

Current qualifications and the 14-19 Learning Pathways initiative



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales



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Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court

Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gsi.gov.uk

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Introduction

- 1 This report describes the full range of qualifications and awards that is currently available to learners in the 14-19 age range. It considers how providers are using qualifications and awards to support the 14-19 Learning Pathways initiative. It also considers the ways in which partnerships are developing in different areas.
- 2 The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning notes the importance of the initiative in her introduction to the Learning Pathways Guidance where she states that 'The Welsh Assembly Government recognises how important the 14-19 phase is to the main priorities for better health, better jobs, better skills and safer, stronger communities.'
- 3 The aim of the Learning Pathways initiative is to make sure that 95 per cent of young people by the age of 25 are ready for high-skilled employment or higher education by 2015'.

Learning Pathways consists of the following six key elements:

- individual learning pathways to meet the needs of each learner;
 - wider choice and flexibility of programmes and ways of learning;
 - a learning core wherever there are learners aged 14-19;
 - the support of a learning coach;
 - access to personal support; and
 - impartial careers advice and guidance.
- 4 This paper deals mainly with the first and second elements.
 - 5 Inspectors visited a range of organisations while undertaking this report. The organisations included schools, colleges, work-based learning providers, ACCAC, ELWa, LEAs and awarding bodies. Inspectors also consulted Estyn's reports on providers inspected during 2004-2005.

Main findings

- 6 The arrangements for delivering the 14-19 curriculum vary very greatly between different providers within local area partnerships. Because of competition between providers, there are often quite significant tensions between the members of partnerships, particularly for the recruitment of post-16 learners. This works against the need to work in collaboration to offer wider choice in option menus.
- 7 Current qualifications successfully meet the needs of pre-16 and post-16 learners who choose to study National Curriculum subjects at both GCSE and A level, and other academic subjects not within the National Curriculum, such as psychology, law and sociology.
- 8 Many providers are beginning to offer more vocational routes for 14-19 learners either alone or in partnership with other providers. However, there are not enough vocational qualifications available at levels 1 and 2 which are well matched to the needs of key stage 4 learners.
- 9 The Welsh Baccalaureate qualification has much in common with the Learning Pathways initiative, especially in relation to the learning core. Within the Welsh Baccalaureate pilot phase, there are examples of good practice in developing approaches to the qualification. Too few of the 14-19 Networks are aware that the lessons learnt from the Welsh Baccalaureate pilot centres have direct implications for the Learning Pathways.
- 10 Schools and colleges are introducing more vocational courses for learners in key stage 4. A few schools are offering NVQs at level 1 in collaboration with colleges and training providers so as to cater for a wider range of learners' needs.
- 11 Individual schools are working hard to extend the range of learning opportunities at key stage 4 in support of the Learning Pathways initiative. However, very few schools are large enough on their own to offer a good range of choices at different levels. Often the courses provided are not well enough matched to the local labour market.
- 12 There is a new and developing range of vocationally-related qualifications. These qualifications are often a better choice for key stage 4 learners than NVQs, as they develop learners' general employability skills.
- 13 A good range of general qualifications is provided through the medium of Welsh. However, there are not enough vocational qualifications available in Welsh.
- 14 Many schools and colleges use Open College Network (OCN) awards. They use these effectively to award credits for work experience or for a specific skill area, such as basic woodworking.
- 15 Many schools and colleges are still using the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate qualification. It is due to be phased out and awarding bodies are developing alternative qualifications. However, so far, none of

these alternatives fully meets the needs that are currently met by the GNVQ at both intermediate and foundation levels.

- 16 Many colleges have chosen to use BTEC national diploma qualifications instead of Vocational Certificates in Education (VCE A level). This is because the national diploma is more vocational and a better preparation for direct entry to employment.
- 17 A few networks have been very active in developing partnerships among schools, colleges and private training providers. However, no 14-19Network has the full options menu available for its learners.

Recommendations

14-19 Learning Networks should:

- R1 make sure that there is a suitable menu of options available for learners in their local areas;
- R2 make sure that learners in schools receive information about the options available in other providers so they know about the range of choices available to them;
- R3 make sure that the options menu includes appropriate general and applied vocational qualifications (or credits) from entry level to level 3, and especially at key stage 4;
- R4 make sure that providers do not unnecessarily duplicate provision that is already available locally;
- R5 include work-based learning provision more when drawing up their development plans; and
- R6 provide schools and other providers with guidance on the local labour market so that courses at key stage 4 can help to prepare learners for jobs available locally.

Awarding bodies and ACCAC should :

- R7 develop more qualifications available in Welsh, particularly in the most popular courses;
- R8 design a more appropriate replacement for GNVQ; and
- R9 make sure that any replacement for the GNVQ is a general vocational course that could be taken full-time at post-16 in one year or part-time over two years in key stage 4 where it could be combined with the learning core and other GCSE options.

The Welsh Assembly Government should:

- R10 make sure that there is a mechanism in place to require the 14-19 Learning network to provide a suitable menu of options;
- R11 review the use of performance indicators at 16 and 18 to focus more on point scores rather than qualifications;
- R12 establish a way to review and evaluate on a regular basis the suitability of qualifications available to 14-19 learners in relation to the economic needs of the country;

- R13 prioritise the development of credit framework in the most popular qualifications for learners in the 14-19 age group;
- R14 increase the speed at which commonly-used vocational qualifications receive a credit rating so that learners can gain credit for partly-completed qualifications;
- R15 make sure that the lessons learnt from the Welsh Bacculaureate pilot centres support providers in developing 14-19 Learning Pathways; and
- R16 Identify and support the development of vocational qualifications that are best suited to key stage 4 learners in order to help them move more easily into further education and training as well as to employment.

