



By email to all schools and colleges in Wales.

7 December 2016

Dear colleague

## Update on GCSE and A level reforms in Wales

As we enter the final leg of reforms to GCSEs and A levels, I want to recap on what is happening and to explain what the final phase of changes will mean for schools and colleges in the year to come. I hope you will find this information helpful as you develop your plans for the next academic year.

The main points covered in this letter are:

- The new GCSEs and A levels we are approving for first teaching in 2017 and the training and resources planned to support their introduction.
- Availability of new GCSEs and A levels in low take-up subjects.
- Last assessment of qualifications being replaced or discontinued.

## Approval of Wales-only GCSEs and A levels for 2017

GCSEs and A levels designed specifically for Wales are being reformed for first teaching from September 2017.

<b>GCSEs</b>	<b>A levels</b>
Business	Design and Technology
Computer Science	Further Mathematics
Design and Technology	Government and Politics
History	Law
Media Studies	Mathematics
Religious Studies	Media Studies
Welsh Second Language	



On our website you will find a [detailed timeline](#)<sup>1</sup> indicating when we expect approved specifications and sample assessment materials to be available for each of these qualifications. Approved specifications and materials are already available for GCSE Religious Studies and GCSE History. For all other subjects listed above, WJEC has published draft specifications on its website, which we would encourage you to take a look at, if you're interested in the changes to these subjects. We will continue to update our website as we approve qualifications and as final specifications and materials are published.

In the coming months, WJEC is offering 'Preparing to teach' training for each of these new qualifications. The training is free of charge for one delegate from each centre for each subject being reformed. More information about this training is available on the WJEC's [website](#)<sup>2</sup>.

We are working closely with WJEC, Welsh Government, Regional Consortia and ColegauCymru to agree what further support will be available to teachers preparing for these new qualifications. In January, we will update our website explaining what specific support will be available for each subject, who will provide it, when it will be offered and how to access it.

One important change related to these reforms will be the removal of the GCSE Welsh Second Language Short Course. In January we will run a series of regional question and answer sessions, providing an opportunity for teachers and senior leadership teams to discuss the changes to Welsh Second Language with representatives of Qualifications Wales, WJEC, Regional Consortia and Welsh Government. For more information about the events, or to register online, visit our website<sup>3</sup>.

## **GCSEs and A levels in Health and Social Care and ICT**

Following our recent review of qualifications in the Health and Social Care sector, we intend to commission new qualifications in Health and Social Care and in Child Development, for first teaching from September 2019. These will include a level 1/2 qualification, which will replace GCSEs and other

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<sup>1</sup> <http://qualificationswales.org/media/2137/timeline-2017.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.wjec.co.uk/teachers/teacher-support/face-to-face-courses-for-teachers/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://qualificationswales.org/events/welsh-second-language-events-2017/?lang=en>

qualifications taught in schools, and level 2 and 3 qualifications that will replace A levels and other qualifications commonly taken by 16 to 19 year olds. Until then, WJEC will continue to offer its existing Health and Social Care GCSE and A level and its GCSE Home Economics: Child Development.

We are now conducting a full review of qualifications in the IT sector. While we do so, we have decided not to reform the regulatory requirements for GCSE and A level qualification in ICT. If, as a result of our review, we decide to introduce new qualifications for this subject area, the earliest we would expect them to be introduced would be for first teaching from September 2020. Until then, we have agreed that WJEC will update its existing GCSE, A level and Applied A level specifications for ICT for first teaching in September 2017. We expect the new specifications and sample assessment materials to be available in March 2017.

### **Availability of new GCSEs and A levels in low take-up subjects**

There are some GCSE and A level subjects for which the number of learners in Wales is too low to make it viable for any awarding body to develop qualifications for award only in Wales. In some of these subjects, GCSEs or A levels are being reformed in England, where the potential number of candidates is large enough to make the qualifications viable.

