

Chair of Qualifications Wales Board

Pre-appointment hearing report

July 2025

1. Introduction

- 1.** The Welsh Government and the Welsh Parliament agreed to introduce pre-appointment scrutiny by Senedd committees of certain public appointments that are of significant public interest or which will have a significant impact on the public. The aim is to improve the scrutiny and transparency of the public appointment making process. Pre-appointment scrutiny generally takes the form of a public pre-appointment hearing with the preferred candidate. For appointments to these agreed roles, it is for the relevant committee to decide whether or not it wishes to carry out a pre-appointment hearing.
- 2.** We considered our approach to the pre-appointment scrutiny of the Chair (“the Chair”) of Qualifications Wales Board (“the Board”) on 26 March. We agreed to ask the Welsh Government’s preferred candidate to provide a brief written response to seven questions and to invite them to attend a pre-appointment hearing on 3 July. The preferred candidate’s response is set out at annex C.
- 3.** The Welsh Government provided us with documentation to support our pre-appointment scrutiny. This included the post role specification (annex A) and person specification (annex B), information about the recruitment process, and anonymised information about the field of candidates.



2. The post

4. The Board meets five times a year and is made up of the Chair, Chief Executive and up to 10 other members. The Board is responsible for:

- defining and developing strategic direction and setting objectives;
- holding the Chief Executive to account and monitoring Qualifications Wales activities to ensure they are conducted efficiently and effectively; and
- promoting high standards of public finance - upholding the principles of regularity, propriety and value for money.¹

5. According to the documentation sent to us by the Welsh Government, the role of the Chair of the Board includes:

- Providing vision and strategic leadership to the Board.
- Ensuring that the Board, in reaching decisions, takes proper account of statutory and financial management requirements, QW's principal aims and statutory functions and pays regard to all relevant guidance and policy direction provided by the Welsh Ministers.

6. The terms of office of the Chair is set out in paragraphs 2 to 9 of schedule 1 of the Qualifications Wales Act 2015.² The Chair is appointed by the Welsh Ministers for a term of up to three years, and may be reappointed only once.

7. The current Chair is David B. Jones OBE. He was appointed in October 2019 and was reappointed for a second three-year term in October 2022. His appointment ends on 30 September 2025. The Cabinet Secretary for Education has offered the current Chair an extension to his term to December 2025.³ The new Chair's term of office will start in January 2026.

8. The recruitment documentation provided to us by the Welsh Government states that the post has a time commitment of an average of 5 days per month at a remuneration of £337 per day.

¹ Qualifications Wales, '**Structure & Governance**'

² Legislation.gov.uk, '**Qualifications Wales Act 2015**'

³ We will be considering this issue further during our meeting on 16 July 2025. [Corrected since original publication. The original text incorrectly stated "... 17 July 2025".]

3. The recruitment process

How the post was advertised

9. The post was advertised for four weeks between March and April 2025, and was promoted via the following websites and social media platforms:

- Welsh Government website (including Public Appointments website / parts of government website);
- Qualifications Wales website; and
- other media outlets – actioned via Golley Slater (advertisement agency).

10. Paid advertisements were placed on the following websites:

- Western Mail (including Jobs Wales);
- Daily Post;
- Golwg;
- Diversity Jobs Network (to attract a diverse pool of potential candidates); and
- Fish4.

11. The role was promoted via the following networks:

- Qualifications Wales and Welsh Government informal network of stakeholders.
- As part of the Welsh Government's commitment to increasing diversity in public appointments, the advert was sent to equality and other organisations who have expressed an interest in this or similar posts.
- Individuals with an interest in public appointments who have registered for Job Alerts.

Selecting a preferred candidate

12. The appointment panel consisted of:

- Ruth Meadows, Panel Chair, Welsh Government, Director Tertiary Education;
- Craig Stephenson, Senior Independent Panel Member (SIPM); and
- Georgina Haarhoff: Welsh Government, Director Education.

