



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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QUALIFIED FOR LIFE

UNDERSTANDING THE NEW QUALIFICATIONS IN WALES

Parent pack | November 2014

www.qualifiedforlife.org.uk

“I take great pride that Wales is having this national debate on secondary education, taking a long hard look at how to raise standards, in the best interests of Welsh learners and our country.”

Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz
Vice Chancellor, University of Cambridge

INTRODUCTION

This guide is for parents and carers of students who will start studying for the new qualifications in schools and colleges across Wales from September 2015. Qualifications are the passport to any young person's future, so it is important that everyone understands what is happening in Welsh education and why we're making these improvements.

The guide explains what is changing and what this means for your children. There is much more information available on the Qualified for Life website at www.qualifiedforlife.org.uk and from your child's school or college.

This booklet provides information on the changes to:

- GCSEs;
- A levels;
- the Welsh Baccalaureate;
- vocational qualifications; and
- the curriculum.

It also tells you about Qualifications Wales – a new national body for qualifications in Wales.

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER



“As the father of two school aged children and a former teacher, I know that one of the things you want most for your child is an excellent education that gives them the

best possible start in life.

We want to give all our young people the skills they need to find the right job or go onto college or university. We have worked with businesses, colleges and universities to improve qualifications in Wales and make sure they meet the needs of our young people and the Welsh economy.

The new qualifications will motivate, reward, and reflect your child's efforts. The approval of a qualification for use in Wales will be recognised as a mark of excellence: trusted, valued and

respected by employers and universities not only here in Wales and the UK, but internationally.

I am proud of our new qualifications, and excited about what will be achieved by our young people in the years to come. Our young people are our future and whatever they want to do in life, these new qualifications will support them and allow them to show what they know and can do. That is what we, as parents, want for our children, and that is what they deserve.”

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Huw Lewis".

Huw Lewis

Minister for Education and Skills

“The focus of these new qualifications means that their core learning is strengthened, but there is also a greater attractiveness for future employers.”

Gary Griffiths

Head of Early Careers Programme, Airbus UK





WHY ARE QUALIFICATIONS CHANGING?

The time was right to look again at qualifications for our young people to make sure they are right for everyone. An independent review with experts from schools, colleges, universities and businesses made a number of recommendations which we are now putting in place.

One of the strongest messages to come out of the review was the need to strengthen our children's language and number skills – literacy and numeracy. Our new qualifications tackle this head-on, with a renewed focus on these building blocks for work and further study.

"If we get this right, it will give Wales a significant edge in developing the right calibre of people with the appropriate aptitudes to make a successful transition into the world of work."

Graham Edwards
CEO Wales & West Utilities

"The Welsh Government reform agenda is timely and is based on reflection."

Claire Armistead
Headteacher, Rhyl High School

GCSEs

The value of GCSEs is recognised and understood the world over. So they will continue to be the main general qualifications that young people complete at age 16, and the familiar grading structure A* to G will stay the same.

Our new GCSEs will be challenging, thorough and respected, and will have a renewed focus on literacy and numeracy.

WHAT WILL CHANGE FOR TEACHING IN SEPTEMBER 2015?

- There will be new GCSEs in English Language and Welsh Language. These will concentrate more on the functional aspects of language. These are reading, writing and oracy (speaking and listening) skills which will all count towards the final grade.
- There will be two new maths GCSEs which, together, will cover similar content to the existing course. Both will focus more on problem-solving and applying maths to real-life situations. We expect that most young people will sit both maths GCSEs. These are:
 - GCSE Mathematics – Numeracy, which will focus on the mathematics needed for everyday life; and
 - GCSE Mathematics, which will give young people the mathematical skills they need for further mathematical, scientific or technical study.

“Numeracy is more important than ever in today’s corporate world and the reform to the maths curriculum will equip our young people with the skills they need to meet the challenges they will come across in the modern workplace.”

Robert Lloyd Griffiths
Director, Institute of Directors Wales

Teaching will also begin for revised GCSEs in English Literature and Welsh Literature.

In 2015, there will be no changes to other GCSE subjects.

WHAT WILL CHANGE FOR TEACHING IN SEPTEMBER 2016?

There will be changes to GCSEs in the following subjects from 2016, and we will also review all science GCSEs.

Art and Design; Biology; Chemistry; Design and Technology; Drama; Geography; History; Modern Foreign Languages: French, German, Spanish; Music; Physical Education; Physics; Religious Studies.

A LEVELS

The A level system is trusted and well-established. A levels will continue to be the general qualifications taken at level 3 (generally at age 16 to 19). As far as possible, A levels in Wales will share the same content as A levels in England. However, in some cases differences may be appropriate to reflect a Welsh perspective.

AS qualifications will continue, reflecting the fact that universities believe they are useful to help predict a young person's grades at A level, while schools and colleges believe they are a good 'reality check' midway through the A level course.

