced turnover in the last 12 months, and this was broadly comparable to our rate in the previous year, (14.7% last year compared to 14.3% in this financial year). Our organisation has grown from 97 in March 2022 to 103 in March 2023.

Our workforce continues to have a greater proportion of female employees, two thirds female and one third male. Of the 21 new employees in the last financial year, 17 were women and three were men. We employ seven employees on part-time contracts, one male and six women. We are similar to the wider education workforce in Wales and the UK in that we employ a higher proportion of females and have low ethnic diversity. This year we have seen a small increase in the number of employees from a minority ethnic background, but this is not immediately obvious from our data due to suppressing data where numbers are too low to report. We are committed to working with relevant bodies to help increase interest in working for our organisation, which we hope will lead to applications from a broader range of candidates.

We have seen some changes in our age profile, some of which is attributed to employees moving between categories as well as in response to turnover and recruitment. The most significant change is growth in the 45-49 group and a small increase in the 60+ group with other areas remaining relatively static.

We have a small number of employees declaring a disability, which is an increase on a zero declaration last year.



The full data tables are provided in *Appendix 1*.

Our Wellbeing and Equality Group promotes positive messages in our organisation. The group is made up of volunteers from across the four directorates and works in partnership with HR to communicate in a way that helps to build our inclusive environment.

In our 2022 annual survey, 92% of employees agreed that they were treated with respect by the people they work with and 84% believed that we respect individual differences (cultures, working styles, background, and ideas). In this survey we asked some new questions relating to inclusion and fair treatment to support our review work. The survey showed that 89% of our employees felt we were committed to creating an inclusive workplace and 81% felt we were committed to creating a diverse workplace. We will be able to review these figures in the future to assess the impact of the inclusion review and associated training.

3. Our Board Profile

Qualifications Wales has a skills-based Board which is made up of the Chair, Chief Executive and between eight and ten members. Apart from the CEO, all members are appointed by the Minister for Education through the Public Appointments Process (Wales).

The role of the Board is to:

- provide effective leadership for Qualifications Wales, defining and developing strategic direction, and setting objectives
- provide effective leadership for the operation of the organisation; holding the Chief

Executive to account for ensuring that Qualifications Wales' activities are conducted efficiently and effectively

- monitor performance to ensure that Qualifications Wales fully meets its aims, objectives, and performance targets
- promote high standards of public finance, upholding the principles of regularity, propriety, and value for money

As at 31 March 2023, our Board had 11 members (including the Chief Executive). Their equality profile is shown in *Appendix 2*. The Chief Executive data is included in both the staff profile and the Board profile below.

In September 2022, the Chair appointed a special advisor to the Board with the aim of gaining valuable insight from a school leader with an ethnic minority background. In May 2023, their appointment was extended to March 2024.

Following the last recruitment process for Board members the Chair asked QW officials to consider what actions could be taken to encourage a more diverse range of successful applications in the future. We identified a project called 'Pathway to Board Membership' run by a group of Housing Trusts aimed at developing individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds who had the potential to become Board members in the future.

The project aims to identify potential future Board members and offers training, mentoring and the opportunity to observe Board meetings. In January 2023 the Board agreed to continue supporting this project, and several of our Board members are acting as mentors to the new cohort of participants. The project will continue throughout 2023-24. More information about the Qualifications Wales Board can be seen here on our [website](#).

4. Our Strategic Equality Plan (Objectives 2022-2024)

To bring us in line with Welsh Government and other organisations we reviewed and refreshed our Strategic Equality Plan at the end of 2021-22 and our revised objectives were approved by the Board at its meeting in March 2022.

We will further consult and engage during 2023/24, in line with other public bodies in Wales, to develop our objectives for the period 2024-2028.

The purpose of our equality objectives is to strengthen our performance of the public sector equality duty and ensure we make progress in advancing equality and inclusion for protected groups in Wales.

