

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Hynt y gwaith gan Lywodraeth Cymru wrth ddatblygu Cwricwlwm newydd Cymru | Welsh Government's progress in developing the new Curriculum for Wales

CR 15

Ymateb gan: Cymdeithas Ddysgedig Cymru  
Response from: Learned Society of Wales

## 1. Introduction

1.1. As the national academy of Wales, The Learned Society of Wales / Cymdeithas Ddysgedig Cymru (LSW) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the CYPE Committee consultation on the Welsh Government's progress in developing the new Curriculum for Wales. **This response reflects our experience as an expert advisor on the 'Welsh Dimension and International Perspective' (WDIP) in the development of the new curriculum.**

## 2. Background

2.1. The Learned Society of Wales was commissioned by the Welsh Government in July 2018 to undertake a review of the progress to date in the WDIP aspect of the new curriculum.

2.2. The project arose due to our ongoing work to promote, safeguard and develop Wales Studies scholarship. Wales Studies is conceived in the broadest of terms and aims to be pan-disciplinary, ranging from art, literature and the performing arts, to geology, oceanography, business, geography, sociology and more. Our work in Wales Studies also includes scholarship directly concerned with matters such as (and to give just some examples amongst many possibilities): Welsh cultural history; Welsh life in the present; the development of creative writing practice in Wales; Welsh land and environment; and administrative systems operating within Wales.

2.3. We have welcomed the opportunity to engage relevant experts to review and feed in to the further development of the cross-cutting WDIP elements in each Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE). The experts we have engaged in this project have significant research experience

and scholarship in studies relevant to Wales and its international dimensions, as well as broader subject experience.

2.4. The Society has been monitoring progress of the new curriculum since the publication of the *Successful Futures* review. We welcomed the commitment made in *A Curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life* (2015) that “Each AoLE should include, where appropriate, a Welsh dimension as well as an international and UK perspective”.<sup>1</sup> The development was timely, as the Society had identified Wales Studies as one of its strategic priorities, and was developing a programme of activities and policy work to promote the vitality and importance of scholarship and research about Wales.<sup>2</sup>

### **3. The latest position regarding the work of the Working Groups which have been established for each of the six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE)**

3.1. We noted early in 2018 that the WDIP element was largely undeveloped in the December 2017 ‘What Matters’ statements, and that there was a risk that the curriculum would lose the intended Wales-specificity. Realising that we had an appropriate expert network to support this work, we looked in to how the Society could become engaged in the development of the curriculum.

3.2. In February 2018, through an expert advisor already engaged in supporting one of the AoLEs, we were put in contact with the civil service leads for the WDIP aspect. After a series of constructive meetings, we initially engaged relevant experts to work on re-drafting the definition of WDIP to ensure inclusivity, intersectional identities, and to stress that a Welsh view of the world was not parochial or introspective if developed correctly; WDIP is about Wales in the world, and in order to place Wales in the world, learners need to first understand their place(s) within Wales.

3.3. In particular, we worked to develop principles to support the embedding of WDIP across the curriculum, and suggested potential approaches. The revised definition was adopted by the Curriculum Design and Development Unit and distributed to the AoLE groups in late March.

3.4. In June, we were invited by the WDIP lead civil servants to undertake a review of the progress to date. We were asked to:

- Advise on how to further develop the overarching definition of a Welsh dimension and international perspective

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<sup>1</sup> *A Curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life*

<sup>2</sup><https://www.learnedsociety.wales/our-publications/uncovering-wales-studies-a-report-on-ref2014-impact-case-studies-from-welsh-heis/>

- Provide suggestions about how the overarching definition might be interpreted in the context of each of the six AoLEs:
  - Expressive Arts
  - Health and Well-being
  - Humanities
  - Languages, Literacy and Communication
  - Mathematics and Numeracy
  - Science and Technology
- Complete an audit and analysis of how the Welsh dimension and international perspective have been incorporated in the work produced so far by the six AoLE groups, and suggest next steps to ensure they are embedded effectively as the groups continue with their work.

3.5. Enquiries were sent out by LSW officers to over 550 individuals including the Fellows of the Society, members of the Society's Wales Studies Steering Group, members of the Wales Alliance for Global Learning (WAGL), and early-career researchers working in various fields of Wales-facing study. Five meetings were held, and eighteen documentary responses were received (excluding comments from LSW officers and the author of the report, who all have experience in relevant WDIP research and activities). We were pleased to have been able to engage early career researchers in the exercise, many of whose research has focused exclusively on Wales and Welsh context.

3.6. The feedback was worked up in to a comprehensive report (over 12,000 words) which outlined specific advice for each AoLE together with next steps, and signposted further support available.

3.7. For those who engaged with the review, this was the first opportunity many had been provided with to contribute to the development of the new curriculum, and they engaged with enthusiasm. More than one respondent noted that it would possibly have been more efficient to engage WDIP experts earlier in the process to ensure that it did not become a 'bolt-on' to the curriculum, and rather a principle embedded from its inception.

