

26 June 2020

Dear

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: ATISN 14014 – PISA 2018 Analysis

Thank you for your request which I received on 1 June 2020. You asked for:

The Welsh Government to supply you with the brief given to NFER for this further analysis [additional analysis of the PISA data, potentially in relation to Welsh medium, wellbeing and disadvantaged pupils] and the link to the published outcome or, if there has been a decision not to publish, to the data and complete response from NFER.

In relation to the discussions with NFER regarding additional analysis of the PISA 2018 dataset, we have commissioned them to undertake the following:

PISA 2018 analysis of Welsh-/English-medium school results

Welsh Government has asked NFER to undertake some analysis of the PISA 2018 data to examine the differences in Reading performance between English- and Welsh-medium schools.

This analysis will consider the following variables by medium of education, language of test and home language:

- Mean and median PISA reading scores
- 10th, 25th, 75th and 90th percentile scores
- Percentage of pupils at each Reading proficiency level (i.e. Levels 1-6)
- Cognitive Process scores and Reading source scores
- Cognitive Process scores and Reading source scores by proficiency levels
- PISA score by gender
- PISA score by FSM eligibility.

The final output will be a series of tables accompanied by brief interpretive commentary for each table.

PISA 2018 analysis of Welsh-/PISA Regional performance and GCSE matching

Welsh Government has requested that NFER undertake some analysis of the PISA 2018 data to explore the results by Regional Consortia and by pupil performance on GCSE and BTEC.

PISA 2018 scores by Welsh Regional Consortia

As reading was the major domain for 2018, this analysis will calculate mean PISA 2018 reading scores, standard errors and confidence intervals for each of the Welsh Regional Consortia as follows:

South East Wales - Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, Torfaen

Central South – Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Vale of Glamorgan

North Wales – Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Wrexham, Ynys Mon

West Wales – Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Swansea
PISA 2018 scores by GCSE

PISA 2018 maths and science item analysis

Welsh Government has requested that NFER undertake analysis of the PISA 2018 data to explore strengths and weaknesses of pupils in Wales in science and maths. The objective of this analysis is to better understand variation in Welsh pupil performance on PISA 2018 and to provide an indication of pupils' PISA assessment skills.

By examination of pupil responses to PISA items in science and maths, we will:

- provide an item analysis of Welsh pupil performance on PISA 2018 that identifies the proportion of unattempted items, no credit items and partial credit items, as in the 2015 item analysis report.
- identify a selection of items where relatively high proportions of students in Wales gained no, or partial, credit using the same methodology as 2015.
- highlight the features of the selected items considering (i) item type (open constructed response, simple multiple choice, complex multiple choice or responses requiring interaction with computer based software (e.g. science simulations), (ii) PISA sub-domains/categories to which items belong (if item numbers permit).
- provide commentary on the implications of any findings in relation to the (i) subject specific knowledge and skills, (ii) general assessment skills of Welsh pupils, and (iii) differences between low and high achievers (definition of low and high achievers to be determined, we would suggest lowest and highest quartile) in response by item type and PISA sub-domains (if possible).
- compare the results of this 2018 item analysis to the results of the item analysis conducted previously for Wales in 2015. Welsh Government are particularly interested in changes in strengths and weaknesses since 2015 (GCSE specifications have occurred in this time) (notes, these will be high level, descriptive commentary of differences between 2015 and 2018, it will not be possible to carry out the analysis with the same items in the two cycles as there will be insufficient data to draw conclusions).
- compare the all student results of the item analysis for Wales to an OECD average and the results in other selected countries of interest (we have included costs for up to five countries, to be agreed but likely to be Estonia, RoI, one country which Wales has improved against, one country which has remained similar to Wales, one country which has declined). We will not make comparisons with 2015.
- undertake item analysis of the PISA 2018 data by sub-groups of Welsh pupils to identify if there are noticeable differences in the patterns of responses demonstrated across the identified items. Sub-groups to examine are the same as in the 2015 analysis: (i) gender, (ii) medium of Schooling (Welsh or English), (iii) language of assessment (Welsh or English) and (iv) socio-economic status (the 30 per cent most deprived learners in Wales according to the PISA index of economic, social and

cultural status (ESCS) compared with the 70 per cent least deprived). We have not costed to do this analysis for countries other than Wales, or to carry out the analysis for high and low achievers. We have costed on the basis of descriptive analysis, as in 2015. As noted in the 2015 item analysis report, it would be an improvement to do regression analysis (not costed). We can provide the cost for regression analysis.

The final output will be a 30 page report and executive summary, in Welsh and English.

We have received a draft of the Welsh language performance report which we are currently considering - however all outputs have been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We are planning to publish all three reports once received and will send you the links to the documents as and when they are published.

I have decided that some of the information is exempt from disclosure under section 22 - Information intended for future publication of the Freedom of Information Act and is therefore withheld. The reasons for applying these exemptions are set out in full at Annex A to this letter.

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely

Annex A

I have decided to withhold the following information:

Information being withheld	Section number and exemption name
The draft report on PISA 2018 analysis of Welsh/English-medium school results	Section 22 – Information intended for future publication
.	

This Annex sets out the reasons for the engagement of section(s) **section 22** of the **Freedom of Information Act** and our subsequent consideration of the Public Interest Test.

Engagement of section 22 (Information intended for future publication) of the Freedom of Information Act.

The Welsh Government believes that **the draft report on PISA 2018 analysis of Welsh/English-medium school results** should be exempt from disclosure. **The draft is currently being considered by policy and statistical colleagues for accuracy. The report will be published in due course.**

Public Interest Test

Public interest arguments in favour of disclosure

Publishing the draft report may release information that is incorrect into the public domain and will need to be retracted.

Public interest arguments in favour of withholding

The validated report will be published shortly.

Balance of public interest test

Given that the validated draft report is to be published shortly, on balance the public argument in withholding is stronger than that to release the draft version.