



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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14 to 16 learning under the Curriculum for Wales guidance: impact assessments

Assessment of the impact of 14 to 16 learning policy within Curriculum for Wales.

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Section 1: what action is the Welsh Government considering and why

The issue

In accordance with the Curriculum for Wales, all maintained schools are responsible for designing, implementing, and reviewing their curriculum. The headteacher must ensure a curriculum is designed for all registered learners at the school age 3 to 16. The legal requirements for learners aged 14 to 16 however, are different for those aged 3 to 14, this is to take account of the choices that learners can make around some of the courses they follow in years 10 and 11 that lead to qualifications.

Alongside curriculum reform, Qualifications Wales, the independent regulator of qualifications in Wales, are undertaking a programme of work to reform qualifications in Wales, shaping new qualifications to support the Curriculum for Wales. This work covers the full offer of 14 to 16 qualifications, including GCSEs.

With such significant reform, both to the curriculum and to the supporting qualifications, we feel it appropriate and necessary to publish statutory guidance to support schools to understand and deliver against their legislative requirements under the Curriculum for Wales Act 2021 (the Act), in respect of a curriculum offer to 14 to 16 year olds. We also want to set out our policy around the wider aspects of a curriculum offer for progression step 5 and 14 to 16 year olds which we value and consider essential to supporting Our National Mission.

At 14 to 16, learner progression is supported by learning that happens as learners follow courses of study, but equally important through the wider learning and experiences that the school provides. Whilst this guidance supports schools with helping learners to progress towards the four purposes, this is the starting

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point for all teaching and learning, and the guidance also provides expectations for 14 to 16 learners to develop skills, knowledge, and approaches to learning, that will form the basis for what they need throughout their lives. The guidance emphasises the importance of learner progression and preparing learners for their post-16 journey, and will be used within and between schools, to support self-evaluation and improvement, and therefore the realisation of the Curriculum for Wales.

All 14 to 16 teaching and learning should be planned and designed in accordance with the Curriculum Framework, with a pedagogical approach aligned with the 12 pedagogical principles, which means that learning experiences will feel like a continuous part of the learner's 3 to 16 journey. This should result in an improvement in planning the curriculum for 14 to 16 learners, which supports the best possible learning experiences and onward progression for learners, whatever their background or circumstances. As one of the mandatory Principles of Progression, increasing learner effectiveness is critical to unlocking the potential of Curriculum for Wales, and this plays a central role in the 14 to 16 guidance. When we teach young people how to learn more effectively, we can unleash their ability to learn, progress and achieve their full potential.

Actions proposed

Welsh Government to publish statutory guidance for 14 to 16 learning in schools in Wales that will:

Ensure that schools design a curriculum specifically for year 10 and 11 learners

In designing a curriculum, practitioners will not only be required to ensure that everything a learner experiences is in pursuit of the four purposes and consider

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what they teach, they will also be required to consider how and why they teach it. This includes selecting the most appropriate pedagogical approach to ensure the experiences offered to learners are engaging and relevant. There will also be more opportunity for partnership working with other schools and colleges, to broaden curricula where it is in the best interest of learners.

Introduce a Curriculum for Wales learner entitlement for year 10 and 11 learners

The learner profile consists of four components of broad and balanced learning and experiences:

- Qualifications in Literacy and Numeracy: evidence of attainment will support successful onward progression.
- Qualifications that encourage breadth of learning: an offer of a wider set of courses of study that includes general and vocational qualifications, from which learners can choose as they begin to specialise, which supports progress and future career pathways.
- Wider learning and experiences: an offer of a breadth of learning opportunities that will be meaningful and allow learners to develop knowledge, skills and provide experiences across the curriculum. Not all learner experiences will lead to a formal qualification, and the guidance is explicit about wider learning and how it is vital that this contributes to learner progress towards the four purposes. This component also allows more opportunity for independent study to enhance deeper learning, independence, and communication skills.
- Reflection and post-16 planning: continued dedicated curriculum time for learners to reflect on their learning and progress across the curriculum and to plan for their post-16 journey. This will allow learners to be supported with their next steps and will provide opportunity for schools to provide more individually tailored Careers and Work Related Experiences (CWRE).

The guidance will also require schools to ensure that all their learners are able to demonstrate their learning, progress, and achievements within all four of the components, when they complete compulsory education.

Ensure a broad offer of learning and experiences to support learner pathways

It is important that schools allow for appropriate learner progression in accordance with the progression code. The guidance includes advice for schools to 'secure learning' for year 10 and 11 learners in each Area of Learner and Experience (AOLE), as required by the Curriculum and Assessment Act 2021 (the Act). This includes, but is not limited to, schools offering a range of courses in each AoLE.