13. 8 applications were received. The panel agreed that 4 applications provided strong evidence against the competencies and these applicants were invited to interview. 1 applicant withdrew before interview stage, meaning 3 applicants were interviewed.

14. Interviews were conducted on 4 June 2025. Following the interviews, Dr Paul Bevan was named the Welsh Government's preferred candidate.

15. Dr Paul Bevan has worked in higher education ("HE"), further education ("FE"), and research sectors, He is currently leading digital and organisational transformation programmes for a range of clients including Jisc, a British education technology charity.

4. The pre-appointment hearing

16. The preferred candidate, Dr Paul Bevan, attended a pre-appointment hearing on 3 July 2025.

17. During the hearing, we explored a range of issues relevant to Dr Bevan's professional experience, his vision for the role and the wider qualifications landscape in Wales. We sought to assure ourselves that Dr Bevan had the prerequisite skills and experience to carry out the role effectively.

18. He told us that he has been working in and around the education sector for over 20 years, in a variety of different roles, related to qualifications at level 1 to level 8.⁴ However, he acknowledged that he has no experience of working in schools. He explained that his general approach to upskilling is to ask questions, to listen, and to cross-check information to build his knowledge. He added that were he to be appointed he would be assisted in doing so by a significant handover period with the current post-holder and by working alongside the Qualifications Wales executive.⁵

19. We also asked Dr Bevan about whether he believed that he has, or may have in time, any conflicts of interest, prior experiences or relationships that could affect his ability to carry out the role impartially. He assured us that he did not believe that he did, and that he would declare any potential conflicts of interest if they were to arise.⁶

20. Dr Bevan identified his three priorities across his three-year tenure as:

- the successful delivery and implementation of the reformed qualifications (the new GCSEs, skills suite, VCSEs and foundation qualifications);
- ensuring the appropriate balance of qualifications for Wales; and
- building on Qualifications Wales' role as a partner within the education sector.⁷

⁴ Children, Young People and Education Committee, **3 July 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraphs 10-11

⁵ Children, Young People and Education Committee, **3 July 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraphs 17-18

⁶ Children, Young People and Education Committee, **3 July 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraphs 7-8 & 77

⁷ Children, Young People and Education Committee, **3 July 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraphs 27-30

He told us that the qualifications approach in Wales is “really strong”, and that he does not believe there is case for a fundamental change to that approach. His priority, he explained, was to listen and communicate with key stakeholders to deliver the changes in the “right way” whilst being clear in the direction being taken.⁸

21. Finally, we asked Dr Bevan how he would respond if a future Senedd Committee did not choose to carry out annual scrutiny of Qualifications Wales, which we have done throughout the Sixth Senedd. He told us that he would be “disappointed”:

“The reason I would be disappointed is because it would say to me that they don't see the fundamental roles that qualifications, not just Qualifications Wales, but the qualifications play in the landscape. It's easy to see that a qualification is just the output of an end of a curriculum-based course, but it's not; it's the whole thing, and it's the whole system that has to work. So, I would be, kindly and gently, arguing that being clear as a committee on what your qualifications regulator is doing is part of ensuring that we have an education system in Wales that performs for Wales in the short term and the long term. For employers, for learners, for providers, everybody, the qualifications need to work, otherwise the system really can't operate.”⁹

Our view

22. The preferred candidate performed well during the pre-appointment hearing and we are happy to endorse his appointment.

Conclusion 1. We endorse the appointment of the Welsh Government's preferred candidate to the post of Chair of the Qualifications Wales Strategic Board.

⁸ Children, Young People and Education Committee, **3 July 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraphs 32-34

⁹ Children, Young People and Education Committee, **3 July 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraph 91

Annex A: Role specification

The Chair of Qualifications Wales Board (the Board) is appointed by Welsh Ministers and is responsible for leading the Board and setting the strategic direction for QW and monitoring the delivery of the organisation's business strategy, plans and performance and objectives. Whilst the Board has this strategic level responsibility, the Chief Executive has responsibility in respect of the day-to-day operational management of QW.

