



**Federation of Small Businesses**  
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14<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Ann Jones AM  
Chair  
Children, Young People and Education Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Dear Ann

**RE: Qualifications Wales Bill**

FSB Wales welcomes the opportunity to present its views to the Children, Young People and Education Committee on the Welsh Government's proposed Qualifications Wales Bill. FSB Wales is the authoritative voice of businesses in Wales. With 10,000 members, a Welsh Policy Unit, two regional committees and twelve branch committees; FSB Wales is in constant contact with business at a grassroots level. It undertakes regular online surveys of its members as well as a biennial membership survey on a wide range of issues and concerns facing small business.

FSB Wales broadly agrees with the objectives of the Qualifications Wales Bill. As part of the review of qualifications, FSB Wales submitted evidence highlighting the difficulties experienced by members in recruiting and retaining staff with the relevant skills. In our most recent Voice of Small Business member survey, 16 per cent of respondents stated that they struggled to recruit and retain staff with a further 13 per cent stating that there was a shortage of skilled staff to suit their business' requirements. It is therefore vital that qualification reform seeks to address these issues.

The programme of reform embarked upon by the Welsh Government has been welcome. In particular, FSB Wales has been engaged in the restructuring of the Welsh Baccalaureate examination to include wider workplace skills and has supported an increased focus on literacy and numeracy by the Welsh Government. In order to succeed, this focus must be matched and built on by the proposed Qualifications Wales.

In order to do this, a number of requirements must be in place in the legislation. Firstly, Qualifications Wales must be fully independent from Welsh Government. This should include strong formal lines of

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accountability to the National Assembly for Wales and a commitment to regular scrutiny by a National Assembly committee.

Secondly, Qualifications Wales must have a duty to consult widely with external stakeholders including micro, small and medium sized businesses. This is particularly relevant given the decline in presence in Wales of the Sector Skills Councils over the current National Assembly term and given the different status accorded to restricted priority, priority and non-priority qualifications under the Bill.

There must also be transparency in terms of the annual remit letter proposed in the Bill. This should be published to ensure the aims and objectives of Welsh Government in respect of Qualifications Wales are subject to public scrutiny. Finally, Qualifications Wales should ensure that the number and complexity of qualifications in Wales are kept under review in consultation with employers.

I hope you find the comments of FSB Wales of interest.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

**Janet Jones**  
**Wales Policy Chair**  
**Federation of Small Businesses Wales**