Providers should:

- R17 increase the use of a wider range of general and vocational qualifications for 14-19 year old learners across a learning network;
- R18 raise awareness of the range of qualifications available and how best to increase learning opportunities for the whole range of learners;
- R19 collaborate with neighbouring providers to offer learners a wider choice of qualification routes; and
- R20 increase the use of learners' work experience as a basis for gathering evidence for key skill qualifications.

Note

From 1st April 2006, ACCAC will be part of the Welsh Assembly Government. All references in the text to ACCAC's work will be the responsibility of the successor divisions within the Welsh Assembly Government.

What is the 14-19 Learning Pathways initiative?

- 18 The 14-19 Learning Pathways initiative aims to prepare 95 per cent of young people for high skilled employment or higher education by the age of 25. This is a challenging target and the initiative recognises that a great deal more needs to be done to engage those young people who currently do not engage in education and training after the age of 16. It also recognises that much of this work needs to be done before the age of 16, particularly when young people are in the 14-16 age range. It is during these years in particular that young people are thinking about the options available to them after the age of 16.
- 19 In order to achieve this challenging target, the initiative must overcome two important challenges. First, the initiative must improve the relatively poor staying-on rates in education and training in Wales. Second, it must engage more young people in education and training by providing more alternatives for them beyond the traditional GCSE and A level routes.
- 20 Another key aim of the Learning Pathways initiative is to reduce the number of learners leaving school at 16 without any recognised qualifications. The options for these young people are severely restricted once they leave school. Schools have been successful in recent years in reducing the proportion of young people who leave without any qualifications. Welsh Assembly Government data shows that it now stands at 2.7% of all 16-year olds in Wales. However, this proportion differs greatly across Wales. In 2005, the proportion varied from 4.9% in Denbighshire to 0.4% in Ceredigion.
- 21 The Learning Pathways initiative aims to provide more choice and variety for learners so that each learner can have an individual pathway which suits their needs and aspirations. The National Assembly for Wales issued guidance on learning pathways in 2004. The six elements of Learning Pathways are:
- individual learning pathways to meet the needs of each learner;
 - wider choice and flexibility of programmes and ways of learning;
 - a learning core wherever there are learners aged 14-19;
 - the support of a learning coach;
 - access to personal support; and
 - impartial careers advice and guidance.
- 22 The intention is that learners will select, with support and guidance, options which are appropriate to their abilities and learning styles and which will give them the opportunities they need to help them to reach their full potential. Each learner will also benefit from the support of a learning coach as well as access to other personal support and guidance, such as careers advice.

- 23 Each pathway is likely to have a combination of formal, non-formal and informal elements. Formal elements will include organised learning opportunities which lead to approved qualifications and/or achievements. Non-formal elements are organised programmes that may lead to accredited qualifications or credits, but are typically outside the National Qualifications Framework. Informal elements are wider experiences which do not normally lead to recognised qualifications.

How are Learning Pathways developing?

- 24 Local 14-19 partnerships, are developing plans for implementing Learning Pathways in each area of Wales. A network is a grouping of strategic organisations, learning providers and learners within a local authority area. They have the responsibility for developing a menu of options that give learners a wider range of choices and more flexibility in how they put their chosen courses together. A key function of the network is to develop a shared prospectus of the options available to their 14-19 learners in their area.
- 25 The aim is for 14-19 networks to offer learners a range of options in general and applied forms from entry level to levels 3. The courses are set out within five 'domains': These domains are:
- mathematics, science and all aspects of technology;
 - business and management;
 - services to people;
 - creative arts and culture; and
 - humanities and languages.
- 26 14-19 Networks are responsible for submitting annual development plans to the Welsh Assembly Government to show how they are going to organise and deliver the range of options within their area.
- 27 The development plans that 14-19 Networks have submitted thus far show that most are making very slow progress in developing option menus for learners in their area in the form of a shared prospectus across a network area.
- 28 Very few plans have met the requirement to include option menus based on the five domains of learning. Some 14-19 Networks are making good progress in finding out about all the 14-19 provision within their area and sharing the information with everyone in the local partnership. However, few networks use this information well enough to support systematic planning of learning options across the network. Overall, few networks use labour market intelligence enough to help them to plan a range of vocational options for their learners.
- 29 A few LEAs and colleges are using the Welsh Assembly Government grant and the ELWa Common Investment Fund effectively to for projects that support the

development of the Learning Pathways initiative by encouraging collaboration between schools and colleges.

- 30 There are 17 schools and 14 colleges across Wales that are acting as pilot centres for the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification. In general, these providers are making good progress in implementing some of the elements that are common to Learning Pathways for post-16 learners. However, lessons learnt from the Welsh Baccalaureate development are not shared enough across 14-19 Networks.

What qualifications are providers currently using?

- 31 A very wide range of qualifications are approved and available for providers to use with both pre-16 post-16 learners. There are more than 8,000 qualifications within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) up to level 8. Appendix 3 provides examples of the kind of qualifications and awards providers are using which are suitable for suitable for both pre-16 and post-16 learners.

What qualifications are schools using?

