



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

**QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW OF  
THE QUALIFICATIONS, CURRICULUM AND  
ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY FOR WALES  
(ACCAC)**



**STAGE I REPORT**

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## Executive Summary

- (01) This summary covers Stage I of the Quinquennial Review of ACCAC, the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales. The remit for the Review and the questions for Stage I are as follows:
- (02) “In the light of the statutory duties and functions of the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales, the objectives of the National Assembly and models of good practice elsewhere, is there a continuing need for all the functions of Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales and, if so, is the current organisational framework for delivering those functions the most appropriate?
- What is the legal framework governing the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales?
  - Are the functions of the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales still necessary?
  - Do the functions need to be carried out by an Assembly Sponsored Public Body – are other options for undertaking the functions likely to be more effective?
  - Are the functions best carried out by a single body? Is there a need to rationalise functions between the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales and other public bodies engaged in the provision of like services in Wales?”
- (03) The Review is being undertaken in the context of the Welsh Assembly Government’s published Quinquennial Review Guidelines which set out the process for conducting the reviews. This includes self-assessment by the Authority, discussion with its Members and senior managers and inviting views from major stakeholders including staff and their trade unions, partners and customers. The Review Team has undertaken an extensive consultation exercise with ACCAC’s many stakeholders and the outcomes of this exercise are reported in this Interim Report insofar as they relate to the questions posed at Stage I.
- (04) Stage II of the Review will consider the Authority’s strategic effectiveness, its contribution to the policies and priorities set by the Welsh Assembly Government on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales and corporate governance issues.
- (05) The key findings of this stage of our Review are set out below.
- (06) The legal and political framework governing the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales is described in an introductory section of the Report. This identifies the three main roles which ACCAC plays: as regulator of all qualifications outside HE, as advisor on curriculum, qualifications and assessment in schools and as commissioner of classroom materials.
- (07) We consider the strategic policy context both in respect of the National Assembly and more widely within the UK and beyond.
- (08) We outline ACCAC’s remit and performance, presenting an overview of the Authority’s planning processes which ensure that it meets the terms of that remit. We present ACCAC’s own view of its achievements over the past five years and confirm

the accuracy of this view.

- (09) We then review the findings of the previous Quinquennial Review of ACCAC and the recent Quinquennial Review of QCA to identify issues which have previously been identified as worthy of further consideration. We note the lack of progress which has been made on the proposed Memorandum of Understanding with QCA first mooted in 1997.
- (10) **On the basis of the evidence gathered from our Consultation exercise and interviews with key stakeholders, from Assembly and Authority papers and observation of meetings, we are of the firm view that the functions which ACCAC is currently charged to perform are still necessary.**
- (11) In considering alternative models, we are also persuaded that an Assembly Sponsored Public Body is an appropriate constitutional model through which those functions may be most effectively and independently be performed. The ASPB model permits delegation of statutory responsibility for certain Governmental functions to a body which operates at arm's length from it. It is thus in a position to act independently of Government *and be seen to do so*. This is of significance both to the regulatory and to the advisory functions which ACCAC performs. It is of less significance to the classroom materials commissioning and production role which ACCAC performs.
- (12) We consider the question whether there is a need to rationalise functions between the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales and other public bodies engaged in the provision of like services in Wales and conclude that – for a number of constitutional and practical reasons – this would not be desirable in respect of either its regulatory or its advisory functions. We discuss the advantages and disadvantages of rationalising the commissioning and production of curriculum materials and conclude that ACCAC's robust procurement systems and the quality of the materials which it produces appear to serve Wales well and should not be lightly overturned.
- (13) ACCAC has certain defined responsibilities in relation to the Welsh language to exercise which are common to all ASPBs in Wales. However, in relation to commissioning classroom materials to support Welsh medium education, ACCAC has additional obligations. There are mixed views about the effectiveness with which it pursues these obligations, particularly in relation to the promotion of second language Welsh. This suggests at the very least a need for clarification of engagement in this area, given different local conditions and taking account of the views of the many different stakeholders with an interest in this issue. We will wish to explore this in greater detail at Stage II as part of our review of ACCAC's strategic effectiveness.
- (14) Audit and corporate governance evidence available to us at this Stage of the Review demonstrates that ACCAC is exercising its responsibilities and functions with integrity and propriety according to the terms of its Remit from the Welsh Assembly Government and is widely regarded as a "safe pair of hands". **We see no case on grounds of financial propriety or managerial efficiency for recommending that an alternative ASPB should be charged with the responsibilities currently allocated to ACCAC or that a new ASPB should be created to replace ACCAC.** Our review of audit and corporate governance evidence at this point has been limited to this particular question. We shall report more fully on these aspects of ACCAC's work in our Stage II Report.
- (15) We are very aware that neither the present constitutional settlement between Wales

and the United Kingdom nor the position and role of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority can be seen as being in steady state. We do not believe that ACCAC will emerge from the next quinquennium unchanged. We recommend that both the Assembly and the Authority give early and active consideration to the implications for ACCAC of further constitutional change as well as QCA's changing role and *modus operandi*.

(16) Finally, we indicate the other avenues of enquiry which we intend to pursue at Stage II of the Review.

(17) Our Conclusions are that

- The legal framework governing the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales is sufficient and adequate for the purposes which the National Assembly wishes to achieve.
- The regulatory and advisory functions of the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales are still necessary and are likely to become more so into the future. Its assessment function will continue to be necessary for as long as Wales retains a National Curriculum and a commitment to Welsh medium and bilingual provision and this may also be true of its commissioning function.
- Those functions could be carried out by an Executive Agency but this would remove the advantage of independence from Government in respect both of the regulatory and the advisory functions which ACCAC performs. There is no evidence that an Executive Agency would be more efficient in the discharge of these functions than ACCAC in its ASPB form.
- Although some Stakeholders may wish to see a realignment of functions between ACCAC and other agencies (whether statutory or not), we cannot see that this would be more efficient or more effective. However, we do see considerable scope for clarification of these agencies' respective functions.
- From inspection of papers, observation of meetings and interviews with key players, we are in no doubt about the diligence and professionalism with which the Authority fulfils its remit each year. Equally, we have received overwhelming evidence from most of ACCAC's stakeholder communities that they value ACCAC's role and work, even when they may wish to enter a caveat about some aspect of it.
- We would advise the Assembly in the strongest terms that it would do well to consider very carefully the implications of major structural change for an organisation which is working very effectively both as a corporate body, as a regulator (within the limited scope of its regulatory operation) and as an adviser which is trusted by Ministers and senior civil servants alike.
- We have been very mindful of ACCAC's particular responsibility for the Welsh medium and second language Welsh curriculum, together with its key role in relation to the Cwricwlwm Cymreig. We are concerned that insufficient attention appears to be paid (by ACCAC and by other agencies) to those work-based learners who seek to have their achievement assessed through the medium of Welsh.

(18) We make thirteen Recommendations (at pages 23 and 24 below).

## Introduction

1. The National Assembly for Wales has undertaken to review each of the Public Bodies which it sponsors every five years. Further information about these Quinquennial Reviews is given on the Assembly's web-site.<sup>(1)</sup> In essence, each Review falls into two parts: Stage I considers whether there is a continuing need for the functions to be performed and, if so, whether an Assembly Sponsored Public Body model is the most appropriate way of performing them. Stage II examines the strategic effectiveness and corporate governance of the body under Review.
2. This Report covers Stage I of the Review of ACCAC – the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales. It addresses the questions:
  - 2.1. What is the legal framework governing the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales?
  - 2.2. Are the functions of the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales still necessary?
  - 2.3. Do the functions need to be carried out by an Assembly Sponsored Public Body – are other options for undertaking the functions likely to be more effective?
  - 2.4. Are the functions best carried out by a single body? Is there a need to rationalise functions between the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales and other public bodies engaged in the provision of like services in Wales?
3. Consistent with the requirements for Quinquennial Reviews set out in the Assembly's Guidelines, this Review has included self-assessment by ACCAC itself, discussion with Members of the Authority and senior managers and receipt of views from major stakeholders including staff and their trade unions, partners and customers. We have undertaken a major consultation exercise which has enabled all of ACCAC's many stake-holders to comment on the Authority's role, functions and performance.
4. Our understanding has benefited particularly from detailed interviews with the Minister for Education and Life-long Learning and the Head of the Department for Training and Education at the Welsh Assembly Government. We have also – and unusually – had benefit of an appearance before the Assembly's Education and Life-long Learning Committee in order to take its views during the Consultation period, rather than at the end of it.
5. We have considered a large number of documents (both published and unpublished) and interviewed many of the key people whose decisions affect the way in which ACCAC performs its role. Many of these relate not only to these Stage I questions but are of equal importance to the questions which we shall address at Stage II.
6. We are indebted to all those who gave time to our enquiries and to our Steering Group whose advice we have tried assiduously to take on board. What follows is our own judgment based on the evidence which we have gathered from these different sources.
7. The format of the report follows the questions posed above.

## The legal framework

8. ACCAC - the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales/ Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru - has two principal roles. It is:
  - the Welsh Assembly Government's principal advisory body on matters relating to curriculum, assessment and qualifications in schools; and
  - the statutory regulatory authority in Wales with regard to all qualifications (outside higher education).
9. The Authority also has a key role in commissioning high quality Welsh and bilingual classroom materials to support the teaching of Welsh, other subjects through the medium of Welsh and Wales specific aspects of the school curriculum.
10. Its primary aim is "advancing education and training through the promotion of quality and coherence"<sup>(2)</sup> and its major priorities are:
  - "to ensure the framework of qualifications (outside higher education) meets the needs of learners and of Wales;
  - to ensure an integrated curriculum and assessment framework that:
    - provides a broad and balanced education
    - widens opportunity
    - raises standards of achievement;
  - to commission high quality Welsh and bilingual classroom materials;
  - to advise the Assembly as appropriate on educational policies; and
  - to ensure the Authority is managed efficiently and effectively."<sup>(3)</sup>
11. It was originally established by Section 14 of the Education Reform Act 1988 as the Curriculum Council for Wales (CCW). Section 253 of the Education Act 1993 provided for the expansion of the functions of the Council and for it to be renamed Awdurdod Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru/the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACAC).
12. These changes came into effect on 1 April 1994. Responsibility in respect of the examination and assessment of pupils aged 14–19 in subjects other than Welsh was transferred to the Authority from the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority under the provisions of the Education (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Transfer of Functions Order 1995, effective from 21 April 1995. Similar responsibilities in relation to Welsh were already invested in the Authority.
13. The Education Act 1997 provided for the reconstitution of the Authority through the amalgamation of ACAC and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) (Wales Office), its retitling and a significant widening of its remit. With effect from 1 October 1997, the Authority assumed additional responsibilities for the accreditation and quality assurance of the full range of vocational qualifications in Wales (with the exception of NVQs, in respect of which the Authority exercises concurrent functions with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), apart from formal accreditation of NVQs for which QCA will have sole responsibility).
14. The establishment of ACCAC meant that for the first time there was a single organisation in Wales that was responsible for overseeing and advising on both academic and vocational qualifications and the school curriculum.
15. The functions conferred on the Authority are to be exercised for the purpose of

advancing education and training in Wales and with a view to promoting quality and coherence in education and training.

16. In carrying out their functions, the Authority is to:

- comply with any directions given by the Welsh Assembly Government
- act in accordance with any plans approved by the Assembly
- so far as relevant, have regard to:
  - the requirement that the curriculum of schools must be balanced and broadly based, i.e. promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at school and of society, and prepare pupils at school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life
  - the requirements of industry, commerce, finance and the professions regarding education and training (including required standards of practical competence)
  - the requirements of persons with special learning needs
  - information supplied to them by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales or by any other body designated by the Welsh Assembly Government.

17. The statutory and legal framework within which ACCAC operates is thus clear. Its responsibilities lie with the school curriculum and the preparation of young people for adult life (the formative stages of learning) and with the requirements of working life (often referred to as continuing education or life-long learning).

18. Whilst the balance between these two responsibilities will be reflected in the annual remit letter which the Minister gives the Authority and in the emphasis which the Authority thereby places on them, there is no statutory or legal *lacuna* in the Authority's functions.

19. This is widely misunderstood amongst ACCAC's stake-holders, many of whom have advanced the view that the emphasis which ACCAC has given to the schools curriculum at the expense (as they would see it) of post-16 learning is statutory in nature. Other than the exclusion of awards made by Wales' Universities there is no statutory basis for this belief. It arises largely as a consequence of the emphasis which the National Assembly has placed in ACCAC's Annual Remit Letters on the primacy of its responsibilities in respect of the National Curriculum. Nonetheless, it is not helpful to ACCAC's standing to have this view persist and we **recommend** that ACCAC and its Sponsor Division explore ways in which it might correct this view.

20. We consider ACCAC's legal basis to be perfectly satisfactory but would **recommend** that the Authority discuss with its Sponsor Division ways in which its annual remit letter might be developed to demonstrate a fuller engagement with the post-16 agenda.



## The Strategic Policy Context – ACCAC’s functions and *The Learning Country*

21. ACCAC operates within a framework of policies determined by the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government. Prominent amongst these are the Assembly's policy statement *The Learning Country*<sup>(4)</sup> and the statement on *Developing the Learning Country* in the Plan for Wales 2001.<sup>(5)</sup>
22. The fundamental principles for education and lifelong learning in Wales, as set out in *The Learning Country*, are:
- setting high standards and expectations;
  - ensuring the interests of learners are paramount;
  - ensuring true parity of esteem between academic, technical and vocational pathways;
  - removing barriers to learning;
  - narrowing inequalities in achievement;
  - supporting innovation consistently to focus on the future needs of the economy;
  - cementing partnerships with practitioners and others;
  - using money wisely;
  - basing policies on sound evidence; and
  - responding to the needs and circumstances of Wales.
23. These are all central to the functions which ACCAC is charged to perform. Conversely, Wales will continue to need a body which is both authoritative and accountable to achieve these objectives. It might be argued that such a body could stand outside Wales and achieve the first nine objectives just as effectively as a Wales-based body. The difficulty comes in respect of the final objective – responding to the needs and circumstances of Wales – and being seen to be accountable to the people of Wales through the National Assembly. It is particularly difficult to imagine a non-Wales body fulfilling ACCAC’s responsibilities for the Curriculum Cymreig (and not only those which relate to Welsh-medium and bilingual provision) with the sensitivity and insight with which almost all of ACCAC’s stake-holders credit it.
24. On the other hand, there is a potential danger of insularity and national introversion if a Wales-based standards setting and regulatory body were to focus solely on national needs without reference to those current in the rest of the United Kingdom, Europe or the rest of the world. At the very least, this might jeopardise the acceptability and transferability of qualifications between Wales, England and Northern Ireland with potentially adverse consequences for learners and institutions alike.
25. There is thus a continuing need for close dialogue between the qualifications regulators, if not the national curriculum development agencies, in the UK home territories. Curriculum development, qualifications frameworks, assessment techniques and quality assurance methods are all matters of current concern to most countries in the contemporary world. To be effective as a curriculum or qualifications adviser, therefore, an agency must ensure that it is abreast of best practice not only in its home territory but also on the wider world stage.
26. From the evidence which we have gathered, it is clear to us not only that ACCAC works hard to ensure that it maintains a positive and developmental relationship with the other UK qualifications regulators and curriculum development bodies but that its experience is sought and valued by similar agencies beyond the United Kingdom.

27. Within the UK, it is particularly well regarded – by a range of different partners and counterparts - for its work on credit frameworks whilst internationally one of its senior officers was recently invited to give the keynote speech on ACCAC's experience at an Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities' conference.

## The Strategic Policy Context – the United Kingdom

28. As noted above, alongside its critically important Wales-specific strategic policy requirements, the Authority must also engage closely and appropriately with its key peers in the other countries of the United Kingdom. Particularly in its role as regulator of qualifications, ACCAC cannot be judged in isolation from its larger English counterpart, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). In operational terms, ACCAC has a defined lead responsibility for two Awarding Bodies – WJEC/CBAC and the International Baccalaureate Organisation. In other operational dealings with Awarding Bodies it depends on judgements made by QCA. However, its *strategic* interest extends to all such bodies.
29. In its advisory, rather than regulatory, role in relation to qualifications, as in its broader role as adviser on curriculum and assessment matters, it is not so constrained by structural relationships with non-Welsh agencies. Here, it has an opportunity to interpret the needs of Wales within an increasingly European and international context and offer advice which may be seen as *leading* rather than *following* the other nations of the United Kingdom.
30. Over time there may be some expectation that there will be increasing divergence in policy and practice between these national administrations and their agencies. It is to be anticipated that a key challenge for the Authority and its senior staff will continue to be to interpret and navigate successfully between the developing requirements of the National Assembly and the shifting stance of its key peers. The work of the Richard Commission may have a significant bearing on this.
31. That challenge is well recognised by ACCAC's Chairman and Chief Executive.
32. It was recognised by the then DfEE as long ago as October 1997 that a map – in the form of an agreed protocol or memorandum of understanding between ACCAC and QCA – would be desirable. The Financial and Management Policy Review of ACCAC completed in February 1999 also recommended such a memorandum. However, we are disappointed to note that this issue appears not to have been addressed during last year's DfES-led Quinquennial Review of QCA.
33. In its response to the current Consultation, QCA presages a weakening of formal linkages between the regulators, as devolution becomes of ever greater significance. It envisages the possibility of greater divergence between Wales and England and considers a different type of working relationship likely.
34. This has important ramifications not only for those aspects of ACCAC's work which parallel QCA's but also – and perhaps more especially – for those where QCA has traditionally acted for the other qualifications regulators. The impact is likely to be felt rather more keenly in respect of occupational qualifications than it is in respect of general qualifications and may well raise the question whether Wales wishes to retain a particular approach to qualification regulation should England decide to move away from current practice. If so, this will inevitably lead to capacity and resourcing questions for ACCAC and for the National Assembly.

35. **We recommend**, therefore, that both the Assembly and the Authority give early and active consideration to the implications for ACCAC of the report of the Richard Commission as well as QCA's changing role and *modus operandi*.
36. Despite these pressures for divergence, it is very much in the interests of the UK national Governments to endeavour to remain in step with one another to ensure comparability and transferability of qualifications from one country to another. Joint work on the rationalisation of qualifications together with reviews of the national qualifications framework, regulatory arrangements and the accreditation process will test the strength of the common purpose which England, Wales and Northern Ireland have in this arena.
37. However, the urgent need for an agreed protocol cannot be ignored without leading to misunderstanding, discontinuity and opacity of responsibility and accountability, whether the trend be towards greater harmonisation or greater divergence. **We strongly recommend that ACCAC and QCA, together with their respective Sponsors, conclude a Memorandum of Understanding at the earliest opportunity.**
38. In this regard, the November 2001 Concordat between the Welsh Assembly Government and the DfES is of significance, although we have observed perceptions from all sides that this could be adhered to rather more robustly than has been the case. In the course of our Review, we have witnessed at first hand an example of a DfES Minister making a statement (in relation to Key Skills tests) which not only cut across advice which ACCAC was preparing for the Assembly Minister at her request but on which no soundings appeared to have been taken from the devolved administrations. It was represented to us that this was by no means a one-way street. It is not our place to explore this more fully, but we believe that a restatement of the intentions of the Concordat in the light of its operation in practice may be timely.
39. **We therefore recommend that** the Welsh Assembly Government seek an early opportunity to reinforce with DfES the mutual benefit arising from better adherence to the letter and spirit of the Concordat established between them.
40. Furthermore, the new responsibilities vested in the Sector Skills Development Agency and the Sector Skills Councils may well require a similar approach to be adopted to ensure that their UK-wide remit but Westminster-directed line of accountability does not inhibit a Wales-specific approach to the relationship between the skills agenda and matters concerning qualifications and assessment. This may be an issue which Future Skills Wales, of which ACCAC is a strategic partner, may care to address, as may the Skills and Employment Action Plan team.
41. The issue is simple. Wales has a well-developed Skills and Employment Action Plan and a process which underpins and sustains it.<sup>(6)</sup> That Plan, agreed in 2002, covers both entrants to the labour market and those already in employment. The strategy for each is given in paragraphs 24 and 28 respectively:
42. Throughout the Plan are references to qualifications, whether this is *"to make [them] more attractive to learners [and] enabling them to achieve qualifications in manageable stages"* (para 27), to *"extend literacy and numeracy qualifications for young people and adults"* (Action B2), to *"enable learners to progress towards qualifications or awards by accessing learning in convenient bite-sized chunks [via a credit-based qualification framework in Wales] by September 2003"* (Action B4), *"to monitor take-up of Key Skills Qualifications in all learning routes"* (Action B5), *"to pilot a Welsh Baccalaureate to provide a broader qualification option including vocational learning and key skills"* (Action B7) or to explore *"linking work experience to vocational qualifications as part of a clearer vocational learning route"* (Action B9). Many of these are distinctive Welsh actions which do not yet figure on the agendas of the other UK partners.

43. This tension is identified clearly in paragraph 15 of the Skills and Employment Action Plan, which locates Wales firmly within the new and changed framework of UK institutions (especially the SSDA and SSCs),

*“It is vital that Wales is part of this new structure because many labour market issues are UK-wide and many of our employers are not based in Wales. In addition we need the ability to address Wales-specific issues. The Assembly Government works closely with DfES in the licensing process and ELWa will provide support for SSCs in Wales. SSCs will be required to operate effectively in Wales.”*

44. Part of that effective operation will be to recognise the distinctive Welsh needs which flow from other Assembly policies and strategies in relation to qualifications, curriculum (in its widest sense) and assessment, including a grasp of the implications of *laith Pawb*<sup>(7)</sup> for the development and certification of generic and vocational skills in specific sectors. This is of direct interest to ACCAC, especially in its role as regulator of qualifications.
45. **We recommend, therefore, that the Assembly keep under close review its definition of “effective operation” in respect of the new Sector Skills Councils to ensure that they meet the particular needs of employment and workforce development in Wales within a framework given by the Assembly’s other major strategies. Within this, we recommend that they liaise closely with those agencies – in particular, ACCAC – which have a responsibility for the quality assurance of qualifications, curriculum, assessment and delivery in Wales.**
46. These wider strategic issues are, in some senses, beyond the specific remit of this Review. Nonetheless, they set some of the wider parameters for it. **These two sections have demonstrated that the functions of the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales are still necessary.**

## ACCAC’s remit and performance

47. ACCAC undertakes a detailed and comprehensive planning process to ensure that its Objectives and the detailed specification of the Assembly’s requirements can be achieved each year. It produces an annual Corporate Plan, which it refines through discussion both within the Authority and with its Sponsor Division and which it seeks to align closely to its Remit Letter and the financial resources available to it.
48. The Authority’s Plans are prepared within the framework provided by the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum issued by the Welsh Assembly Government and take account of advice set out in the Welsh Assembly Government’s *Guidance on Corporate Planning by executive sponsored public bodies (2001)*.
49. The Corporate Plan is published in February each year and covers a three year period. It offers stated assumptions where necessary to cover those areas of policy and resources where final decision has not yet been made. The Corporate Plan sets out a narrative on the Authority’s future direction, objective by objective and gives a summary of planned expenditure by objective, together with performance indicators and output measures. Stage II of this Review will consider these in detail.
50. The Corporate Plan 2003/2004 to 2005/2006 indicates the Authority’s planned expenditure by programme:<sup>(8)</sup>

Activity	2001/02 Actual £'000	2002/03 Budget £'000	2003/04 Plan £'000	2004/05 Plan £'000	2005/06 Plan £'000
<b>EXPENDITURE BY PROGRAMME</b>					
1. Qualifications	1,106	1,684	1,745	1,399	1,335
2. Curriculum and assessment	4,825	4,917	4,541	5,080	5,363
3. Commissioning of classroom materials	1,192	1,400	1,400	1,500	1,550
4. Research and information	209	235	198	205	295
<b>TOTAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>7,332</b>	<b>8,236</b>	<b>7,884</b>	<b>8,184</b>	<b>8,543</b>
5. Administration expenditure	3,198	3,633	4,070	4,509	4,818
Capital expenditure	-	376	80	80	80
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>10,530</b>	<b>12,245</b>	<b>12,034</b>	<b>12,773</b>	<b>13,441</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>(113)</b>	<b>(70)</b>	<b>(75)</b>	<b>(75)</b>	<b>(75)</b>
<b>NET CASH EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>10,417</b>	<b>12,175</b>	<b>11,959</b>	<b>12,698</b>	<b>13,366</b>
Depreciation of fixed assets/cost of capital	-	166	145	145	145
<b>TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>10,417</b>	<b>12,341</b>	<b>12,104</b>	<b>12,843</b>	<b>13,511</b>
<b>FUNDED BY:</b>					
Grant in aid	10,304	12,149	12,104	12,843	13,511
Carryover from previous year	113	192	-	-	-
Amount owing from QCA	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>10,417</b>	<b>12,341</b>	<b>12,104</b>	<b>12,843</b>	<b>13,511</b>

51. Because ACCAC's total income comes from grant in aid it is particularly important that it is not only seen to be managing its finances with absolute propriety but that it is also achieving value for money. **A preliminary review of the Authority's accounts and audit papers, together with initial interviews with both Internal and External Auditors, suggest a very high level of probity and financial control within the Authority, coupled with a commitment to establish appropriate measures to assess value for money in a more formal way than hitherto.**

52. The Authority's Corporate Plan targets are translated into an Annual Operational Plan, which give a more finely grained view of the Authority's planned work, as illustrated by the table below which is taken from the 2003/2004 Operational Plan in respect of Objective 1 Qualifications. There is a slight mismatch between the indicative figure for Programme 1 expenditure given in the Corporate Plan (£1,745k) and that in the operational plan (£1,877k) due to carry-over and grant in aid adjustments.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Budget £'000</b>
The National Qualifications Framework and other Policy Developments	229
Ensuring Standards to secure public confidence	367
Support for Welsh-medium qualifications	1,081
The statutory approval of qualifications	-
QCA agency costs	200
<b>PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>1,877</b>
Allocation of the Authority's Direct Running Costs from Objective 5	<b>1,851</b>
<b>OBJECTIVE 1: TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>3,728</b>

53. Behind these budget allocations sit a large number of detailed planned outcomes. The Operational Plan is reviewed quarterly by the Authority *via* a comprehensive Quarterly Performance Report. Once again, this Report presents outcomes by Objective, with a Report on Achievements against Performance Measures and Targets and a Financial Summary showing Budgeted Expenditure for the full year and for the year to date, Actual Expenditure for the year to date and Revised Forecast Expenditure for the full year at the time of the report and any previous Revised Forecast. This is supported by more detailed Management Accounts for each Objective.

54. We will consider this process in more detail at Stage II of the Review. At this time, we note simply that the Authority's planning and financial control systems appear to be robust and can support the outcomes and achievements which are reported annually in its **Annual Report and Accounts**, an attractive publication which presents a clear picture of the Authority's work. ACCAC's Corporate Plan and its Annual Report and Accounts are accessible on its web-site ([www.accac.org.uk](http://www.accac.org.uk) – Corporate Information).

## **ACCAC's own view of its achievements**

55. In its own self-evaluation produced for this Review <sup>(9)</sup>, ACCAC summarises its principal achievements against each of its five Objectives over the past five years as follows:

*Objective 1. Developing a coherent and integrated framework of high quality qualifications, which meet the needs of Wales; improves levels of skill and educational achievement and commands the confidence of the public.*

- In conjunction with QCA and CCEA, the Authority has been working since 1997 to establish a National Qualifications Framework for all qualifications. The vast majority of the programme will be completed by 2005. Rationalisation of existing qualifications continues. During 2002, 454 qualifications were accredited. Since 1999, A/AS levels, GCSEs, AEs, VGSEs, VCEs, over 200 VRQs, NVQs, the IBO diploma and a large range of Entry Level titles have been accredited.
- The *Arrangements for Monitoring and Reporting Publicly on External Qualifications* provides the basis for the current post accreditation monitoring arrangements, which has been phased in since 2000.

*Objective 2. Developing a coherent and integrated curriculum and assessment framework which raises standards of achievement and widens educational opportunity.*

- Following the approval of a revised National Curriculum in 2000, the

Authority has continued to support its implementation, publishing supplementary guidance and exemplification materials and providing further advice to Ministers including advice on PSE and WRE becoming statutory. Preparation is underway to prepare for the next review.

