



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg **The Children, Young People and Education** **Committee**

Dydd Iau, 5 Chwefror 2015
Thursday, 5 February 2015

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Angela Burns	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Keith Davies	Llafur Labour
Paul Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (yn dirprwyo ar ran Suzy Davies) Welsh Conservatives (substitute for Suzy Davies)
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Chair of the Committee)
Lynne Neagle	Llafur Labour
David Rees	Llafur Labour
Aled Roberts	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Simon Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Siwan Daniel	Cyfreithiwr, Tîm Addysg (Ysgolion) a'r Gymraeg, Llywodraeth Cymru Lawyer, Education (Schools) and Welsh Language Team, Welsh Government
Huw Lewis	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau) Assembly Member, Labour (the Minister for Education and Skills)
Catherine Lloyd	Cyfreithiwr, Tîm Addysg (Ysgolion) a'r Gymraeg, Llywodraeth Cymru Lawyer, Education (Schools) and Welsh Language Team, Welsh Government
Alison Standfast	Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr Sefydlu, Cymwysterau Cymru Deputy Director Qualifications Wales Transition
Cassy Taylor	Pennaeth Cangen Sefydlu Cymwysterau Cymru Head of Qualifications Wales Transition Branch

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Michael Dauncey	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Marc Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk
Gareth Pembridge	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:32.
The meeting began at 09:32.

Cyflwyniadau, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the Children, Young People and Education Committee. We've had apologies this morning from John Griffiths and from Suzy Davies, and Paul Davies is subbing for Suzy. So, welcome, Paul—glad to have you with us. We'll just do the usual housekeeping rules. If you've got your mobile phones or if you're using your iPads, can you just make sure they're on silent? The pings do annoy me. It's like a microwave dinner: 'ping'. It does annoy me, but I won't say what I normally say, because I was caught out with that. Could you just make sure they're on silent so they don't affect proceedings? We're not expecting the fire alarm to operate, but if it does, we'll take our instructions from the ushers. We operate bilingually, so channel 1 is translation from Welsh to English, and channel 0 is the floor language, should you need it for amplification. We're going to move on to our final evidence session on the Qualifications Wales Bill.

Bil Cymwysterau Cymru—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 7 The Qualifications Wales Bill—Evidence Session 7

[2] **Ann Jones:** We're delighted to have the Minister with us again. You've got your own name plate. We keep it because you're here quite often, which is quite right as well, because we are the education committee. This is the last evidence session, as I said, so, Minister, would you like to introduce yourself and your officials for the record, and then we will go straight into some questions?

[3] **The Minister for Education and Skills (Huw Lewis):** Of course, Chair. I'm Huw Lewis, the Minister for Education and Skills. On my left, I'm joined by Cassy Taylor, who is our head of transition for Qualifications Wales. Siwan Daniel, on my right, is part of our legal team. I also have legal support from Alison Standfast and Catherine Lloyd.

[4] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thanks very much, and I believe your team's going to change when we get to various parts in the Bill. Okay, that's great. Thank you. As you know, we've been taking evidence, and we did pre-leg scrutiny as well, so we've taken some evidence on the qualifications Bill. There are a number of areas that we've got: independence of Qualifications Wales and relationship with stakeholders; then, limitations, principal aims and matters; risks associated with a distinct national qualifications system in Wales and the requirement for Wales-specific qualifications; prioritising and restricting qualifications; a more strategic approach to vocational qualifications; and then, financial and commercial issues, and anything else that may crop up from discussions.

[5] I thank you for your letter. That was helpful, as well. So, if that's okay, we're going to move into those sets of questions, and the first set, then, on the independence of Qualifications Wales and relationship, is Angela's.

[6] **Angela Burns:** Thank you. Good morning. I think the great thing that's come out of the evidence sessions that we've heard is that there's been absolutely nobody who dissents from the idea that we should have an independent body, and I think that's really important. There are concerns around, which I think other people will flesh out, about the powers within that body, but to have an independent body from the Government is seen by everybody as a really positive step forward.

[7] One of the things that has come up, though, time and time again is how independent does independence really mean? We've had a number of organisations—NAHT, ASSCL, even the WJEC to an extent—sort of wanting that kind of clarification and reassurance. How will that independent body report back? Will they just report back into you, as Minister, or is

there going to be an opportunity on a regular basis for reporting back into the Assembly, or, if you like, a right of recall? I wonder whether you might just again—sorry to ask you to re-hash some of the old ground—really reinforce and explain to us where you see that independence line being drawn.