All our objectives are aimed at promoting equality and inclusiveness for people with any of the protected characteristics. We identified objectives which will help us better meet our duties and grouped these under five main headings:

1. Our regulatory work
2. Our review and reform work
3. Engaging with and informing the qualifications system
4. Workforce and Board diversity
5. Inclusive culture

The information in the remainder of this report provides an update on our work for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

5. Review of progress against our objectives for the period April 2022 to March 2023

In the following pages, we provide an update of our progress against our two-year plan (2022-24) for strategic equality objectives.

Strategic Objective 1: Our Regulatory Work

'Regulated qualifications are delivered and awarded in a way that is fair for all types of learners'

How we will achieve the objective:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When reviewing qualifications for approval, we will focus on equality issues as part of our approval process and ensure staff and expert panels refer to the Fair Access by Design guidance when reviewing qualifications.• We will require all awarding bodies to report to us, via their annual Statement of Compliance, that they have appropriate procedures in place to ensure compliance with our Standard Conditions of Recognition (which reinforce the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010). This includes having appropriate procedures for applying reasonable adjustments in qualifications for learners with disabilities. We will take appropriate and proportionate action where non-compliance is identified within an awarding body, and to address any issues or concerns raised with us.• We will complete both regulatory and equality impact assessments to support decision making informed by research and feedback from stakeholders. In assessing impact, we will also consider to what extent any proposals meet the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty or specific duties.• We will be active members, along with fellow regulators, of the Equalities Forum and the Access Consultation Forum to consider equality issues.• We will give due regard to the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) during our work to oversee the summer and winter examination series.• Where we identify any systematic negative equality issues outside our own remit, we will report these to the appropriate bodies so that they may be alleviated or addressed.• We will work with Welsh Government as they undertake the necessary legal work required to make QW the appropriate regulator to specify reasonable adjustments to qualifications.
Review of our work this year:
<p>During 2022/23 we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approved the new Advanced Skills Welsh Baccalaureate qualification and worked with the WJEC to review the materials in relation to equality of access, fairness, and minimising bias. When reviewing the Advanced Skills Welsh Baccalaureate qualification for approval we focused on equality issues as part of our approval process and sought to ensure staff and expert panels referred to the Fair Access by

Design guidance when reviewing the proposed qualification. The content of the Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales will foster good relations by supporting learners to become effective, responsible, and active citizens ready to take their place in a sustainable global society and in the workplace. The new qualification will be available for first teaching from September 2023, with first certification in Summer 2025, and the specification and other key qualification documents are available on the [WJEC website](#).

- Continued to be active members of the Equality Forum and Access Consultation Forum which considers legislative matters for qualifications with regard to equality matters. We also regularly attended the Equalities VQ forum.
- Continued to work closely with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and sought feedback on the summer 2022 awarding arrangements.
- Continued to produce official statistics on Equalities Impact Analysis: GCSE, AS, and A level to include analysis of attainment gaps (as undertaken following summer 2020 and summer 2021). In October 2022 we published an equalities analysis of the summer 2022 exam series, [Summer 2022 Equalities Impact Analysis: GCSE, AS, and A level](#), which included a new analysis of A-level results across both schools and FE by the Welsh index of multiple deprivation, a proxy for socio-economic status.
- Continued to work with Welsh Government on becoming the appropriate regulator to specify reasonable adjustments to qualifications and in March 2023 wrote to Welsh Government outlining proposals to progress this work. Our [Standard Conditions of Recognition](#) require awarding bodies to make reasonable adjustments and we monitor awarding bodies' compliance with these Conditions. Given our regulatory oversight of awarding bodies and the obvious interaction between the regulations and our rulebook, having one organisation responsible for all matters relating to the reasonable adjustments of general qualifications would be beneficial to the Welsh qualification system.
- Undertook Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA) to support regulatory consultations including [reforming the 14-16 qualifications](#) and the [Full 14-16 Qualifications Offer](#), and published summaries of the IIAs on our website.

Strategic Objective 2: Our Review and Reform Work

'Regulated qualifications are designed and assessed in a way that is fair for all types of learners.'

