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Welsh Government

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# Annual updates to the Curriculum for Wales Framework guidance

This consultation welcomes your views on proposed updates to the Curriculum for Wales Framework guidance on Hwb.

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# Contents

**Overview** (<https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/73016#191115>)

**Introduction** (<https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/73016#191117>)

**Updated sections of Curriculum for Wales framework guidance**  
(<https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/73016#191119>)

**Consultation questions** (<https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/73016#191322>)

**UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)** (<https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/73016#191324>)

**Your rights** (<https://www.gov.wales/pdf-optimised/node/73016#191326>)

# Overview

This consultation welcomes your views on proposed updates to the **Curriculum for Wales Framework guidance** (<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/introduction-to-curriculum-for-wales-guidance/>) on Hwb. The Framework guidance was published in January 2020 and before its publication, was subject to broad and extensive consultation.

A systematic annual update of the Framework guidance on Hwb was implemented from January 2022. This is considered the most advantageous point in the academic year to make curriculum guidance updates. It avoids the first few weeks of the spring term while also providing updated information to schools and settings in good time to inform their work on curriculum development for the subsequent academic year, which is typically undertaken through the spring term and into the summer term.

The proposed updates for 2026 are presented in this document. We have avoided including entire sub-sections of existing guidance, focussing instead on just those paragraphs being amended. Due to the timing of the changes put forward for inclusion this year, the plan is to consult for a 4-week period from 5 January 2026. This will allow amended guidance to be published by the end of February 2026.

As part of this year's update, we plan to only make changes to the 14 to 16 Learning Guidance.

## **Key changes proposed to the Designing the 14 to16 curriculum offer**

### **Section update: increasing learner effectiveness: supporting reflections on learning and progress and post-16 planning**

Added signposting reference for schools to consider the opportunities provided to learners through the **Seren Academy** (<https://www.gov.wales/seren-network-overview>).

### **Section update: ensuring a broad offer of qualifications, learning and experiences to support learner pathways**

Remove reference to GCSEs The Sciences (double award).

Add reference to VCSEs (Vocational Certificate of Secondary Education), Skills Suite and Foundation qualifications: from 2027, 14 to 16-year-olds in Wales will be offered the choice to undertake Vocational Certificates of Secondary Education (VCSEs); Skills Suite and personal Project; and Foundation qualifications in addition to GCSEs.

### **Section update: Science and Technology**

Amended narrative to reflect the **Cabinet Secretary for Education's Written Statement (September 2025)** (<https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-science-gcses>) confirming that Qualifications Wales (QW), in its role as independent regulator, had announced its decision to continue to listen to the education sector and undertake a further consultation in autumn 2028 on the suite of GCSE Science qualifications available to learners in Wales. Consequently, they also confirmed that separate Science GCSEs in biology, chemistry and physics will continue to be available to schools and learners, pending the outcome of that consultation.

## **Section update: self-evaluation and improvement**

Added signposting reference for schools to consider the **Youth Engagement Progression Framework** (<https://www.gov.wales/youth-engagement-and-progression-framework-handbook-html>).

## **Section update: a new education data and information ecosystem**

Amended narrative reflects that the **new 14 to 16 Learner Entitlement Indicators Framework was publicly consulted** (<https://www.gov.wales/data-and-information-support-learning-and-improvement-those-working-within-school-system-html>) on between January and March 2025. It forms one aspect of the information and evidence that should be used at the different levels of the school system for evaluation, improvement and accountability purposes, in alignment with our **approach to using data and information to support learning and improvement** (<https://hwb.gov.wales/school-improvement-and-leadership/evaluation-improvement-and-accountability/using-information-and-data-to-support-and-improve-learning/>).

## **Consultation timing**

This feedback phase will end on 2 February 2026, after which all responses will be considered by the Welsh Government and other partners. The draft guidance will then be refined and, subject to the Cabinet Secretary for Education's agreement, will form the Framework guidance update for February 2026.

# Introduction

## Key changes proposed to the Designing the 14 to16 curriculum offer

### Section update: increasing learner effectiveness: supporting reflections on learning and progress and post-16 planning

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# Updated sections of Curriculum for Wales framework guidance

## 14 to 16 learning guidance

Under the 'Designing the 14 to 16 curriculum offer' of this guidance we propose to make minor amendments under five headings. These changes are designed to reflect the following:

### Made for Wales Science GCSEs

In September 2025, the Cabinet Secretary for Education released a **Written Statement** (<https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-science-gcses>) confirming that Qualifications Wales (QW), in its role as independent regulator, had announced its decision to continue to listen to the education sector and undertake **a further consultation** (<https://qualifications.wales/news-views/further-consultation-planned-on-gcse-science/>) in autumn 2028 on the suite of GCSE Science qualifications available to learners in Wales. Consequently, they also confirmed that separate Science GCSEs in biology, chemistry and physics will continue to be available to schools and learners, pending the outcome of that consultation.

