

## **Qualifications Wales – The Full 14 to 16 Qualifications Offer in Wales**

### **Responses**

#### **Overall Approach**

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Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed qualifications will support schools to deliver the Curriculum for Wales?

3

Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed qualifications will help learners to progress in life, learning and work?

5

What (if anything) do you like about these proposals?

6

What (if anything) don't you like about these proposals?

7

Is there anything else we need to think about regarding our overall proposals?

#### **Integral Skills Project Qualification**

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Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal for an Integral Skills Project qualification?

#### **Strongly agree**

We support the proposal for a standalone qualification to assess the four integral skills described in the Curriculum for Wales. Developing these essential skills in learners will greatly assist them in any future STEM or engineering education, as well as helping them to integrate effectively into engineering and manufacturing workplaces and take full advantage of the career opportunities open to them. We particularly welcome the inclusion of the 'planning and organising' skill as project management for technical projects is currently a skills gap in the sector.

We welcome the proposed approach of requiring learners to work independently on a subject or topic of their choice, enabling them to contextualise the qualification to complement their wider programmes of study. This should enable learners with a strong interest in engineering to develop and be assessed on Integral Skills in a way

they find particularly motivating and relevant for their wider studies now, and in the future.

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Is there anything else we need to think about regarding the Integral Skills Project qualification?

We support the proposed role of awarding bodies in guiding schools and learners on the design of the qualification and setting the assessment. The role of awarding bodies within the design and assessment process will need to be carefully considered to ensure that schools have sufficient and timely access to awarding body expertise and the burden on awarding bodies is manageable.

The proposal is to grade the qualification as a simple pass/merit/distinction. It might be worth considering whether a minimum grade of pass would provide the right incentives for learners on a project that will require a significant amount of application and independent work. We also explain in response to question 35 why a pass/fail grade is generally more suitable for skills-based engineering qualifications than pass/merit/distinction.

### **Skills for Life Qualifications**

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Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal for Skills for Life qualifications?

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To what extent do you agree or disagree with the list of units/subject areas for the Skills for Life qualifications?

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Are there any other units/subject areas we should add?

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Is there anything else we need to think about regarding Skills for Life qualifications?

### **Skills for Work Qualifications**

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Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal for Skills for Work qualifications?

**Strongly agree**

We strongly support the proposal for Skills for Work Units. Both learners and employers will greatly benefit from school leavers having work-ready skills. We support the proposal to enable schools to tailor how they deliver these skills to their

learners, taking into account the local context, such as current and future local employment opportunities. Unlike University, where students generally travel to a new location for study, most apprentices, for example, are engaged within their local area, so it is extremely important to ensure these units reflect the needs of local employers.

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To what extent do you agree or disagree with the list of units/subject areas for the Skills for Work qualifications?

Agree

To ensure that these units/subject areas fully benefit learners, it is essential that they be informed by the needs of employers, with schools having the flexibility to adapt them to meet the needs of their local employers.

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Are there any other units/subject areas we should add?

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Is there anything else we need to think about regarding Skills for Work qualifications?

### **Skills Suite – Overview**

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Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal for a Skills Suite - which includes Skills for Life qualifications, Skills for Work qualifications and the Integral Skills Project?

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To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Skills Suite should replace the existing Skills Challenge Certificate?

### **Pre-vocational Qualifications**

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Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal for Pre-vocational qualifications?

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To what extent do you agree or disagree with the list of subject areas for the Pre-vocational qualifications?

Agree

### Existing vocational qualifications in engineering

Enginuity supports in principle the proposal to include Pre-vocational qualifications in engineering. However, we note that Qualifications Wales already recognises Level 1 and Level 2 vocational qualifications in engineering which are geared towards skills (1 and 2) and knowledge (3 and 4) development:

- (1) Level 1 - Performing Engineering Operations,
- (2) Level 2 – Diploma in Practical Engineering,
- (3) Level 1 – Certificate in Engineering Technologies, and
- (4) Level 2 – Diploma in Engineering Technologies.

If the proposal were implemented, we assume that Qualifications Wales would withdraw recognition from these qualifications above because “[t]he Pre-vocational qualifications described in this proposal will replace all existing publicly funded pre-16 vocational qualifications.”

### The Pre-vocational qualifications

We would not support an entry level qualification in engineering. To our knowledge, there are no existing entry level qualifications in engineering. This is largely because of health and safety restrictions due to the use of potentially dangerous equipment such as metal working machinery.

We support securing a Pre-vocational qualification at Level 1 as proposed. As we note above, there is already a template for such a qualification in the existing ‘Level 1- Performing Engineering Operations’ and ‘Certificate in Engineering Technologies’ qualifications. There also used to be a popular ‘Young Apprenticeship’ aimed at pre-16 which was based on Level 1 units.

We strongly disagree with the proposal not to secure a Pre-vocational qualification in engineering at Level 2, if the effect of the proposal was to remove recognition from the existing Level 2 vocational qualifications, the ‘Diploma in Practical Engineering’ and the Diploma in Engineering Technologies.

We strongly disagree that a Level 2 vocational qualification in engineering would overlap with GCSE engineering. The vocational qualification provides an alternative to GCSEs which enables more practical learners to develop their skills. As GCSE engineering and vocational engineering qualifications at Level 2 are not substitutable, the effect of the proposal would be to reduce the options for vocational learners.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that Qualifications Wales either:

- (1) Continue to recognise the Level 2 – Diploma in Practical Engineering and Diploma in Engineering Technologies, or
- (2) Secure a Pre-vocational qualification in engineering at Level 2.