[8] **Huw Lewis:** Thank you, Angela. Yes, I'm also very encouraged by the fact that I think there is overall consensus across the educational community in terms of moving towards an independent regulator. I mean, I think everyone accepts that the present situation is far from ideal. The idea here, of course, is to shift to a regulator that is operationally independent and is also expert in terms of the tasks that we will be asking it to undertake. What the Bill, as drafted, seeks to do is strike the best possible balance that we can find between that operational independence and the need for accountability.

[9] Now, the body Qualifications Wales would be accountable to the National Assembly through its annual report. I think that would be the primary vehicle for the line of accountability, for example through this committee and your active scrutiny of what that annual report might say, the ability to call the chief executive before you to give evidence, and, of course, the Assembly would be at liberty to call Qualifications Wales to account at any time, not only in relation to the publication of the annual report.

[10] There also, of course, would be a remit letter from me, which would be an important part of the relationship between Welsh Government and Qualifications Wales. Now, that's not intended to be a remit letter that spells out the operational objectives of Qualifications Wales therein that independent element of its operation; it would be a document that primarily sets out the financial reporting arrangements, the grant allocations, and so on and so forth. There would also be the provision for the Welsh Government to ask Qualifications Wales for advice in particular areas, as well. And I should mention that the remit letter would be published.

[11] The third aspect of the relationship would be governed by a framework document, which would outline the working relationship between the Welsh Government and Qualifications Wales and, again, aspects of the financial arrangements that would be set up between the two, signed off by the Welsh Ministers and the new chief executive.

[12] **Angela Burns:** Thank you for that. To be honest with you, I think you've made it very clear, but for the stakeholders out there who still have a degree of unease, can I just repeat back what I think you're saying, which is that Welsh Government's relationship will be entirely with Qualifications Wales, and the stakeholders will engage with Quals Wales, that you will enable full and frank disclosure, that there will be a reporting mechanism, and that it will be debated in the Assembly on a yearly basis, much like we debate Estyn's report or the children's commissioner's report? Do you think there's any way that you can strengthen the face of the Bill to really make that absolutely crystal clear, to offer that level of assurance to the stakeholders?

[13] You know, there's just one particular point I wanted just to ask again for some clarification on, because I'm slightly confused about it. It's in the explanatory memorandum. Paragraph 59—sorry to drag us back to the kick-off point, if you like, of the Bill—says that a Welsh Government 'sponsor unit' will have 'oversight' of Qualifications Wales's responsibilities, and yet paragraph 60 of the EM states that dialogue between Welsh Government and Qualifications Wales will not undermine the body's independence. I think there's confusion over the role of Welsh Minister and this oversight body. I just wondered whether you could explain that a little bit.

[14] **Huw Lewis:** Okay. I think it's worth mentioning also of course that the annual report would have to contain details of how Qualifications Wales has actually engaged with

stakeholders, and that would be an expected part of its day-to-day workings. So, that's built in, you know, in terms of the proper way in which things should be done but also reassurance around the role of stakeholders in the whole process. Ultimately, of course, if anything were to go wrong and the Assembly were to consider that Qualifications Wales was in some way deficient, then it would be for the Assembly to call them to account through public scrutiny—by 'them', I mean the chief executive, the board—and then for Ministers to ultimately make decisions about continuing the board, and future appointments, and so on. And, of course, as a Minister then, I would be accountable to you as an Assembly.

[15] In terms of the sponsor unit, that is nothing nefarious. There are no black arts involved. It would be a small administration team—a conduit, if you like—for communication between the Welsh Government and the new body, the primary purpose of which would be to make sure we have a good constant working relationship, particularly in relation to curriculum development. As Members will know, we're about to embark upon a major curriculum change. Curriculum content remains part of the public domain. This is not a matter for Qualifications Wales in terms of content; this is a matter for us to debate as representatives of communities. So, we need that link between the Welsh Government and the new organisation.

[16] **Angela Burns:** One final question. You'll have heard the expression poacher turned gamekeeper, I'm sure, many times. A substantial number of staff will be transferring from Welsh Government to staff up Qualifications Wales, which is, you know, right and proper and they'll be taking their experience with them, but what are you able to do to ensure that these ex-Government staff who are now in Qualifications Wales, the independent regulator, are able to, if you like, take off their Government hat and put on their independence hat with success? Will you be offering them some form of training? How will you ensure that stakeholders can really have faith that they are now dealing with people who are looking at this just as objectively from both sides of the fence and not leaning too far towards your camp?

