



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

**WRITTEN STATEMENT
BY
THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

TITLE **Qualifications Wales Bill**

DATE **1 December 2014**

BY **Huw Lewis, Minister for Education and Skills**

The Qualifications Wales Bill has been introduced to the National Assembly today, 1 December 2014.

The Bill will establish a new, independent, expert body called 'Qualifications Wales' to regulate awarding bodies and non degree qualifications in Wales.

The creation of Qualifications Wales underpins the on-going reform to qualifications that began with the Review of Qualifications in 2012 and is now a cornerstone of our 'Qualified for Life' strategy. In creating Qualifications Wales I am delivering against my commitments firstly to independent regulation, secondly to the strengthening of regulation and thirdly to the simplification of the qualification system in Wales.

This Bill will establish Qualifications Wales as an independent regulator. It will lay annual reports before the National Assembly for Wales on how it has carried out its regulatory functions that year, on its engagement with stakeholders and on its intentions for the next year. It will also report on the conclusions of any assessments it has made on the impact of its previous activities.

This Bill places the learner at the centre of the qualification system and ensures that decisions about non-degree qualifications in Wales are taken *in* Wales, and in the interests of Welsh learners.

In addition to powers similar to those currently held by the Welsh Ministers, Qualifications Wales will have a range of new and innovative powers that will allow it not only to regulate but also to shape the qualifications system in Wales.

The new body will have two principal aims in relation to qualifications and the qualification system in Wales. The first is to ensure that they are effective for meeting the reasonable needs of learners in Wales. The second is to promote public confidence.

In delivering these principal aims the new body must also have regard, amongst other things, to eight vitally important matters when making decisions. These refer, for example, to the Welsh economy; the Welsh language; the needs of employers, higher education providers and professions; the comparability of qualifications within and beyond Wales; the efficiency of provision; the availability of qualifications, the assessment arrangements and the knowledge, skills and understanding that are required.

Critically, the introduction of the aims and associated matters mean that Qualifications Wales is expected to consider the content of the qualifications not just how well they are put together or assessed. It gives a broad scope to Qualifications Wales and means that it will have to be proactive in developing an understanding of what is needed in Wales and then to act appropriately.

The Bill does not differentiate between general qualifications and vocational qualifications. Both are very firmly within the remit of Qualifications Wales.

I expect Qualifications Wales to become an expert in regulation. It will be able to shape the qualifications system in Wales, carrying out research; working closely with educators and with businesses and sector representatives in Wales; and using that evidence to determine needs. Its powers to commission new qualifications will enable it where necessary, to take direct action to secure the design and development of new qualifications to meet the needs in Wales.

My long-term ambition remains for Qualifications Wales to become an awarding body. But that needs to be at the right time. The Bill requires Qualifications Wales to keep its role and that of awarding bodies under review and I will welcome its advice on how the qualifications system is working for Wales.

In summary, while this Bill gives Qualifications Wales a number of regulatory functions which reflect those currently exercised by Welsh Ministers, it contains a number of innovative provisions that will provide Qualifications Wales with a powerful toolkit to enable it to regulate appropriately in the interests of learners in Wales.