

Cyn sesiwn dystiolaeth cyfres arholiadau'r haf 2022 gyda CBAC a Chymwysterau Cymru, fe ofynnwn ni i randdeiliaid a'r cyhoedd gyflwyno cwestiynau yr hoffem nhw i aelodau'r Pwyllgor eu gofyn ar eu rhan. Rhestrir yr holl gwestiynau a dderbyniwyd isod.

Ahead of the summer 2022 exam series evidence session with the WJEC and Qualifications Wales, we asked stakeholders and the public to submit questions that they would like to be asked by members of the Committee on their behalf. All the questions received are listed below.

- In what ways was this year's exams series (2021-22) fairer than last year's (2020-21)?
- What justification can the organisations give for grade inflation in 2020, 2021 and 2022, relative to earlier, pre-COVID cohorts?
- Noting that some schools and some pupils were impacted more than others - what, if any, consideration was given to learning time lost due to COVID-19?
- How were reductions in course content determined, and what representation from the wider system - if any - was considered in final decision-making?
- With the benefit of hindsight, how might the challenges of external assessment be overcome should similar difficulties arise in the future?
- How confident are the organisations that all papers were robustly and reliably marked this summer, given the sharp increase in papers and significant demands on markers' time?
- In the organisations' view, are the 'COVID generation' at an advantage or disadvantage in relation to their pre-COVID peers when it comes to future employment/further study?
- How might 'washback' from qualifications into early secondary and the latter part of primary education be avoided as Wales' new national curriculum comes into force?
- What plans are there to reform qualifications so that they fully align with the vision and ethos of the new national curriculum?

- How is the experience with the 2022 exam series being used to learn lessons to inform the development of Qualifications Wales ' approach to qualifications for the new curriculum? Our particular interest is in how the four purposes and integral skills will be assessed.
- Why have Qualification Wales and WJEC taken the decision to run GCSE November re-sit examinations on full specifications when adaptations were provided to the 2021/2022 cohort. Please can this decision be reconsidered? Despite Advance Information being provided, this will exclude learners from accessing the November re-sit examinations. This would be due to the increased amount of content to be taught/learned in addition to upskilling on content covered in 2021/2022. It will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to prepare learners effectively for this assessment opportunity in time.
- Grade boundaries were relatively low in A Level subjects in 2022, such as A2 Level Mathematics which required 32% for an A grade:
 - This has reduced staff confidence in setting realistic grade boundaries for formative assessments in 2022/2023 and in generating appropriate UCAS predicted grades. Will Qualifications Wales/WJEC provide centres with any further guidance to mitigate this issue e.g. publishing additional exemplar materials for each grade for 2023 examinations?
 - Examination of Centre Performance on the WJEC secure website, the facility factor (how accessible the questions on the Mathematics paper were) raises concerns about the content being assessed in the examination papers. The highest scores nationally for all candidates entered were 76.7% for Unit 3 and 51.2% for Unit 4. The lowest scores were 7.8% for Unit 3 and 26.3% for Unit 4. What actions are Qualifications Wales/WJEC taking to review the content in A Level examination papers to redress how accessible the questions are to cohorts sitting examinations?
- Qualifications Wales say that part of Q8 AS unit 1 maths could have been interpreted as having been removed from the spec. Therefore, should all candidates be awarded full marks for this question? Can you imagine how confusing this would have been for them in exam? Could change grade for some.
- Entries for AS physics dropped 21% this year, the largest of any science subject in Wales. We have a shortage of physics students and teachers, hitting Welsh-medium disproportionately. Have WJEC and Qualifications Wales looked, or will they be looking, to understand why certain subjects saw a drop

in participation this year? Will they look to see if pandemic GCSE arrangements put students off AS level physics, or if reintroducing exams put students off taking AS level physics? If they have looked, are solutions being proposed?

- Have WJEC and Qualifications Wales looked, or will they be looking, to understand why certain subjects saw a drop in participation at AS level? Physics saw a drop of 21% in the first year since the pandemic, which was the largest of any science subject in Wales. Will they look to see if pandemic GCSE arrangements put students off AS level physics, or if reintroducing exams put students off taking AS level physics?
- Are exam arrangements increasing underrepresentation, and are arrangements assessed through an equality, diversity and inclusion lens?
- Does WJEC and/or Qualifications Wales have data on how many physics entries were in Welsh and/or is the number so small that it would have to be suppressed?
- Will similar adaptations be implemented in summer 2023 for GCSE Religious Studies Units 1 and 2, as they were in summer 2022? For example, allowing learners to choose 3 out of the 4 questions to answer, and/or providing information prior to the exam, regarding the areas the 15 mark questions would be focused on. If so, this would make for a smoother and fairer transition back to the usual, pre-Covid process and protocol, especially if grade boundaries are going to rise again this year. If not, will there be adaptations for learners in current Year 11 who want to re-sit GCSE RS Unit 1 in summer 2023, who originally sat the exam in summer 2022 with adaptations?
- The Pandemic shone a light on some of the inequalities that exist at the heart of our examination system. Given that the UK is one of the few countries which subjects 15 and 16 year olds to high stakes exams, how can Wales learn from the rest of the world and ensure that 'back to normal' doesn't mean failing one third of (the largely poorest) learners?