[17] **Huw Lewis:** Sure, sure. Well, there are many things that need to be balanced carefully in terms of the transition arrangements, and it just so happens that our head of transition is sitting on my left, and I'll ask Cassy in a moment perhaps to underline some of the details here. We do want a smooth transition. We don't want disruption in terms of the experience of learners, particularly. As you say, there's a good number of staff: I believe 49 is the number that we're talking about here. In terms of them taking off Government hats and so on, well, hence the legislation. I mean, the legal basis for Qualifications Wales would be very clear, and its operational independence is something we will rely upon as a guarantor of a better way of doing things. But, Cassy, if you—

09:45

[18] **Ms Taylor:** Yes, sure. So, there's quite an extensive arm of the transition project that is related to the staffing and structure of Qualifications Wales, in order to give it the best possible start. So, some staff, as you rightly point out, from the current team working on the regulation of qualifications are being offered the opportunity to transfer to Qualifications Wales and, as you're aware, Philip Blaker has been appointed as interim chief executive, and he's very much leading the thinking on how Qualifications Wales will think in future, and is able to have dialogue with those staff at the moment. As part of that staffing plan, there's also been investment in further training in terms of looking at regulation and assessment aspects, to upskill. But, even were all the staff who wanted to to be transferred, there'd still be a recruitment need and the opportunity to bring in expert staff from elsewhere. So, the numbers of staff, overall, working on regulation, even were they all to move across, and they probably won't—. There's currently about 31 staff working on regulation and that's moving up to 49, and that'll be additional staff, obviously, for the corporate services. So, there's an up-

numbering, and an upskilling process as well. Clearly, the intention is for that to continue, so we're making provision in there for staff to lead on training and building relationships with experts in the field, both in regulation and assessment.

[19] **Angela Burns:** Thank you.

[20] **Aled Roberts:** A gaf i droi'n ôl, jest at yr adroddiad blynyddol, achos mae yna rai tystion wedi bod yn feirniadol bod y memorandwm esboniadol ddim yn hollol glir ynglŷn â'r broses? Mae pawb yn derbyn y bydd yn rhaid i'r adroddiad gael ei gyflwyno neu ei osod gerbron, ond mae paragraff 322 yn y memorandwm esboniadol yn sôn bod

Aled Roberts: May I return, just to the annual report, because some witnesses have been critical that the explanatory memorandum isn't entirely clear about the process? Everyone accepts that the report will have to be introduced or laid, but paragraph 322 in the explanatory memorandum discusses how

[21] 'Cymwysterau Cymru yn gorfod ateb i Gynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru, naill ai mewn sesiwn lawn neu mewn Pwyllgor.'

'Qualifications Wales will be held to account by the National Assembly for Wales either in full session or by Committee.'

[22] Mae'r cyngor rydym ni wedi ei gael yn dweud bod y ffordd mae'r Bil ei hun yn trafod y sefyllfa yn ei gwneud yn hollol bosib mai jest rhoi copi o'r adroddiad blynyddol yn y Llyfrgell a fyddai'n digwydd. Rwyf i jest yn gofyn ichi ystyried, hwyrach, y feirniadaeth a'i gwneud yn hollol glir, fel yn achos adroddiad blynyddol Estyn ac adroddiad blynyddol y comisiynydd plant, lle mae'r ddeddfwriaeth yn dweud yn hollol glir bod yn rhaid cael dadl o flaen y Cynulliad. Hwyrach mai eich dewis chi ydy mai pwyllgor yn hytrach na'r Cynulliad llawn—. Ond mae'n debyg y byddai yna rai Aelodau o'r Cynulliad yn barod iawn i gyflwyno eu profion nhw o ran cymwysterau yn hytrach na jest rhoi cyfle i'r Cynulliad—. Nid wyf yn meddwl ei fod o'n bwynt sylfaenol, ond mae'r feirniadaeth wedi cael ei gwneud.

The advice that we've received says that the way that the Bill itself discusses the situation makes it entirely possible that that could just be a matter of laying a copy of the annual report in the Library. I am just asking you to consider, perhaps, that criticism and to make it entirely clear, as is the case with the Estyn annual report and the children's commissioner's annual report, where the legislation states explicitly that that there must be a debate before the Assembly. It might be your choice for it to take place in committee rather than in Plenary—. But it's likely that some Assembly Members would be very prepared to introduce their tests in terms of qualifications rather than just giving the Assembly an opportunity—. I don't think it's a fundamental point, but the criticism has been made.

[23] **Huw Lewis:** Well, this, of course, would be a matter for the Assembly itself, or for committees and Assembly Members to decide. I would envisage that we would have an analogous process to that which Estyn, for instance, will undergo every year. So, it's not necessarily a matter for me.