- 32 Schools mainly use qualifications that successfully meet the needs of learners who choose National Curriculum subjects at both GCSE and A level. They also offer courses in some other academic subjects that are not within the National Curriculum, such as psychology, law and sociology. In 2005, the subjects with the most entries at A level were Biology, Mathematics, History, and English literature.
- 33 Since the introduction of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) in the early 1990s, many schools have used a limited range of GNVQs and Vocational Certificates in Education (VCE A level). In general, they offer one or two of these in the areas that do not require a lot of additional, costly resources. The most popular examples are vocational qualifications at advanced level in business, health and social care and information and communications technology, and the same subjects, plus leisure and tourism, at intermediate level. Schools have generally made little use of GNVQ at foundation level.
- 34 At key stage 4, schools generally decide to offer a particular vocational area where they have the relevant staff skills and most of the resources already available within the school to meet the demands of the course. In most schools, labour market intelligence is not used to decide whether to offer a particular vocational course or not. In some cases, schools are developing vocational courses in the same occupational areas that duplicate those offered in a nearby further education college with better resources and a good track record in delivering such courses.
- 35 Ten secondary schools offer the BTEC first diploma courses and a further 10 offer courses leading to national diplomas and certificates. Three-quarters of the BTEC qualifications awarded in Welsh schools in 2004 were in sport. Other BTEC awards issued to pupils in schools in Wales were in health, early years, performing arts and public services.
- 36 Fifteen secondary schools in Wales offered NVQs in 2004 and nearly all known entries were in hairdressing at level one.
- 37 Schools are making increasing use of applied GCSEs. These qualifications were introduced in 2002 and assessed for the first time in 2004. There were about 3000 entries in Wales in 2004. These qualifications have the same points score as two GCSEs. The highest uptake is in health and social care, applied ICT and applied science, which increased greatly in 2005.

- 38 Applied GCSEs were introduced at the time of the proposed removal of GNVQs at intermediate and foundation levels. However, the Applied GCSE is not working appropriately as a suitable replacement for GNVQ intermediate and foundation levels, particularly in the sixth form. Overall, providers perceive the Applied GCSE as a key stage 4 qualification with too much emphasis on subject content rather than skill development when compared with the GNVQ.
- 39 More and more schools are using Asdan qualifications (see appendix 3). These are often well suited to the needs of those learners who are finding National Curriculum subjects uninteresting. The teaching of these subjects often does not match their preferred style of learning which favours practical activities and linked skills development.
- 40 A few schools are developing work-based provision for their learners in collaboration with other providers. These arrangements allow learners to engage in extended periods of work-related education where they can develop their vocational skills in work settings. For example, some secondary schools link up with special and primary schools so that their post-16 learners can train as teaching assistants while on work placement. These learners can then go on to gain an NVQ level 2 as teaching assistants. This is good practice as the learners gain a valuable experience and qualification and all partner institutions benefit from the arrangement. This is the kind of flexible arrangement that the Learning Pathways initiative aims to establish more extensively across and between 14-19 Networks.

Case study – Putting qualifications together

There are a number of examples where a range of qualifications are packaged together to form an overarching qualification framework. The Skill Force programme is an overarching qualification framework on offer in four schools in one local education authority area at key stage 4. The Skill Force package includes Asdan career planning qualifications, Asdan bronze and silver awards, the Duke of Edinburgh awards and qualifications in the wider key skills. The Skill Force programme is a youth initiative sponsored by the Ministry of Defence and supported by the DfES and the Welsh Assembly Government. It offers a vocational curriculum which also leads to key skills qualifications. The programme is activity based and its practical nature meets the learning styles of many of the learners. This is a major factor in contributing to its success. The core programme focuses on team building problem-solving and raising self-esteem. It closely matches many of the aims of Learning Pathways.

What qualifications are colleges using?

- 41 Colleges use qualifications that successfully meet the needs of learners who choose to continue studying National Curriculum subjects post-16, at both GCSE and A level, as well as other academic subjects that are not within the National Curriculum, such as psychology, law and sociology.
- 42 Most colleges provide a wide range of vocational qualifications from entry level to level 3 for full-time learners over the age of 16.

- 43 In many colleges, first and national diplomas are increasingly popular. Many colleges decided not to use GNVQ intermediate and advanced, but continued to provide first and national diplomas instead. In comparison, the diplomas provide better opportunities for learners to develop more specific, vocational skills as a preparation for employment or higher education. Most first and national diplomas also include a substantial amount of work-related experience. Learners on national diplomas often also study an NVQ and are trained and assessed for this in a real work environment. The VCE has now replaced the GNVQ advanced, but colleges are continuing to offer the diploma route as they regard the VCE as too academic rather than being a preparation for a particular vocational sector.
- 44 Two-thirds of the colleges in Wales are pilot centres for the development of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification. In most cases, they are using the qualification with groups of learners on particular courses. Often this is on grounds of cost or because of the issues of manageability of a new curriculum model for what are often quite varied groups of learners.
- 45 Many colleges make good use of Open College Network (OCN) qualifications and offer additional qualifications and awards such as certificates in first aid, food hygiene and customer care. These qualifications are often highly valued by employers, particularly when they are associated with legislative requirements.

What qualifications are work-based learning providers using?

- 46 The majority of young people in work-based learning provision are following apprenticeship frameworks at either level 2 or level 3. The relevant sector skills council (see appendix 2) determines the design and content of each apprenticeship to suit the demands of different occupations. All apprenticeships require learners to gain an NVQ and specific key skills. Learners on most advanced modern apprenticeships must also gain a specific technical certificate. The most popular apprenticeships are in construction, engineering and care.
- 47 Work-based learning providers are making slow progress in implementing developments linked to the Learning Pathways initiative. There are many reasons for this. Many learners following both foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships find it difficult to meet all the requirements of the training framework apprenticeships. The introduction of technical certificates into the apprenticeship frameworks has increased the challenge for learners
- 48 In many cases, learners make sound progress towards achieving their NVQ as their job skills develop in the workplace however, they struggle to get the key skill requirements or the technical certificate, or both.
- 49 Overall, too few 14-19 Networks have taken account of the needs of work-based learners in drawing up their development plans.