The work of the Board is supported by the following committees:

- Audit & Risk Assurance.
- Resources; Regulatory Policy and Standards, and Remuneration.

You can find more information on the Board and its committees on the Structure & Governance section of our website.

In addition to chairing the Board, the Chair may attend other committees. The Chair will usually be required to work approximately 5 days per month (remunerated on an hourly basis).

The key responsibilities for the Chair include, but are not limited to:

- Providing vision and strategic leadership to the Board.
- Building effective working relationships with the Chief Executive and Directors
- Formulating the Board's strategies.
- Ensuring that the Board, in reaching decisions, takes proper account of statutory and financial management requirements, QW's principal aims and statutory functions and pays regard to all relevant guidance and policy direction provided by the Welsh Ministers.
- Promoting the economic, efficient and effective use of staff and other resources.
- Ensuring high standards of regularity and propriety.
- Representing the views of the Board to the public and to the Cabinet Secretary for Education.

- Ensure that all Board members are briefed fully on the terms of their appointment and on their duties, rights and responsibilities.
- Ensure that they, together with other Board members, receive appropriate training, including on the financial management and reporting requirements of public sector bodies and on the differences that might exist between private and public sector practice.
- Ensure that the Board has an appropriate balance of skills and backgrounds that best reflect the diversity of Wales to direct QW's business.
- Working with Board members to build a positive working environment and encourage a culture of open and effective scrutiny and challenge
- Where appointments to vacancies on the Board are to be made by the Welsh Ministers, advise Welsh Ministers on the needs of QW and how it might best reflect the diversity of Wales.
- Assess the performance of individual Board members in accordance with the arrangements agreed with the Welsh Government.
- Ensure that an appropriate Code of Conduct for Board members, including rules and guidance on Board members' interests and conflicts of interest, is in place and consistent with the Welsh Government model Code.
- Attend an annual performance review, conducted by Welsh Ministers (Minister with QW Sponsorship / portfolio lead).
- Chairing meetings and supporting the development of the Board, ensuring an appropriate balance of skills and experience.
- Ensuring that the Board is effective in working with QW (the Executive) to develop strategy and corporate business plans that are properly scrutinised and monitored.
- Working with the Chief Executive, in their role as Accounting Officer, ensure that appropriate governance arrangements are implemented in line with best practice and the requirements of a public body.
- Ensuring that governance arrangements deliver the legal responsibilities, functions and duties placed on the body by Statute.

- Working closely with the Chief Executive to ensure a relevant organisational strategy remains in place.
- Working closely with the Chief Executive continue to build and mature the organisation's culture and positive approach to its work.
- Overseeing the work of the Chief Executive, providing appropriate support as necessary, including managing their performance.
- Representing the Body externally and fostering close working relationships with key stakeholders.

The Chair will be responsible that all members of the Board, including themselves, adhere to the Nolan Principles of public life:

- Integrity
- Selflessness
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

Annex B: Person specification

Applicants will be required to demonstrate the qualities, skills and experience to meet all essential criteria for appointment.

Essential

1. An outstanding record of leadership, organisational transformation and development at Board level or equivalent in a complex organisation.
2. Demonstrable ability to encourage a Board culture of effective and helpful challenge and scrutiny
3. Experience of leading the development and implementation of strategies aimed at achieving organisational goals.
4. Demonstrable interest in education and understanding of the education system in Wales including an understanding of the future needs and challenges.
5. Excellent track record of inspiring and enthusing staff and stakeholders that demonstrates an inclusive and collaborative approach including working in partnership with staff representatives.
6. Leading or being part of the leadership in developing organisational cultures.
7. An exceptional ability to communicate, including handling the media and wider public audiences, and building relationships at all levels. Strong interpersonal skills are required, including the ability to negotiate, persuade and influence.
8. A track record of managing complex and challenging relationships at a senior level in a multi-stakeholder environment.
9. Well-developed analytical reasoning skills and judgment based on an expert ability to process and interpret complex and often technical information.
10. Able to demonstrate leadership and a creative and pro-active approach to problem solving with a high level of professionalism.