Enhance school self-evaluation and improvement

As part of their self-evaluation and improvement process there will be a number of requirements for schools (that support the Curriculum for Wales and underlying principles) and that will ensure successful delivery for year 10 and 11 learners. Schools will be required to:

- demonstrate that their curriculum for year 10 and 11 learners allows access to learning experiences across all four components of the learner profile
- evaluate and reflect on the quality of learning offered to individual learners in years 10 and 11, with particular consideration of those completing their education in year 11 as to whether appropriate progress across all four components has been made
- report any concerns around individual learners to their local authority so that the appropriate support can be put in place
- for the conclusions of any of the above to inform school improvement plans

The Five Ways of Working of The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The requirements set out in the 14 to 16 learning guidance align with all seven well-being goals and the five ways of working set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015:

Long-term

The Curriculum for Wales has been developed to ensure it is fit for a rapidly changing world and to ensure education delivers its priorities and addresses the potential needs of business and the economy in the future. A nation's prosperity and cohesion and well-being are built upon a successful education system.

We know that the curriculum in Wales to date has had a heavy focus on qualifications, without sufficient recognition of the breadth and range of skills to support young people to thrive. CfW does this and the learner entitlement aims to support all learners. The long-term benefits of the learner entitlement will, however, enable learners to develop the skills, knowledge, and approach to learning that they will need throughout their lives and will help them to thrive in further education or employment.

Prevention

Disadvantage in many forms, has an effect on the educational achievement of children and young people. The offer of broader, more tailored learning should help to better motivate individual learners to attend school, breaking the negative cycle of lower attendance rates. If learners are more engaged and have more input into what and how they learn, this should help with improving pupil behaviour in classrooms and help to support improved well-being and mental

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health for learners.

The learner entitlement (and self-evaluation arrangements) should help with earlier identification of learners at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). It will also help young people to self-reflect on their learning, to plan ahead for their post-16 journey (breaking barriers to learning, and improving aspirations, whatever their background), and undertake meaningful Careers and Work Related Experiences, that will prepare them for their next steps.

Integration

The guidance aligns with each of the seven well-being goals outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015:

A prosperous Wales

- One of the four purposes of Curriculum for Wales is to enable ‘enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in work and life’. Schools’ curricula for 14 to 16 year olds will be required to enable learners to progress towards this. Careers and Work-Related Experiences (CWRE) is included in the guidance to help ensure year 10 and 11 learners undertake meaningful CWRE, and that employability skills are built across the curriculum. Qualifications in literacy and numeracy and post-16 planning are both key components of the learner entitlement, that will ensure learners are grounded in these skills which are fundamental for success throughout life and for a prosperous Wales.

A resilient Wales

- The characteristics which underpin the four purposes contribute to raising awareness of biodiversity and ecology: Under ethical, informed citizens all learners, are required to show their commitment to, and recognise their dependence on, the sustainability of the planet, understanding and considering the impact of their actions when making choices and taking action. Schools' curricula for 14 to 16 year olds will need to ensure that learners progress towards these purposes. Within the qualifications to encourage breadth component of the learner entitlement, schools should ensure that all learners in years 10 and 11 follow an appropriate, challenging and ambitious course that leads to a qualification in science. Schools are also advised to offer a range of courses in computation and digital technology.

A healthier Wales

- Another of the four purposes is to enable 'healthy, confident individuals ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society' and each AoLE contributes to this. Within the qualifications to encourage breadth component of the learner entitlement, schools are advised to offer a range of qualifications within the Health and Well-being Area. The guidance also reaffirms that schools must continue to provide Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) for all learner in years 10 and 11, (to design the most appropriate approach to meet the needs of their learners) and this is separate to the requirement to secure learning in this Area.

A more equal Wales

- The guidance further supports another of the four purposes to enable

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‘ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives’. With the removal of key stages, it offers further clarity on how the continuum from age 3 to 16 is applied for learners in years 10 and 11 and reaffirms that schools must provide for appropriate progression in accordance with the principles of progression, and not just assessments that may form part of a qualification. The learner entitlement recognises the importance of learning without qualifications and the development of key skills to support transition to employment or further training. In line with Curriculum for Wales, the learner entitlement recognises that all learners are individuals, and as such their entitlement will be made up of a variety of different learning, experiences, and achievements across the four components.