What about qualifications through the medium of Welsh?

- 50 Under the Welsh Language Act 1993, all public bodies that provide services to the population of Wales are required to treat both languages equally. All schools and colleges are required to comply with the provisions of the Act. Private training organisations are outside the scope of the Act.
- 51 Most GCSE and A level qualifications are available through the medium of Welsh as well as English. Since 1995, it has been possible for some vocational qualifications to be achieved entirely through the medium of Welsh or through the dual language route where both Welsh and English may be used for presenting work. The number of vocational qualifications are becoming available through the medium of Welsh is increasing.
- 52 In 2004, ACCAC established a Welsh-medium Awarding Body forum to support awarding bodies who wished to offer vocational qualifications through the medium of Welsh. ACCAC has also offers financial incentives and support to awarding bodies to extend the range and use of qualifications available in Welsh.
- 53 Awarding bodies wishing to offer qualifications through the medium of Welsh or in both languages must have sufficient resources to do so. This is often an issue where the specialist aspects of some vocational qualifications require a large number of vocational specialist verifiers or examiners who can work through the medium of Welsh. In spite of support for awarding bodies to increase the number of qualifications available through Welsh, there are still too few to meet the demands of learners.
- 54 There are very few teaching and learning materials in the Welsh language across the range of vocational sectors. Sgiliaith, the centre for developing Welsh language communication skills, is working with ELWa to provide Welsh-medium materials in a few sectors such as hairdressing.
- 55 There are a few interesting planned developments of Welsh medium provision. For example the four Welsh medium secondary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taff are working together to deliver the CACHE level 2 certificate in Early Years Care and Education through the medium of Welsh for post-16 learners. This development is planned to meet the needs for learning assistants in Welsh medium schools and nurseries.

How are providers working together to deliver qualifications?

- 56 An increasing number of schools, colleges and local education authorities are developing arrangements for working together in order to improve the range of vocational provision within an area at key stage 4.

Case studies of partnership in practice

In one college in North Wales, a very wide range of qualifications is provided on school link programmes. School learners can experience a broad range of occupational areas within a Vocational Futures programme. These include opportunities:

- in construction, where learners can achieve the foundation certificate in building craft occupations and the first diploma in construction;
- in care, where learners can gain a wide range of OCN awards in such areas as babysitting and initial skills for caring as well as qualifications in first aid and food hygiene; and
- in hospitality, where learners can work towards NVQ level 1 in preparation and serving food as well as NVQ level 2 in hospitality and catering.

The range of qualifications available on the Vocational Futures programme at this college is well matched to the labour market information for the local area. Many of the young people on the Vocational Futures programme make good progress and move on either to work-based learning or to further education.

Another college in North Wales and several secondary schools in two local authority areas have developed a partnership where the college provides a wide range of courses at entry and level 1 leading to appropriate qualifications for school-based learners. Learners in schools are thus able to have access to a good choice of vocational opportunities. More than 300 school-based learners are currently taking part in this vocational pathways scheme.

- 57 Even where there is partnership working between schools and colleges, there are often not enough opportunities for key stage 4 learners within the arrangement to gain vocational qualifications at level 2. Most partnerships and centres are not yet offering enough vocational options at level 2, and, where they do, it is usually limited to GNVQ. In such situations parents and learners often perceive that the vocational route is an option only for those learners who are not able to succeed within the more traditional, academic routes.
- 58 Overall, while these partnership arrangements are developing across Wales, there are not enough of them. Also their extent and impact are still small in terms of the numbers of learners involved. Too many providers are working in isolation and continue to compete with each other for post-16 learners. Where this happens, the needs and interests of learners do not have the priority they should have in planning the menu of options available to learners.

How are awarding bodies developing qualifications?

- 59 Awarding bodies, such as CGLI, Edexcel and OCR, provide qualifications at entry level and at level 1 which they have designed for learners on introductory courses and schemes. A few providers are beginning to make good use of these qualifications. They are often more suitable than NVQs at level 1 for pre-16 learners.
- 60 Examples of these awards include the foundation certificate in building crafts, the entry level certificate in preparing for work in the care sector (CGLI), the level 1 certificate in salon services (CGLI) as an introduction to hairdressing and beauty therapy, and the BTEC level 1 certificate in hairdressing.
- 61 The VCE qualification was introduced to replace the GNVQ at advanced level. Since then, the qualification has been made available in three different models. There is a three-unit level (equivalent to an AS level qualification), a six-unit level (equivalent to an A level), and a twelve-unit level (equivalent to two A levels). The popularity of the twelve-unit and six-unit levels has decreased, but the three-unit model has become more popular as it allows a wider choice of options.
- 62 The GNVQ qualifications that are currently offered at intermediate and foundation level are being withdrawn over the next two years. The QCA published guidance on appropriate alternatives in November 2005. At foundation level, the most suitable alternative qualifications suggested are the Edexcel BTEC (Business and Technical Education Council) introductory diplomas, the OCR level 1 national awards and vocational GCSEs at grades D-G. At intermediate level, the alternatives are the Edexcel BTEC first certificates and diplomas, the OCR level 2 national awards and vocational GCSEs at grades A*-C.
- 63 However, none of these qualifications fully meets the needs currently being met by the GNVQ at both intermediate and foundation levels as a general introduction to vocational study. Schools often perceive Applied GCSEs as key stage 4 subjects and learners often find them too similar to other GCSE subjects. The BTEC and OCR qualifications often require more specialist resources than GNVQs.
- 64 Appendix 3 to this report indicates the range of vocational qualifications and awards available to providers for use in the 14-19 age range.