How we will achieve the objective:

- When reviewing existing qualification provision and considering changes we will include a specific focus on whether qualifications are accessible to and meet the reasonable needs of all types of learners.
- We will involve a broad and diverse range of stakeholders in the work to develop new qualifications to ensure they are designed to be engaging, relevant and accessible. We will use and grow our mechanisms for discussing and shaping our work in collaboration with stakeholders, including our Learner Advisory Panel, Welsh language stakeholder group, and our HE engagement group.
- We will seek and respond to feedback on proposals for the design of new qualifications, including from representatives of learners with protected characteristics and those that are hard to reach. This includes seeking feedback on the potential impacts of proposals as well as the proposals themselves.
- When developing requirements for new qualifications we will actively look for opportunities to ensure the content is reflective of and sensitive to the diverse range of learners taking them.
- We will also explore how the high-level content and assessment requirements for new qualifications can foster good relations by helping all learners to gain further knowledge by and engaging with equalities and human rights themes and issues, for example, by recognising the contributions and perspectives of minority communities, being curious about and questioning accepted knowledge, and exploring a diversity of views on the past and the present.
- We will continue to grow our links with experts specialising in equality issues in assessment, and with practitioners specialising in diversity and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) so that we can draw from expert views and experience when needed. This will inform our review and reform activities and help us to explore innovative ways of improving the accessibility of qualifications and assessments, and participation in our work.
- Where we procure services from an awarding body to develop new qualifications, we will require them to have due regard to equality in their stakeholder engagement during their qualification development.

Review of our work this year:

During 2022/23, we:

- Set out to explore what makes a coherent and inclusive qualification offer for 14–16-year-olds in Wales. This involved an extensive programme of research and engagement with a wide range of contributors. Having developed proposals in light of the findings of our research and engagement activity, we launched a public [consultation](#) on our Full Offer proposals in March 2023 to gather feedback which would inform our decision making. A [youth friendly](#) and [easy read](#) version of the consultation was made available to enhance accessibility. Ahead of the consultation, we undertook a [preliminary review](#) which set out to identify the features of a coherent and inclusive qualification offer for 14–16-year-olds in Wales. This review involved undertaking surveys, desk-based activities, direct engagement, and interviews with a wide range of stakeholders. We involved learners, parents and those working in mainstream schools, special schools, colleges, universities, Pupil Referral Units, Local Education Authorities, regional consortia, employers and employer bodies, Careers Wales, and the Stakeholder Reference Group. We contracted Youth Cymru to support our engagement activity, with a particular focus on accessing underrepresented learners and engaged with our Learner Advisory Group, evaluating our assumptions and our ideas as they took shape.
- Continually reflected upon any impacts that our Full Offer proposals could potentially have on stakeholders, and published a summary of our [Integrated Impact Assessment](#) which included consideration of the equality, Welsh Language and regulatory impacts of the proposals.
- Carried out further targeted engagement and a desk-based review of the Full Offer proposals with a key focus on accessibility and inclusion. We sought to better understand how learners with different needs could be better provided for during the assessment process and identified flexibility as a key consideration. As a result, we developed bite sized units that can be taken at a wide range of levels and combinations to suit an individual learner’s needs.
- Undertook a sector review of [Travel, Tourism, Hospitality and Catering](#) which included a focus on Welsh medium and whether the assessment of these qualifications were accessible to learners, making use of relevant experts to support our review work. The review found that learning providers felt that there were limited options for learners to undertake qualifications in this sector through the medium of Welsh. In response we committed to continue prioritising, for our Welsh Language Support Grant, qualifications in full-time programmes of learning for learners aged 14-19 and apprenticeships.
- Undertook a rapid review of several qualifications in the [Health, Social Care and Childcare](#) suite. Feedback suggested that some learners were experiencing manageability issues and changes were made to the Level 2 Core and Level 3 Extended Diploma as a result of this feedback.
- Gathered feedback from a wide range of stakeholders on the co-constructed design proposals for new GCSEs and related qualifications to help make sure the proposed content and assessment was as accessible as possible and promoted opportunities for learners to engage meaningfully with equalities, diversity, and human rights. Our consultation on the proposals for new GCSEs

for Wales included specific questions on whether the proposals for each of the subjects we consulted on would meet the reasonable needs of learners and we considered factors such as accessibility, manageability, wellbeing, and progression onto post-16 pathways.