A Wales of cohesive communities

- The 14 to 16 learner guidance supports all schools in developing a curriculum offer at 14 to 16 which supports learners to develop the competencies, dispositions, skills and experiences as set out in the four purposes. It will support learners to become ‘healthy, confident individuals ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society’ and will support learners to continue to thrive towards being ‘ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the World’, who understand and exercise their human and democratic responsibilities and rights, are knowledgeable about their culture, community, society, and the world, now and in the past and respect the needs and rights of others, as a member of a diverse society. A school’s curriculum will be designed taking account of the local community and with the learner entitlement supporting a greater focus on post-16 planning it is hoped that schools will work with the local community to identify skills gaps and community needs to help shape the curriculum offer at 14 to 16. Making links with the local community and developing a curriculum that supports understanding of the local community and which supporting learners to develop skills that can support the local community to thrive, should lead to making the community more attractive and more viable

economically.

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

- In line with the Welsh Government's Welsh language vision and strategy, Cymraeg 2050, the guidance maintains the current policy that all learners must have the opportunity to study for a qualification in Welsh and clarifies the continued importance for all year 10 and 11 learners to secure learning and progression in the Welsh language. The qualifications in literacy and numeracy component, of the learner entitlement, provides for all learners to follow a challenging and ambitious course that leads to a qualification in Welsh. This will allow schools to satisfy the requirement to include this subject as a mandatory part of their curriculum. The guidance offers further clarity around how the new made-for-Wales GCSE suite of qualifications in Cymraeg language and literature, are to be implemented in the different language categories of schools (see above). The wider learning and experiences across the curriculum component of the learner entitlement, provides further opportunity for learners who do not choose to follow a qualification in Welsh (or any international language), but who wish to continue their progression in this regard.

A globally responsible Wales

- The Humanities and Science and Technology AoLEs support learners to be informed, self-aware citizens engaged with the challenges and opportunities that face humanity, and are able to take considered, ethical action. Within the qualifications to encourage breadth component of the learner entitlement schools should offer a broad range of ambitious and challenging courses that lead to qualifications in these Areas. The guidance also advises that whether or not a learner follows a course leading to a qualification, in accordance with the wider learning and experiences component, it is vital

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that all learners are given opportunities to make progress towards the four purposes through learning and experiences in these Areas.

Collaboration

As part of a robust pre-consultation process, there has been extensive engagement with an array of stakeholders, both internal to Welsh Government and with external partners including employers, and this engagement has continued throughout the formal consultation process. We have established a 14 to 16 learning board, represented by all key stakeholders with an interest in 14 to 16 learning in Wales. The board were consulted on an early draft of the guidance document and their views were taken into account, prior to the launch of the consultation. Board members have continued to advise the Welsh Government as we progressed towards publication of the final guidance and prepare for implementation by schools. Officials have also engaged with the Children's Rights Advisory Group, the feedback from which was positive and advice received taken on board in the development of the Children's Right Impact Assessment. Officials have engaged with further education colleges across Wales, and employer group representatives (CBI, FSB, Chambers of Commerce) recognising that the 14 to 16 offer is intended to ensure young people can move confidently to employment, education and training opportunities.

The draft statutory guidance for 14 to 16 learning was the subject of a public consultation which ran from 28 February 2024 to 8 May 2024. There has also been direct engagement with learners and parents and carers. The formal consultation process was carried out on behalf of the Welsh Government by Miller research and involved extensive engagement with Children and Young people.

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Impact

Under the 2008 Curriculum, 14 to 16 learning is centred around formal qualifications. As we reform the entire 14 to 16 year old qualifications landscape, qualifications remain an important element of 14 to 16 learning, however, to meet the requirements of Curriculum for Wales and to truly support learners to develop towards the four purposes, the Curriculum Offer at 14 to 16 must provide for more than just qualifications. The intention is to provide consistency across Wales, whilst still enabling the flexibility and support for progression that is embedding within the new curriculum, and this is a clear benefit.

The guidance will also inform proposals on what should be included in the new school information ecosystem, as it articulates what Welsh Government considers to be most important for 14 to 16 learning. This includes the information requirements that will replace the current interim school performance measures. In line with the guidance, we would expect this to include but be broader than qualification entries and outcomes.

We have worked closely with a range of practitioners and teaching unions to explore any concerns around the implementation of this policy in relation to school workload. Feedback in these discussions has contributed to a specific analysis of workload impact that has been considered alongside responses to the formal consultation process. Further resources will be produced to support schools to implement this policy and we will continue to address any concerns and monitor impact around school workload.

Costs and Savings

The guidance is designed to support schools to understand expectations of them under existing Curriculum for Wales legislation, so we do not foresee it leading to any additional direct costs on schools. Many schools already provide a

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curriculum offer which provides wider learning and experiences and supports learners to thrive in their onward transitions, and we consider for those this will not be a significant change. We do however consider there would be benefits in providing some professional learning support to help schools to build their capability around supporting learners to self-reflect and build learner effectiveness, which are requirements of the Principles of Progression but underpin the post 16 planning and self-reflection component of the learner entitlement. This will be delivered nationally in order to keep Welsh Government costs to a minimum.

Mechanism

Schools already have a statutory duty to provide for each learner along the 3-16 curriculum. In years 10 and 11 the curriculum will include some of the choices made by learners in terms of their qualifications. The purpose of the guidance is to ensure that schools understand the Welsh Government's priorities for a curriculum offer in years 10 and 11. It will also support schools to meet the statutory requirements set out in section 30 of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Act 2021](#).

Section 8: conclusion

How have people most likely to be affected by the proposal been involved in developing it?

There has been extensive pre-consultation engagement, with an array of stakeholders, both internal to Welsh Government and with external partners including employers, and much of this is ongoing. We have engaged with a wide range of Welsh medium school practitioners, including 'Gyda'n Gilydd' deputies/curriculum leads from Welsh medium secondary schools (CYDAG) and Special

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School practitioners.

We have established a 14 to 16 learning board, represented by all key stakeholders with an interest in 14 to 16 learning in Wales. The board were consulted on an early draft of the guidance document and their views were taken into account, prior to the launch of the consultation. The learning board continue to advise the Welsh Government as we progress towards implementation by schools. Officials have also engaged with the Childrens Rights Advisory Group to discuss the policy intentions and impact on learners.

The guidance was the subject of a public consultation which ran from 28 February 2024 to 8 May 2024, a parent and carer version of the consultation document was published alongside the draft guidance with specific consultation questions aimed at capturing parent and carer views. The consultation process was undertaken by Miller research on behalf of the Welsh Government who facilitated focus groups with practitioners, parents and carers and learners. There were 103 responses to the formal consultation. A learner survey was also disseminated via Children in Wales and 340 children and young people from years 7 to 11 responded. The engagement process has helped to identify gaps in the draft guidance and shape the final guidance.

What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?

It is considered that the most significant impacts of the guidance will be positive, as it aims to combat the negative aspects of current curricula provision for 14 to 16 year olds in Wales, whilst building on the existing strengths. The guidance introduces a 'learner entitlement' for every learner in this age range. Children's rights have been integral throughout the development of this policy which has a strong learner focus and will therefore have a positive impact on Children's rights.

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The guidance offers further clarity in respect of Curriculum for Wales policy to secure learning for 14 to 16 year olds in each Area of Learning and Experience (Area) whether a learner takes a qualification in a specific Area or not. In accordance with the Curriculum for Wales it seeks to support our culture and heritage by requiring that local, national, and international contexts are embedded across the curriculum for 14 to 16 year olds (and across schools). The Humanities Area is concerned with engaging learners with the most important issues facing humanity, including sustainability and social change, and helping to develop skills necessary to interpret and articulate the past and present. In addition to qualifications in humanities subjects, the wider learning and experiences component of the learner entitlement offers further opportunity for learning in this Area. The guidance promotes knowledge and understanding of biodiversity issues through the four purposes, as the starting point for all teaching and learning, and specifically in the Science and Technology Area. In addition to the qualifications to encourage breadth component of the learner entitlement (where schools are advised to offer a range of ambitious and sufficiently challenge courses that lead to qualification within this Area), there is also further opportunities for learners to make progress towards the four purposes within the wider learning and experience component of the learner entitlement.

The guidance requires schools to consider how they propose to ensure that all of their 14 to 16 learners are making suitable and challenging progress in their skills along a Welsh language continuum by increasing the amount of Welsh instruction in line with their local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. Whilst schools are encouraged to provide opportunities for learners to continue their progression in languages, via the wider learning and experiences component, as part of the qualifications in literacy and numeracy component of the learner entitlement, schools are also required to make appropriate use of the new made-for-Wales GCSE suite of qualifications to ensure that:

- all year 10 and 11 learners in category 3 Welsh-medium schools follow a challenging and ambitious course that leads to a qualification in Welsh

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- all year 10 and 11 learners in category 1 English-medium schools can continue to make progress and continue to have the opportunity to study towards a suitably challenging and ambitious qualification in Welsh
- all year 10 and 11 learners in dual-language schools can continue to make progress and continue to have the opportunity to study towards a suitably challenging and ambitious qualification in Welsh, which will include a greater proportion of learners studying for qualifications further along the Welsh language continuum than in category 1 schools