11. Ability to ensure that the organisation's financial dealings are prudently and systematically accounted for, audited and publicly available showing a commitment to transparency and openness.
12. Understanding of the public sector context and understanding of and commitment to the principles of public life.
13. Able to demonstrate a track record of commitment to and notable delivery against principles of equality and diversity.

Desirable

- Understanding of the constraints imposed by operating in the public sector.
- Understanding of the culture and heritage of Wales and a commitment to ensuring that, along with its language, they are reflected in the working of the organisation.
- Experience of working in a regulatory environment.

Annex C: The preferred candidate's response to our seven written questions

1. What is your motivation for applying to be the Chair of the Qualifications Wales Strategic Board?

I have been privileged to work in the education sector for nearly 20 years and to have gained experience across Higher Education, Further Education, and Skills provision.

I place strong personal value on the positive impact I can have on Wales and the wider world. Working in Education allows you to extend your personal impact through creating and enhancing opportunities for Learners, and I am excited by the opportunity to extend that impact even further by taking a vision-holding role in the body which has both the regulatory responsibility and leadership opportunity in relation to a renewed qualifications system in Wales.

This is a critical and exciting time to lead the Strategic Board, with multiple elements of transition coming together that I feel I will be well placed to support including:

- The Qualified for the Future reforms, linked to the Curriculum for Wales - where I will be able to offer my experience in transformation, change management, and the education sector to assure and support the delivery of the programme of reforms already in train.
- Broader post-16 and wider sectoral changes - where my background and experience of leadership and governance roles in Higher and Further Education will help support alignment between the work of Qualifications Wales and other changes planned or arising.
- A larger Senedd - where I will be able to use my skills and experience in stakeholder engagement and collaboration to support relationships with both existing and new Members along with the opportunity for increased engagement and scrutiny.

Ten years after the passing of the Qualifications Wales Act, we are at another key moment in the delivery of a made for Wales education system and I would be proud to play a role in putting in place a qualification system that supports the improved attainment possible through the new curriculum.

Achieving this will require a strong and high-performing Qualifications Wales, with a clear voice, broad links and partnerships, positive relationships with Welsh Government, and close alignment of board and executive. All of these are areas I am keen to ensure are effective if I were to be appointed.

2. What skills and experience make you well-suited for the role?

I have extensive senior leadership experience across education, particularly in Further and Higher Education. I have led complex organisational transformation activities, developed and implemented strategies, and worked effectively at board level in both executive and non-executive roles.

As you can see from the information provided from the application process, during my career I have shown my ability to lead cultural and strategic change whilst maintaining a strong collaborative relationship with staff and stakeholders.

I have direct governance experience through a number of non-executive positions and I understand the education landscape in Wales and the importance of Qualifications Wales in the context of curriculum reform, as well as the critical role of a qualifications regulator in maintaining an appropriate qualifications system and ensuring public confidence.

I am committed to the values of public service, have a strong grasp of financial, risk, and other governance priorities and am a confident communicator with expertise in managing complex multi-stakeholder relationships in challenging contexts.

I feel these skills and experience position me to provide excellent leadership to the organisation, working collaboratively with the executive team and staff, and building highly effective relationships inside and outside of the sector.

3. What is your vision for qualifications in Wales and what are the three main outcomes that you want to achieve over the course of your tenure?

My vision for qualifications in Wales is for a resilient, effective, inclusive and evolving system of qualifications that are inherently made for Wales.

This reflects my view that our qualifications must support Wales today and into the future, meet the needs of all Learners and Employers in both the short and long-term, and be part of a system which is able to continuously improve in partnership with providers, awarding bodies, and Welsh Government.

The current system is in a period of change that could be described as ‘a revolutionary shift towards an evolutionary model’ and that the outcome can and should be qualifications which can retain comparability over the long-term without losing relevance.