We have listed all of these subjects in the enclosed annex, together with an indication of which awarding body will be offering them as reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels in England. This is important because not all of the subjects are offered by all the awarding bodies and some are only offered by a single awarding body.

We have invited awarding bodies offering these qualifications in England to apply to have them designated by us as eligible for use on publicly funded learning programmes in Wales.

These qualifications are designed to meet requirements set by Ofqual – the qualifications regulator for England. They differ in a number of important ways to those GCSEs and A levels for which we have set Approval Criteria. For example, new GCSEs in England are graded on a scale of 9 to 1, not A\* to G; and

new AS and A levels in England are decoupled, so the AS results do not contribute to the overall grade awarded at A level. You can find more information about the key similarities and differences between reformed GCSEs and A levels in Wales, England and Northern Ireland on our website<sup>4</sup>, including an infographic map summarising the main points.

It is a decision for the awarding bodies offering these qualifications in England whether to apply to have them designated in Wales. To encourage awarding bodies to make the widest possible range of subjects available to learners in Wales, we are not insisting that they make these qualifications available through the medium of Welsh. However, we do require that they publish a statement for each qualification confirming whether it will be available in Welsh and, if so, explaining how to request Welsh-medium assessment.

The awarding bodies offering these qualifications in England have confirmed their intended approach to offering them on publicly funded courses in Wales as follows.

- **AQA** does not plan to offer reformed GCSEs and A levels in Wales. You can read more about AQA's decision on its [website](#)<sup>5</sup>. This means that reformed GCSEs and A levels in some subjects will not be available in Wales.
- **OCR** will be offering its reformed GCSEs and A levels on publicly funded courses in Wales. It does not intend to offer any of its reformed GCSEs or A levels through the medium of Welsh.
- **Pearson** will be offering its reformed GCSEs and A levels on publicly funded courses in Wales. It will offer Welsh-medium assessment for subjects in which there has been a proven demand for it in the past and it is judged operationally viable to offer this provision in future.
- Under its **Eduqas** brand, WJEC offers many of the listed GCSEs and A levels in England. It will also make all of those listed qualifications that it offers in this way available on publicly funded courses in Wales. It will offer Welsh-medium assessment in all of them upon request.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://qualificationswales.org/news/291116-3-country-statement/?lang=en>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.aqa.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/policy/gcse-and-a-level-changes/wales-and-northern-ireland>

The table enclosed with this letter indicates those GCSE or A level subjects which have in recent years been taken through the medium of Welsh with one awarding body or another. In light of the intentions of the awarding bodies indicated above, we expect that Welsh-medium assessment will continue being available in all of these subjects.

### **Last assessment of qualifications being replaced or discontinued**

In some subjects, existing 'legacy' GCSEs and A levels will be replaced by new ones designed specifically for learners in Wales. In other subjects they will be replaced by designated qualifications that are also offered in England. Other subjects will no longer be offered at all as GCSEs or A levels.

A full list is available on our website of all the legacy qualifications that will come to an end over the next three [years](#)<sup>6</sup>. The list includes dates for when each qualification will be assessed for the last time, including any final resit opportunities.

### **Further information**

I hope you find the information in this letter helpful. We give regular updates to schools and colleges on GCSEs, A levels and the other qualifications we regulate through our 'Slate' newsletter. You can sign-up to receive this from our [website](#)<sup>7</sup>.  
Yours sincerely



**Philip Blaker**

Chief Executive

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List of GCSE (9-1), AS and A level qualifications in low take-up subjects and the awarding bodies offering them in England.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://qualificationswales.org/development/last-awards-and-dates/?lang=en&>

<sup>7</sup> <http://qualificationswales.org/about-us/get-involved/?lang=en>

## Annex:

List of GCSE (9-1) AS and A level subjects and the awarding bodies offering them in England.

### GCSEs (9-1) for first teaching from 2016

The table below indicates which awarding bodies are offering reformed GCSEs in the subjects listed.

