

Independent Review of Qualifications in Wales 2020

Issues for the Review to consider

Scope

- What is the moral purpose of an effective qualification system?
- To what extent was there transparency and open communication with key stakeholders?
- How has the recent events impacted:
 - Confidence of young people in the education system
 - HT and Teacher morale
 - Trust of the profession in WG, QW and WJEC
- How are and will individual partners be held to account for the quality of their decision making, transparency and communication?
- Are the roles and responsibilities of QW and WJEC clearly explained in deciding the strategic direction and then operating the qualifications process?
- What were the decision making processes that led to the algorithm being described as fair and robust?
- How can trust be restored between key stakeholders, including young people and the public, and WJEC, QW and WG?
- How will this impact the future of young people into the education profession?
- What steps need to be put in place to ensure that this situation doesn't arise again?

Issues about the process

- What impact assessments were carried out before deciding on their choice of algorithm?
- What were the risks identified after deciding their choice of algorithm?
- Who made the eventual and final decision on choice of algorithm and how and when was this shared with Welsh Government?
- Why wasn't the algorithm shared with schools and other stakeholders prior to results day or prior to collecting the data?
- Why hasn't the finer detail of the algorithm still not been shared with stakeholders?
- What was the purpose and what use was made of centre assessments grades and centre ranking order?
- Was the consultation leading and not open? Why was the consultation process so narrow in its focus?
- Would there have been an agreement that standardisation was appropriate had the details of the algorithm been shared at the time of consultation and that CAGS and centre ranking orders would not be used?
- Why weren't schools with significantly different CAGs to the algorithm consulted for more evidence as initially promised before results were finalised?

Appendix 1

- It seems that a predetermined decision had been made by Qualifications Wales as a tolerance level of 3% was touted during the consultation face. The improvements in A-level results this year was no greater than 2.9% (A*-A).
- Was there an over reliance on developing an algorithm to ensure broadly similar outcomes rather than ensuring that individual learners and groups of learners were fairly treated and awarded the grades they deserved?
- Why didn't any officer from Qualifications Wales, Welsh Government or WJEC communicate that there were issues around what the results of the algorithm had produced? Some of the issues include:
 - Improving schools being penalised
 - Vulnerable learners being excessively downgraded
 - Learners in low free school meals schools with a proven track record rewarded at the behest of schools with high free school meal learners
 - Centre assessments were ignored during the process
 - Grades not been awarded to the right individuals (as assessed by the schools in their CAGS and ranking order)
 - Significant variation within and across subject which wasn't logical
- Why wasn't the algorithm model tested with a range of schools to ensure that individual and groups of learners at risk of missing out were identified rather than the product?
- What were the lessons learnt from the English Language GCSE debacle of 2018 where the same problem has been identified and was largely ignored and passed as a regional problem in North Wales? Those entered early for the GCSE gained a significant advantage over those entered in the summer.
- When did QW inform Pearson a company responsible for BTEC of the need to change their process?
- What evidence is there to show that's Qualifications Wales meets the need of the Welsh system?

Considerations in going forward

- How do we build trust back between the public, schools staff and WJEC, QW and WG?
- How will this impact the future of young people into the education profession?
- How can we ensure clear lines of accountability and what steps need to be put in place to ensure that this situation doesn't arise again?
- Do we need to consider replacing an annual standardised system which caps achievement with a more accurate and fairer process which holistically reflects the achievement of young people in Wales?