To move towards this vision, I would see my three main outcomes over my tenure as:

- Delivery of the Qualified for the Future Reform programme: Evidenced by successful completion of 2025 starter GCSE cycle and positive implementation of GCSE, VCSE, and Foundation qualifications in 2026/7.
- A Made-for-Wales System: Evidenced by an uplift in the proportion of available, planned, and awarded *approved* qualifications and qualifications in Cymraeg.
- A Regulator at the Heart of the System: Evidenced through stakeholder’s views of Qualifications Wales, our support for qualifications beyond pure regulation, our engagement and sector leadership activities, and preparation for a 2029 onwards strategic plan.

However, the need for a secure and stable focus for Qualifications Wales over the next three years should not be underestimated. The key measure of success for the body will be the benefit that Learners and Wales in general will gain from a reformed curriculum with robust and well understood qualification outcomes and I recognise the need to deliver on that fundamental transformation alongside maximising the positive impact Qualifications Wales has on the broader Welsh education system.

4. What do you think are the key challenges facing Qualifications Wales?

Like all organisations operating in the education sector, Qualifications Wales constantly needs to evolve in response to external and internal drivers and challenges. Ultimately, I view these factors as key elements of the operating environment we are within rather than individual challenges, and as areas of focus rather than consternation, but my view is that the three key challenges are:

Embedding the reformed 14-16 qualifications

Whilst the new Curriculum for Wales is owned by Welsh Government, and individual examinations and processes are owned by WJEC, Qualifications Wales is firmly linked to the success of the new qualifications both in terms of the practical implementation and Learner outcomes.

This is both an operational challenge and a strategic one. The programme of reform is a huge undertaking and requires a clear focus on delivery alongside broad and effective consultation and change management. Challenges that any similar system-wide changes would experience, such as delays or unexpected issues, are highly critical because of both the fixed timelines of academic cycles and the large number of practitioners, Learners, parents, and other stakeholders dependent on delivery.

Those stakeholders themselves are also under systemic pressures, whether local authority budgets or broader concerns over workload and meeting learner's additional needs.

Beyond the specifics of operational delivery, the broad change to teaching and qualifications that the reforms have brought represents a potential fundamental challenge to the 'public confidence' aim of Qualifications Wales. Outcomes from the new qualifications will be understandably compared against a theoretical, and unknowable, outcome under previous qualifications. Maintaining confidence across government, the sector, and stakeholders in both the process of change and the underlying approach to qualifications will be essential at a strategic level.

However, this challenge is well understood and highly engaged with. It also represents another opportunity: Wales has continued to under-perform on international benchmarks and we have a unique social, cultural, and economic mix which requires appropriate curricula and qualifications. The reforms are an opportunity for Qualifications Wales, as part of the broader sector, to realise a system which is capable of being effective in meeting the needs of Learners in Wales into the long term.

Transitioning from reform to regulation in a time of constrained resources

As the reform programme is a significant and complex undertaking, the implementation has been staged across multiple years, supporting providers and others. This means that there will be a multi-year period where a mix of 'old' and 'new' GCSEs/Vocational Qualifications will exist and it will be essential for Qualifications Wales to balance resources between the reform activity and supporting and regulating qualifications which are in active delivery.

Qualifications Wales is a small organisation with little capacity to generate additional income due to its role and remit. The costs of the organisation are necessarily weighted heavily towards staff and therefore any constraint on funding will have a direct impact on capability to deliver.

Combined, these two factors increase the risk of underperformance and therefore of secondary issues such as failure to comply with regulatory or legal requirements.

Again, opportunities also exist as activities and staff move from reform to regulation work, including looking for new and more efficient ways of working as well as creating more agile roles and functions. However, managing the allocation and transition of resource effectively will be crucial to the success of Qualifications Wales over the coming years.

Ensuring a healthy and effective system of awarding bodies

Whilst the reforms are aimed at creating the right curriculum and qualifications for Wales there is a need to ensure the underlying qualifications system is healthy and effective. As the systems in England and Wales (in particular) diverge to meet differing policy and educational needs, awarding bodies are challenged by the financial viability of their offer.