The guidance introduces the reflection and post-16 planning component of the learner entitlement which means that learners will be better supported to think about their aspirations and post-16 next steps at a younger age, negating some of the risks with delaying this until the age of 16. Schools are advised to consider how learners are becoming increasingly effective as learners in social and work-related contexts and are required to allocate appropriate curriculum time for year 10 and 11 learners to reflect on their learning and plan their post-16 next steps. The guidance further supports the **Careers and Work Related Experience (CWRE) section of the Curriculum for Wales framework guidance** as the reflection and post-16 planning component will provide opportunities for schools to provide more tailored and specific CWRE for learners in years 10 and 11. The **Young Person's Guarantee (YPG)** is a commitment made by Welsh Government to ensure that young people in Wales have the available support and opportunity to reach their potential following the disruption of the pandemic, to support young people, to either gain a place in education or training, or to help to get into work or to become self-employed. In developing the guidance, we have worked closely with the YPG policy leads and considered relevant research to ensure that the policy intentions are fully aligned with the YPG commitment.

In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal maximise contribution to our well-being objectives and

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the seven well-being goals

In supporting 14 to 16 learners to realise the four purposes, the guidance contributes across all seven well-being goals as detailed in Section 1. The requirements provide sufficient flexibility to practitioners to use their creativity and professional judgement to deliver a curriculum which supports their 14 to 16 learners within their specific contexts. The policy supports positive impacts by ensuring that teaching and learning for learners in this age range forms a continuous part of the 3 to 16 continuum, recognising that as these learners reach year 10, they begin to specialise in certain aspects of learning and follow some courses of study that lead to qualifications. It also supports inclusivity as it is responsive to the needs of individual learners and encourages schools to making learning engaging and ensures that schools curricula are designed to ensure that learners develop the skills, knowledge and approach to learning that they will need throughout their lives to meet potential business and economy needs of the future.

School self-evaluation and improvement arrangements already require schools to show how they are enabling all learners, particularly different cohorts of learners such as those with additional learning needs and from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, to progress along their own individual learning pathway, taking into account their diverse needs. The narrative around the four components of the learner entitlement in the guidance, provides further definition and clarity as to how the curriculum offer for 14 to 16 year olds needs to be applied appropriately, on an individual learner basis.

This policy will inform the school information ecosystem, that will replace current key stage 4 interim performance measures. The policy will develop wider learning and self-reflection in schools, that will help to shape school information requirements going forward. The post-16 planning component specifically, will further support wider use of destinations data, that has already been widely recognised as an improved measure for the progress of economically

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disadvantaged learners.

The overarching purpose is to help schools give year 10 and 11 learners the best possible learning experiences and outcomes whatever their background or circumstances, to ensure that education inequalities narrow, and standards rise.

In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal avoid, reduce or mitigate any negative impacts

Any negative impacts that might emerge with implementation of the policy can be reduced and mitigated through:

- Appropriate professional learning around curriculum design for practitioners. The Welsh Government is working on developing an appropriate national programme, to ensure that this is proportionate and provided in a consistent manner cross Wales.
- The Welsh Government will publish online resources to support schools with implementation, alongside currently planned support for schools on the new qualifications.
- There will be an effective communications strategy that provide clarity around the aims and benefits of the policy to all stakeholders.
- Schools will be required to evaluate and reflect on the quality of learning offered to individual learners in years 10 and 11, with particular consideration of those completing their education in year 11 as to whether appropriate progress across all four components has been made. They will be required to report any concerns to their local authority, so that the appropriate support can be put in place, and school improvement plans adapted accordingly.

How will the impact of the proposal be monitored and evaluated as it progresses and when it concludes

The draft statutory guidance was published in February 2024 following a wide range of pre-consultation engagement activities with practitioners and wider stakeholders. The guidance was then refined during the spring and summer of 2024. In parallel a range of stakeholders including employers, and the 14 to 16 learning board have liaised with their own networks and have provided feedback which has informed further refinement. This engagement is ongoing as we move towards and post implementation. The evaluation of implementation of the policy has been built into the National Evaluation Framework for Curriculum for Wales, with a specific focus on 14 to 16 Curriculum implementation from 2025 onwards, once schools have begun to roll Curriculum for Wales out to their year 10 learners.

New [school improvement arrangements](#) and the [school information ecosystem](#) that will help to shape school information requirements going forward will be informed by this policy and will support post implementation review and evaluation. Once finalised, these arrangements will form the basis of system-wide monitoring and will identify any changes that need to be made to the 14 to 16 learner guidance in the future.

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