How is ACCAC developing qualifications?

- 65 ACCAC is currently undertaking work on developing and reviewing the curriculum which is likely to match the aims of the Learning Pathways initiative in terms of providing greater choice and flexibility to learners.
- 66 The ACCAC review of the key stage 4 curriculum states that, "existing qualifications at key stage 4 need to be reviewed to provide greater flexibility and reward to more learners. GCSE needs to be retained as a well-established qualification, but expanded to cover a wider range of preferred learning styles and subject content. More effective use needs to be made of a wider range of qualifications to motivate

and reward learners, including those who are disaffected and those at each end of the ability range.”

- 67 It is also likely that ACCAC’s work on developing a revised National Curriculum will include a framework for common skills.

What contribution is the Welsh Baccalaureate making to Learning Pathways?

- 68 The Welsh Baccalaureate has many elements that are common to Learning Pathways. It places a strong emphasis on the development of key skills, work-related education, participation in work outside of the school/college environment, and individual project work. The qualification has a learning core and there is a strong emphasis on the provision of personal, tutorial support.
- 69 A small number of schools and colleges in Wales have piloted the qualification with learners over the age of 16 since 2003. Learners can attain the qualification at intermediate and advanced level. There are also plans to develop a Welsh Baccalaureate at foundation level.
- 70 The Core of the Welsh Baccalaureate includes:
- Wales Europe and the world including a language module (WEW);
 - Personal and social education including community participation (PSE);
 - Work related education including work experience and enterprise(WRE); and
 - Key skills at appropriate levels.
- 71 The Welsh Baccalaureate is an overarching qualification that 'wraps around' existing qualifications such as A levels and vocational qualifications. The Welsh Baccalaureate also places a strong emphasis on personal support through a tutorial programme.
- 72 The pilot centres have taken different approaches to the qualification and learners are receiving very different experiences of the Welsh Baccalaureate depending on the way each provider has decided to deliver the programme.
- 73 There is considerable variation in the approaches taken to the work-related education within the qualification. In the best practice, learners on vocational courses use well-structured work experience programmes to maintain logs of activity and are able to achieve an OCN qualification as a result. Other centres use careers officers well to assist in arranging placements that are matched well to learners' career aspirations and their studies. A few providers do not require learners to undertake a structured period of work experience. Generally, there are not enough opportunities to accredit the skills that learners gain through work experience other than providing evidence for the wider key skills.
- 74 The delivery of key skills initially provided many challenges in most centres. In the best practice, providers integrated key skills into both the delivery and assessment of the options and the core curriculum. This is often done best on vocational courses in colleges where teachers had developed the skills of integrating key skills into learning programmes well before the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate.

Generally, few learners see the relevance of key skills where teachers deliver them as 'stand alone' subjects.

- 75 Overall, most learners following the Welsh Baccalaureate are gaining a wide range of relevant skills through their learning outside the school/college environment and they are enthusiastic about their experiences. However, many have found the demands too heavy and have dropped out.
- 76 Providers are developing their approach to the qualification as the pilot evolves. New centres are joining the pilot over time and they benefit from the lessons learnt as the pilot has progressed. For example, the delivery and attainment of key skills improved in the second year of the pilot, so there is evidence that providers are beginning to tackle these issues and to share good practice.
- 77 Overall, the Welsh Baccalaureate has the potential to meet the needs and aspirations of many post-16 learners. However, the pilots remain developmental and currently involve only a relatively small number of learners across Wales. Not enough learners have been through the qualification to make hard-and-fast judgements about its overall success in terms of attainment rates. It will be a significant challenge to providers to roll out the qualification successfully to all learners in schools and colleges. 14-19 networks in most areas are not yet using the lessons learnt from the piloting of the Welsh Baccalaureate in developing their plans.

What is the impact of work-related learning on learners?

- 78 Work-related learning is now a statutory requirement for all learners at key stage 4. This includes the following activities:
- learning through work by undertaking direct work experience or part-time employment;
 - learning about work by providing opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding through vocational courses and careers education; and
 - learning through work by developing skills for enterprise and employability.
- 79 Where learners are on vocational courses, work experience is often an integral part of the course and providers use relevant OCN awards well to give learners credit for what they have learned through the work-related learning. In providers where there is not a great deal of vocational learning, a few are using the wider key skills qualifications effectively as a way of giving learners some credit for their work-related experiences. Careers Wales has developed a good diary for collecting evidence during work experience. However, many providers do not ask learners to use this diary often enough.
- 80 Overall, the impact of work-related learning is strongest where learners are on vocational courses and spend substantial periods of time in work placements. It makes only a slight contribution to learners' development in most other settings, especially where most learners are following general, academic routes post-16.

What is the role and impact of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales?