3.8. In September, we met with the Curriculum Coherence Group to present the report and discuss its findings in detail. Further suggested changes were incorporated into a final version.

3.9. In October, the Society was commissioned to undertake a further review of how the recommendations for the initial report had been implemented. **The two reports prepared by the Society are attached to this report (CONFIDENTIAL).**

#### 4. **The involvement of academic and other external expertise in informing curriculum design**

4.1. Following on from the first report, some of the respondents attended AoLE workshops held in October. The respondents were happy to give their time and expertise, however there was very little specific advice about what they were expected to deliver in their session.

4.2. The people involved are all very busy, and would have appreciated some pre-workshop correspondence with AoLE group leads to ensure that their priorities could be supported in the most constructive and efficient way possible. As one expert respondent reflected:

The AoLE group were very welcoming but were under pressure and did not have the time to listen. Academics are trained to examine large quantities of material and discern broad trends and themes, whereas the purpose of these workshops was working quickly at a granular level to find a wording that matched an existing framework. If the government really want meaningful academic scrutiny of these processes then this has to be done, from start to finish, and in a way that allows for input at every stage. If documentation is shared with academics in an organised and systematic way, we could create feedback sessions/seminars that reflect on the broader themes and build discussions.

4.3. Another participant commented that:

It was my feeling that the points at which our 'expert' input might be most useful would be at the beginning - and potentially end - of the process. We were of the view that helping to frame the narrative of such an exercise would be an aspect we could deliver on, and moreover (given the difficulties of writing by committee) that academics could be the ones to write initial drafts for the educational experts to then work on. With respect to the 'end' of the process, whilst we are aware that content is meant to be a responsibility devolved to the teachers themselves, it feels that given the very general nature of the documentation, providing case studies would be very helpful. This would be an obvious way to ensure that teachers have a sense of how the Wales and the World perspective might be drawn into their teaching.

On the whole it is a real positive that the participants have been willing to engage and their responses seemed positive; as such the little experience we've had should speak to the importance of doing much more of this in future.

4.4. A longer, more structured mechanism for engaging experts would be welcomed for the development of the assessments for the new curriculum.

**5. How the ‘What Matters?’ statements, published in December 2017, are evolving into the design of the curriculum content in each of the six AoLEs**

5.1. The What Matters statements have developed significantly since December 2017, and the latest versions reviewed by the Society (5 November 2018) have incorporated many of the recommendations we have fed in.

5.2. However, there is a need for consistency in terms of inter-disciplinary / inter-AoLE working, to ensure that where there is potential for this work (and co-production of syllabus materials, for example), these opportunities are maximised. The Languages, Literacy and Communication AoLE document in particular offers a good template for other groups to adopt.

5.3. The Society’s most recent comments on the latest drafts of the What Matters statements and the latest drafts of the AoLE templates are attached for information.

**6. Progress in developing new assessment arrangements**

6.1. In our engagements to date, there has been little evidence of the development of the new assessment arrangements; when the issue of qualifications and potential new models for GCSEs has been raised, we have been informed that this is an issue for Qualifications Wales. There is concern that the WDIP in particular could potentially be written out of the syllabus for assessments, especially if a more generic model is adopted. It is vital that the opportunity is taken to create assessments and qualifications suitable for the ‘made in Wales, for Wales’ curriculum.

**7. The preparedness of schools and teachers for delivering the new curriculum and to what extent the concepts of Professor Donaldson’s *Successful Futures* review are being tested and carried out already**

7.1. We are not able to comment on how the concepts of *Successful Futures* are being implemented already, but in terms of WDIP, the explicit shift to a curriculum more rooted in the ‘local’ will require further training for teachers and access to relevant resources to inform the development of their syllabuses. Some subjects may also benefit from the development of new textbooks – Wales specific, written and published in Wales, rather than those ‘bought in’ from other examining boards with Welsh context inserted retrospectively. There is significant expertise across Wales’ academic community which could be harnessed to support this work.

**8. The steps being taken to ensure that the new Curriculum for Wales complements other Welsh Government priorities, including (but not restricted to) Cymraeg 2050**

8.1. Careful attention will need to be given to how the new Curriculum for Wales fits with other government priorities. For example, Welsh as a second language is a key facet of achieving the ambition of Cymraeg 2050. There is little explicit engagement with the Well-being of Future Generations Act, although the four purposes of the new curriculum complement the seven well-being goals of the act.

**9. Progress towards producing a draft Curriculum for Wales in time for its publication by the Welsh Government for public feedback in April 2019**

9.1. The latest version of the AoLE templates (November 2018) indicate that the majority of the draft curriculum is nearly complete. There has been a very evident urgency in the schedules we have been asked to work to, and there seems to be determination to complete much of the work before the end of 2018.