[24] The legislation also, you know, is deliberately set out in the way that it is in order to allow that day-to-day ability of the Assembly to call the new body to account. I think, particularly in the world of qualifications, where things can shift really quite quickly in terms of, for instance, policy developments at UK Government level, which might suddenly change or introduce some kind of conundrum that we have to deal with here in Wales, that it is necessary not just to restrict the ability of the Assembly to have oversight of the new body to the annual report. There could be day-to-day matters that this committee or the wider Assembly would need to call in the board or the chief executive to discuss.

[25] **Ann Jones:** Simon.

[26] **Simon Thomas:** Jest ar y pwynt yna, a dweud y gwir. Yn bersonol, fyddwn i ddim yn hapus iawn i weld deddfwriaeth sydd yn gosod allan sut mae'r Cynulliad i fod i ymdrin â chraffu; penderfyniad y Cynulliad yw hynny, fel rydych yn dweud. Ond ar y pwynt ynglŷn â chadw trac, os leciwch chi, yn enwedig efallai yn y dyddiau cynnar, ar ddatblygiad y corff yma, rydym wedi cael tystiolaeth gan Dr Chris Howard, er enghraifft, a oedd yn dweud pa mor bwysig oedd e y byddem yn galw mewn Cymwysterau Cymru o bryd i'w gilydd. Pa fath o ddyletswydd ydych chi'n ei weld yn y ddeddfwriaeth fydd ar Cymwysterau Cymru i ateb yn briodol i hynny? A ydych chi'n gwbl hapus fod y ddarpariaeth yn ddigonol i wneud y berthynas rhwng y Cynulliad a'r corff yma yn gwbl glir?

Simon Thomas: Just on that point, to be honest. Personally, I wouldn't be very happy to see legislation that laid out how the Assembly was supposed to deal with scrutiny; that's up to the Assembly, as you say. But on the point about keeping track, if you like, particularly in the early days, of the development of this body, we've had evidence from Dr Chris Howard, for example, who said how important it was that we would call in Qualifications Wales from time to time. What kind of duty do you see in this legislation for Qualifications Wales to respond appropriately to that? Are you completely happy that there is sufficient provision to make the relationship between the Assembly and this body entirely clear?

[27] **Huw Lewis:** You'd expect me to say this, Chair, but I think the legislation is completely clear in that regard. Of course, I'm always willing to listen to suggestions for sharpening up the legislation, if there are any that come through the committee's deliberations, obviously.

[28] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Aled, shall we move on to your questions on limitations, principal aims and matters?

[29] **Aled Roberts:** Rwyf eisiau sôn am y prif nodau, a dweud y gwir, a jest rhai o'r pwyntiau sydd wedi cael eu gwneud gan ein tystion. Beth ydy'ch ymateb chi i ganfyddiad Prifysgolion Cymru bod yr ail nod yn rhy gul? Maen nhw'n poeni y dylid cyfeirio'n benodol at hyrwyddo hyder y cyhoedd yn y system cymwysterau ar sail ryngwladol.

Aled Roberts: I want to talk about the principal aims, to be honest, and just some of the points made by our witnesses. What is your response to the perception of Universities Wales that the second aim is too narrow? They're concerned that there should be an explicit reference to promoting public confidence in the qualifications system on an international basis.

[30] **Huw Lewis:** There isn't mention of the word 'international' within the principal aims, as you say, because it is taken to be part and parcel of what Qualifications Wales needs to be doing every day: it's part of its bread and butter operation. There is a reference to learners in Wales in the principal aims, and we need to have that in there, of course, because it's part of the jurisdiction of Qualifications Wales. But what we're also talking about here—and this phrase is used—is 'the reasonable needs of learners in Wales', which must, of course, include the reasonable need of learners in Wales to be sure that whatever qualifications we recognise on their behalf, or offer to them, are usable passports, both throughout the United Kingdom and internationally. And that is a key part, of course, of the instilling of public confidence in the Welsh qualifications system, which is also part of Qualification Wales's key core remit.

[31] It's also important, of course, to understand that, when it comes to those stakeholders that have to be a part of the conversation with Qualifications Wales—employers, universities, professional bodies—these are not Wales-only stakeholders. So, Qualifications Wales will be required to be in regular conversation with universities throughout the UK and throughout the world; similarly, with employers and professional bodies too.