- 81 The Credit and Qualifications Framework (CQFW) for Wales was launched in 2003. It is designed to offer parity of esteem for learners of all ages whether they are learning in the workplace, or in the community, at school, college or university as well to recognise achievement wherever learning takes place.. It embraces qualifications within the national qualifications framework, higher education qualifications and informal/non formal learning programmes.
- 82 The basis of the CQFW structure is a 'credit', which is a unit of learning currency. Achievement in learning attracts different amounts of credit depending on the length of time taken for learning. One credit equates to learning outcomes achieved in about 10 hours of learning time. An important benefit of a credit and qualifications framework is that learners can collect credits, progress through them at different levels and carry them from one provider to another. It also allows learners to develop a learning programme tailored to their particular needs and hopes. Finally, such a framework allows general and vocational qualifications to sit alongside each other and to have some equivalence in terms of their credit value. In these ways, the work associated with the CQFW has the potential to meet many aspects of the Learning Pathways agenda.
- 83 Awarding bodies, Sector Skills Councils and individual providers often develop and manage their courses and qualifications in terms of units and modules. The CQFW is working with awarding bodies and Sector Skills Councils to find ways of linking units to credits so that learners can be awarded credits as they progress through their courses.
- 84 Overall, the rates at which learners attain vocational qualifications are often too low. Too many drop out and too many get nothing in terms of a qualification, even where they have completed many parts of their qualification. One significant benefit of a credit framework is that it could award learners credits for partial attainment of a qualification. Such a framework would also help these learners to return to education and training opportunities later where they could build on the credit that they have already achieved.
- 85 Overall, the impact of the CQFW on learners thus far is limited. This is because the issues involved in allocating credits to so many different courses and qualifications are complex. Progress towards the implementation of a credit-based system has been slow.

Case study of the CQFW in practice

One secondary school is in the second year of providing a general vocational course for year 12 learners. Learners are able to select six units from the BTEC First Diploma course in four different vocational pathways. Each unit is worth six credits. This is an innovative package and popular with learners. Learners are able to sample a wide range of options. However, while the development has much strength, there is not enough opportunity for learners to 'cluster' units around vocational themes. There are not enough opportunities for learners to gain key skills or to take part in work-related experience. Learners are also not able to gain the award at merit or distinction level. Overall, the development does not match the sector-skills led approach to vocational qualification development.

Conclusion

- 86 The range and variety of qualifications for 14-19 year olds are increasing but their use is constrained by the pace at which individual providers and 14-19 networks are responding to the challenge of the Learning Pathways initiative. There are implications too for training those who give information to learners and for raising awareness of the learning opportunities available.

Appendix 1: The National Qualifications Framework

The national qualifications framework now has nine levels and all accredited qualifications are at a specific level within a particular sector. It was introduced to help learners, teachers, trainers, employers, universities and colleges to understand the range of qualifications offered and to show progression routes. There are more than 4000 qualifications within the framework and only qualifications that have been approved by the regulatory bodies (QCA, ACCAC and CCEA) are within the framework. All accredited qualifications are ascribed to one of 15 sector/subject categories. More than 100 awarding bodies are responsible for providing the qualifications.

Under the provisions of Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, schools, colleges and other learning providers can only offer external qualifications to learners under the age of 19 that have been approved by the National Assembly of Wales. Section 97 of the same Act applies to learners over the age of 19 in further education. However, the National Council – ELWa does give recognition and approval for the use of a limited range of awards outside the framework where they are particularly well suited to need and there are not suitable alternatives within the qualifications framework. The framework informs learners and providers of the range of qualifications available to them and the relationships between them. .

The national framework contains all accredited qualifications. Each qualification has a level, ranging from entry level to level 8, and a title that clearly identifies the awarding body, the nature of the award, and sector/subject.

There are a great number of awards that are outside the national qualifications framework. These are generally classified as non-formal qualifications (eg Duke of Edinburgh's Award) or informal (local OCN awards and such awards as the Pacific Institute awards). Many of these are widely used by schools, colleges and training providers for particular learning and training schemes.

National qualifications framework

Level	Examples of qualifications	Level indicators
3	A level GCE, NVQ level 3, key skills level 3, BTEC national certificates and diplomas, OCR nationals level 3, ASDAN Certificate in personal effectiveness level 3, CACHE Diploma in Childcare and Education	Recognise the ability to gain and, where relevant, to apply a range of knowledge, skills and understanding independently.
2	GCSE grades A*-C, NVQ level 2, BTEC first certificates and diplomas, OCR nationals level 2, ASDAN Certificate in personal effectiveness at level 2, key skills at level 2.	Recognise the ability to gain good knowledge and understanding and to perform varied tasks with some guidance and supervision.
1	GCSE grades D-G, NVQ level 1, key skills level 1, BTEC introductory certificates and diplomas, OCR nationals at level 1, Foundation certificate in Food handling	The ability to apply knowledge with guidance or supervision.
Entry	ASDAN certificate in Life Skills at entry level 1,2 and 3, BTEC Skills for working life, Certificates in Adult Numeracy/Literacy	Building basic knowledge and skills.

Appendix 2: Sector Skills Councils

Sector skills councils (SSCs) are independent, UK-wide, employer-led organisations that ensure the availability of suitable training opportunities in each of the main sectors of the economy across the UK. They actively involve trade unions, professional bodies and other stakeholders in each sector.

Each sector skills council has responsibility to:

- reduce skills gaps and shortages;
- improve productivity and service performance;
- increase opportunities to boost skills; and
- improve learning supply.

SSCs are the bodies responsible for developing national occupational standards (NOS) to meet their sector's needs. Together with the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA), they form the Skills for Business Network.

Appendix 3: Commonly-used qualifications

GCSEs

GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education. The GCSE was first examined in 1988 following the merger of GCE O levels and the CSE examination. Examinations for the qualification are normally sat at the end of key stage 4. However, they are available to anyone who would like to gain a qualification in a subject in which they are interested. GCSEs are available in 45 subjects. GCSEs form the core of the key stage 4 curriculum.

A levels

A levels are normally taken as a two-year course that is a progression from either GCSE or its equivalent. A levels are regarded as the main route to higher education and/or employment. A levels can be taken in more than 80 subjects.

