

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Flaenoriaethau'r Chweched Senedd](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) consultation on [Sixth Senedd Priorities](#)

CYPE SP 50

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Response from: Dr Rachel Bowen, Director of Policy and Public Affairs, ColegauCymru

Beth yn eich barn chi yw'r prif flaenoriaethau neu'r materion y dylai'r Pwyllgor eu hystyried yn ystod y Chweched Senedd? Os oes modd, nodwch eich barn o ran sut y gallai'r Pwyllgor fynd i'r afael â hyn.

What do you consider to be the main priorities or issues that the Committee should consider during the Sixth Senedd? Where possible, please set out your view about how the Committee could address them.

Thema 1: Addysg oedran ysgol | Theme 1: School-age education

Thema 2: Addysg bellach ac addysg uwch | Theme 2: Further and higher education

First six months

Scrutiny of the proposed Bill to create a Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER)

Consistent with the Programme for Government, the Executive intends to introduce a bill that will change the funding, oversight and quality assurance of the post-compulsory education sector. It is imperative that the Committee considers the impact of this bill on the provision of vocational skills and training at all levels, as well as the development of progression routes from compulsory education and the associated impact on the economy. The Committee should consider and propose amendments as necessary to ensure that the bill, if passed, achieves the desired outcomes.



Impact of Covid on assessment and grading – Results 2022

Given the impact of Covid-19 on assessment arrangements, including the cancellation of exams in 2020 and 2021, and the subsequent increase in top level grades, the Committee should consider how best to manage assessment arrangements for 2022. This includes how to address the issue of the increase in top level grades in 2020 and 2021 in comparison to 2019, and the fairest system for learners and staff in 2022 and beyond, where a sharp return to 2019 levels may, in effect, disadvantage the 2022 cohort of learners.

Such an investigation should also consider future assessment arrangements for vocational learners: how we can learn from the events of the past two years to improve their assessment experiences, the efficiency of awarding bodies in adapting to change, and how to improve the process of agreeing change fairly where qualifications operate across more than one UK country.

Longer-term

Aside from CTER, ColegauCymru proposes five potential areas of inquiry for the Committee during the period 2021-26. These are:

Competition for post-16 learners

In a significant number of local authorities across Wales, there is still ongoing and unregulated competition between sixth form schools and FE colleges in terms of attracting new 16 year old students – which HM Inspectorate Estyn regularly comment adversely on.

Competition can be measured – and as such monitored – using a variety of criteria, e.g. choice, outcomes (e.g. grades and success rates), progression and value for money (particularly where class sizes are small). But consideration also needs to be taken of ‘entrance qualifications’ which can differ between institutions and can impact on grades. Whilst some competition can be positive in terms of giving students and parents some degree of choice, competition in these cases can result in students being given a restricted choice of options and as such, restricted progression opportunities. In addition, small class sizes – and as such, poor value for money – can result in courses needing to be subsidised from other areas of the institution’s provision, e.g. pre-16, squeezing available funds at a time when funding remains tight.



In such cases, it could be expected that regular measurements and monitoring are undertaken by either the Local Authority working with the FE college(s) or by the Welsh Government – but there is little evidence of any regular reviews undertaken and conclusions drawn.

The Hazelkorn Review highlighted the need to address these issues in *Towards 2030*.¹ As the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research Bill proceeds, it would be useful for the Committee to hold an early inquiry into the specific issue of post-16 competition and how to effectively address it in the best interests of learners. This could help shape and influence the CTER legislation to ensure the aims of *Towards 2030* are properly realised.

Raising age of compulsory engagement with education or training to 18. (This must include the necessary access to independent advice and guidance for all learners.) Ellen Hazelkorn's report, *Towards 2030*, which provided the basis for the Welsh Government's proposed Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, referenced "the need to review the school leaving age in light of the fact that 21st century employment opportunities require people to have higher level skills and competences".² This is an area on which the Committee could hold an important and relevant inquiry that follows up previous work on this topic in Wales.

For instance, in February 2021, the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) published its report on the rationale and effectiveness of raising the age of participation (RPA) in education and training to the age of 18 in Wales.³ The report was sceptical of the benefits of introducing such a policy but focused mainly on the shortcomings of the policy as introduced in England, and utilised a small number of interviews with stakeholders. However, there is no reason why Wales could not learn from the difficulties experienced in England and introduce an improved and more appropriate version for Wales.

The WCPP review states "An overarching view was that young people should be offered a range of post-16 options (education, employment and training), and that a compulsory school-based post-16 route would be too narrow a choice for some groups of young people" (p7). ColegauCymru agrees that young people should be offered a wide range of options, which do not focus on school-based post-16 routes only. Instead, this should be framed as an entitlement for learners. The focus should be on providing routes for learners into all post-16 institutions and opportunities, including apprenticeships and training. Learners should not be forced to stay in school or institutions where they will not flourish, instead they should be engaged in suitable education or training until they are 18.



A Committee inquiry could take an in-depth look at this issue, investigating the factors and characteristics that mean young people leave school or training before they reach 18, as well as specific measures to engage groups such as disabled people or people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

There may be the opportunity to hold some joint sessions with the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee and the Equality and Social Justice Committee as this issue is explored.

Advanced technical and higher technical skills – a Technical Accreditation Council for Wales (including a review of Qualifications Wales)

Higher level skills, creating a more highly skilled workforce and meeting (or importantly, stimulating) employer demand for high level skills have been discussion points for previous administrations and form an ongoing part of Welsh Government policy.