[32] **Aled Roberts:** Pa waith sy'n mynd rhagddo, felly, yn ystod y cyfnod trosglwyddo yma ynglŷn â chymwysterau meincnodi yn rhyngwladol, o ran y drafodaeth ynglŷn â chymwysterau?

Aled Roberts: What work is being done, therefore, during this transition period relating to the international benchmarking of qualifications, in terms of this discussion about qualifications?

[33] **Huw Lewis:** Of course, it's very early days in terms of qualifications. We have a sort of shadow Qualifications Wales, which consists of the chief executive, pretty much, at the moment. Again, it's very important here, I think, that Welsh Government doesn't get into this business of over-specifying how Qualifications Wales should go about prioritising its business, and start to micromanage what this organisations does. It is intended to be an expert body that has operational independence, and that's quite a responsibility, but it is, in essence, what we need to do if we're going to shift away from the regulation of the situation by a politician. There will have to be that investment of trust within the new organisation. Cassy, did you want to say a little more about the initial stages?

[34] **Ms Taylor:** Yes, sure. Well, already, colleagues working on qualifications do engage with Europe and are cognisant of the European qualifications framework, for example, and work there to ensure that qualifications are of the appropriate level and comparability with Europe. So, that work is ongoing at the moment and, of course, we would expect Qualifications Wales to continue in a similar vein if it saw fit. Obviously, it has that independence.

[35] But, the relevant matter amongst the matters about Qualifications Wales looking at where qualifications need to be comparable with wherever it feels appropriate, is specifically designed to promote that international comparison and not just to fix its comparisons with England, for example. So, there is ongoing work in relation to Europe. It could probably go further afield and Qualifications Wales would be well-placed to do that. We're equipping it with a research team to enable it to look further than that.

[36] **Huw Lewis:** If you'll forgive me, Aled, if I could refer Members to section 3(2)(F) of the Bill, it points Qualifications Wales in the direction of comparable qualifications, whether awarded in Wales or elsewhere.

[37] **Aled Roberts:** Okay. So that we understand fully the arrangements, because we've come across other areas where Welsh institutions have to defer, in the European context, to a member state, although we're told that that isn't the case with this arrangement and Qualifications Wales would stand on its own legs, as it were.

[38] **Ms Taylor:** There are European comparability frameworks, but the level of detail that that prescribes is relatively limited to level descriptors. The work within that does not constrain Qualifications Wales in terms of how it specifies qualifications should be set out.

[39] **Aled Roberts:** Ac, i fynd yn ôl at y prif nodau, un pwynt arall a wnaethpwyd gan, rwy'n meddwl, ColegauCymru, oedd y dylai fod y Bil yn nodi ein bod yn awyddus i hyrwyddo parch cydradd rhwng cymwysterau academiaidd a rhai galwedigaethol. Roedden nhw'n pryderu nad oes datganiad manwl ynglŷn â hynny yn y prif nodau. Rwy'n gwybod y buasech chi'n dweud mai dyna un o'n seiliau ni, fel corff, ond roedden nhw'n awyddus i'w weld ar wyneb y Bil.

Aled Roberts: And, going back to the principal aims, one other point that was made, I believe, by ColegauCymru, was that the Bill should note that we want to promote parity of esteem between vocational and academic qualifications. They were concerned that there was no detailed statement about that among the principal aims. Now, I know that you would say that that is one of our basic principles, as a body, but they were keen to see that on the face of

the Bill.

[40] **Huw Lewis:** Well, everyone agrees that we need to make absolutely crystal clear to everyone involved the parity of esteem between general and vocational qualifications. This is our aim in Wales; this is our commitment. There are two ways to go about that. I suppose, you could get into the business of wording something on the face of the Bill that underscores that, or—and this is the approach we’ve taken—you simply make no distinction in the Bill between general and vocational qualifications. We just talk about ‘qualifications’, and that is your job, as a regulator—the whole gamut of qualifications, and no distinction being made.

[41] I take the view that it is, perhaps, more robust and safer to take the latter course—in other words, do not distinguish—because, once we start distinguishing on the face of the Bill, all sorts of questions start to arise. For instance, the Welsh bacalaureate, which is evolving into, potentially, a mixed qualification, would introduce all sorts of questions, then, around, ‘Well, is that a general or is it vocational?’ and so on. So, what I’m attempting to do, I suppose, is to spare the Welsh Government some lawyers’ fees—sorry, Siwan—and simply make it very clear that the job of Qualifications Wales is holistic in terms of qualifications.

10:00

[42] **Ann Jones:** Happy?

[43] **Aled Roberts:** Yes.