## 'Made for Wales'

We agree that it is important to develop qualifications and assessments that are specifically designed to suit the needs of learners, providers, and employers in Wales. However, we do not think this requirement needs to exclude completely the use of qualifications which are also offered in other jurisdictions, if such a qualification was the best option for Welsh learners, providers, and employers. Likewise, when a great qualification is made for Wales, it would be unfortunate if it could not be offered in other countries. For example, EAL made the Level 2 Diploma in Practical Engineering specifically for Wales, and then subsequently made it available in England.

## Digitalisation and digital skills

We would also like to note that digitalisation and digital skills are key areas for the engineering sector, and it will be important to ensure that learners with an interest in engineering are taught key aspects of numeracy and digital competence, either as part of the Pre-vocational qualification or through some other mandatory learning.

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Are there any other subjects we should add to this list?

We strongly support securing a Pre-vocational qualification in engineering at Level 2, if the effect of the proposal was to remove recognition from the existing Level 2 vocational qualifications, the 'Diploma in Practical Engineering' and Diploma in Engineering Technologies.

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To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to have a simple, common grading scale for Pre-vocational qualifications - such as pass/merit/distinction?

Disagree

## Grading

We strongly recommend that the option for a simple pass/fail grading be retained for pre-vocational qualifications, rather than applying a uniform pass/merit/distinction grading across all subjects. This flexibility is necessary to account for practical differences between the proposed Pre-vocational qualification subjects.

A pass/fail grade is much more suitable for skills-based engineering qualifications than pass/merit/distinction grading because of the importance of consistency and standards in engineering work. When a learner makes an engineered component to the required specification of 'pass or fail', the component either meets the specification or it does not. This learning situation simulates the process in industry where they will be required to produce that component to a specification/drawing that sets out certain tolerances of size, finish, etc. The existing Level 1 Performing

Engineering Operations and Level 2 Diploma in Practical Engineering both apply a pass/fail grade for this reason.

Doing something better than the benchmark standard is usually seen in other sectors as achieving a higher standard, and therefore merit or distinction can be applied. However, for the development of practical skills in engineering this is not necessarily the case. To overprocess the manufacture of an engineering component, making it better than it needs to be or closer to a size, can cause a number of issues, including:

- Greater time and costs than necessary, making production inefficient and potentially leading to the company being uncompetitive,
- Out of specification because the sizes achieved are too tight and the component does not work as intended, or
- Negative environmental impact as overprocessing uses more energy and resources.

A pass/fail grade for skill-based qualifications will be more effective in ensuring that engineering learners understand these important issues. Unfortunately, a pass/merit/distinction grading for these type of qualifications could mislead learners about the nature of engineering work and create unnecessary challenges for them when they enter the workplace.

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To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal that Pre-vocational qualifications should take a similar amount of time to teach as GCSE qualifications - around 120 guided learning hours?

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Is there anything else we need to think about regarding Pre-vocational qualifications?

## **Foundation Qualifications**

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Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal for Foundation qualifications?

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To what extent do you agree or disagree with the list of subject areas for Foundation qualifications?

Neither agree nor disagree

We think that a Foundation qualification in engineering may not be necessary. The availability of GCSE Engineering and Pre-vocational qualifications in engineering at Level 1 and 2 should provide sufficient opportunities for different types of learners.

If a Foundation qualification in engineering were included, a key theme should be transferable skills. So, for example, content on electrification should be focussed on the key principles of electrical theory rather than the use in a specific context.

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Are there any other subjects we should add to this list?

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Is there anything else we need to think about regarding Foundation qualifications?

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Are you happy to answer a few more questions about possible Foundation qualifications in Religion, Values and Ethics, Health and Wellbeing and for learners who use English, or Welsh, as an additional language?

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We are proposing to create a Foundation qualification in **Humanities**, as well as units within the Skills for Life qualifications in **Religion, Values and Ethics**. In addition to these, do you consider there is a need for a standalone Foundation qualification in **Religion, Values and Ethics**?

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In the area of **Health and Wellbeing**, we are proposing to create a wide range of units in the Skills Suite, as well as relevant Pre-vocational subject areas. We therefore **do not** propose to develop a standalone Foundation qualification in **Health and Wellbeing**. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this approach?

52

Should we create separate Foundation qualifications for learners who use English, or Welsh, as an additional language?

**Impact Assessment**

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Are you happy to answer a few more questions about the [potential equalities, regulatory, Welsh language or cost impacts of these proposals?](#)

60

Would your awarding body be willing to develop and award any of the qualifications outlined in the Skills Suite proposal?

Yes

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Please explain your answer. If you answered yes, please also indicate which qualifications you would be willing to develop and award.

The Integral Skills Project qualification.

62

Would your awarding body be willing to develop and/or submit for approval any of the qualifications outlined in the Pre-vocational qualification proposal?

Yes

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Please explain your answer. If you answered yes, please also indicate which qualifications you would be willing to develop and/or submit.

Pre-vocational qualifications in Engineering.

64

Would your awarding body be willing to develop and award any of the qualifications outlined in the Foundation qualifications proposal?

No

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Please explain your answer. If you answered yes, please also indicate which qualifications you would be willing to develop and award.

The proposal is not to create a Foundation qualification in Engineering.

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Would you or someone from your awarding body be willing to engage with us to help develop our proposals further?

Yes

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Which proposal or subject would your awarding body be willing to engage with us about?

We would be happy to engage with you about any of the proposals related to Engineering, or any of our recommendations in this submission.



Who would be the key person to contact and what are their contact details?