



**WALES
CYMRU**

RESPONSE TO:

**14 -19 Learning Pathways policy:
The way ahead**

CONSULTATION

Contact Details:

**Lisa Edwards
Temporary Liaison Officer
UCU Wales
Unit 33, The Enterprise Centre
Tondu
BRIDGEND
CF32 9BS**

**Tel: 01656 721951
E-mail: ledwards@ucu.org.uk**

1. The University and College Union (UCU Wales) represents more than 7,000 academics, lecturers, trainers, instructors, researchers, managers, administrators, computer staff, librarians, and postgraduates in universities, colleges, adult education and training organisations across Wales.

2. UCU Wales is a politically autonomous but integral part of UCU, the largest post-school union in the world: a force for educators and education that employers and government cannot ignore.

3. UCU was formed on the 1st June 2006 by the amalgamation of two strong partners – the Association of University Teachers (AUT) and the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) – who shared a long history of defending and advancing educators' employment and professional interests.

4. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the 14-19 Learning Pathways policy: the way ahead

Proposed changes to Regulations

In taking forward the Task and Finish Group's Recommendations 1, 2 and 3 the Welsh Government proposes to bring about new Regulations under the Education Act 2002 (as amended by the Measure). It is anticipated that those regulations will be made early in 2014 with a view to them coming into force (i.e. have legal effect) on 1 September 2014.

This would involve new laws which reduce the minimum number of courses required at Key Stage 4 to form a local curriculum offer from 30 to 25. Correspondingly, the minimum vocational element would reduce from five to three. Schools would still be able to offer their learners more than the legal minimum, including that for vocational provision; something which most schools already do. Through such a change all schools would, however, be afforded greater flexibility to help them focus more on the quality of the offer and the local needs of their learners and areas.

The points scoring system set out in the Measure, having now served its purpose, would be withdrawn at both Key Stage 4 and post-16.

Question 1 – Would bringing forward new Regulations early in 2014 reducing the number of courses that must be included in the local curriculum from 30 to 25 with effect from September 2014 cause your organisation/school particular operational difficulties?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
--------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Please give your reasons for your answer.

--

Question 2 – Would bringing forward new Regulations early in 2014 reducing the number of vocational courses that must be included in the local curriculum from five to three with effect from September 2014 cause your school/organisation any operational difficulties or prevent you from providing the most appropriate balance of choice for your learners?

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	-------------------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------

Please give your reasons for your answer.

Concerns arise over the impact that this would have on the provision offered by FE Colleges. A reduction in the number of vocational courses offered is likely to have a direct effect by reducing the collaboration between schools and colleges as it will reduce the number of vocational courses offered by colleges, within the local curriculum. It may also impact on the staffing levels in colleges as fewer staff will be needed to deliver the curriculum.

There is much evidence cited in the Group report, that point to the positive contribution that vocational courses bring, in terms of the increased choice for learners and the impact that they have on improving attendance, behaviour and attainment. In light of this it is unclear as to why it is desirable to reduce the number of vocational qualifications offered.

Question 3 – Would bringing forward new Regulations and changes to statutory guidance early in 2014, removing the requirement on schools and colleges at Key Stage 4 and post-16 to meet respective points scores when compiling the course offer for September 2014, cause your organisation/school/college any operational difficulties?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	x <input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------------------

Please give your reasons for your answer.

Proposed changes to funding arrangements

In taking forward the Task and Finish Group's Recommendations 4, and 10–14 (relating to future funding arrangements) the Welsh Government proposes to evolve the current funding arrangements to local authorities over the next financial year. This would form a transitional year between current regional 14–19 grant funding and future funding arrangements to regional consortia.

The Group's recommendations set out an appropriate route through which current funding arrangements can be refreshed and brought more in line with wider developments around regional consortia working and support to schools. The same approach should be applied in terms of post-16 funding, with the need to adjust the current 14–19 Learning Pathways revenue grant to reflect the introduction of the new post-16 planning and funding System and Learning Area Programmes from September 2014.

In taking forward these changes, the objective would be to make 14–19 deliverable and sustainable beyond 2014–15. More harmonised management arrangements within consortia would aid reduced administrative costs, while also making best use of the data flows available on school improvement and 14–19 to strategically plan and target interventions on areas most in need. This is essential to make best use of finite resource.

The Group identified a minimum funding level of £10 million necessary for the transitional period in 2014–15. This has been accepted by the Minister for Education and Skills, and £10.241 million has been provisioned for this purpose in the Welsh

Government's draft budget announced on 8 October 2013. An indicative sum of £8 million has been set aside for 2015–16, which also reflects the figure arrived at by the Group.

It is proposed that priorities for funding through the transitional year include protecting provision for those learners at Key Stage 4 and post-16 already undertaking courses of up to two academic years, and their associated transport. The Welsh Government accepts that within an overall reducing budget total, there is a need to also continue ring-fenced support for Welsh-medium course provision.

It is recognised that the current 14–19 grant, and associated networks, provide some considerable support in areas of learner engagement and preventing young people from becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET). This also needs to be reflected in forward funding arrangements, particularly in support of the [Youth Engagement and Progression Framework](#) implementation.

The Welsh Government has already started work with stakeholders in developing draft guidance for the transitional year and beyond. However, we would welcome your input on the specific questions below.