We are introducing some important changes to A levels to make sure they continue to be challenging, thorough and internationally recognised and that they assess the skills which employers and others value.

- The weighting of AS qualifications within the full A level grade will be reduced from 50% to 40%.
- Practical or controlled assessments will still contribute towards the final grade if they are assessing an important part of the subject. In other cases, they may be removed.

There will be changes to the following A level subjects for teaching from September 2015 and 2016.

A LEVEL SUBJECT CHANGES 2015

- Art and Design
- Biology
- Business Studies
- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Economics
- English Language
- English Literature
- English Language & Literature
- History
- Physics
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Welsh (first language)

A LEVEL SUBJECT CHANGES 2016

- Design and Technology
- Drama
- Geography
- Mathematics
- Further Mathematics
- Modern Foreign Languages: French, German, Spanish
- Music
- Physical Education
- Religious Studies
- Welsh Second Language

"We greatly value the decision to retain AS in Wales as an integral part of the A Level approach."

Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz
Vice Chancellor, University of Cambridge



WELSH BACCALAUREATE

The Welsh Baccalaureate is changing and will be introduced for learners at age 14 to 19 from September 2015.

The new Welsh Baccalaureate will help learners develop the skills they will need for college, university, employment and life. It will be studied alongside learners' traditional choices at GCSE, AS and A level, or vocational qualifications.

The revised Welsh Baccalaureate will have a clear focus on the following skills.

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Digital literacy
- Critical thinking and problem-solving
- Planning and organisation
- Creativity and innovation
- Personal effectiveness

Learners will develop and use these skills, and the skills will be assessed, by completing an individual project and three 'challenges'.

- Global citizenship challenge
- Enterprise and employability challenge
- Community challenge

We have introduced grading to strengthen the qualification and properly reward students who achieve high standards.

WHY SHOULD LEARNERS STUDY THE WELSH BACCALAUREATE?

The Welsh Baccalaureate is already widely respected and accepted by universities across the UK as an entry qualification. It has been designed to help 14 to 19-year-olds to develop the skills they will need for college, university, employment and life.

By passing the Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate, learners will be gaining a qualification that is the same size as an A level and graded in the same way (A* to E). UCAS expect to allocate the same tariff points for university entry as for an A level – with the number of points allocated to each grade matching the points for the equivalent A level grade.

“The Welsh Baccalaureate does present a real opportunity to sit at the core of the Welsh qualifications systems, something that inspires learners to improve their employability skills, be better prepared for life in general and to fulfil their potential.”

Scott Waddington
Chief Executive, SA Brain

Not all universities and colleges use tariff points in their entry requirements, instead they describe their requirements in terms of qualifications, subjects and grades. Universities and colleges are independent organisations and set their own entry requirements.

WHAT DO LEARNERS NEED TO DO TO GET THE WELSH BACCALAUREATE?

Learners will need to successfully complete an individual project and three challenges to pass the Welsh Baccalaureate.

Learners will also need to show that they have literacy and numeracy skills by gaining GCSE English Language or GCSE Welsh Language and GCSE Mathematics – Numeracy.

They will also need enough supporting qualifications, for example, GCSEs, AS qualifications, A levels, vocational qualifications (see the WJEC website: www.wjec.co.uk for specific requirements for each level).

“From our perspective, we expect students who come to Oxford to be independent thinkers, highly motivated for the subjects that they’re planning to study, and also be prepared to be flexible. I truly believe that the new qualifications from Wales, especially the refocused and strengthened Welsh Baccalaureate, will help develop students in that direction.”

Dr Samina Khan
Acting Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach, Oxford University

WHEN DO YOUNG PEOPLE STUDY THE WELSH BACCALAUREATE?

The Welsh Baccalaureate will have qualifications at three levels – designed for 14 to 19-year-olds.

Title of qualification	Level	Grades available	Age of learners	Equivalent qualification
Foundation Welsh Baccalaureate	Level 1	Pass* and Pass	14 to 16 and post-16	One GCSE
National Welsh Baccalaureate	Level 2	A*, A, B and C	14 to 16 and post-16	One GCSE
Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate	Level 3	A*, A, B, C, D and E	Used post-16 only	A level



VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Vocational qualifications provide young people with the knowledge, understanding, skills and, in some cases, the relevant job skills to work in a particular sector or role. Many vocational qualifications are, and will continue to be, offered in Wales, England and Northern Ireland. This means that many vocational qualifications in Wales will be identical to those awarded in England.

WHAT IS CHANGING WITH VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN WALES?

All vocational qualifications in Wales have been classed as one of the following, in line with the rest of Europe.

- IVETs (introductory qualifications, suitable for all ages).
- CVETs (continuing qualifications linked to job skills, suitable for learners over the age of 16).

Only IVETs are suitable for people younger than 16, but both IVETs and CVETs can be used for learners who are 16 and over. This will help to make sure that young people take qualifications that are appropriate for their age and stage

of learning, and can gain an introduction to a sector or subject before moving on to qualifications that are based on job skills.

