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Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1160
Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/10850/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
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20 August 2021

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 3 August in respect of home educated students, drawing my attention to a petition submitted to the Petition Committee in respect of home educated students' access to local examination centres.

As you will be aware, learner well-being whilst balancing the need to ensure progression routes are available for all learners has been at the forefront of Wales' decision making throughout the pandemic.

Working closely with Qualifications Wales and the WJEC we ensured that as part of the development of the Centre Determined Grade model, equitable and accessible arrangements were developed to support private candidates. This was a key consideration to ensure appropriate progression opportunities for these learners given the centre based nature of the approach to determining grades and recognising that not all private candidates were able to gain their qualifications in 2020 when centre assessment grades were awarded.

On 17 May, Qualification Wales published their updated [Guidance](#) for centres entering private candidates alongside their [Guidance](#) on alternative arrangements for approved GCSE, AS and A level qualifications 2021. This guidance provided details of the two routes which were made available to private candidates to access their qualifications in 2021. Where a private candidate already had a relationship with a school or college and that centre was prepared to enter the learner for qualifications, their Centre Determined Grade(s) were produced in the same way as for other learners who attended that school or college.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

For private candidates without an existing relationship with a centre, we worked closely with local authorities to ensure at least one centre was designated per local authority area to host private candidates. A [list](#) of contact details of centres in Wales, by local authority, was published so that candidates could find a centre to arrange assessment of their work. Qualifications Wales also ran a marketing campaign to raise awareness to ensure that private candidates were aware of the support that had been put in place to ensure they were able to access their qualifications.

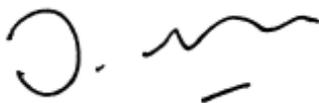
To support and enable implementation, we provided additional funding to centres to cover the cost of hosting the private candidates and the respective additional work for centres. In addition to this arrangements were also made with the Department for Education for private candidates from Wales taking qualifications with English awarding bodies to be eligible via the private candidate support grant for centres that was established. This was to ensure that these learners were not disadvantaged in comparison to private candidates in England – particularly in relation to learners taking community language qualifications which are predominantly only offered by English awarding bodies. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) published [Interim Guidance for Private Candidate Centres](#) along with a [list of centres](#) for entries for private candidates to sit exams.

You may be aware that, prior to the pandemic policy development was underway in respect of home educated children. This was centred on the 2019 consultation on draft statutory guidance to assist local authorities to identify children of compulsory school age who are not known to them to ensure these children receive an appropriate level of education. Although there is no requirement for home educators to follow a particular curriculum, or adopt school-based approaches, nor will their children be required to take any national exams or assessments, a parent is required by law to ensure that their child receives a full-time education suitable to the child's age, aptitude, ability and aligned to any special educational needs they may have. Home educating parents are responsible for their child's education, including the costs of exams which have to be taken at an approved exam centre and local authorities should where possible help inform parents where their child can sit exams.

Unfortunately as a result of Covid19 and the necessity to respond to the pandemic including the prioritisation of new 2020 and 2021 qualification arrangements for all learners, this longer term policy development work was temporarily paused. However, we are now in a position to resume this work and will draw on our experiences of providing education during the pandemic, including supporting learner entry to qualifications.

I hope you find the above overview of how private candidates have been and continue to be supported during what remains uncertain times helpful, as well as the confirmation that further policy development will be undertaken to strengthen the support available to home educators and learners.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Miles', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

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