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13 Mawrth 2018

Annwyl Ms Neagle,

Availability of textbooks

Thank you for your letter of 22 February regarding the availability of textbooks.

As an awarding body, WJEC can stimulate publishers' interest in providing textbooks, can advise on aspects of content and assessment and can provide an "endorsement" of textbooks that are well aligned with the qualification. However, we have no contractual control over a publisher's programme of work nor the timelines to which they work.

In general, the main inhibiting factor in relation to timelines to which publishers proceed with their work is the regulatory schedule for approving qualifications, relative to the date of first teaching. This has proved to be a problem for several subjects that were recently reformed to a schedule set out by Welsh Government during the latter part of the period when it fulfilled the role of qualifications regulator in Wales (that schedule being very similar to that followed for qualifications reform in England). However, in relation to GCSE and A level textbooks for Religious Studies, it appears that there were additional factors that impacted on the two publishers involved.

In support of most of our qualifications, WJEC makes a substantial investment in teaching and learning resources that are made available in digital form free of charge to users. These comprise a substantial "guidance for teaching" document and a range of digital resources to support learning, with a particular emphasis on areas of the qualification that have changed from previous versions. GCSE and GCE Religious Studies happen to be qualifications for which we have developed a substantial range of new digital resources.

For some qualifications, usually for reasons related to low volume of take-up or the nature of the learning, we fail to attract interest from any textbook publisher. In such cases, digital resources produced by WJEC assume an even greater importance, as is the case for reformed qualifications in Design & Technology and Electronics (for the former, funding support was received from Welsh Government).

Overall, the commercial provision of textbooks for reformed GCSE and GCE qualifications in Wales is reasonable in terms of range, but it is very unusual to find for any subject a choice of products from more than one publisher. The main issues have been with timeliness of production and with the interval between availability of English-medium and Welsh-medium versions. Looking to the future, however, it cannot be assumed that the commercial market

as it currently stands will meet the needs of learning programmes that are based on a curriculum in Wales that becomes increasingly more distinctive.

Even in situations where learners have been disappointed with the availability of textbooks, we have in general not found that they have had subsequent concerns with the results they have achieved in their assessments. We believe that this arises because of the breadth of other resources that are available, including those tailored by teachers and lecturers to meet the needs of their classes.

If the Committee considers that it would be useful, WJEC would be pleased to provide further information through a discussion and illustration of matters relevant to current and future arrangements.

Yn gywir,

Gareth Pierce

Prif Weithredwr / *Chief Executive*
CBAC / WJEC

cc Philip Blaker, Prif Weithredwr, Cymwysterau Cymru