[44] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thanks. We’ll move on to risks associated with the distinct national qualification system in Wales and the requirement for Wales-specific qualifications. Simon first, and I know Keith has got some as well.

[45] **Simon Thomas:** Diolch, Gadeirydd. Weinidog, rydym wedi clywed sawl tyst yn dweud wrthym fod o hyd—hyd yn oed gyda’r Bil hwn sydd, fel rydych yn gwybod, wedi cael ei groesawu yn gyffredinol—rhai risgiau ynghlwm â gwneud yn siŵr bod cymwysterau yng Nghymru yn cael eu cymharu yn rhwydd gyda chymwysterau y tu hwnt i Gymru a’u bod yn gallu cael eu mudo yn rhwydd, hynny yw, eu bod yn agor y drysau—bu ichi sôn am basbort gynnew fach. Nawr, efallai mae hynny’n un o’r pethau sy’n wir am yr hinsawdd rydym ynnddi; nid yw Cymwysterau Cymru o reidrwydd, neu’r Bil yma o reidrwydd, yn gwneud hyn yn fwy niwlog, ond mae hi’n dal yn wir fod cymaint yn digwydd yn Lloegr a llefydd eraill sy’n gwneud y farchnad yn anodd gweithio ynnddi. A ydych wedi cael cyfle i edrych ar y dystiolaeth yna ac i feddwl a oes angen gwella’r Bil mewn unrhyw ffordd i ddiogelu safle’r dysgwyr yng Nghymru o safbwynt y ffordd y mae eu cymwysterau nhw’n gallu cael eu defnyddio y tu hwnt i Gymru yn arbennig?

Simon Thomas: Thank you, Chair. Minister, we’ve heard several witnesses telling us that—even with this Bill, which, as you know, has been welcomed generally—there are still some risks tied in with making sure that qualifications in Wales can be compared easily with qualifications outside Wales and that they are portable and they can open doors—and they can be a passport, as you said earlier. Now, maybe this is one of the things that is true about the climate that we’re in at the moment; Qualifications Wales and this Bill do not necessarily make this more unclear, but it’s still true that there are still a lot of things happening in England and elsewhere that make it difficult to work within the market. Have you had an opportunity to look at that evidence and to think about whether the Bill can be improved in any way to safeguard the position of learners in Wales in terms of the way in which qualifications can be used beyond Wales in particular?

[46] **Huw Lewis:** Well, the key improvement, of course, is the creation of Qualifications

Wales itself as a body that has expert oversight, that takes into account—. You're quite right, I mean, of course, there's always risk in the world of qualifications, and we need rigorous oversight of just what awarding bodies and so on are getting up to, and a real-time appreciation of what's happening in the wider world. But, and I come back to this, it would be for Qualifications Wales to get that job done. They have operational independence. They will have to take a look at the key questions of portability, of reputation, and my contention would be that that is a key reason why we are going through all this bother in the first place: to make sure that qualifications awarded in Wales have a bulletproof reputation.

[47] Now, what we're hearing in terms of feedback from stakeholders is very positive in this regard. Universities Wales have been very positive about their confidence around this way of working. You know, universities deal with hundreds of international qualifications every single year, so we're not introducing any kind of, you know, novel danger into the system. This is part and parcel of the way, for instance, universities work everywhere. We do have a large neighbour, but I am very keen that Qualifications Wales take an international perspective and is not necessarily some kind of organisation that is set up to react to changes in England. I would anticipate—. I would like to see a reasonably near future where improvements to qualifications in Wales undertaken through Qualifications Wales would actually act as an exemplar for others. That's the kind of gold standard we should be aiming for. I think there is something of a psychological glitch amongst some commentators that, if something departs from what might be going on in England at any given moment, it must by definition be defective in some way. Well, I'm sorry, but that's not a reasonable overview and it would not deliver for us either an independent expert organisation that was doing its job properly.

[48] **Simon Thomas:** Rwy'n derbyn nifer o'r pwyntiau yr ydych yn eu gwneud, ond rwy'n credu bod y pryderon yn troi o gwmpas dau beth yn benodol. Un yw'r posibilrwydd o gymhwyster yng Nghymru yn dwyn yr un enw â chymhwyster, dywedwch, yn Lloegr, ond y tu hwnt efallai, ond ei fod yn gymhwyster gwahanol iawn. Mae'n ddigon posib ei fod yn gymhwyster gwell. Mae'n bosib iawn bod Cymwysterau Cymru wedi gwneud gwell job na Ofqual neu unrhyw un arall. Ond, wedi dweud hynny, mae'n wahanol ond yn dwyn yr un enw, a mewn marchnad, os licwch chi, mi fydd yna gwestiynau yn cael eu codi, a bydd yna rai rhagdybiaethau yn cael eu creu o ran hynny. Felly, dyna un pryder.

