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Mark Drakeford MS
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language
Welsh Government
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01 May 2025

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Aligning future Cymraeg qualifications with the Code to describe Welsh language ability

Thank you for your letter dated 23 April 2025 regarding the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill (The Bill). We are grateful for ongoing discussions with your officials as proceedings with the Bill take place, and for our involvement in the task and finish group as the Code under Section 6 of the Bill is developed.

As your letter acknowledges, we have publicly stated our support for the aims presented in the Bill. This includes the establishment of a Code for describing Welsh language ability which will define common reference levels based on the CEFR. The CEFR is a well-established and proven framework for assessing linguistic competence. The work being undertaken to contextualise the generic descriptors within the CEFR to the Welsh language will support us in aligning future Cymraeg qualifications to the common reference levels in the Code.

Aligning future Cymraeg qualifications to the common reference levels of the Code will allow users of qualifications to describe their Welsh language proficiency in a recognisable way. It can also support learners to assess where they are on a lifelong Welsh language skills continuum and help them to see the relevance of the qualifications they take for progressing their Welsh language skills.

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As you will be aware, we recently reformed the range of Cymraeg qualifications which will be made available from September 2025 as part the new National 14-16 Qualifications. This includes the new GCSE in Cymraeg Language and Literature (for learners in category 2 and 3 schools) and the new GCSE Core Cymraeg and related Level 2 Award in Additional Core Cymraeg (for learners in category 1 schools). The content and assessment of these qualifications reflect broader policy intent for the Welsh language, including the aim of creating independent and confident speakers and users of Cymraeg. Since the work to create these qualifications predates recent policy developments, they were not designed to align with the specific linguistic outcomes set out in the Bill. However, we recognise the importance of mapping these qualifications to the common reference levels within the Code as a way of providing a baseline for measuring future progress towards the Welsh language learning goals. We anticipate commencing this work in 2026.

As policy in this area evolves, we are aware that there will be a need to keep these new Cymraeg qualifications under review. Future iterations of these qualifications can be aligned to the common reference levels defined in the Code. We will also set requirements in forthcoming reforms, including the new AS and A level qualifications in Cymraeg to be available from September 2027, that Cymraeg qualifications are designed to support alignment to the common reference levels defined in the Code.

It is important to note that there are likely to be some challenges in this work. Ultimately, qualifications must be designed to enable reliable and accurate judgements of learner attainment. Careful consideration will be needed to manage any change in expected standards, including an increase in the level of demand of Welsh language qualifications over time. It is for this reason that we believe it is important to undertake a mapping exercise of the new GCSEs against the common reference levels in the Code so that any change in demand can be assessed. We must ensure fairness to learners past, present and future, and avoid any unintended negative consequences which may undermine the teaching and learning of Cymraeg, as well as confidence in the Cymraeg qualifications that learners take.

We understand the important role that qualifications play in helping to realise the aims set out in the Bill, including progress towards the Welsh language learning goals. For these aims to be achieved, qualifications must be considered within the context of a whole system approach. We look forward to continuing to work with Welsh Government officials and other partners with a role to play in Welsh language education during the implementation of the Bill.

Yours sincerely



Philip Blaker
Chief Executive