From September 2026, schools will be able to offer their learners the existing separate Science GCSEs and new, reformed GCSEs in The Sciences (double award) and Integrated Science (single award). The timing of this consultation will allow these new qualifications to be embedded in schools and awarded for the first time, prior to the planned QW consultation in 2028 taking place.

Learners can be confident that both the new The Sciences GCSE (double award) and existing separate science GCSEs will continue to support progression to AS and A levels in biology, chemistry and physics, and on to STEM careers where that is their chosen pathway.

## **National 14 to 16 Qualifications Offer**

When the 14 to 16 Learning Guidance was published in September 2024, it detailed that from September 2027, all learners should make their qualification choices from the **National 14 to 16 Qualifications offer** (<https://haveyoursay.qualifications.wales/hub-page/national-14-16-qualifications>). The guidance did not detail explicitly that this includes Vocational Certificates of Secondary Education (VCSEs), Skills Suite and a Personal Project, and Foundation Qualifications. The amendment has been made to clearly reflect the availability of these qualifications in addition to GCSEs from 2027.

## **References to Seren Academy and the Youth Engagement Progression Framework**

In addition, the guidance now signposts schools to consider the opportunities provided to learners through initiatives and frameworks such as the **Seren Academy** (<https://www.gov.wales/seren-network-overview>) the **Youth Engagement Progression Framework** (<https://www.gov.wales/youth-engagement-and-progression-framework-handbook-html>).

## **A new education data and information ecosystem**

As the consultation referred to in the original guidance has concluded, the revised guidance also includes further information on the new education data and information ecosystem, with reporting arrangements being introduced from 2027.

## **Proposed Changes**

The proposed changes are outlined below:

## **1. Increasing learner effectiveness: supporting reflections on learning and progress and post-16 planning**

We propose adding the below second paragraph between the second bulleted list and the CWRE para this heading.

To support the brightest learners, the Seren Academy is a super-curricular route to ignite learners' curiosity and increase their motivation for their learning, empowering them to make ambitious, informed choices about their future educational pathway and advancing their ability to reach their potential and excel in their future educational goals at the highest level. A Seren Manager is assigned to each school to provide support.

### **1.2 Ensuring a broad offer of qualifications, learning and experiences to support learner pathways**

We propose updating the second paragraph under this heading, as set out below. All other wording under this heading will remain as is.

GCSE qualifications have been reformed in recognition of the Curriculum for Wales. Learners who have been learning under the Curriculum for Wales should, wherever possible, be studying for reformed qualifications. This means that learners who will begin Year 10 in September 2025 should be choosing from the **Made-for-Wales GCSE offer** (<https://qualificationswales.org/regulation-reform/reforming/qualified-for-the-future/made-for-wales-gcses/>) rather than the legacy qualifications they are replacing. The same principle applies for Year 10 learners in September 2026, when further reformed Made-for-Wales GCSEs, including GCSE The Sciences (double award), will become available. From September 2027, all learners should be making their qualification choices from the **National 14 to 16 Qualifications offer** (<https://haveyoursay.qualifications.wales/hub-page/national-14-16-qualifications>) (as well as any qualifications that may be designated for 14 to 16-year-olds under Qualifications Wales' revised designation policy). In addition to GCSEs, this offer includes Vocational Certificates of Secondary Education (VCSEs), as well as Foundation, Personal Project and Skills Suite qualifications.

### 1.3 Science and Technology

We propose updating the fourth, fifth and sixth paragraphs under this heading, as well as adding in an additional (seventh paragraph) as set out below. All other wording under this heading will remain as is.

All learners should have the opportunity to acquire an ambitious qualification in the sciences to support their future transitions. In Years 10 and 11, schools should ensure all learners follow a challenging, ambitious and stretching course that leads to a qualification in the sciences. For most learners, this will be GCSE The Sciences (double award) or by taking all three separate science GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

From 2026 the **Made-for-Wales GCSE suite of qualifications** (<https://qualifications.wales/regulation-reform/reforming/national-14-16-qualifications/national-qualifications-gcse/>) will include GCSE The Sciences (double award), which should be offered by all schools. Qualifications Wales has also announced that separate science GCSEs in biology, chemistry and physics will continue to be available to schools and learners. These qualifications will have both a foundation and higher tier so that learners can be entered at the level that is most suitable for their individual needs. Schools should support all learners who wish to undertake GCSE The Sciences to do so, where this is in the learners' best interests.

There will also be an integrated science (single award) GCSE. This will provide an alternative route for the small proportion of learners who would benefit from undertaking a smaller science qualification than GCSE The Sciences or three separate science GCSEs, given their particular circumstances. This single award qualification is not designed to support progression to GCE Sciences (AS and A level).