- The Authority has issued a range of materials to support and develop teachers' own assessment skills and has developed, distributed and marked statutory tests.
- The Authority has actively supported and promoted the teaching of religious education and has been at the forefront of work supporting pupils who have additional educational needs.

*Objective 3. Commissioning high quality Welsh and bilingual classroom materials to support the teaching of Welsh, other subjects through the medium of Welsh and Wales specific aspects of the school curriculum.*

- Since 1996, the Authority has commissioned 185 projects leading to the publication of 1329 titles. The Authority's commissioning strategy is reviewed every three years.

*Objective 4. Improving the Authority's intelligence base with targeted research and providing timely information regarding developments in education and training in Wales.*

- The Authority has provided clear and timely information on curriculum, assessment, examination and commissioning matters, through the ACCAC newsletter, exhibitions, regular meetings of teachers associations and the website.

*Objective 5. Ensuring an effective and efficient organisation.*

- The Authority maintains an efficient and effective organisation. Regular reports are provided to the Authority and the Assembly utilising quarterly performance reports and the Annual Report and Accounts.
- The Authority aims to conform to the prompt payment code and has done so with an average of 94.46% compliance since 2000.
- An IT Action Plan has been developed which includes upgrading the Authority website. This is aimed at meeting Government targets of making all government services available electronically by 2005.
- In the past five years, the Authority has worked successfully in improving its effectiveness (see reports of National Audit Office and Internal Auditors). The Authority has undertaken a number of personnel initiatives. These include, in October 2000, accreditation by Investors in People; completion of the Conditions of Employment Staff Handbook in March 2001; development of an Equal Opportunities Policy and a review of the pay and grading system in line with the Assembly's equal pay in 2001-2002. A number of policies nearing completion are the Work/Life Balance Policy, Working Time directive and the Data Protection Policy.
- The Authority maintains its commitment to bilingualism (English/Welsh). The Welsh Language Board approved our Welsh Language Scheme in 2001. Further actions will be undertaken this year in line with the Assembly's *Iaith Pawb* Action Plan.
- The Operational Plan for 2003-2004 also outlines how the Authority incorporates the Assembly's crossing cutting themes across its work.

**56. The Review Team can confirm the accuracy of these claims. From inspection of**

**papers, observation of meetings and interviews with key players, we are in no doubt about the diligence and professionalism with which the Authority fulfils its remit each year. Equally, we have received overwhelming evidence from most of ACCAC's stakeholder communities that they value ACCAC's role and work, even when they may wish to enter a caveat about some aspect of it.**

## Options Appraisal

57. A Quinquennial Review gives an opportunity for Ministers and the Assembly to consider whether there is a better, more cost effective way of performing a set of functions which it is generally agreed are desirable and necessary. The principal options which are generally thought worth testing<sup>(10)</sup> are:

- carrying out the tasks within the Department
- vesting the responsibilities in an Executive Agency
- transferring them to an existing ASPB
- contracting out - that is, to hold a competition, without an in-house team competing, between external bidders (usually the private sector, but there could be bids from the voluntary sector, or other parts of the public sector) for work previously done in-house.
- market testing – that is, to hold a competition with an in-house team competing against external bidders.
- privatisation – that is, to provide the service through the private sector.

58. We have discussed these with a number of interviewees. We can report that there is no appetite on the part of the Welsh Assembly Government for absorption of these tasks into the Department for Training and Education. The Department would be obliged to take on specialist staff to give itself the capacity and expertise to perform the functions which ACCAC presently performs and the Minister would lose the advantage of being able to stand at some distance both from the qualifications regulation role which ACCAC performs and from the advice which it gives her.

59. It is generally thought advisable to retain an arm's length approach when any or all of the following conditions are present:

- The functions are regulatory, may encompass activities which the Government undertakes, the execution of which to be seen as independent from Government.
- The functions involve judgements about intellectual activity which need to be seen to be free from political constraint.
- The judgements crucially require particular specialist professional knowledge or skills which government does not have or expect to have.
- The functions primarily take the form of a direct service to the public which are best managed through a free-standing corporate body.
- The functions require commercial judgements and the ability to make and execute rapid commercial decisions.

60. In ACCAC's case, the first three of these conditions are clearly present, whilst the fifth touches on ACCAC's commissioning role. This would support the argument for the continuation of an arm's length relationship.

61. On the other hand, the Executive Agency option has some attractions. It would avoid the



complexity and possible ambiguity of the current accountability relationships. On the one hand, ACCAC's Chairman and Chief Executive are accountable to the Members of the Authority. On the other, they are accountable to the Minister. As Accounting Officer, the Chief Executive is also accountable to the Permanent Secretary. The Executive Agency model would clarify this line of accountability. It could be achieved at relatively low cost and with minimal disruption to the service which ACCAC provides.

62. However, it would deny the Minister the distance which she – and her official advisers – see as valuable and would deny ACCAC its autonomy in giving independent advice and in regulating qualifications. It would also lose the benefit of the expertise which members of the Authority may bring to bear on the work of the Authority and the advice given to the Minister. The need to amend primary legislation (the Education Act 1997) could be time-consuming and disruptive. Above all, we have found no evidence to suggest that it would lead to greater efficiency of operation.

63. Indeed, it has been argued elsewhere that the difference between the Executive Agency and ASPB model may be more apparent than real. Andrew Massey has claimed in the UK context that

*“There is an increasing homogeneity here, with even those agencies which remain nominally part of a central government department behaving increasingly like quasi-autonomous NDPBs, while many NDPBs are increasingly coming to resemble Next Steps executive agencies.”<sup>(11)</sup>*

**64. We do not recommend, therefore, that the Executive Agency model would be more appropriate than the ASPB model for the discharge of ACCAC's current functions.**

65. If it is accepted that the Executive Agency model is inappropriate, then a second option would be to transfer ACCAC's functions to another ASPB or similar body. To amalgamate ACCAC's functions with those of either Estyn or ELWa would be likely to cause greater confusion in the public mind about responsibility for standards in education on the one hand and responsibility for adequacy of funding and planning on the other. As our Consultation has shown, there is an urgent need to clarify responsibilities and boundaries in the public mind, not to confuse them yet further. Nowhere have we found any strong argument in favour of such a transfer of functions, nor can we point to an example elsewhere of such functional amalgamation having been attempted.

66. Especially in regard to the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, there is an urgent need for the three bodies to identify clearly their respective roles and promulgate these to stake-holders and the wider public. **We recommend** that ACCAC, ELWa and Estyn agree and clarify their respective roles and responsibilities in relation to the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, perhaps in the form of a Joint Statement.

67. A third option which has been canvassed is that of merging ACCAC's functions with those of WJEC/CBAC. This would present a number of difficulties. First of all, it would put the new body in a position where it had both awarding and regulatory responsibilities and thus needed effective Chinese walls to protect the public interest. Although a model which applies in Scotland and Northern Ireland, it did not appeal to the QCA Quinquennial Review team and does not commend itself to key stakeholders in Wales, including WJEC/CBAC itself.

68. Quite apart from any conflict of interest problems which it might engender (and which are, in the Review Team's view compelling), there is also the constitutional difficulty that WJEC/CBAC is a non-statutory company, wholly owned by the local authorities in Wales. It is questionable whether those local authorities would be prepared to transfer this ownership to ACCAC in order to secure proper independence and public accountability.

Conversely, under the Government of Wales Act 1998 (c. 38), whilst it would be possible to transfer any or all of ACCAC's functions "to a county council, county borough council or community council in Wales (or to more than one such council)" (clause 28 (1) (c)), there appears to be no provision to transfer them to a company which is the joint creature of several such councils.

**69. We conclude, therefore, that transfer of ACCAC's functions to another ASPB or similar body would not benefit Wales.**

70. Contracting out, market testing and privatisation are not options which have met with much favour amongst our consultees. ACCAC's work is specialist in nature and defined in terms of the public interest in having secure standards for qualifications, curriculum and assessment. Whilst there are those who argue that ACCAC's commissioning role might be better performed elsewhere (including, possibly, entirely in the private sector), there is no significant body of opinion wishing to construct a case for putting out either its regulatory or advisory roles.

71. At the strategic level, although ACCAC is the Minister's statutory advisor on qualifications, curriculum and assessment, it is not the *only* advisor. We have found no example of the Authority's advice being rejected by the Minister, although there are several examples of both the Minister and the Assembly taking advice *both* from ACCAC *and* from other advisors, particularly Estyn and the academic community. We believe this to be a healthy situation which assists the Minister and Assembly to develop evidence-based policy from whichever sources it may be provided. We do not believe that the "marketisation" of ACCAC's advisory role would lead to any particular benefit to the Assembly or its Government.

72. There is an argument, however, that

*"regulatory and support functions require different tones of engagement. The one is authoritative and detached, while the other is more collaborative; one seeking compliance, the other requiring creative engagement."*<sup>(12)</sup>

73. This was presented to us as a comment on structure, rather than style, and deserves consideration at this Stage of the Review. Its resolution could be through the separation of curriculum development work (including qualifications and assessment frameworks) from the regulation of qualifications and awards offered through those frameworks. It would require the creation of two quite distinct bodies – one as qualifications and assessment regulator and the other as a free-standing curriculum development agency. Each would then be free to adopt whichever "tone of engagement" were thought to be appropriate to its function.

74. A body with responsibility, *inter alia*, for the National Curriculum for Wales would at times expect (and be expected) to be "authoritative and detached" once it moved from consultation to oversight mode. Equally, a body whose only functions were regulatory would need to engage continuously with the body responsible for curriculum and others to ensure that it fully understood the assessment requirements and implications of a curriculum determined by others.