The number of recognised awarding bodies in Wales has reduced by around a third in the lifetime of Qualifications Wales. Work to align and reduce the regulatory burden is undertaken by regulators but there is also an important role in explaining the value of meeting the specific needs of Wales and the Welsh qualifications system.

The system needs to be able to support the aspirations of Welsh Government, Learners, Employers, and Qualifications Wales which requires a resilient ecosystem of awarding bodies and qualifications. To achieve this there needs to be a suitable balance of approved and designated qualifications in Wales, but also a viable and resilient market for approved qualifications.

Whilst a challenge as we continue to move to a more Wales-focused qualifications base, this is also an opportunity to ensure we confidently promote the value of tailoring or creating qualifications for Wales. Highlighting the benefits to awarding bodies as well as employers and other stakeholders. It is also an opportunity to look at new sources of designated qualifications and to fully take advantage of broader international alignment.

5. How will you maintain and enhance the Commission's relationship with Welsh Government and key stakeholders within the sector?

I think it is important to set out here my view of the relationship that should exist between the executive and non-executives in any public body. Ultimately, as a board and as chair there are direct responsibilities related to ensuring that

Qualifications Wales is effective and these require strong and ongoing scrutiny. However, the non-executive and executive are together the leadership of the organisation. We must work together as a team, with strong communication and co-ordination and when I talk about engagement here and elsewhere I want to underline that I am referring to that strong team working rather than necessarily individual actions.

Our relationship with Welsh Government and the Cabinet Secretary, as well as other members of the government, is absolutely at the heart of being effective. From my understanding Qualifications Wales has a strong and positive relationship with Welsh Government and it is important we continue to maintain the right balance of being an independent regulator and supporting Welsh Government's aims for education.

Positive and open discussion is at the heart of this, and I look forward to building a relationship with the sponsoring team and the Cabinet Secretary which embodies plain speaking, transparency and openness around any issues or concerns, as well as ensuring we give enough time to aligning the 'long view' and where we are in meeting the policy objectives for education in Wales.

Welsh Government is the sponsor of Qualifications Wales of course and there will need to be clear and focused discussions around funding. Qualifications Wales is a small organisation, with costs almost entirely linked to the wage bill. As a result changes in funding – positive or negative - can be very impactful. The function that Qualifications Wales plays in supporting qualification development is also going to be critical in the future, particularly in meeting the bilingual objectives we have, and I am keen to ensure we have an ongoing discussion about how Qualifications Wales can most effectively play its part in delivering across Welsh Government's policy agenda.

In terms of stakeholders, one of the strongest features of Qualifications Wales, particularly over the past 3 years or so, has been a focus on transparency and open communication. There's been, and continues to be, a real embedding of the Learner in the work of Qualifications Wales. That needs to continue, as does an increasing focus on engagement with those sector stakeholders.

Ultimately, we are in a time of change and reform in the 14-19 and post-16 sectors in Wales. It is imperative we work together with Welsh Government, Schools, Colleges, Independent Training Providers, WJEC, Accrediting Bodies, staff and trade unions, Medr and the Universities, to make this change stick and be successful.

I see Qualifications Wales' role, and my role if appointed, as central to this. As the regulator we must be constantly and actively working to ensure the system is effective and relationship building is a key to that.

I have my own views from my experience in the sector of where I think relationships require the most initial focus: with WJEC and Schools (including teaching staff) in relation to the reforms; with Medr in particular to ensure we are informed and aligned on post-16 direction – particularly for VCSEs and the vital inter-relationship between Colleges and Sixth Forms; and with awarding bodies, setting out clearly our expectations and plans as a regulator with as long term a timeline as possible.

Wales is well-connected, particularly the education sector, and we have a key role here in making sure that messaging around changes to qualifications is well aligned outside of the sector – particularly to Learners, Parents, Employers, and others not embedded in reforms. We can do that through good stakeholder engagement, playing our appropriate role in the broader system, and through looking for opportunities to work closely together with bodies such as Medr, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, and Estyn to ensure we are a genuinely aligned sector.