- produced a [youth friendly](#) version of the new GCSE consultation, which provided a general overview of the proposed changes, and prepared an Integrated Impact Assessment of how the proposals could affect learners, schools and others. The [Integrated Impact Assessment](#) outlined how we could work in partnership to mitigate any negative effects of the proposals. As well as considering the suitability of the qualifications for different audiences, we considered the different literacy skills of learners taking these qualifications, and determined the wording of numeracy questions should reflect this diversity as much as possible. As a result of our engagement and consultation work, the new suite of made-for-Wales GCSEs includes a greater mix of assessment methods, with many subjects having a reduced proportion of exam-based assessment, more unitized qualifications, and fewer qualifications.
- Worked with others to agree design proposals for a new suite of made-for-Wales GCSEs which included a more inclusive range of subjects, including British Sign Language and Engineering.
- Worked closely with a wide range of stakeholders to respond to demand for qualifications through the medium of Welsh and increased access to Welsh medium provision and assessment for Welsh speaking learners. We also started work to develop a new Welsh language qualification for learners in English-medium settings to support all learners in making the best progress they can along the Welsh language continuum. These new qualifications will have a positive impact for learners in English medium settings who want to further develop their Welsh language skills at the age of 14-16.
- Awarded £120k through competitive grant funding to support awarding bodies to make more qualifications available through the medium of Welsh and provided £410k of grant funding to the WJEC to contribute to the cost of preparing bilingual qualifications.
- Launched a new strategic partnership with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to work together so that learners and apprentices who choose Welsh-medium and bilingual provision have accessible bilingual qualifications available in all relevant subject areas.
- Strengthened our links to experts in equality and assessment and practitioners with responsibility for ALN and diversity. We continued to co-ordinate the [Research Advisory Group](#), a group of experts in education and assessment with members having expertise in ALN and diversity, and sought their views on our reform proposals. During our engagement activity, we proactively sought the views of the Research Advisory Group and those with expertise in ALN and diversity, including the South Wales Association of Special Schools Headteachers, North Wales Association of Special Schools Headteachers, staff in pupil referral units, special schools, and local education authorities.

Strategic Objective 3: Engaging with and Informing the Qualifications System

'We communicate, engage, consult and conduct research with diverse groups, benefiting from a wide range of views'

How we will we achieve the objective:

- We will continue to deliver our communications and engagement strategy. The strategy has consideration for equality and diversity built in – we will continually seek out new ways to engage and communicate with groups with protected characteristics through a range of channels, sense-check our communications to ensure they are easy to understand for each target audience and ensure a full range of visible diversity across our promotional content.
- We will have the appropriate mechanisms, channels, and relationships to engage specific groups where required for the purpose of research, engagement, consultation, and other relevant communications. This will ensure we make our decisions in the most informed and effective way and that we will listen and respond to, and communicate effectively with, all our diverse communities and our workforce.
- We will enhance our business-as usual data collections from Welsh Government to enable impact assessments to be completed, including equalities impact assessments.
- We will scrutinise our ethical review document for research to ensure inclusive research design and inclusive engagement is built into our processes.

Review of our work:

During 2022/23, we:

- Effectively delivered our communications and strategic engagement strategy, considering equality and diversity principles, to increase understanding and involvement with our stakeholders.
- Worked in partnerships across Wales with relevant equality and diversity organisations and groups (including our own learner advisory groups) to develop a strong track record of engaging on equality and diversity matters. We engaged with learners and centres across Wales, with a focus on those catering for a diverse range of learners including pupil referral units, learners with ALN, faith schools, Welsh medium schools, and inner-city schools.