75. We fear that such a separation of curriculum development and regulatory roles might reduce the effectiveness of both, without bringing any desired benefit in terms of engagement with relevant stake-holders. **We recommend** that ACCAC's curriculum development and regulatory roles should not be separated.

76. ACCAC can be seen as a paradigmatic ASPB in terms of the definition of Executive Non-Departmental Public Bodies given by the Cabinet Office:

*“NDPBs therefore carry out a wide range of important functions best provided by a body which is at arm’s length from Government, preserving independence in its day-to-day decisions from Ministers and their civil servants. NDPBs also offer the opportunity of bringing a large number of ordinary people into public life.”<sup>(13)</sup>*

77. The Cabinet Office paper suggests a number of questions which should be asked to gauge the potential for contracting out, market testing or privatising a function of service. These are given at Appendix 2.
78. **The general consensus which has emerged from our Review is that none of these options would improve ACCAC’s operation as a whole and we are not minded, therefore, to recommend any of them as alternatives to the current ASPB model.**
79. However, it is worth considering whether some of these options might be appropriate for one particular element of ACCAC’s work – its commissioning responsibilities.
80. We have found that ACCAC’s experience of commissioning test and other curriculum materials (including Welsh language materials) and its robust procedures for ensuring probity and value for money demonstrate a commitment to the principles of externality and market competition alongside a determination to ensure the proper use of public monies.
81. We can confirm from our own review of ACCAC’s papers that it has strong and transparent procedures both for the identification of needs and the commissioning of materials. This has been attested by most of the respondents to our Consultation. We recognise the scale and significance of this work, within ACCAC’s overall remit. We do not believe that transfer of this responsibility to another ASPB (or similar public body) would improve on ACCAC’s performance.
82. However, there is an important debate as to whether this role creates and maintains an artificial market by distorting schools’ expectations of the price which they should expect to pay for such materials. That argument suggests that a more realistic approach to pricing of materials could lead to a greater willingness by publishers to risk investment in a wider range of publications than those supported through the public commissioning process. This could be facilitated by diverting funds which are presently voted to ACCAC to schools themselves, perhaps ear-marked (initially, at least) for Welsh-medium classroom materials purchase.
83. We have given careful thought to this argument and would not wish to support it. Support for Welsh-medium education is a high priority for the National Assembly and its Government. It is reasonable for it to wish to retain levers of control – whether in the form of incentives or constraints – in this area. It is difficult to see how it could ensure that such ear-marking could be given practical effect in an environment where Assembly funds might not easily be hypothecated via LEAs to schools or, indeed, within schools themselves.
84. Furthermore, the Assembly would be gambling on the commercial acumen of a limited range of publishers who would need to be prepared to risk significant investment in the production of materials for which they would need to create a market.
85. For these reasons, and despite the apparent attractiveness of a redirection of public subsidy away from an intermediary (ACCAC) to direct beneficiaries (schools and their pupils), **we do not wish to recommend any change to ACCAC’s commissioning remit.** We are persuaded that ACCAC discharges its remit well in this area of its work and do not believe that transfer of this responsibility to another ASPB (or similar public

body) would improve on its performance. **We do believe that an entirely different approach, based on market principles, would be a considerable gamble and one which we would not recommend.**

86. **Indeed, we caution against radical change in the remit and terms of reference of an organisation which is working very effectively both as a corporate body, as a regulator (within the limited scope of its regulatory operation) and as an adviser which is trusted by Ministers and senior civil servants alike.**

87. We do so not because of any innate preference for the *status quo*, nor because we believe that ACCAC has *no* need to reconsider any part of its operation. Rather, we recognise that its key counterpart, QCA, is quite likely to see significant change in its functions and operations within the next eighteen months and these, of themselves, will have significant implications for its fellow qualifications regulators. In our view, it would be unwise for Wales to strike a radically different organisational path at the present time.

## The Consultation Exercise

88. We despatched 342 hard copies of a twelve page Consultation Document to individuals and organisations in mid-May with a request that they respond by July 11<sup>th</sup>. Subsequently, we have sent a further 28 copies electronically. We have received 67 responses, including more than one response from the same organisation.

89. In addition to this, ACCAC sent an invitation on our behalf to 2,065 schools and colleges in Wales

1,653	Primary Schools
228	Secondary Schools
51	Special Schools
30	Pupil Referral Units
28	FE & Technical Colleges
43	Independent Primary Schools
32	Independent Secondary Schools

and also to a further 283 Training Providers. We have received only two responses from this constituency.

90. We published (and publicised) two web-based questionnaires – in English and in Welsh – to specially created web-sites at [www.accacreview.info](http://www.accacreview.info) and [www.adolygiadaccac.info](http://www.adolygiadaccac.info) respectively. The latter generated a further five responses.

## The Stakeholder Constituencies

91. In considering these responses, we have found it helpful to group respondents into a number of Stakeholder Constituencies, as follows:

- Key Counterparts
- Other Public Agencies in Wales
- Awarding Bodies
- Educational Establishments
- Local Education Authorities and Local Governors' Associations
- Churches and other Religious Bodies
- Trade Unions and Professional Associations
- Business, Industry and Commerce

Current and former Members of ACCAC  
Contractors  
Others

## Conclusions

92. Stage I of our Review has involved a substantial evidence gathering process. We have received a considerable and broadly representative response to our Consultation Document. Most of ACCAC's key stakeholders have responded fully to our enquiries, either *via* a written response or through interview. We have conducted interviews with the Minister for Education and Life-long Learning and senior members of the Department for Training and Education. We have broken new ground procedurally in consulting with the Assembly's Education and Life-long Learning Committee during the consultation period, rather than simply discussing our Stage I report with them after the event.
93. We have interviewed both the Chairman and Chief Executive of ACCAC formally, as well as having discussed matters informally with them on a number of occasions. We have welcomed the opportunity to meet Members of the Authority and discuss our Review with them during a briefing session which preceded the July meeting of the full Authority. We have met most members of ACCAC's staff and have been present at the annual staff Away Day, which focussed on communications, equal opportunities and team working. We have interviewed the Authority's Internal and External Auditors and key partners from a number of organisations.
94. We have attended all committee meetings except the Remuneration Committee during the cycle leading to the July Authority meeting. We have considered ACCAC's own Position Statement, written specifically for this Quinquennial Review, as well as a large number of published reports and committee papers. The Authority has been open to all our enquiries throughout.
95. Much of the information which we have gathered will be germane to Stage II of the Review. That Stage will focus on the corporate governance and effectiveness of the Authority and will involve a closer engagement with the wider staff team. It will also consider the scope for ACCAC to engage with the National Assembly's Relocation Strategy.
96. We will wish to interview some of those who have responded to the Consultation Document, as well as using workshops and focus groups to bring those constituencies which have not taken the opportunity to respond so far into the ambit of the Review. We consider it particularly important to engage with schools, colleges and training providers, LEAs and the business community.
97. Our conclusions at this stage are, therefore, only partial conclusions, although they are firm conclusions in respect of the four major questions which we were asked to address in Stage I.

### ***Question 1. What is the legal framework governing the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales?***

98. We believe that the legal framework governing the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales is sufficient and adequate for the purposes which the National Assembly wishes to achieve. We are persuaded especially by the evidence which the Minister for Education and Life-long Learning gave to the Richard Commission

and by her interview with us that the Education Act 1997 confers sufficient powers should there be a wish to exercise them fully. We consider, however, that some of ACCAC's potential powers (relating to post-16 and skills agenda issues) are under-used and that there is scope for further discussion between ACCAC and its sponsor Division on the fullest implementation of its remit in these areas.

**Question 2. Are the functions of the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales still necessary?**

99. We are persuaded that the regulatory and advisory functions of the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales remain necessary and are likely to become more so into the future. Its assessment function will continue to be necessary for as long as Wales retains a National Curriculum and a commitment to Welsh medium and bilingual provision and this is similarly true of its commissioning function. We are mindful of ACCAC's strong track record in this procurement function. It has earned a reputation for conducting this role in a highly professional manner, demonstrating and requiring absolute probity throughout. Despite a strong intellectual argument for changing the basis on which the Assembly supports this provision financially in order to create a more effective market, we are not convinced that this would be any more efficient than present arrangements.

100. We do not accept the argument that, because the Minister is open to advice on curriculum and assessment matters from a number of quarters, then this suggests that ACCAC's advisory role is either ineffective or inappropriate. We believe that the interests of Wales are best served by having Assembly policy based, wherever possible, on strong evidence. ACCAC has shown itself to be particularly effective at providing such an evidence base. The only real argument is whether it is appropriately resourced to provide advice across the range of qualifications, curriculum and assessment issues which fall within the Education and Lifelong Learning remit. In particular, it raises once again the question of the Assembly's remit to ACCAC for post-16 and skills agenda issues and also leads us to ask whether ACCAC can satisfactorily pursue Objective 4 of its own Corporate Plan *Improving the Authority's intelligence base with targeted research and providing timely information regarding developments in education and training in Wales* on the funding base which it currently enjoys. We wish to explore this further at Stage II.

**Question 3. Do the functions need to be carried out by an Assembly Sponsored Public Body – are other options for undertaking the functions likely to be more effective?**

101. We have discussed alternative options for providing ACCAC's current functions. These could be carried out by an Executive Agency but this would remove the advantage of independence from Government in respect both of the regulatory and the advisory functions which ACCAC performs. There is no evidence that an Executive Agency would be more efficient in the discharge of these functions than ACCAC in its ASPB form. Such an Agency would lose the benefit of the expertise which Members of the Authority bring to bear on its decisions and its advice. An Executive Agency would almost certainly need to create some form of Steering or Advisory Group mechanism to give it that independent purchase.

