



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

20 MAY 2020

Report by: Alwyn Jones - GwE Assistant Director

Subject: Qualifications – summer 2020 and 2021 examination series

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 For Joint Committee to consider the consequences of the ministerial decision to close schools and the consequential decision to cancel the summer 2020 exam series for awarding of grades for GCSEs, AS, A levels, Skills Challenge Certificate and other vocational qualifications; and also
- 1.2 To consider the potential implications for the summer 2021 exam series.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Following the ministerial decision on 18 March 2020 to close schools and the consequential decision to cancel the summer 2020 exam series, progression of learners to sixth form, college, higher education, training or employment must be facilitated. Schools, colleges and other exam centres will be asked to submit **centre assessment grades**, together with a **rank order** of learners to enable the award of GCSE, AS, A level and Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC) qualifications.

The centre assessment grades submitted to WJEC must reflect a fair, reasonable and carefully considered judgement of **the most likely grade a learner would have achieved if they had sat their exams this summer and completed any non-exam assessment**. The deadline **for submission** of the data will be **no earlier than 29 May 2020**, and the actual date for submission will be communicated by WJEC as part of the detailed instructions they will issue.

In the interests of fairness for learners, judgements made by centres across Wales should be consistent. However, it is unreasonable to expect that teachers in different centres across

the country will make judgements that are precisely consistent with one another. So that the final grades awarded are as fair as possible, WJEC will standardise the centre judgements once they have been submitted, using a method developed in conjunction with Qualifications Wales.

Welsh Government has confirmed that centres will not be held to account for their performance on the basis of these grades and will expect Estyn, local authorities and regional consortia to adopt a similar approach. Key Stage 4 and post-16 school performance measures will not be calculated for the 2019/20 academic year.

For every GCSE, AS, A level and Skills Challenge Certificate qualification, each centre will be required to submit:

- A **centre assessment grade** for each learner – the professional judgement of the subject teachers, including the Head of Department, about the grade that each learner is most likely to have achieved if they had sat their exams this summer
- The **rank order** of learners within each grade – for example, for all those learners with a B grade in GCSE Mathematics, a rank order where 1 is the learner at the top of that grade (and so closest to the grade above), and so on.

The same information is being required of centres in England for GCSEs, AS and A Levels regulated by Ofqual.

- 2.2 As yet, no guidance have been published by Qualifications Wales regarding those learners preparing for the 2021 examination series. Headteachers, through their Strategic Head teacher Forums, have noted an urgent necessity for advice and guidance from Qualifications Wales and WJEC regarding syllabus and examination content for the current Year 10 and Year 12. GwE have been actively supporting them with this work. This is essential to ensure schools are fully informed when planning and delivering distance learning strategies and transition back to schools.

3.0 Considerations

- 3.1 The Chairs of the six regional Secondary Headteacher Strategic Forums have written to Qualifications Wales asking for exegesis and clarification on the following areas:

- an urgent necessity for advice and guidance regarding syllabus and examination content for the current Year 10 and Year 12. This is essential to ensure schools are fully informed when planning and delivering distance learning strategies and models;
- by adhering to the use of comparable outcomes, there are mounting concerns that the GCSE brand is being protected to the detriment of individual pupil achievement;
- current lack of transparency around the statistical model being used for standardisation;
- an urgent requirement to effectively engage in professional dialogue with head teachers around the application of ‘historical data’ within the statistical model for standardisation;
- requirement for further guidance to stakeholders to fully understand the process of ‘grade awarding’ and the ‘standardisation model’; and
- significant concerns that schools will be unduly exposed by the appeals process where standardised assessment grades are different to those initially awarded by the school.

A copy of the letter and response from Qualification Wales is attached in Appendix 1.

3.2 Qualifications Wales have undertaken consultation on how the standardisation and appeals process will work for this year’s GCSE, AS and A level grades, following the cancellation of exams. The deadline for responding is 5pm on Wednesday, 13 May 2020. GwE have been actively supporting schools and Local Authorities with their responses to the consultation, and have also completed an online regional response based on the views and advice from Headteachers and LA Officers.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to consider the report and any subsequent action needed in light of the report.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.0 Equalities Impact

6.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Personnel Implications

7.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

8.0 Consultation Undertaken

8.1 Consultation undertaken with the GwE Management Board and Secondary Headteacher Strategic Forums.

9.0 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 – Letter sent to Qualification Wales by the Chairs of the Regional Headteachers Forums and response from Qualification Wales

OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Nothing to add from the propriety perspective.

Statutory Finance Officer:

Nothing to add to the report from a financial propriety perspective.