Simon Thomas: I accept a number of the points that you make, but I think that the concerns turn around two things specifically. One is the possibility of a qualification in Wales having the same name as a qualification in England, say, or perhaps somewhere else, but that it's a very different kind of qualification. It's quite possible that it might be a better qualification. It's quite possible that Qualifications Wales might do a better job than Ofqual or anyone else. But, having said that, it would be different but would have the same name, and in a market, if you like, questions will be raised, and there will be some assumptions made about that. So, that's one concern.

[49] Mae'r pryder arall yn troi o gwmpas rhywbeth penodol iawn yn y Bil—ac nid wyf yn gwybod a ydych wedi cael cyfle i edrych ar hwn—sef adran 29(3), sydd yn sôn am fersiwn Gymreig y cymhwyster yn cael ei greu. Nawr, yn y mae memorandwm esboniadol, mae'n esbonio hwn, yn syml iawn, fel bod yn rhaid i'r cymhwyster gael ei gymeradwyo gan Cymwysterau Cymru. Mae hynny'n ddigon syml. Ond mae rhai tystion wedi pryderu, os oes angen creu fersiwn Cymreig o bob cymhwyster, i bob pwrpas,

The other concern turns around something very specific in the Bill—and I don't know whether you've had an opportunity to look at this—namely section 29(3), which talks about a Welsh version of the qualification being created. Now, in the explanatory memorandum, it explains this, very simply, as that the qualification must be approved by Qualifications Wales. That is quite simple. But there has been concern voiced by some witnesses, that, if we need to create a Welsh version of every qualification, to all intents

byddai hynny'n llesteirio ac yn aflonyddu, fel petai, ar y farchnad. and purposes, that could frustrate and distort the market, as it were.

[50] Felly, mae'n bosib bod y geiriad fanna ychydig yn gamarweiniol neu ddim yn ddigon clir. A ydych wedi cael cyfle i edrych ar hynny, ac a ydych yn ystyried gwelliant yn y cyd-destun hwnnw? So, it's possible that the wording there is a bit misleading or isn't clear enough. Have you had an opportunity to look at that, and are you considering an amendment in that context?

[51] Gan droi'n ôl at y pwynt arall hefyd, beth am yr enwi hwn? A ydy'r ddeddfwriaeth hon yn galluogi Cymwysterau Cymru i edrych ar sut yr ydym yn enwi'r cymwysterau mewn modd sydd yn mynd i ddenu'r parch a'r bri y maent yn ei haeddu? Going back to the other point, what about this naming issue? Does this legislation allow Qualifications Wales to look at how we name qualifications in a way that's going to attract the respect that they deserve?

[52] **Huw Lewis:** Right. Simon Thomas makes some very important points that need to be discussed. In terms of distinctiveness, of course, of some aspects of qualifications within Wales, well, we are already there—we've been there for quite a while, most particularly, perhaps, in terms of language distinctiveness but also, now, increasingly through the way that the Welsh baccalaureate is evolving. Once we have our own distinctive curriculum content, then the ripples from that will go out throughout the GCSE and A-level system and through into vocational qualifications as well. You know, we can't afford, at this point, to become twitchy or nervous around the idea of distinctiveness. So, what matters very much—and again, I say this, the key safeguard is the creation of Qualifications Wales in order to make sure that these worries are allayed and risk is mitigated. But you also ask a very specific question about the term 'Welsh version'. And it's important because I think that some stakeholders have got the wrong end of the stick when it comes to what this term means. It's essentially an administrative label, a legal label, which refers to a legislative description, if you like, which signals that this qualification comes under the remit of Qualifications Wales; it is the business of Wales. Now, that could mean that that Welsh version has been specifically designed in Wales for the needs of Welsh learners. So, for instance, I don't know, perhaps we could have a Welsh history GCSE. So, that's specific. Or it could be slightly different to a version that might be doing the rounds in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland or anywhere else in the world, that has been modified slightly to take account of the fact that it's being offered within Wales. Again, you could think of a British history GCSE that has specific requirements as regards Welsh history as part of the overall qualification. Or, indeed, the Welsh version could be absolutely identical to a qualification that was being offered in Ipswich. So, most particularly—. I don't know why Ipswich, but there we are; it's the first English town that popped into my head.