102. We are not persuaded of the case for change in respect of the commissioning of Welsh-medium classroom materials. We can confirm from our own review of ACCAC's papers that it has strong and transparent procedures both for the identification of needs and the commissioning of materials. This has been attested by most (though not all) of the respondents to our Consultation. We recognise the scale, significance and quality of

this work and its place within ACCAC's overall remit. We do not believe that transfer of this responsibility to another ASPB (or similar public body) would improve on ACCAC's performance.

103. *However*, there is force in the argument that the public commissioning of such materials creates and maintains an artificial market and distorts schools' expectations of the cost of such materials. That argument suggests that a more realistic approach to pricing of materials could lead to a greater willingness by publishers to risk investment in a wider range of publications than those supported through the public commissioning process. This could be facilitated by diverting funds which are presently voted to ACCAC to schools themselves, perhaps earmarked (initially, at least) for Welsh-medium classroom materials purchase.
104. This would be a considerable gamble for the Assembly and one which most of our respondents would probably not advise, given the frequency with which we have been told that this could not be done without maintaining the current level of public subsidy, however that is delivered. We are aware of the difficulties which the Assembly would face in hypothecating this element of funding (currently forming some £1.4m of ACCAC's budget) into schools' revenue budgets. The danger would be that the money would be lost, rather than ear-marked, and the "market" would disintegrate for lack of purchasing power even before it had been formed.
105. We would also advise the Assembly in the strongest terms that it would do well to consider very carefully the implications of major structural change for an organisation which is working very effectively both as a corporate body, as a regulator (within the limited scope of its regulatory operation) and as an adviser which is trusted by Ministers and senior civil servants alike. Particularly with the changes in QCA's functions and operations which are likely to take place within the next eighteen months and which will cause significant underwash for its fellow qualifications regulators, it would be unwise for Wales to strike a radically different organisational path at the present time.

***Question 4. Are the functions best carried out by a single body? Is there a need to rationalise functions between the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales and other public bodies engaged in the provision of like services in Wales?***

106. Although some Stakeholders are keen to see a realignment of functions between ACCAC and other agencies (whether statutory or not), we cannot see that this would be more efficient or more effective. However, we do see considerable scope for clarification of these agencies' respective functions, particularly in relation to those parts of the qualifications and curriculum agenda on which Wales is leading the rest of the UK. This is especially so of the Curriculum and Qualifications Framework for Wales, where there is the potential to transform life-long learning in a very distinctive way.
107. We have been very mindful of ACCAC's particular responsibility for the Welsh medium and second language Welsh curriculum, together with its key role in relation to the Cwricwlwm Cymreig. We note a significant difference of view expressed by the Welsh Language Board and would advise ACCAC and the Board to seek a common understanding of the critical issues (especially those relating to the Key Stage 2 to 3 continuum) to ensure that effective collaboration in taking *laith Pawb* forward is not vitiated. We recognise that the Quinquennial Review of the Welsh Language Board recommended some two years ago, that

*"The WLB needs to be given a more clearly delineated role in relationship to bodies such as the Further Education Funding Council for Wales, ACCAC, the Welsh Joint*

*Education Committee and ELWa. It may well be necessary for the National Assembly to give specific guidance in this matter and arbitrate on the respective roles and responsibilities of the bodies in respect of Welsh medium education provision.*<sup>\*(14)</sup>

108. We would see revised National Assembly guidance as helpful in encouraging its ASPBs to reach a shared understanding of their respective responsibilities, as was achieved in 1994 following discussion and iteration of drafts amongst the several ASPBs.
109. We are concerned at the warnings given by some respondents about ACCAC's role in relation to Welsh-medium **vocational** qualifications. Despite ACCAC's evident commitment elsewhere, it may be that insufficient attention is being paid to those work-based learners who seek to have their vocational achievement assessed through the medium of Welsh. This is not solely a matter for ACCAC and its resolution will depend on action by awarding bodies, training providers and employers alike. We intend to return to this issue in Stage II, along with more detailed consideration of concerns about special needs provision.

## Recommendations

1. We consider ACCAC's legal basis to be satisfactory but would **recommend** that ACCAC and its Sponsor Division explore ways in which they might correct the view that ACCAC has insufficient statutory powers in relation to post-16 qualifications and curriculum matters. *(para 19)*
2. We **recommend** that the Authority discuss with its Sponsor Division ways in which its annual remit letter might be developed to demonstrate a fuller engagement with the post-16 agenda. *(para 20)*
3. **We see no case on grounds of financial propriety or managerial efficiency for recommending** that an alternative ASPB should be charged with the responsibilities currently allocated to ACCAC or that a new ASPB should be created to replace ACCAC. *(para 69)*
4. **We do not recommend** that the Executive Agency model would be more appropriate than the ASPB model for the discharge of ACCAC's current functions. *(para 64)*
5. The general consensus which has emerged from our Review is that none of the other options considered (contracting out, market testing or privatisation) would improve ACCAC's operation as a whole and **we are not minded, therefore, to recommend** any of them as alternatives to the current ASPB model. *(para 78)*
6. **We recommend** that ACCAC's curriculum development and regulatory roles should not be separated. *(para 75)*
7. After careful consideration of alternative approaches, **we do not wish to recommend any change to ACCAC's commissioning remit**. We are persuaded that ACCAC discharges its remit well in this area of its work and do not believe that transfer of this responsibility to another ASPB (or similar public body) would improve on its performance. We do believe that an entirely different approach, based on market principles, would be a considerable gamble and one which **we would not recommend**. *(para 85)*
8. **We caution against** radical change in the remit and terms of reference of an organisation which is working very effectively both as a corporate body, as a regulator



(within the limited scope of its regulatory operation) and as an adviser which is trusted by Ministers and senior civil servants alike. *(para 86)*

9. **We recommend** that both the Assembly and the Authority give early and active consideration to the implications for ACCAC of the report of the Richard Commission as well as QCA's changing role and *modus operandi*. *(para 35)*
10. **We strongly recommend** that ACCAC and QCA, together with their respective Sponsors, conclude a Memorandum of Understanding at the earliest opportunity. *(para 37)*
11. Alongside this, **we recommend** that the Welsh Assembly Government seek an early opportunity to reinforce with DfES the mutual benefit arising from better adherence to the letter and spirit of the Concordat established between them. *(para 39)*
12. **We recommend** that the Assembly keep under close review its definition of "effective operation" in respect of the new Sector Skills Councils to ensure that they meet the particular needs of employment and workforce development in Wales within a framework given by the Assembly's other major strategies. Within this, **we recommend** that they liaise closely with those agencies – in particular, ACCAC – which have a responsibility for the quality assurance of qualifications, curriculum, assessment and delivery in Wales. *(para 45)*
13. **We recommend** that ACCAC, ELWa and Estyn agree and clarify their respective roles and responsibilities in relation to the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, perhaps in the form of a Joint Statement. *(para 66)*

## Footnotes and references

- (1) *At [www.wales.gov.uk/subieconomics/content/aspb/non\\_ex\\_aspbs\\_guidance-e.htm](http://www.wales.gov.uk/subieconomics/content/aspb/non_ex_aspbs_guidance-e.htm)*
- (2) *ACCAC Corporate Plan 2003/2004 to 2005/2006, November 2002, p 5 and elsewhere*
- (3) *ibid, p 6*
- (4) *At [www.wales.gov.uk/subieducationtraining/content/learningcountry/tlc-contents-e.htm](http://www.wales.gov.uk/subieducationtraining/content/learningcountry/tlc-contents-e.htm)*
- (5) *At [www.planforwales.wales.gov.uk](http://www.planforwales.wales.gov.uk)*
- (6) *At [www.wales.gov.uk/subieducationtraining/content/employment/skillsemployment-actionplan-e.pdf](http://www.wales.gov.uk/subieducationtraining/content/employment/skillsemployment-actionplan-e.pdf)*
- (7) *Welsh Assembly Government, *Iaith Pawb – A National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales*, February 2003*
- (8) *ACCAC Corporate Plan 2003/2004 to 2005/2006, November 2002, Appendix 3.2, p 33*
- (9) *Final version, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2003*
- (10) *Cabinet Office, *Non-Departmental Public Bodies: A Guide for Departments*, March 2000, ANNEX C, *Options to consider when setting up and reviewing NDPBs**
- (11) *Public Money and Management, April-June 1997, p 22*
- (12) *Response from Dysg to the present Consultation Exercise*
- (13) *Cabinet Office, *Non-Departmental Public Bodies: A Guide for Departments*, March 2000 p 14*
- (14) *National Assembly for Wales, *Quinquennial Review of the Welsh Language Board*, Final Report, August 2001 para 4.5.4*

