

Require local Welsh exam centres to accept home-educated students for public exams

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 16 Gorffennaf 2021
Petitions Committee | 16 July 2021

Reference: SR21/0189-3

Petition Number: P-06-1160

Petition title: Require local Welsh exam centres to accept home-educated students for public exams.

Text of petition: Home-educated students need guaranteed access to suitable local examination centres at affordable prices, enabling them to have the same rights and access to qualifications as every other child in Wales.



1. Background

Generally, if a young person wants to take a qualification, such as a GCSE or A level which requires an examination, the examination has to be taken at an approved examination centre, usually a secondary school or further education college. These are centres approved by the examination board that meet their requirements and the requirements of the Joint Council for Qualifications.

Local authorities have no legal responsibility or obligation to fund parents who choose to home educate. Parents who choose to educate their children at home must assume full financial responsibility, including books and all other resources as well as meeting the cost of any public examinations and course fees.

Welsh Government [guidance](#) for parents on elective home education, suggests that where parents have an existing and positive relationship with a school or college, they may wish to enquire whether their child could be entered there for the examinations and that the school or college will be willing to undertake the assessment of any coursework. Where there is no relationship or contact with a school or college parents need to contact an examinations board, which may be able to arrange a local centre on their behalf.

2. Public examinations in 2021

On 10 November 2020, Kirsty Williams, then Minister for Education [announced](#) that there would be no end of year examinations in summer 2021 and that instead, there would be teacher-managed assessments, including assessments that will be externally set and marked but delivered within a classroom environment under teacher supervision.

On 20 January 2021, the Minister [announced](#) that, due to the worsening public health situation and the need for remote learning until mid-February, learners undertaking GCSE, AS and A levels approved by Qualifications Wales were to have their qualifications awarded through a Centre-Determined Grade model.

Grades will be determined by a learner's school or college, based on an assessment of the learner's work. Schools and colleges have been able to use a range of evidence to determine the grades to be awarded to their learners, including Non-Examination Assessment elements, mock-exams, and classwork. In addition, WJEC have offered a set of adapted past papers to enable schools to continue to assess learning within their teaching plans, providing extra support for teachers and learners.

Once quality assurance has been completed at the centre, the grade is submitted to WJEC. Learners can appeal to their school or college if they are unhappy with their grade, and to WJEC if they are unhappy with the process.

Further information can be seen on the Qualifications Wales [website](#).

3. Private candidates

Learners who are electively home educated and wishing to take qualifications are considered to be 'private candidates'. For the summer 2021 examination series Qualifications Wales has published [guidance](#) for private candidates. This sets out two routes available for private candidates.

- If a private candidate has an existing relationship with a centre, for example a learner in the centre taking a re-sit, or a candidate where a centre has already accepted a provisional entry, then these centres will undertake assessment activities using the same approach as for their own learners. The centre will produce the centre determined grades and will also be responsible for the centre review if a candidate appeals against their provisional results.
- If a private candidate does not have an existing relationship with a centre, then centres will be identified to host private candidates for assessment purposes. Private candidates will attend these centres to undertake assessment activities set by the WJEC. WJEC will mark these assessment activities, alongside a portfolio of the learner's work to produce a grade. WJEC will base their judgements on the same guidance as that used by centres, including the published grade descriptors, WJEC will also manage the appeals process for these candidates.

The Welsh Government state that they have worked with local authorities to ensure that there is at least one school or college in their local area identified as a centre to host private candidates. These can be seen on the [Welsh Government website](#).

The entry deadline for the centre-hosted route was 26 April 2021. Centres may still accept candidates via the centre assessed route after this date however, that is at the discretion of the centre and a late entry fee may apply.

The Welsh Government has provided a grant to support centres identified to host private candidates. This is to meet costs associated with supporting assessment arrangements for private candidates this year, to avoid any extra costs being passed on to candidates.

In a normal year, most private candidates pay the entry fee for their qualification, and an additional charge for the centre to administer that entry. This will remain the same for summer 2021. The available grant is intended to cover any additional costs that would be incurred this year in hosting private candidates because the assessment approach is different. Centres are expected

to only charge private candidates the same fee they would charge in previous years where exams have taken place.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.