Schools should support learners to access qualifications that best meet their needs and ensure progression. It is also important that they receive a breadth of learning and experiences across the scientific disciplines. While there is no requirement for a learner to study all three separate science qualifications, it is unlikely that learners will engage with this breadth if they only take one or two of

the separate science qualifications. Schools will also want to ensure equity of learners' experiences and access regardless of the qualification they choose.

#### **4. Self-evaluation and improvement**

We propose inserting the below paragraph between paras two and three.

Schools could also consider the Youth Engagement Progression Framework, which sets out a process for organisations to work together to identify 11 to 18-year-olds at risk of disengaging from learning, or who are at risk of youth homelessness, and provide them with the support they need. This process is managed by local authority engagement and progression co-ordinators and youth homelessness co-ordinators.

#### **1.5 A new education data and information ecosystem**

We propose to replace the two paragraphs with one single updated paragraph.

The policy set out in this guidance, centred around the 14 to 16 learner entitlement, summarises those elements of 14 to 16 learning considered to be most important for learners in Years 10 and 11. The future reporting arrangements for 14 to 16 learning information have been built around the 14 to 16 Learner Entitlement to reflect this. The **new '14 to 16 Learner Entitlement Indicators Framework' was publicly consulted** (<https://www.gov.wales/data-and-information-support-learning-and-improvement-those-working-within-school-system-html>) on between January to March 2025 and forms one aspect of the information and evidence that should be used at the different levels of the school system for evaluation, improvement and accountability purposes, in alignment with our **approach to using data and information to support learning and improvement** (<https://hwb.gov.wales/school-improvement-and-leadership/evaluation-improvement-and-accountability/using-information-and-data-to-support-and-improve-learning/>). The new reporting arrangements will be introduced in 2027, with the reporting on the first 14 to 16 cohort completing this phase under the Curriculum for Wales.

# Consultation questions

## Question 1

Do you agree that the guidance is clear about Welsh Government's expectations with regards to the use of science qualifications for 14 to 16-year-old learners, following the decision by Qualifications Wales (QW) to continue offering triple science?

## Question 2

Do you agree that the guidance makes clear that VCSEs, Skills Suites and Foundation qualifications will be available from September 2027?

## Question 3

Do you agree that the updates to the guidance make clear that future reporting arrangements for 14 to 16 learning have been built around the 14 to 16 Learning Entitlement?

## Question 4

Do you agree that the updates to the guidance make clear that new reporting arrangements will be introduced in 2027?

## Question 5

What, in your opinion, would be the likely effects of this section of the Curriculum for Wales guidance on the Welsh language? We are particularly interested in any likely effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English.

- Do you think that there are opportunities to promote any positive effects?
- Do you think that there are opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects?

## **Question 6**

In your opinion, could these proposed amendments to the Curriculum for Wales Framework guidance be formulated or changed so as to:

- have positive effects or more positive effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English; or
- mitigate any negative effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English?

## **Question 7**

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

Please use the consultation response form to respond to the above questions.

## **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)**

The Welsh Government will be data controller for Welsh Government consultations and for any personal data you provide as part of your response to the consultation.

Welsh Ministers have statutory powers they will rely on to process this personal data which will enable them to make informed decisions about how they exercise their public functions. The lawful basis for processing information in this data collection exercise is our public task; that is, exercising our official authority to undertake the core role and functions of the Welsh Government. (Art 6(1)(e))

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about or planning future consultations. In the case of joint consultations this may also include other public authorities. Where the Welsh Government undertakes further analysis of consultation responses then this work may be commissioned to be carried out by an accredited third party (for example, a research organisation or a consultancy company). Any such work will only be undertaken under contract. The Welsh Government's standard terms and conditions for such contracts set out strict requirements for the processing and safekeeping of personal data.

In order to show that the consultation was carried out properly, the Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

You should also be aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation and that the Welsh Government may be under a legal obligation to disclose some information.

If your details are published as part of the consultation response then these published reports will be retained indefinitely. Any of your data held otherwise by the Welsh Government will be kept for no more than three years.

## **Your rights**

Under the data protection legislation, you have the right:

- to be informed of the personal data held about you and to access it
- to require us to rectify inaccuracies in that data
- to (in certain circumstances) object to or restrict processing
- for (in certain circumstances) your data to be 'erased'
- to (in certain circumstances) data portability

- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection.

For further details about the information the Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you want to exercise your rights under the UK GDPR, please see contact details below:

Data Protection Officer:

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

e-mail: [dataprotectionofficer@gov.wales](mailto:dataprotectionofficer@gov.wales) (mailto:dataprotectionofficer@gov.wales)

The contact details for the Information Commissioner's Office are:

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire SK9 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113

Website: [ICO website](https://ico.org.uk/) (https://ico.org.uk/)

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