# APPENDIX 1

## Conclusions from the Quinquennial Review of QCA 2002, pp 3-4

6. There was almost universal consensus that there is a continuing need for QCA, and that its NDPB status is right – visible independence from government, yet close enough to have the ear of Ministers. There was also widespread support for keeping together qualifications and curriculum, and general and vocational learning.
7. We considered the potential benefits of contracting out the development of mathematics statutory national tests, and concluded that the decision to keep these in-house should be reviewed. We also recommend that there should be a clearer rationale for deciding which materials QCA needs to publish itself.
8. There was no case apparent to us for merging QCA with any other body, or for privatisation of any activities over and above those discussed in the paragraph above.  
.....
10. QCA's activities impact on an enormous range of people and bodies, and it consults widely. However, there were two clear themes in what was said to the team: that steps should be put in place to make it easier for outsiders to communicate with the right people in QCA; and that QCA can be “conservative” and needs to be more responsive.
11. Almost all consultees considered QCA to be very effective in dealing with detailed work, for example in interpreting and applying the curriculum. There was, though, a view that QCA should adopt a higher profile and more strategic role, particularly in debates about the maintenance of standards, and in promoting the social and economic benefits of learning and qualifications.
12. The qualifications and examinations system is critical in developing the national skills base. QCA has had a central role in the success of the current system: developing the qualifications framework, ensuring the system is robust, and dealing effectively with failure.
13. The system is complex, involving around 100 awarding bodies of different sizes and with different strengths. This diversity requires a regulator with a strategic overview of the system. However, much of QCA's current role focuses on the detail of the qualifications. It was persuasively, and consistently, argued that QCA could take a step back and focus more on quality assuring the awarding bodies. We recommend that QCA and DfES appraise the scope for developing QCA's role in this way.
14. We encountered strong views from some quarters about vocational qualifications. We were told that QCA could be more responsive to employers' needs, and that the current system for accrediting qualifications is too protracted. There is a tension here, because there is a need to ensure standards and reliability, and because some of the delays are caused by other parties, despite QCA's best efforts to help and expedite. Nonetheless we do accept that there is scope and need for improvement. We recommend that QCA, with DfES, should review its capacity as respects vocational qualifications and current systems. DfES should also lead an assessment, with QCA and the Sector Skills Development Agency, of the wider arrangements for vocational qualifications in light of the creation of Sector Skills Councils.
15. One apparent inconsistency in QCA's activity is the very different role it plays in the assessment system compared with its role in the qualifications system. In the latter it is essentially a regulator of delivery agents, and in the former QCA is itself the delivery agent.
16. There are cogent arguments both for and against change, and any transition would

require very careful risk management. On balance we see merit in QCA continuing its strategic oversight of the tests, but the case for whether or not QCA should withdraw from direct delivery functions deserves further examination. These do not sit easily with its main roles of policy adviser and regulator, and QCA needs to tighten its focus on these. We recommend that QCA should provide advice so that DfES can decide how our concerns can best be met; and advise DfES on the feasibility of a change in QCA's role in relation to tests at KS 2 and 3. If the decision is to go ahead with changes, we think that 2005 is a reasonable target for the national tests. We also propose changes for key and basic skills tests from 2004.

## APPENDIX 2

### Cabinet Office Questions

The Cabinet Office paper<sup>†</sup> suggests a number of questions which should be asked to gauge the potential for contracting out, market testing or privatising a function of service. These are

#### ***Contracting Out***

- Is the function assigned by statute to a Minister, office holder or local authority? If so, the power in Part II of the Deregulation and Contracting Act 1994 would need to be used.
- Is the market capable of providing the service? If the market is not particularly mature, does it show signs of developing and expanding to meet the challenge of market testing and contracting out?
- Is expertise required which the private sector is better able to offer and develop because of specialisation and differences in size (and which might also offer transferring staff the chance to specialise)?
- Who would bid? Is there a risk of strategic dependence if the potential market is limited?
- Where there are workload fluctuations and the potential for rapid technological change, can the private sector offer economies of scale and greater flexibility?
- What would be the effect on staff? How much uncertainty would there be? What would be the opportunities for staff?
- Would the private sector be better at managing the risks associated with delivering the service and can these risks be transferred?
- The results of the option appraisal that justified the choice of strategic contracting out, including the comparative cost of the public sector meeting the specified requirement, should be used as benchmarks and reviewed if necessary.
- Is capital investment needed? If so, the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) should be considered.

#### ***Market testing***

- Is the service or function new, without an existing in-house operation? Has the NDPB the resources to set up a function in order to compete? What would be the implications for other parts of the NDPB of earmarking resources in this way?
- Are the skills and management capability necessary to mount an in-house bid available?
- Is there scope for an in-house team to compete in partnership with an external organisation?
- How strong is the likelihood that the in-house team would offer better value for money than the private sector? Would they be able to make a viable bid? Or, would their participation in the competition be, in reality, an attempt to maintain morale? If so, have other means – such as rigorous internal restructuring – been adequately considered?
- What would be the effect on staff of uncertainty during the market testing process? Would they be less likely to co-operate with a private sector contractor if the in-house team were to be unsuccessful in the competition?
- Would it be fair on staff to make them compete with organisations that later they might have to work for, if an external bid were successful?

### ***Privatisation***

- Is the service, or something similar, being provided in the private sector?
- If the Government was not responsible for the service, would significant needs go unmet?
- Would the private sector muster the skills and resources necessary, if the market were left to respond to the particular service needs in question?
- Could the Government ensure that needs were met with better quality at optimal cost through regulation?

† ***Cabinet Office, Non-Departmental Public Bodies: A Guide for Departments, March 2000, ANNEX C, Options to consider when setting up and reviewing NDPBs, pp 146-148***

# APPENDIX 3

## Terms of Reference for the Review

### WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

### QUALIFICATIONS, CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY FOR WALES (ACCAC): QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### Introduction

The Quinquennial Review of the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales (the Authority) is being undertaken in the context of the Welsh Assembly Government's published Quinquennial Review Guidelines. The Guidelines set out the process for conducting the reviews. This includes self-assessment by the sponsored body, discussion with Members of the Authority and senior managers, inviting views from major stakeholders including staff and their trade unions, partners and customers.

The Terms of Reference sets out the key questions that the Review has to address. The issues common to all reviews are identified in the Guidelines, but the Terms of Reference also take account of issues specific to the Authority. The Review will take into account the Department for Education and Skills quinquennial review of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and consider the emerging conclusions from the review.

The key output of the review is a single report, which will be in two parts. The first part of the report on functions (Strategic Review – Stage I) will be considered at an interim stage, which will also set out emerging issues for the rest of the review.

The context for the review is the Assembly's strategic plan, *Plan for Wales 2001*, and related Assembly strategic document *The Learning Country*.

Stage I: Strategic Review

#### Functions

*In the light of the statutory duties and functions of the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales, the objectives of the National Assembly and models of good practice elsewhere, is there a continuing need for all the functions of Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales and, if so, is the current organisational framework for delivering those functions the most appropriate?*

- What is the legal framework governing the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales?
- Are the functions of the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales still necessary?
- Do the functions need to be carried out by an Assembly Sponsored Public Body – are other options for undertaking the functions likely to be more effective?
- Are the functions best carried out by a single body? Is there a need to rationalise functions between the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales and other public bodies engaged in the provision of like services in Wales?

## Stage II: Strategic Effectiveness & Corporate Governance Review

### Strategic effectiveness

*Subject to the findings in Stage I: are there improvements which should be made to the way in which the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales' functions are delivered, taking account of its statutory duties, how these have been translated into the aims and objectives of the Corporate Plan and the values and objectives of the National Assembly. Are there ways in which the functioning of its relationship with the National Assembly could be improved?*

This should take account of any independent studies, for example by the National Audit Office, and the actions taken following the previous FMPP.

- What have been the main strategic achievements of the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales over the last 5 years? To what extent has it met its objectives? What has been its performance against targets? How does its performance compare with that of comparable bodies? Are there performance issues that need to be addressed?
- How effective is the strategic relationship between the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales and the National Assembly, including the Welsh Assembly Government's strategic guidance and the Authority's arrangements for responding to the National Assembly's strategic objectives, guiding themes and values (including equal opportunities, tackling social disadvantage and sustainable development)? How might they be improved?
- How effective has been the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales' corporate planning in developing clear strategic direction, setting targets and allocating resources to objectives and priorities?
- Does the corporate planning process reflect an integrated approach to the functions delivered by the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales?
- Is there an effective mutual understanding of the roles of the members of the Authority and the senior management team in setting corporate objectives and monitoring their implementation? Are the processes for decision-making by members clear and efficient and the delineation between what is for the Authority and management clear?
- Is the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales sufficiently responsive to its partners and customers, does it understand the nature of its relationships with them and does it have their confidence as a body with which they can do business, are there ways in which relationships might be strengthened?
- Are reporting arrangements adequate between the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales and the National Assembly, does the Authority need different freedoms and flexibilities?

### **Corporate governance**

- Do the arrangements for governing the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales continue to be appropriate? Is the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales managing its finances effectively and in accordance with the requirements of regularity, propriety and value-for-money? What progress has the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales made in improving operational efficiency?
- Do the current arrangements for governing the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales continue to be appropriate? Is there sufficient public accountability for the conduct of the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales?
- Do the financial and managerial control arrangements between the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales and National Assembly meet established requirements?
- Do internal and external audit reports provide confidence that the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales is managing its finances in line with the Assembly's expectations of public bodies? Is the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales' internal audit committee working effectively?



- Is the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales managing its finances and assets effectively? Are value-for-money issues (including policy evaluations) and risk management being rigorously pursued?
- Does the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales' conduct of business meet the standards of practice expected of public bodies in relation to procurement, openness, codes of conduct and the handling of complaints (including whistle blowing)?
- Are the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales' running costs and staffing levels being controlled and scrutinised? Can useful comparisons be made with the operating costs of similar bodies?
- Does the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales have good arrangements for monitoring/challenging the quality and efficiency of its service delivery?
- Does the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales have a good track record in and robust plans for improving efficiency?
- In support of the aim to spread prosperity, inclusiveness and public services throughout Wales, what scope is there for the Qualifications, Curriculum & Assessment Authority for Wales to mirror the Assembly Government's strategy in locating more jobs outside of Cardiff?