New panels of experts in each economic sector will advise on developing and approving vocational qualifications to make sure that they provide young people with the right knowledge and skills for employment, and support their progression to further study or the world of work.

“We welcome the IVET/CVET classification. Qualifications Wales will be the gatekeeper for future vocational qualifications and will ensure that vocational provision meets the needs of Wales.”

Arwyn Watkins

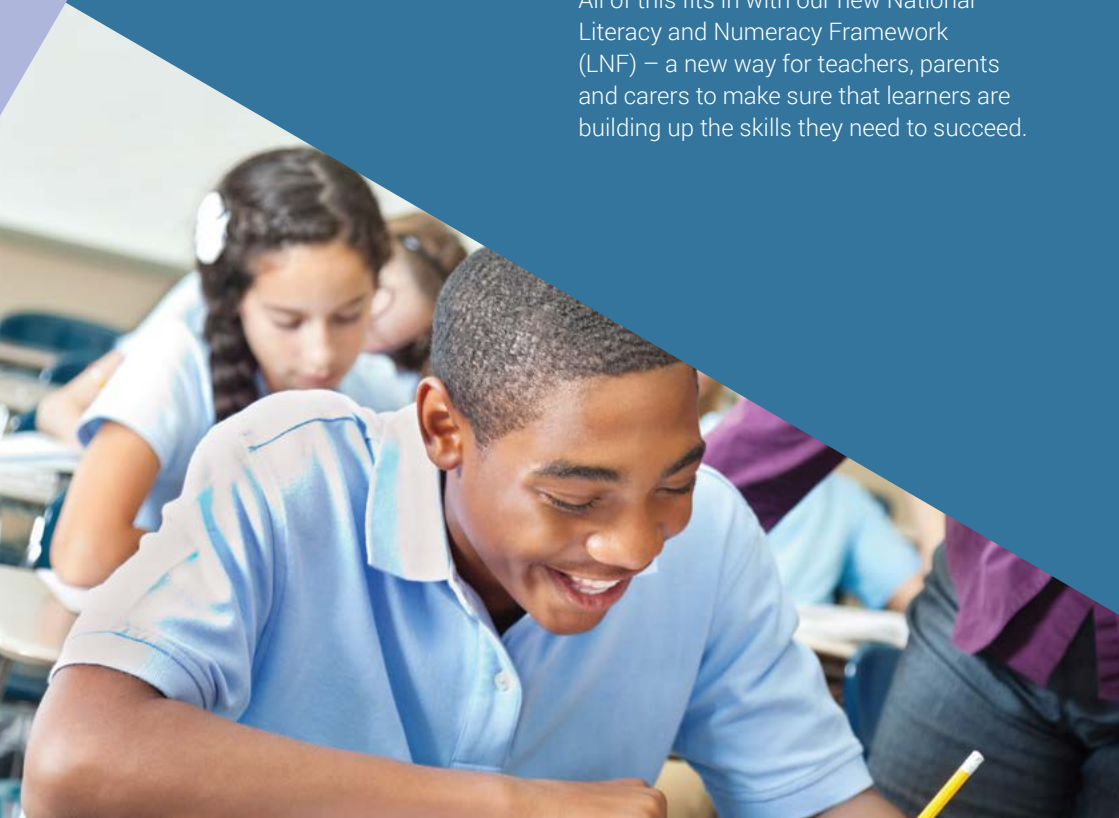
Chief Executive National Training Federation
Wales and MD Cambrian Training Ltd

CURRICULUM

We are putting in place a new curriculum for Wales, and an independent review of what your children are being taught in school is currently taking place. Professor Graham Donaldson is due to report around the end of 2014.

To put the basics in place we are introducing new programmes for teaching in English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics in September 2015. These will make sure that your child is learning the right things to make progress each year in their reading, writing and number skills.

All of this fits in with our new National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) – a new way for teachers, parents and carers to make sure that learners are building up the skills they need to succeed.



QUALIFICATIONS WALES

In 2015, a national body for qualifications in Wales will be established, called Qualifications Wales. Qualifications Wales will be independent of the Government and will be responsible for regulating and maintaining the quality of qualifications and, in some cases, commissioning the development of new qualifications. It will make sure that our qualifications are internationally respected and our learners are suitably stretched and challenged by our qualifications system. Its main aims will be to make sure that:

- qualifications in Wales are fit for purpose;
- the qualifications system in Wales is efficient and effective; and
- there is public confidence in qualifications in Wales.

“This is a massive opportunity for Wales: nothing can be more important than the education, recognition and attainment of our young people. We now have a unique opportunity to establish a strong and innovative system of qualifications for Wales.”

Professor April McMahon
Vice Chancellor, Aberystwyth University



Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark does not apply to the design of this document.

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For further information:
www.qualificationswales.org