6. How will you work with Senedd Members, Senedd Committees and wider stakeholders?

I've mentioned openness and transparency as being positive attributes of Qualifications Wales, and these closely align to my own personal style. This approach is vital to effective working between Qualifications Wales, an independent regulator, and the legislature.

Scrutiny is critical to this, of course, and I welcome the fact that Qualifications Wales has annual direct opportunity to appear before the committee and discuss the past year and progress towards our broader objectives. We also have an important role in responding, from a regulatory perspective, to the broader work of this and other committees and the Senedd in general.

I hope that I, along with the executive, will also be able to work with the Committee and broader Senedd Members to ensure we are providing key technical briefings and other background information to help both broader Senedd and local work. Where relevant I would see this working through direct engagements or through cross-party groups.

The elections in 2026 will present a unique opportunity, and challenge, to Qualifications Wales along with other bodies across the wider Welsh public

services. 36 more members, along with whatever the outcome of the election process will be, will mean a need to engage and inform about the work of Qualifications Wales and the sector more generally. I feel it will be essential for Qualifications Wales, and other bodies working in the system, to ensure we do this in a co-ordinated and complementary way.

Qualifications Wales is still relatively young as an organisation, and as such our role may not be well understood by all. We will need to be proactive in our engagement, particularly in the period from May to August, as we arrive at the Wave 2 point of the reforms.

The increased size of the Senedd will also bring new opportunities for engagement and scrutiny, and I hope that we can embrace those opportunities to ensure Qualifications Wales continues to support any further thematic scrutiny as well as our direct work.

In terms of wider stakeholders, I want to pick up two groups that I think are the most important at this time: Employers, and bodies beyond Wales. Strong engagement with both of these is essential to achieving the two principal aims of Qualifications Wales.

In terms of Employers, there is always a challenge in Wales of balancing the shape of our economy with the practicalities of any engagement. 94% of our businesses are micro, and 99% SMEs – the types of businesses that often find it difficult to engage with any sort of consultation or messaging. One of my priorities post-appointment would be to understand better Qualifications Wales's work and plans in this area and to be assured that it remains fit for purpose, particularly as we move towards VCSEs and Foundation Qualifications.

Appropriate alignment with bodies outside of Wales is critical to the 'public confidence' aim of Qualifications Wales. There is a need, particularly in a time of qualification reform, to ensure that ongoing trust and esteem in qualifications offered and gained in Wales. There are regulatory alignment and quality assurance based mechanisms for doing this, but equally there is a softer messaging and engagement to ensure Wales qualifications are well understood and regarded at UK and international levels. Again, this is something Qualifications Wales should take a leading role in but where working with the wider sector and Welsh Government is also important.

7. Are there any key milestones or key performance indicators that you believe are particularly relevant to the work of the Strategic Board? If so, please provide an outline of what they are and any associated timetables.

This is a challenging question to answer from the 'outside in' but the key indicators I will be looking for as chair would relate to:

- Risk management, particularly (but not limited to) regulatory risk but also corporate risks (including Health and Safety, financial)
- Compliance actions undertaken and time to undertake
- Indicators that evidence the health of the system (including number of awarding bodies, diversity of qualifications against plans)
- Indicators of the makeup of qualifications: Spread of priority, restricted priority and designated qualifications, availability of bilingual qualifications
- Progress against the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act implementation and Welsh Language Measures (as well as internal strategies)
- Staff indicators including diversity, staff survey outcomes
- Executive performance
- Progress against the Reforms implementation (including monitoring data) for Wave 1 (2025), Wave 2 (2026), Wave 3 (2027).
- Transition of resource from reforms to regulation following implementation
- International comparators and benchmarking

The largest task for Qualifications Wales is the three waves of reform, and I am aware in general that there are milestones and plans in place for this. However, I would emphasise the importance of leading indicators ahead of these milestones and I expect the Strategic Board, working with the executive, to have defined and be monitoring these well in advance of any key milestones.