# APPENDIX 4

## Interviewees

Gary Brace	General Teaching Council for Wales
Brian Connelly	Chairman, ACCAC
Jane Davidson AM	Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, National Assembly for Wales
Keith Davies & Michael Parkinson	Standards and Performance Division, Welsh Assembly Government
Richard Davies	Department for Training and Education, Welsh Assembly Government
Richard Keveren & Bob Waller	Training, Skills & Careers Policy Division, Welsh Assembly Government
Sara Marshall	Department for Education and Skills
Rheon Tomos	Deloitte Touche
Mike Usher & Phil Pugh	National Audit Office
John Valentine Williams	Chief Executive, ACCAC
Rudi Plaut	Chairman, Northmace Ltd, former Chairman, ACCAC
Meirion Prys Jones	Welsh Language Board

# APPENDIX 5

## The Consultation Document

### THE QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW OF ACCAC, 2003 (The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales)

#### Introduction

Open Direction Ltd has been commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government to carry out a Quinquennial Review of the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC). This Review is part of a programme of reviews of Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs). The National Assembly is committed to review each Assembly Sponsored Public Body every five years ("Quinquennial Reviews"). The Review was announced by the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, Jane Davidson AM, on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2003.

The Review will "look at the need for ACCAC and its functions [as well as] the operation of ACCAC and its conduct of business". It will consider the future of ACCAC, how best its services and functions should be delivered and whether any improvements are needed to increase efficiency.

The review process will be open and transparent and an important feature of it is the opportunity for ACCAC's partners, clients, staff and other stakeholders to submit their views and comments. The Review Report will be in the public domain and it will be discussed by the relevant Assembly Subject Committee before the Assembly Cabinet comes to a view on its conclusions and recommendations.

The fact that a Review is being undertaken implies no criticism of ACCAC, nor is there any presumption about the conclusions to which the Review will come. Assembly Ministers have made it clear that options for the future must be examined on their merits.

#### The Quinquennial Review

The Review will be conducted in two stages, as required by the Terms of Reference (see Annex 2) and within the Guidelines for Quinquennial Reviews of Executive Assembly-Sponsored Public Bodies (to be found on the Assembly's website at [http://www.wales.gov.uk/subieconomics/content/quinquen/review\\_e.htm](http://www.wales.gov.uk/subieconomics/content/quinquen/review_e.htm)).

It will take advantage of the insights into the process of Quinquennial Review conducted in respect of other ASPBs and will benefit fully from active engagement with its Steering Group.

#### Stage I: Strategic Review (April - July 2003)

This Stage will address two principal questions:

- ***Is there a continuing need for ACCAC's function to be carried out?***
- ***Is ACCAC the best means by which the given functions should be carried out or is there a preferred option?***

Annex 1 provides an overview of ACCAC's purposes and priorities, setting out its primary aim as "advancing education and training through the promotion of quality and coherence" and its major priorities as:

- "to ensure the framework of qualifications (outside higher education) meets the needs of learners and of Wales;
- to ensure an integrated curriculum and assessment framework that:
  - provides a broad and balanced education

- widens opportunity
    - raises standards of achievement;
  - to commission high quality Welsh and bilingual classroom materials;
  - to advise the Assembly as appropriate on educational policies; and
  - to ensure the Authority is managed efficiently and effectively."
- ⇒ Do you think that these are appropriate aims and priorities? Should any public body pursue them at all?
- ⇒ Are there functions currently carried out by ACCAC which might advantageously be carried out by other bodies? Conversely, are there any functions currently carried out by other organisations, or perhaps not carried out at all, that should be carried out by ACCAC?
- ⇒ Is there duplication between the functions of ACCAC and other organisations that should be rationalised?
- ⇒ Should ACCAC continue as a single national organisation, or should it be restructured or divided, for example on a geographic or functional basis?

### **Stage II: Strategic Effectiveness and Corporate Governance Review (August - October 2003)**

Subject to the recommendations made and accepted at the end of Stage I, this second Stage will address issues about the strategic effectiveness and corporate performance (including governance) of ACCAC, including these further questions:

- ***Is ACCAC working effectively at the strategic/service level, what is its contribution to the wider objectives of the National Assembly, is it conducting its business in accordance with the National Assembly's principles and values (for example partnership, inclusiveness, equal opportunities, better government, tackling social disadvantage and sustainable development)?***
- ***How might ACCAC's strategic effectiveness be improved?***
- ***Is ACCAC managing its finances effectively and in accordance with the requirements of regularity, propriety and value-for-money?***
- ***What progress has ACCAC made in improving the efficiency of its operation, including the use of IT, and how robust are its future plans for improving efficiency?***
- ***Is ACCAC applying in practice the principles of good corporate governance?***

Some of the questions which you might like to address are:

- ⇒ What do you regard as being ACCAC's main strategic achievements since 1998 and how significant do you regard these as being?
- ⇒ What disappointments or failures have there been since 1998?
- ⇒ How significant are the achievements of ACCAC since 1998?
- ⇒ How effective do you believe ACCAC has been in developing clear strategic direction, setting targets and allocating resources to objectives and priorities?
- ⇒ Is ACCAC sufficiently responsive to its partners and customers, does it understand the nature of its relationships with them and does it have their confidence as a body with which it can do business? Are there ways in which relationships might be strengthened?
- ⇒ Is there sufficient public accountability for ACCAC's work?
- ⇒ Is ACCAC managing its finances and assets effectively and are value-for-money issues

being rigorously pursued?

⇒ How might ACCAC best address the wider policies of the Welsh Assembly Government?

You might find it helpful to consider the other questions which are posed in the Review's Terms of Reference (at pages 10 - 12 below).

Although the two Stages are logically separate and will be reported upon in separate and successive reports which will together form the final Report, we are now seeking your views on **all** aspects of ACCAC's functions and operations.

We are particularly interested to learn of your *experience* of working with ACCAC, as well as your *views* on whether ACCAC is the most appropriate vehicle for delivering the National Assembly's vision, policies and plans in the area of qualifications, curriculum and assessment.

### **The Consultation Process**

The timetable set for the Review is quite condensed. Our commitment is to consult as widely and inclusively as we can. We are therefore sending this document and request for comments to over 250 organisations mainly, though not exclusively, in Wales.

We would appreciate your response *as soon as possible, preferably by Friday 6<sup>th</sup> June*, but certainly **no later than Friday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2003**.

We hope to interview a number of ACCAC's key partners and clients over that period. Those interviews may take the form of telephone or face-to-face discussions. We would find it most helpful if you would indicate on your response whether you would wish to amplify your response through an interview.

We will be pleased to receive your response in either English or Welsh and will conduct any interviews arising from it in either English or Welsh, as you prefer.

We would prefer to receive your response by e-mail, to

[accacreview@open-direction.com](mailto:accacreview@open-direction.com).

However, you may wish to send us hard copy to

Professor Steve Bristow  
ACCAC Review  
Open Direction Ltd  
Sophia House  
28 Cathedral Road  
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Fax: 029 2063 6135

If you have any questions about the Quinquennial Review or this Consultation Process, we would welcome e-mails to the above address or telephone enquiries to

029 2063 6136 (land line)

or

07799 533222 (mobile)

There is also a short consultation questionnaire on the ACCAC Review web-site, [www.accacreview.info](http://www.accacreview.info) which we would ask you to bring to the attention of as many of your staff, clients and partners as possible. You will find other information relating to this Consultation and to the Review on this site.

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.



# APPENDIX 7

## Responses to the Consultation

### **Key Counterparts**

Department for Education and Skills (DfES)  
The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)  
The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

### **Other Public Agencies in Wales**

Commission for Racial Equality  
Estyn  
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)  
National Council – ELWa  
Welsh Books Council  
Welsh Development Agency (WDA)  
Welsh Language Board

### **Awarding Bodies**

Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA)  
City and Guilds of London Institute  
Federation of Awarding Bodies  
LCCIEB  
OCR  
The Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE)  
WJEC/CBAC

### **Educational Establishments**

Lewis Girls' Comprehensive School, Ystrad Mynach  
Neath Port Talbot College  
Trinity College, Carmarthen  
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff  
Plus five responses to on-line questionnaire

### **Local Education Authorities and Local Governors' Associations**

Governors Wales  
Neath Port Talbot Governors' Association  
Welsh Local Government Association

### **Churches and other Religious Bodies**

Cardiff Archdiocese Religious Education Service  
Eglwys Bresbeteraidd Cymru  
Free Church Council of Wales  
Mudiad Addysg Gristnogol Cymru  
Provincial Officer for Statutory Education, The Church in Wales  
WASACRE

### **Trade Unions and Professional Associations**

ATL Cymru  
NUT Cymru  
PAT  
PCS

SHA  
UCAC

***Business, Industry and Commerce***

Cogent SSC Ltd

***Current and former Members of ACCAC***

Ann Davies  
Bryn Roberts  
Jenny Evans  
Louise Lynn  
Owen Rees (Deputy Chairman)  
Rob Fowler  
Rudi Plaut (former Chairman)

***Contractors***

Centre for Educational Studies, University of Wales, Aberystwyth (CEA)  
Drake Educational Associates  
Gwasg Carreg Gwalch  
Gwasg Pia Cyf  
Huw Roberts  
University of Wales College, Newport  
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff  
WJEC/CBAC

***Others***

Chwarae Teg  
Dysg  
Fforwm  
Institute of Welsh Affairs  
NFER (Wales)  
SNAP Cymru