- Regularly engaged with learners via our Learner Advisory Group meetings as well as engaging with parent organisations such as Parentkind.
- Encouraged engagement with consultations that took place during 2022/23. We invited representative groups to engagement sessions designed to raise awareness of our work and encourage responses from as diverse a range of stakeholders as possible. Examples of some of the representative groups we engaged with include Diverse Cymru, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Disability Wales, Race Council for Wales, Royal National Institute of Blind People and Stonewall Cymru.
- Worked with umbrella organisations to discuss how we could engage effectively with individuals and organisations on equality, diversity, and inclusion matters.
- Developed a style guide to ensure we communicate clearly in a way that is accessible to all audiences.
- Created youth friendly and easy read versions of consultations to encourage engagement and participation.
- Launched our new website. The accessibility of our website is guided by the Worldwide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines where possible and meets the W3C AA Conformance Level. In July 2023 we plan to commission the Digital Accessibility Centre to review our new website's accessibility and the report will be published in 2023/24.
- Had access to the data variables from Welsh Government education datasets that were needed to complete effective equalities impact analysis and routinely received learner characteristic data from Welsh Government.
- Completed a review of our research ethics checklist to ensure inclusive research design and engagement is built into our processes.
- Commissioned Beauford Research to conduct a qualitative study to explore key equality, equity, and inclusion (EEI) concepts, alternative and complementary language, and the ways they may be defined when applying them to a qualification system. The research will consider whether using different concepts imply the same or different objectives and actions and will explore how stakeholders think about EEI in relation to education and the qualifications system. The research aims to better understand how important stakeholders regard Qualifications Wales in relation to EEI. The results of the research are expected in 2023/24.

Strategic Objective 4: Workforce and Board Diversity

‘Our workforce and Board reflect the diversity of the population in Wales that we regulate for and work amongst’

How we will achieve the objective:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will offer short-term work placements advertised within the local community (a socio-deprived area) and periodically targeted at specific protected characteristics, to provide work experience and to demonstrate the career opportunities available in the public sector.• We will publish our equalities data in an open-source format on an annual basis on our website. We will continue to monitor and analyse our data to identify any concerns and take action as appropriate.• We will review our recruitment statistics, act on this data, and seek to engage with different communities to improve the diversity of our applications to in turn increase the diversity of our workforce.• We will work with the Public Appointments Unit of Welsh Government to promote our Board member vacancies and opportunities widely and positively to increase our Board diversity.• We will support the Pathway to Board Membership project being run by a group of Housing Trusts to encourage more Board membership from people of an ethnic minority background. We will provide mentors from our own Board and allow observation of meetings (where appropriate).
Review of our work:
<p>During 2022/23, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We published our 2021/22 equalities data in an open-source format on our website and continued to monitor and analyse our data to identify any concerns and act as appropriate. Due to our size some of the information could not be reported so some of the published figures have been redacted to comply with GDPR.• Sought feedback from those involved in the Pathways to Board Programme to understand its impact, and looked at longer-term data to explore whether the programme met its aims. Of the fifteen individuals who took part in the initiative, three successfully secured positions on local boards. We will be supporting a second cohort due to commence in April 2023. and have offered mentoring to three participants from the second cohort. Participants will be invited to attend board meetings as observers and provided with access to our board papers (where appropriate).

- Adjusted our recruitment processes and moved to an online bilingual recruitment platform. This means that we can remove personal /identifying information from applications that may lead to unconscious bias. We have also trialled sharing the areas of focus on which questions would be based ahead of interviews and this has been well received.
- Continued to monitor our equalities data to track whether our workforce is becoming more diverse and representative of our local area and Wales as a whole – with positive indications that our workforce is becoming more representative/diverse.