All A levels were unitised in 2000 and candidates are able to take units as they proceed through the course rather than being examined in a single session. The advanced subsidiary (AS) qualification is a stand-alone qualification and is valued as half of a full A level qualification. The A2 is the second half of a full A level qualification. Generally the AS covers the less demanding material of the A level course.

General National Vocational Qualifications - GNVQs

GNVQs were first introduced in 1992 as a suite of general vocational qualifications as well as replacement for first and national diplomas of the Business and Technical Education Council (BTEC). Initially they were available in a range of five subjects. Awards were available at advanced and intermediate and later at foundation level. In 2002 the advanced GNVQ was replaced by the Vocational Certificate in Education (VCE), available at 12 unit, six unit or three unit combinations.

GNVQs at foundation (level 1, equivalent to four GCSEs grade D-G) and intermediate (level 2, equivalent to 4 GCSEs grade A*- C) are being phased out between 2005 and 2007 but are still being used at many schools and colleges throughout Wales. They remain popular awards and attract students who have not performed well in GCSEs in school as they are more focused on developing skills in a vocational context. They are particularly popular when delivered as a one year post-16 course in both schools and colleges. The most popular subjects are health and social care, leisure and tourism, business, engineering, art and design and performing arts.

GCSEs in vocational subjects

Vocational GCSEs were introduced in 2002. They relate to a particular vocational area and are mainly assessed by coursework. They were intended as a replacement

for part one GNVQ in eight subject areas. They are equivalent to a double award GCSE. The subjects offered are:

- Applied art and design;
- Applied business;
- Applied information and communications technology;
- Applied science;
- Engineering;
- Health and social care;
- Leisure and tourism; and
- Manufacturing.

Vocational Certificates in Education – VCE A levels

Vocational Certificates in Education were introduced to replace the GNVQ advanced level qualification in 2002. It is now to be restructured along the lines of A levels with an AS/A2 structure. It is available as both a single and a double award with up to a maximum of 12 units available. In each award, a third of the units are externally tested, with the remainder being internally assessed. They are available in the following subjects:

- Applied art and design;
- Applied business;
- Applied information and communications technology;
- Applied Science;
- Engineering;
- Health and social care;
- Leisure studies;
- Media, communication and production;
- Performing arts; and
- Travel and tourism.

BTEC National Awards – Level 3 (Edexcel)

BTEC national diplomas are vocationally focused awards that have been in use for a long time in colleges. They have been particularly valued as both a means of developing vocationally focused skills, providing entry to specific employment routes such as the public services and as a route into higher education.

The BTEC national diploma is designed to be delivered in the time allocated to three A levels. The BTEC national certificate originally formed the part-time equivalent to the diploma for young people in employment before the introduction of the current system of modern apprenticeships. It is now deemed to be equivalent to two A levels. The newer national award is equivalent to one A level. GNVQs at advanced level were originally intended to replace the national diploma scheme but in recent years, particularly since the replacement of the GNVQ advanced by the VCE, BTEC national diplomas have regained their previous popularity and are also being delivered by a few schools in selected subjects. Normally, learners are required to have gained at least four GCSEs grades A*- C as an entry requirement to a national award.

National diploma qualifications are often highly specific and more than 500 specialist titles are available. For example, within performing arts, qualifications can be gained in the following options:

- Theatre technology;
- Stage Design;
- Set Construction;
- Production;
- Performance – Drama;
- Musical Theatre; and
- Make-up.

BTEC First Awards – Level 2 (Edexcel)

The BTEC first diploma qualification was originally designed as a one-year post-16 qualification, broadly equivalent to the attainment of four GCSEs at grades A*- C. It is designed to be delivered in one year on a full-time basis and requires learners to complete six units of study. The GNVQ intermediate was originally designed to replace the BTEC first diplomas. However, the BTEC first diploma has retained its popularity, especially because it provides opportunities to develop specifically vocational skills. It is intended as a direct replacement for the GNVQ intermediate qualification. A first certificate qualification is equivalent to three units. There are 15 subject areas available.

BTEC Introductory Awards (Edexcel)

These are level 1 qualifications (foundation) that can be studied as either a certificate (equivalent to a double award foundation GCSE) or as a diploma (equivalent to two double awards). They are available in the following subjects:

- Art and design;
- Business;
- Construction and the built environment;
- Engineering;
- Health and social care;
- Travel and tourism;
- Information and communications technology;
- Manufacturing; and
- Science.

Diploma in Digital Applications – DiDA (Edexcel)

These are a suite of qualifications that are available as either an award, equivalent to one GCSE, or certificate, equivalent to two GCSEs or diploma, equivalent to four GCSEs. They can be studied at both foundation and intermediate levels. They are intended to be paperless qualifications that focus on the practical application of technology. They are designed to stimulate learners' creativity and develop real-world practical skills that will motivate learning across a wide range of subjects.

OCR National Qualifications

OCR nationals have been recently introduced by the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA awarding body. They are a range of vocationally orientated qualifications primarily aimed at post-16 learners. OCR national certificates and awards can be attained at levels 1, 2 and 3 in a range of vocational options. Generally, they are not as vocationally specific as BTEC awards. Some schools are aiming to deliver level 1 and two awards as an alternative to GNVQ at foundation and intermediate level. In general, OCR nationals are available in a narrower range of specialisms than BTEC qualifications.

