



## REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

11 NOVEMBER 2020

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**Report by:** Arwyn Thomas, GwE Managing Director

**Subject:** Independent Review - Qualifications 2020

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### **1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To hold a discussion in the Joint Committee on the Independent Review of awarding Qualifications in Wales in 2020 following the Minister for Education's announcement on 10 November 2020.
- 1.2 To consider what support schools need to effectively implement the Education Minister's recommendations.

### **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 On Monday 17 August 2020, Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education, confirmed that A level, AS, GCSE, Skills Challenge Certificate and Welsh Baccalaureate grades will now be awarded on the basis of Centre Assessment Grades, and that she would issue a further statement in relation to an independent review of events following cancellation of this year's examinations.
  - 2.2 In the Children, Young People and Education Committee on 18 August 2020, the Minister for Education noted that she will commission an independent review of the arrangements for awarding grades in the summer 2020 examination series, and the
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considerations for 2021. The review Chair is Louise Casella, Director of the Open University in Wales, who has extensive experience in strategic roles in the education sector in Wales.

### **3.0 Matters for consideration**

**3.1** The aim of the review is to provide recommendations and considerations for the Minister for Education, whilst acknowledging the various partners associated with supporting learners in Wales.

**3.2** The terms of reference state that the review should take into account the challenges that have arisen from the experience of 2020 (and in the context of the uncertainty about Covid in the future) and the challenges for learners in the summer 2021 examination series (Appendix 1 - Independent Review Terms of Reference).

**3.3** The main lessons that have arisen this year should also be taken into account, specifically so as to provide recommendations and considerations in relation to a possible approach to prepare for 2021, an approach that prioritises learners' needs and their progress, and addresses the continuous need to maintain standards, the credibility of the education system and the process of awarding qualifications.

**3.4** The Joint Committee has secured an input into the review by means of a series of letters to the Minister for Education and completing the online questionnaire 'Independent review of the summer 2020 arrangements to award grades, and considerations for summer 2021'. In addition, an interview was conducted with GwE officers and the Panel.

**3.5** The Joint Committee has urged the Minister for Education to make an urgent decision regarding examination series arrangements, and has recommended Centre Assessment Grades and moderation arrangements for 2021.

**3.6** In a statement on 21 October 2020, Louise Casella, Chair of the Independent Review Panel, noted:

*"The Panel's recommendations will reflect the learner experiences in 2020 and 2021 and will suggest a fair and equitable way forward that takes account of the multiple disruptions that continue to arise due to Covid-19."*

**3.7** In a [Statement](#) on 29 October 2020, the Education Minister confirmed that an announcement will be made on Tuesday, 10 November 2020, regarding the arrangements for awarding qualifications for 2021.

**3.8** The Minister had requested information and advice to inform the decision. This includes the interim recommendations of the independent review and further advice from Qualifications Wales. Both reports were published on 29 October 2020 - Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

**3.9** The region's main priority over the next phase will be to work with schools to ensure continuity of learning and to support schools in implementing the Education Minister's decision. Specifically for the secondary sector, and with the uncertainty around how KS4 and KS5 qualifications will be awarded, we will work together to identify gaps in provision and to identify the level of support that will be needed to support the process of allocating appropriate qualifications for learners.

#### **4.0 Recommendations**

**4.1** The Joint Committee is asked to discuss the implications of the above, and to consider any further response required following the statement by the Minister for Education on 10 November 2020 as regards the Independent Review.

**4.2** Agree that the main priority for the region over the next period will be to provide appropriate support for secondary schools in supporting KS4 and KS5 learners to be fairly accredited.

## **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 took place with the GwE Management Board, the GwE Joint Committee and the Regional Secondary Headteachers Operational Group.

## **9.0 Appendices**

9.1 Appendix 1 – Independent Review ToR

9.2 Appendix 2 – Independent Review Interim Report - October 2020

9.3 Appendix 3 – Advice from Qualifications Wales

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## **OPINION OF STATUTORY OFFICERS**

### **Monitoring Officer:**

Nothing to add from a propriety perspective.

### **Statutory Finance Officer:**

I note that part 5.1 of the report confirms there are no financial implications arising from this report. Therefore, I presume that GwE will be prioritising from within their existing resources.