Strategic Objective 5: Inclusive Culture

'We continue to build a culture where people feel that the organisation values them as individuals, appreciates their differences and makes good use of the range of experiences and insight available'

How we will achieve the objective:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will provide equalities training to our Board members and employees in the next 18 months.• We will engage with external groups representing people with protected characteristics and learn from them, to continually challenge our thinking and approach. Where appropriate we will seek to achieve badges or accreditations or decide to renew those we already hold.• We will undertake or commission a review of our workplace and culture to explore how we can remove unintentional barriers and put in place an action plan including any relevant policies to drive forward change. This work will inform our training programme.• We will review our approach to Hybrid working and its impact on our culture, ensuring that our values and behaviours support an inclusive and fair workplace.• We will complete an accessibility review of our proposed changes to office layout to support hybrid working.• We will continue to review our gender pay gap and consider the underlying reasons for what we report to ensure our processes are not sustaining inequalities.• We will encourage staff with proficiency in the Welsh language, and those learning the language, to feel comfortable speaking Welsh to each other in the workplace.• We will continue to consult with our recognised trade union when reviewing our employee policies to ensure all views are considered.
Review of our work:
<p>During 2022/23, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completed the review of our approach to inclusion in the workplace and published the findings report to employees and the Board in March 2023. On 29 March a pilot training session on equalities and inclusive behaviours took place and was well received. The training will be rolled out to all employees and members of the Board during 2023/24.• Completed the office accessibility review.• Reviewed our employee survey outcomes and considered the extent that employees perceive our culture to be welcoming,

inclusive, and respecting different views and experiences. The 2022/23 annual staff survey took place as scheduled in October 2022 and directorates considered their specific feedback and identified actions to address any issue identified. One of the actions identified was to establish regular employee days, moving from one a year to three/four a year. In response three employee days have been scheduled for 2023/24 with the first session taking place on 24th March. The March session focused on wellbeing and recognizing individual differences and preferences. We also worked to build better connections with people across the organisation, helping newer colleagues to integrate.

- Reviewed our gender pay gap and considered the underlying reasons for what we reported to ensure our processes were not sustaining inequalities.
- Encouraged staff with proficiency in the Welsh language, and those learning the language, to feel comfortable speaking Welsh to each other in the workplace. We promote opportunities for learning Welsh internally and have encouraged learners to share their experiences. We re-ran an internal lite bite on our commitment to the Welsh language, and how and why it is important, and this included access to learning, and the use of the Welsh language in the day-to-day life of working at Qualifications Wales.

6. Looking to the Future

Our next equality report will report on our work for the period April 2023 to March 2024. This will cover the final year of our revised Equalities Objectives which cover the period from April 2022 to March 2024.

In 2022/23 we established an Equalities Champions Group which was tasked with helping us better understand and report on how we are delivering against our current strategic equalities objectives. Our Resources Committee also received regular reports updating them on the equalities work going on across the organisation. During 2023/24 the Champions Group will support the work to set our new equalities objectives for 2024-28 and the Resources Committee will continue to receive regular progress reports.

Contact us

If you have any queries or would like to discuss this report or any aspect of our equality work, please do not hesitate to contact the Corporate Governance team via corporategovernance@qualificationswales.org or 01633 373 222.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Employee Equality Data – as at 31 March 2023

Gender

	31 Dec 2018		31 Mar 2020		31 Mar 2021		31 Mar 2022		31 Mar 2023	
Female	46	58%	55	63%	64	67%	65	67%	72	70%
Male	33	42%	32	37%	31	33%	32	33%	31	30%
Total	79		87		95		97		103	

Age

	31 Dec 2018		31 Mar 2020		31 Mar 2021		31 Mar 2022		31-Mar 2023	
Under 25	5	6%	2	2%	2	2%	2	2%	2	2%
25-29	4	5%	7	8%	12	13%	15	15%	14	14%
30-34	14	18%	12	14%	12	13%	9	9%	8	8%
35-39	12	15%	18	21%	16	17%	16	17%	19	18%
40-44	20	25%	16	18%	19	20%	19	20%	17	17%
45-49	10	13%	14	16%	14	15%	12	12%	19	18%
50-54	8	10%	12	14%	13	14%	17	18%	13	13%
55-59	5	6%	5	6%	5	5%	6	6%	7	7%
60 and over	1	1%	1	1%	2	2%	1	1%	4	4%
Total	79		87		95		97		103	

Ethnic Origin

	31 Dec 2018		31 Mar 2020		31 Mar 2021		31 Mar 2022		31 Mar 2023	
Ethnic Minority	0	0%	*	1%	*	1%	*	4%	*	4%
White European	51	65%	56	64%	60	63%	72	74%	86	83%
White Other	*	5%	*	1%	*	3%	*	2%	*	1%
Prefer not to say / Not specified	24	30%	29	33%	31	33%	19	20%	12	12%
Total	79		87		95		97		103	

Nationality

	31 Dec 2018		31 Mar 2020		31 Mar 2021		31 Mar 2022		31 Mar 2023	
British	35	44%	36	41%	38	40%	48	50%	45	44%
Other	*	1%	*	2%	*	3%	*	2%	*	2%
Welsh	22	28%	23	26%	28	29%	31	32%	47	46%
Not specified (left blank)	21	27%	26	30%	26	27%	16	16%	9	8%
Total	79		87		95		97		103	

Religion/belief

	31 Dec 2018		31 Mar 2020		31 Mar 2021		31 Mar 2022		31 Mar 2023	
Religion/Belief	22	28%	22	25%	26	27%	38	39%	47	46%
No Religion/Belief	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	13	13%	25	24%
Prefer not to say / Not specified (selected)	57	72%	65	75%	69	73%	46	47%	31	31%
Total	79		87		95		97		103	

Marital Status

	31 Dec 2018		31 Mar 2020		31 Mar 2021		31 Mar 2022		31 Mar 2023	
Married or in a civil partnership	45	57%	49	56%	47	49%	52	54%	55	53%
Other Status	30	38%	34	39%	44	46%	43	44%	46	45%
Not specified (left blank)	*	5%	*	5%	*	4%	*	2%	*	2%
Total	79		87		95		97		103	

Sexual orientation

	31 Dec 2018		31 Mar 2020		31 Mar 2021		31 Mar 2022		31 Mar 2023	
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, other	6	8%	*	5%	*	4%	*	5%	6	6%
Heterosexual / straight	48	61%	54	62%	61	64%	69	71%	82	80%
Prefer not to say / Not specified (left blank)	25	32%	29	33%	30	32%	23	24%	15	15%
Total	79		87		95		97		103	

Disability

	31 Dec 2018		31 Mar 2020		31 Mar 2021		31 Mar 2022		31 Mar 2023	
No	53	67%	57	66%	65	68%	75	77%	87	84%
Yes	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	*	4%
Not specified (left blank)	26	33%	30	34%	30	32%	22	23%	12	12%
Total	79		87		95		97		103	

* Indicates where the number of staff is 5 or fewer unless no response or does not identify staff. This has not been applied to data tables relating to part time working, age, salary band or gender.

Appendix 2 – Board Equality Data as at 31 March 2023

Gender

Female	*
Male	7
Non-binary	0
Prefer not to say	*
No response	0
Total	11

Age

16-24	0
25-29	0
30-34	*
35-39	0
40-44	0
45-49	0
50-54	*
55-59	*
60-64	6
65+	*
No response	0
Total	11

Marital Status

Married/Civil Partnership	9
Other status	*
Prefer not to say	*
Total	11

Ethnic Origin

Ethnic Minority	0
White (Welsh/Irish/Scottish/British)	11
No response	0
Total	11

Religion/Belief

Christian	6
Atheist	*
Agnostic	*
No religion	*
Prefer not to say	0
Total	11

Sexual Orientation

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, other	*
Heterosexual / Straight	*
Prefer not to say	0
Total	11

Transgender

No	11
Yes	0
No response	0
Total	11

Disability

No	8
Yes	*
Prefer not to say	*
Total	11

Welsh Language Skills

Fluent	4
Basic Skills	2
No ability	5
Total	11

* Indicates where the number of members is 5 or fewer (unless no response or does not identify members). We do not report where there are five or fewer responses to ensure we protect confidentiality and anonymity. Where it would be possible to determine a redacted figure using the total figure, we have removed a second figure to protect confidentiality and anonymity.