National Vocational Qualifications – Levels 1-5

NVQs are vocationally specific qualifications designed to meet the needs of employers in individual occupations. The specification of each qualification is controlled by the sector skills council for the occupational area. The qualification is

based upon the demonstration of competence in the workplace. They are designed to be delivered and assessed in the workplace. All foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship frameworks are based on NVQs at level 2 and level 3 in specific occupations. Many employers deliver NVQs, often in conjunction with a work-based learning provider. NVQs do not have to be completed within a particular timescale and there are no specific entry requirements although, in most cases, qualifications at level 3 and above require candidates to have gained competence at level 2 before progressing to the higher level. A very wide range of awarding bodies accredits NVQs.

Entry level qualifications

Entry level qualifications were first introduced in 1997 in recognition that there were many young people entering employment who were not yet ready to work at level one of the national qualifications framework (NQF)

There are three sub-levels within entry level. These are:

- Entry level 1 broadly equivalent to national curriculum level one;
- Entry level 2 broadly equivalent to national curriculum level two; and
- Entry level 3 which is broadly equivalent to national curriculum level 3 and just below NVQ level 1.

Learners can work their way through all three levels of entry qualifications and then onto level 1 of the national qualifications framework. Entry level qualifications are offered by a wide range of organisations including colleges, mainstream and special schools (pre and post-16) as well as work-based learning providers and voluntary organisations. They are often used alongside qualifications in basic skills. All awarding bodies offer a very wide range of entry level qualifications.

Examples of these qualifications include Skills for Working Life – Edexcel BTEC entry level 1-3. These qualifications are widely used and include, for example, metal craft skills, hairdressing and beauty and hospitality and catering.

Other examples include Asdan's Entry level qualifications such as the Certificate in Life Skills at entry levels 1, 2 and 3 and the City and Guild's qualifications include the certificate in preparation for employment (entry level 2 and 3).

Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network Awards (ASDAN)

ASDAN was set up as an awarding body in the early 1990s following some pioneering research work that identified that young people's social and personal skills needed to be recognised and rewarded in school, college and employment. The qualifications are particularly suited to young people whose skills and learning styles are not recognised through GCSE accreditation. They recognise and value the development of skills rather than subject knowledge.

One of the main qualifications accredited by ASDAN is the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (COPE) which acts as qualification wrapper for achievements at levels 1-3. It provides a framework for the development, assessment and accreditation of personal and social skills and the wider key skills at the appropriate level. ASDAN also offers approved qualifications in such subjects as career planning and community volunteering. Additionally ASDAN also offers non-formal qualifications. Some of these are designed for use by pre- and post-16 learners with multiple and profound learning difficulties. Amongst these are awards such as those in:

- Transition Challenge;
- Towards Independence; and
- Workright.

The National Open College Network (NOCN)

The National Open College Network is an awarding body that licenses local networks to offer a very wide variety of learning programmes for young people and adults. NOCN is a national awarding body approved by the regulatory authorities. The 11 Open College Networks provide local accreditation systems and assist providers in designing awards that meet particular local needs. All OCN qualifications are credit-based. Many NOCN qualifications are now within the national qualifications framework.

Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE)

CACHE was formed in 1994 when the NNEB (National Nursery Examination Board) merged with the Council for Early Years Awards (CEYA) to form the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE).

Their flagship qualification is the CACHE Diploma in Child Care and Education, (formerly known as NNEB). This is a full-time level 3 qualification which allows progression to higher education as well as nurse education. CACHE also provides a wide range of qualifications such as NVQs in early years and care, playwork and teaching assistants as well as other qualifications in the fields of child care and education from entry level to level 4.

Pacific Institute Awards

Pacific Institute Awards are designed to motivate young people who have gained little from their previous education and training experiences. The main award is now called Gaining Opportunities and Living Skills (GOALS) and the aim of the programme is to develop thinking skills in order to support the development of self-esteem and self-belief so that learners can achieve their full potential. These awards are mainly used by work-based learning providers.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme was set up in 1956 to provide young people aged between 14 and 25 with the opportunity to undertake an enjoyable, challenging and rewarding programme of personal development. It is provided by schools, colleges, youth clubs, voluntary organisations, pupil referral units, young offender institutions and businesses. It is offered at three levels (bronze, silver and gold) and requires an increasing degree of commitment and responsibility at each of the levels. There are four sections at each level with five at gold level. They are:

- Service – helping people in the community;
- Skills – covering hobbies, skills and interests;
- Physical recreation – sport, dance and fitness;
- Expeditions – training for and planning a journey on foot, horseback, or by boat and cycle; and
- Residential project (gold only) – a purposeful activity with young people not previously known to the participant.

The Prince's Trust Volunteer Programme

The Prince's Trust is a national charity offering a range of programmes for young people. It aims to help the most deprived communities and groups, particularly young people, by removing barriers to work.

All Prince's Trust programmes focus on young people who are:

- educational underachievers;
- offenders and ex-offenders;
- unemployed people; and
- in or leaving care.

The Volunteers Programme is a 12-week course offering a range of structured activities designed to enhance learners' motivation and confidence and to give them the skills to help them to progress into further training, education or work.

Participants have the opportunities to experience team-building, work placements and community projects. They can achieve key skills, ASDAN awards and additional qualifications such as those in First Aid.

They also offer the xl award which is accredited by ASDAN. There are xl clubs in more than 60 schools in Wales. The award can be attained at 3 levels: bronze, silver and gold. XI clubs are aimed at young people who face difficulties in school during years 10 and 11. The xl programme has six main curriculum areas:

- personal, interpersonal and team skills;
- citizenship and community awareness;
- a community based project;
- a residential activity;
- entrepreneurship and enterprise; and
- preparation for the world of work and training.