

# Ensuring Equality of Curriculum for Welsh Medium Schools

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 7 Tachwedd 2017  
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## Research Briefing:

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Petition number: P-05-783

Petition title: **Ensuring Equality of Curriculum for Welsh Medium Schools**

Text of petition: I call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to prevent Qualifications Wales (QW) from continuing to discriminate against Welsh-medium learners, and ensure linguistic equality in terms of school curriculum.

In 2015, the WJEC decided to drop GCSE Psychology because candidate numbers were relatively small (37 centres – 5 of which were Welsh medium with 144 Welsh medium applicants each year). Because of this, an invitation was extended by Qualifications Wales to the English Awarding Bodies; AQA, OCR, Pearson-Edexcel, to offer this subject, and others e.g. Economics, in Wales.

Unfortunately, and astoundingly, there was no pressure to offer these subjects in Welsh. Qualifications Wales' response to this is to say that the English Boards would refuse to offer subjects in Wales altogether if they were forced to offer a Welsh language option, and that they seek to ensure 'the widest choice of subjects to learners in Wales' (QW Newsletter, December 2016).

'The widest choice of subjects to learners in Wales' .... unless you are following a Welsh medium education! In September, there will be no year 10 Psychology GCSE course running in my school for the first time since 2009, while the English-medium school a few miles away, start a new GCSE Psychology course in English through AQA. The only reason that I can't offer this subject is because we teach through Welsh. There are four other Welsh centres in the same position.

Psychologists need to be able discuss their subject in Welsh. By depriving Welsh medium pupils of the opportunity to study Psychology GCSE through Welsh, we will lose 144 students per year who would have had the potential of contributing to Psychology – as a

teacher, lecturer, therapist, researcher etc. in Welsh with confidence because the relevant terminology familiar to them

144 candidates sat the unit 2 Psychology WJEC GCSE paper in Welsh to finish the course in 2015, with 5 centres teaching it, so there is the potential for significant numbers, not just a handful. I have arranged that three experienced Psychology examiners are available to work for any English Board, so that translation of candidate's scripts (solutions) would not be needed, just the translation of the paper itself.

The only English Board that even considered the application to provide a Welsh paper (from myself, not QW), was Pearson, but in the end they refused, saying it 'would require Welsh speakers at every level of the production of the papers'. This is nonsense because that doesn't even happen in the WJEC, where the Chief Examiner and the Subject Officer don't speak Welsh!

I don't blame the English Boards, because why should they go to the trouble when they don't have to? Qualifications Wales is to blame for their limp policy, which does not protect the rights of Welsh-medium learners. Surely it would have been possible to create an element of competition between the English Boards by giving priority to those open to the idea of offering a Welsh option, but they did not attempt to do this at all.

This is totally unacceptable in the modern Wales. If English Awarding Bodies are allowed to offer subjects in Wales, it must be made clear that they need to offer a Welsh paper when there is a reasonable request to do so.

## WJEC's withdrawal of GCSE Psychology

In November 2015, WJEC [published a circular](#) stating that their GCSE Psychology (both English and Welsh medium) was to be withdrawn. It stated:

As the reform of GCSE, AS and A level qualifications progresses from the development stage to delivery stage, a phased withdrawal of legacy qualifications will begin. In most cases a legacy qualification will be replaced by an equivalent reformed qualification. **However, certain qualifications will not be reformed and the purpose of this communication is to identify those qualifications and provide early notice of their withdrawal.**

There are certain qualifications where the number of learners in Wales is considered too low for any awarding organisation to develop qualifications for award only in Wales. Where there is a reformed qualification in these subjects available in England, Qualifications Wales have invited awarding bodies to apply to have them designated by them for use on publicly funded learning programmes in Wales. One such qualification is GCSE Psychology which was offered by the awarding body [Pearson](#) for first teaching from 2017. The qualification is available only through the medium of English.

## Qualifications Wales

Qualifications Wales are the independent regulator of qualifications in Wales and are responsible for the approval and designation of publicly funded qualifications. The main points in Qualifications Wales' response to the petition are:

- There is no requirement on awarding bodies (who are commercial organisations) to offer any regulated qualification;
- The number of learners in Wales for a given subject is not always sufficient to make the development of a separate qualification commercially attractive or viable;
- While Qualifications Wales can place conditions of recognition on regulated awarding bodies, it is a decision for the awarding body whether to accept the conditions and offer qualifications or whether to stop offering them at all;
- Not all subjects are awarded by all awarding bodies, some are awarded by a single body as the potential number of learners is only just sufficient to meet a viability threshold;
- Qualifications Wales require awarding bodies to publish their policy on Welsh-medium assessment, but they do not make Welsh medium provision mandatory as such a requirement may lead awarding bodies to completely withdraw their qualifications from Wales.

In relation to GCSE Psychology, Qualifications Wales state:

- Pearson did not intend to offer GCSE Psychology through the medium of Welsh for teaching from September 2017 as it did not have enough examiners and quality assurance personnel with the necessary Welsh language skills;
- Discussions have taken place between Pearson and WJEC to see whether Pearson could make use of some of WJEC's examiners, but it has not been possible to find a solution in time for a reformed qualification to be available in Welsh by September 2017;
- The timeline for the new curriculum means that the newly reformed qualifications are likely to run to 2026 so it may be feasible to develop a new qualification to help meet the need.

## National Assembly for Wales action

In [Plenary on 7 March 2017](#), Llyr Gruffydd asked the Leader of the House and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt for a statement from the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language on the lack of availability of bilingual teaching resources and the impact that this has on Welsh-medium education. Llyr Gruffydd said:

“But I understood today that the psychology GCSE won't be taught through the medium of Welsh anywhere next year, because of the uncertainty about the availability of the necessary materials. Welsh-medium schools in Wales have decided not to provide that course, and bilingual schools have chosen to provide the English course, because they know that the resources will be available. The risk there, of course, is that the authorities will say that there is no demand for such resources and we

will see a vicious cycle developing that is entirely unacceptable, in my view, and that is a million miles away, of course, from where we should be if we want to see a million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050. It lets Welsh-medium schools down. It lets teachers who want to teach through the medium of Welsh down, and it lets pupils who want to be educated through the medium of Welsh down. And it undermines all ambitions that the Government has in terms of the Welsh language. So, I would kindly request that the relevant Minister appear before us to explain exactly what the Government is doing, and how they see that this is acceptable in any way whatsoever.”

In response, Jane Hutt said:

“It is very important that we do get the evidence to substantiate these concerns underpinning this question today. My understanding is that, in terms of psychology, it’s being ceased in both English and Welsh in 2018—English and Welsh—therefore, that obviously drives that decision, [...] So, obviously, it is a matter of exploring what these claims are in terms of getting the appropriate evidence and response.”

In her response to this Petition, the Cabinet Secretary for Education confirmed that arrangements for the approval and designation of qualifications such as the designation GCSE Psychology are a matter for Qualifications Wales.

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.