Question 4 – We propose to amend programme guidance to facilitate use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) and School Effectiveness Grant (SEG) from 1 April 2014 to enable schools to use those resources more flexibly in meeting their learner support needs, particularly around the learning coach function (including staff training costs). Would bringing about such an early change cause your school/institution any operational difficulties? Are there any potential consequences you wish to draw to our attention?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	x <input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------------------

Please give your reasons for your answer.

With regard to Welsh medium courses, we would expect to see funding to support colleges upskill their workforce, through the Sabbatical Scheme for Welsh Language Training, in order to support pupils from Welsh medium schools to access vocational courses.

Question 5

We propose to bring about greater strategic and integrated planning within consortia around school improvement and 14–19 delivery. Do you see value in enhancing that role at the Regional level? What issues would you like to see reflected in planning arrangements as they are developed over the coming months?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	x <input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------------------

Please give your reasons for your answer

The interests of the learners should remain paramount and issues that have arisen to due transport difficulties should be carefully considered when planning. Courses that are considered too far to travel to, no matter how high their quality, are likely to be unattractive to many 14 – 19 learners.

We also have concerns regarding the use of lecturers in maintained schools in terms of travelling times allocated and the perceived inequality between the status of teachers and lecturers with regard to QTS.

Question 6 – The evolution of 14–19 grant funding to local authorities into a more harmonised funding arrangement to local consortia following the transitional year will likely involve moving from a funding allocation approach, to a more needs-driven allocation process, within overall budget limits. Do you agree with the development of a more needs-based, targeted approach to funding for schools/colleges? What issues/concerns would you like to see addressed in the planning guidance as it is developed over the coming months?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	x <input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------------------

Please give your reasons for your answer

--

Proposed delivery changes

In taking forward the Task and Finish Group’s Recommendations 5 and 6 the Welsh Government proposes to bring about changes through guidance documentation and funding terms and conditions on how 14–19 business is planned and delivered; notably both in respect of the approach to learner travel and the administration of the current grant.

There is already a requirement in planning guidance for curriculum planners to fully explore the potential to use modern technologies to avoid learners having to travel (and also the movement of course deliverers in the first instance). However, there is a need for increased scrutiny of planning for learner transport. We need to increase the sharing of existing best practice and realise efficiency savings through more effective approaches.

We recognise the need for some learner travel undertaken as a result of local collaborative provision, but learner travel should be seen as the last resort solution after viable alternatives have been fully and demonstrably explored. The increasing costs associated with this element of the 14–19 grant is simply not sustainable moving forward.

Question 7 – Within local collaborative provision, are you aware of any effective examples of alternatives to learner travel currently in operation? Can you provide outline details, including whether there is a cost and/or learner benefit gained from this approach?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
--------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Please give details.

Excessive travel for either learners or staff is far from ideal. Careful consideration of timetables, allowing for whole days to be allocated to either staff or learners, would help to ease this.

Proposed developments on qualifications

In taking forward the Task and Finish Group’s Recommendations 7 and 9 we propose to test these approaches via the Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales stakeholder groups. However, at this stage we would like your views on the potential for developments around broad-based (generic) vocational two-tiered (Level 1 and Level 2) vocational (IVET) qualifications, and for select courses relating to occupational competence being available as IVETs. Implementation would need to reflect wider stakeholder views and existing work already programmed through the Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year olds in Wales.

Question 8 – Given the need for continued emphasis on the provision of appropriate vocational course options at Key Stage 4, with a view to learner progression on vocational learning post-16, do you see potential value in the development of more broad-based vocational qualifications? How do you feel such developments would benefit Key Stage 4 learners? How do you consider they would best be developed?

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	-------------------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------

Please give your reasons for your answer.

Providing learners with IVET qualification options at KS4 are a valuable way of increasing appropriate course choices for young learners and could help deliver the aims of the Youth Progression Framework and reduce the number of NEETS, by engaging them with more vocational options. It would also provide a clearer progression route at post 16 and help to enhance collaboration between schools and colleges.

Proposed communications approach

The Task and Finish Group's Recommendation 8 suggests that the Welsh Government develops a broader communications strategy around changes affecting 14 to 19-year-olds. We accept that there is merit in considering how we communicate the interconnectivity between the various programme changes taking place affecting 14–19, and how we can better help stakeholders understand how the various actions interact and support each other.

Question 9 – Recognising the various policy developments taking place around the education of 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales, do you consider there is a need for changes in the communications approach of the Welsh Government? How do you think we can best achieve a more joined-up approach to our messages?

Agree	x <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	---	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------

Please give details.

Parity between vocational and academic courses needs to be developed. Colleges often deal with young learners who are disaffected and are advised to take the vocational route, leading to the assumption that vocational courses are somehow inferior. This can be perceived by parents and pupils that academic qualifications are more desirable, leading to perhaps reluctance on the part of learners to engage in vocational qualifications, which could contribute to the number of NEETs. The benefits of vocational qualifications need to be more clearly communicated, to make sure that learners engage in courses that are right for them as individuals, rather than enrolling on courses that perceived to be better. Public perception of the merits of vocational qualifications could also be enhance by giving lecturers equal status with teachers in terms of QTS

General comments

We would like to take this opportunity to invite any further comment on the proposals being put forward within the Task and Finish Group's report.

Question 10 – 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 give details.

--

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: