



Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
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20/12/2018

Dear Chair,

**Petition P-05-783 Ensuring Equality of Curriculum for Welsh Medium Schools e.g. GCSE Psychology**

Thank you for the letter regarding the above petition. As you are aware, several GCSE and A level subjects in Wales have insufficient entrants to make it viable for examination boards to develop qualifications specifically for Wales. These qualifications often exist in England, where the larger number of learners makes it financially viable. Qualifications Wales 'designate' some of these qualifications so as to make them available for learners in Wales. Qualifications Wales do not make it a prerequisite that examination boards must offer the 'designated' qualifications through the medium of Welsh. According to Qualifications Wales, this decision was made in order to offer learners in Wales the broadest range of subjects to study. To make it a prerequisite that examination boards must offer qualifications through the medium of Welsh might mean these boards would no longer desire for their qualifications to be designated for learners in Wales (presumably for financial and practical reasons).

Despite the above rationale, as a matter of general principle, qualifications in Wales should be offered through the medium of Welsh and English. The desire to offer learners in Wales the broadest range of qualifications should not be achieved at the expense of equality of opportunity to learners in Welsh medium education.

Although Qualifications Wales does not require examination boards in England to offer designated qualifications through the medium of Welsh, they have requested that these boards declare their intentions in terms of offering Welsh medium assessments in the future. In a letter to all schools and colleges in Wales on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2016, Qualifications Wales explain the 'designation' process, and outlines the examination

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boards' intentions with regards to offering their qualifications through the medium of Welsh.<sup>1</sup> The letter outlines the following:

- AQA: they do not intend to offer GCSE and A level qualifications to learners in Wales.<sup>2</sup>
- OCR: they will offer GCSE and A level qualifications to learners in Wales, but they do not intend to offer these through the medium of Welsh.
- Pearson: they will offer GCSE and A level qualifications to learners in Wales, and if there is a demand and it is deemed operationally viable to do so, they will offer assessments through the medium of Welsh.
- Eduqas (WJEC): they will offer GCSE and A level qualifications to learners in Wales and intend to offer these through the medium of Welsh upon demand.

The letter also lists the GCSE and A level qualifications that are offered by the various examination bodies in England, and states which subjects have been studied through the medium of Welsh in the past.

It seems that the case of GCSE Psychology is unique with respect to the fact that a Welsh medium qualification has existed previously, that there exists a demand from learners for a Welsh medium qualification, and that there exists provision for the subject in several Welsh medium schools. Although OCR and Pearson do offer their GCSE Psychology qualification for learners in Wales, they do not intend to offer it through the medium of Welsh. This means that Welsh medium schools, unlike English and bilingual medium schools, cannot offer GCSE Psychology to their pupils.

According to the information included in your letter, there is a significant demand for a GCSE Psychology qualification through the medium of Welsh. For example, in 2015 5 centres in Wales offered the subject in Welsh, and there was a total of a 144 entrants through the medium of Welsh. This represents a significant number of pupils who could specialise in the subject, and potentially go on to work and provide Welsh medium services in the field. The 2011 census data<sup>3</sup> indicates that only 16.7% of psychologists have the ability to speak Welsh, which is lower than the percentage of Welsh speakers in Wales. It is possible that this figure will decrease further if learners in Wales do not have the opportunity to specialise in the subject through the medium of Welsh, and also that a significant proportion of fluent Welsh speakers (those in Welsh medium education) are not given an opportunity to study the subject in the first place.

As a long term solution I believe it is necessary to place an absolute requirement on examination boards that offer qualifications in Wales to do so through the medium of

<sup>1</sup> <https://qualificationswales.org/media/2225/diweddariad-i-ysgolion-ar-tgau-a-safon-uwch-071216.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> It seems this decision was reached based on the fact that Qualifications Wales could not give AQA unequivocal assurance that they would not be required to offer designated qualifications through the medium of Welsh in the future.

<sup>3</sup> SB 25/2016, <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2016/160622-workforce-welsh-language-support-primary-care-aneurin-bevan-en.pdf>



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Welsh and English. Qualifications Wales has already committed to making such a requirement a precondition for contracting the work of developing the new qualifications that will accompany the new curriculum for Wales.<sup>4</sup>

In the meantime, a more immediate solution should be sought with respect to GCSE Psychology. I am aware that Qualifications Wales has already been in discussion with examination boards in England regarding developing GCSE Psychology through the medium of Welsh, but that no practical solution was found.<sup>5</sup> I suggest reopening these discussions to gain a fuller understanding of the reasons why Pearson is unwilling to offer the qualification through the medium of Welsh. Pearson have stated their willingness to offer assessments through the medium of Welsh in those subjects where there has been demand in the past, and where it is deemed operationally viable to offer such provision in the future. It would be helpful to understand why Pearson do not deem it operationally viable to offer the qualification through the medium of Welsh, and whether they could be encouraged to reconsider. In this context, it might be worth exploring the potential of using the grants that Qualifications Wales offers for the purpose of developing and supporting qualifications through the medium of Welsh.

Yours sincerely,

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Strategic Director  
Welsh Language Commissioner

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://qualificationswales.org/cymraeg/cyhoeddiadau/letter-to-ros-on-curriculum-and-qualification-reform/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.senedd.cynulliad.cymru/documents/s78521/19.07.18%20Prif%20Weithredwr%20Cymwysterau%20Cymru%20at%20y%20Cadeirydd.pdf>