However, the process for developing and approving Level 4 and Level 5 qualifications can be complex and time consuming.

The UK Government is planning to “reform higher technical education (Level 4 and 5) with a new approval system based on employer-led standards” and “create clear progression routes for students towards the higher-level technical qualifications that employers need”.⁴

Wales needs to take its own lead in the providing of advanced technical and higher technical skills for the country as part of its Covid recovery. The Committee could investigate the best and most efficient way to do this, taking account of future skills demand and building on some of the work from Professor Phil Brown’s Wales 4.0: Delivering Economic Transformation for a Better Future of Work.⁵

Part of any Committee inquiry could look at the possibility of a Technical Accreditation Council as a means to deliver and regulate Level 4 and Level 5 qualifications.

Likewise, Qualifications Wales could be an important body in the reform of higher level technical qualifications but is likely to require appropriate changes to its legal basis, functions and capacity (that would allow it to host the Technical Accreditation Council if necessary). Following its establishment in August 2015, there does not seem to have been a wholesale review of Qualifications Wales and whether it has the responsibilities and powers it now needs to function effectively. This could form part



of any Committee inquiry, as a form of post legislative scrutiny if necessary. With the imminent changes on the education horizon due to the introduction of the new Curriculum for Wales and the proposed CTER Bill, as well as the challenges that all organisations have had to deal with in the past 18 months, reviewing the role and effectiveness of Qualifications Wales would be a useful exercise, especially given that other UK countries are reviewing the effectiveness of their own equivalent bodies. For example, Professor Ken Muir CBE will act as an advisor to the Scottish Government on the reform of the Scottish Qualifications Authority and Education Scotland.

Again, there may be the opportunity to hold some joint sessions with the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee.

Dual professionalism

Dual professionalism, where individual lecturers possess the conceptual understanding, deep knowledge as well as expertise in the learning processes and teaching as well as contexts, matched expert skills and knowledge, achieves only occasional reference in Welsh Government policy. However, when conceptualising a world class education system, the dual professional model is a vital component, especially if aspirations towards parity of esteem between vocational and academic routes are to be achieved.

The Committee could look at the issue of vocational teaching and practice in the post-16 sphere. An inquiry could consider how a best practice appropriate dual professional system could work in Wales, learning from best international practice and implement funded CPD systems to enable this, including – importantly – how a dual professional model could be consistently applied to FE and HE.

Once again, there may be the opportunity to hold some joint sessions with the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee.

Impact of new Curriculum for Wales on post-16 education

The Fifth Senedd saw a significant amount of time focused on developing curriculum reform and ultimately the new Curriculum for Wales for the compulsory education system. However, the impact, transition and implications of the reforms for the post-16 sector have not been considered in a systematic way. Learners who have been educated under the new system risk facing a sharp rupture to the methods and systems of learning



they have experienced if effort is not applied to making sure that post-16 institutions are aware of, and ready for, these new types of learners. Learners will have learnt in different ways, via areas of learning and experience, and the impact this has on their post-16 education needs to be considered.

This means training post-16 sector tutors in the pedagogical approach but also other staff, such as careers advisors. There are other practical implications, such as the large number of GCSE resits in Maths, English and Welsh undertaken in FE colleges, and adult learners who return to do these qualifications and will have learned under a different system as the new curriculum takes time to become embedded. Colleges also provide access to Essential Skills Wales qualifications and these alongside GCSE resits are an important area that needs to be impact assessed.

Similarly, qualifications play an important part in the new curriculum. As Qualifications Wales seeks to reform GCSEs, it is not clear how the new qualifications will work and whether they will retain a similar approach to subjects or follow the broader areas of learning experience. This impacts on A Levels in particular – there may be some subject specific knowledge that is lacking from, for example, a more general ‘science’ approach rather than individual chemistry, physics and biology that needs to be addressed at post- 16 level in order to bring learners up to the level necessary for high level study. This may incur additional teaching costs.

The Committee could look at these and other issues as part of an inquiry into how to make sure the planned benefits of the Curriculum for Wales are realised throughout the post-16 education system and that this part of the education system, employers, and higher education are adequately prepared for the years ahead.

¹ Ellen Hazelkorn, Towards 2030: A framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education system for Wales, Welsh Government, 2016, page 51.
Available at <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/25750/1/160310-hazelkorn-report-en.pdf>

² Ellen Hazelkorn, Towards 2030: A framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education system for Wales, Welsh Government, 2016, page 51.
Available at <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/25750/1/160310-hazelkorn->

³ Professor Sue Maguire, Raising the Age of Participation to 18, Wales Centre for Public Policy, 2021. Available at [Raising-the-Age-of-Participation-to-18.pdf](https://www.wcpp.org.uk/Raising-the-Age-of-Participation-to-18.pdf) ([wcpp.org.uk](https://www.wcpp.org.uk))



⁴Department for Education, *Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth*, UK Government, January 2021, page 28. Available at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957856/_Skills_for_jobs_lifelong_learning_for_opportunity_and_growth_web_version_.pdf

⁵ Phil Brown, *Wales 4.0: Delivering Economic Transformation for a Better Future of Work*, Welsh Government, September 2019. Available at: [Delivering Economic Transformation for a Better Future of Work \(gov.wales\)](#)

Thema 3: Iechyd a lles, gan gynnwys gofal cymdeithasol (i'r graddau y maent yn ymwneud â phlant a phobl ifanc) | Theme 3: Health and well-being, including social care (as they relate to children and young people)

Thema 4: Plant a phobl Ifanc | Theme 4: Children and young people