An asterisk (\*) next to a subject name indicates that it has been taken as a legacy GCSE through the medium of Welsh with at least one awarding body since 2013.

<b>GCSE (9-1) subject</b>	<b>AQA</b>	<b>OCR</b>	<b>Pearson (Edexcel)</b>	<b>WJEC Eduqas</b>
Classical Greek	No	Yes	No	No
Citizenship Studies	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Dance	Yes	No	No	No
Latin*	No	Yes	No	Yes

### GCSEs (9-1) for first teaching from 2017

The table below indicates which awarding bodies will offer reformed GCSEs in the subjects listed for first teaching from 2017.

An asterisk (\*) next to a subject name indicates that it has been taken as a legacy GCSE through the medium of Welsh with at least one awarding body since 2013.

<b>GCSE (9-1) subject</b>	<b>AQA</b>	<b>OCR</b>	<b>Pearson (Edexcel)</b>	<b>WJEC Eduqas</b>
Ancient History	No	Yes	No	No

<b>GCSE (9-1) subject</b>	<b>AQA</b>	<b>OCR</b>	<b>Pearson (Edexcel)</b>	<b>WJEC Eduqas</b>
Arabic	No	No	Yes	No
Astronomy	No	No	Yes	No
Bengali	Yes	No	No	No
Chinese	Yes	No	Yes	No
Classical Civilisation	No	Yes	No	No
Economics	Yes	Yes	No	No
Electronics*	No	No	No	Yes
Engineering	Yes	No	No	No
Film Studies	No	Yes	No	Yes
Geology	No	No	No	Yes
Italian	Yes	No	Yes	No
Japanese	No	No	Yes	No
Modern Greek	No	No	Yes	No
Modern Hebrew	Yes	No	No	No
Polish	Yes	No	No	No
Psychology*	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Punjabi	Yes	No	No	No

<b>GCSE (9-1) subject</b>	<b>AQA</b>	<b>OCR</b>	<b>Pearson (Edexcel)</b>	<b>WJEC Eduqas</b>
Russian	No	No	Yes	No
Sociology*	Yes	No	No	Yes
Statistics	Yes	No	Yes	No
Urdu	Yes	No	Yes	No

### **AS and A levels (decoupled) for first teaching from 2016**

The table below indicates which awarding bodies offer reformed AS and A levels in the subjects listed.

An asterisk (\*) next to a subject name indicates that it has been taken as a legacy AS / A level through the medium of Welsh with at least one awarding body since 2013.

<b>AS and A level subject</b>	<b>AQA</b>	<b>OCR</b>	<b>Pearson (Edexcel)</b>	<b>WJEC Eduqas</b>
Classical Greek	No	Yes	No	No
Dance	Yes	No	No	No
Latin	No	Yes	No	No

### **AS and A levels (decoupled) for first teaching from 2017**

The table below indicates which awarding bodies will offer reformed AS and A levels in the subjects listed for first teaching from 2017.

An asterisk (\*) next to a subject name indicates that it has been taken as a legacy AS / A level through the medium of Welsh with at least one awarding body since 2013.



<b>AS and A level subject</b>	<b>AQA</b>	<b>OCR</b>	<b>Pearson (Edexcel)</b>	<b>WJEC Eduqas</b>
Accounting	Yes	No	No	No
Ancient History	No	Yes	No	No
Chinese	No	No	Yes	No
Classical Civilisation	No	Yes	No	No
Electronics *	No	No	No	Yes
Environmental science	Yes	No	No	No
Film Studies	No	Yes	No	Yes
Geology	No	Yes	No	Yes
History of Art	No	No	Yes	No
Italian	No	No	Yes	No
Music Technology*	No	No	Yes	No
Philosophy	Yes	No	No	No
Russian	No	No	Yes	No
Statistics	No	No	Yes	No