

# National Assembly for Wales

## Children, Young People and Education Committee

### CYPE(4)–01–15 – Paper 2

#### Qualifications Wales Bill

#### Evidence from: NAHT

- 1 The National Association of Headteachers represents over 29,000 headteachers, deputy and assistant heads, business managers and other senior staff of maintained and independent schools within and beyond the UK. Our members work in colleges, secondary schools, primary schools, nurseries and special schools.
- 2 We thank the Minister for listening to our representations and thus welcome the intention to establish Qualifications Wales and the transfer of responsibility for regulation and quality assurance of qualifications awarded in Wales from the Welsh Government to this new body.
- 3 We also welcome the decision to establish this body as a regulator of qualifications in the first instance and not as both regulator and awarder of qualifications. We think this is essential if public confidence is to be maintained within and beyond Wales.
- 4 We remain concerned that the new body will not be independent of Government. Welsh Ministers have the power of appointment, the power of authoring remit letters and the power to identify those priority qualifications that require a pre-determined response by the regulator.
- 5 The National Assembly will have a scrutiny role through its consideration of the Annual Report but unless there is a clear role for the Assembly in determining an overall impact on the quality of the qualifications system and its outcomes, there can be no real independence. What happens when the new body presents its Annual Report to the National Assembly and the remit or priorities of the Welsh Government are found wanting?
- 6 Qualifications Wales will inherit a monopoly arrangement where the WJEC is the single provider of high-status and high-risk qualifications. It will need to reassure stakeholders that there are robust measures in place to ensure that monopoly provider arrangements continue to deliver innovation, responsiveness and reliability.
- 7 Our members fear that Qualifications Wales will encourage monopoly arrangements in certain key areas of provision that are deemed strategically important by Welsh Ministers. Along with the dangers that are inherent in all monopoly arrangements, it makes the qualification system vulnerable to political turbulence. Are Ministers really in the best position to determine which examination best suits the many needs of an individual pupil or group of them?
- 8 Qualifications Wales will be tasked with ‘promoting public confidence in qualifications and in the Welsh qualifications system’. This is very welcome. It remains to be seen how this might be measured, but the aim must be to secure a public perception that made-in-Wales qualifications are valid, reliable and

comparable with other well-regarded qualifications available elsewhere in the UK and beyond.

- 9 Qualifications Wales will engage in research. In considering the Annual Report, the National Assembly should have the power to determine right and proper areas for research and to commission such independently of Government if need be.