[53] **Simon Thomas:** It's literally on the other end of the island. [*Laughter.*]

[54] **Huw Lewis:** So, we could be talking, particularly here, of course, about a lot of vocational qualifications that would be indistinguishable, completely the same, but, as they're offered in Wales, Qualifications Wales has to come into play and legally we have to label that qualification as a Welsh version, because, otherwise, the jurisdiction—that's the word I've been looking for—isn't made clear.

[55] **Simon Thomas:** So, it literally could be a qualification with just a different number than the English qualification and everything else being the same.

[56] **Huw Lewis:** Yes.

[57] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Keith.

[58] **Keith Davies:** Rwyf am ofyn yn Gymraeg hefyd. Nid wyf yn gweld unrhyw broblem fanna, rhaid i fi ddweud, achos rwyf wedi bod yn arholwr ym Manceinion, o TGAU, lefel A, ac rwyf wedi bod yn arholwr i Brifysgol Caergrawnt, lle roeddwn yn marcio sgriptiau a oedd yn dod o Malaysia. Beth sy'n bwysig, wrth gwrs, yw bod y safon yn iawn. Y ffordd rydych chi'n mesur y safon sy'n wahanol, ac rwy'n gwybod, er enghraifft, i'r cydbwyllgor gael mwy o arian o Loegr am lenyddiaeth Saesneg nag yr oedden nhw'n ei gael o Gymru, oherwydd roedd yn cael ei fesur mewn ffordd wahanol, a dyna'r pwynt roeddech yn ei wneud. Cymharu safonau sy'n bwysig. Mae'r ffordd rydych yn eu mesur nhw lan i chi. Rwy'n gobeithio y bydd Cymwysterau Cymru yn cael ei weld gan ysgolion yn Lloegr ac yn cael eu defnyddio, achos nid wyf yn gweld problem yna. Y safonau sy'n bwysig.

Keith Davies: I'm also going to ask in Welsh. I don't see any problem there, I have to say, because I've been an examiner in Manchester, of GCSEs and A-levels, and I've been an examiner for the University of Cambridge, where I was marking scripts that came from Malaysia. What's important, of course, is that the standard is right. It's how you measure the standard that is different, and I know, for example, that WJEC had more money from England for English literature than they had from Wales, because it was measured in a different way, and that was the point that you were making. It's comparing standards that's important. How you measure them is up to you. I hope that Qualifications Wales will be seen by schools in England and used, because I don't see a problem there. It's the standards that are important.

[59] Y cwestiwn sydd gen i yw: yn adran 29(3), rydych yn sôn wedyn mai dim ond cymwysterau Cymreig a fydd yn cael eu cefnogi gan arian cyhoeddus. Y cwestiwn sydd gen i fanna yw: sut y gallwch chi sicrhau hynny? Mae ysgolion a cholegau â'u harian eu hunain, ac, os benderfynan nhw fod TGAU Saesneg yn well gan ryw fwrdd arholi yn Lloegr, nad yw'n gymhwyster cenedlaethol yng Nghymru, sut y gallwch chi sicrhau nad yw hynny'n digwydd? Nid wyf yn gweld y gallwch wneud hynny.

My question is: in section 29(3), you then talk about how only a Welsh version of qualifications will be supported with public funding. My question there is: how can you ensure that? Schools and colleges have their own funding, and, if they decide that an English GCSE is better coming from an examining body in England, which isn't a national qualification in Wales, how can you ensure that that won't happen? I can't see how you can do that.

[60] **Huw Lewis:** Keith makes a very important point in terms of, you know, the clarity here around standards being the central issue. That's the mission of Qualifications Wales. That's why we're doing all this stuff.

[61] In terms of the allocation of public funding, well, again, we're already in that situation in terms of, for instance, the IGCSE, which is in circulation amongst some schools— independent schools only in Wales, anyway. So, that's not supported by public funding in Wales; it is in England. But what we're talking about here is this qualification part of the list on the database, as is currently the case, and, of course, we also then have the duty of local authorities to ensure that schools—publicly funded schools, anyway—are not running around offering, and spending public money on, the weird and wonderful. So, essentially, that regime is already in place.

[62] **Keith Davies:** I can't see that—. Years ago, when I started, the local authorities paid for the exam fees and then, if a school wanted to do a University of Cambridge O-level or GCSE, they had to ask the local authority, and the local authority agreed, because they were given a reason, or the local authority said 'no'. But, now that the money is directly in schools, I can't see how we can stop them actually—

[63] **Huw Lewis:** But we already do. I mean, we have—. I forget the exact terminology, but we have the database of—. The database is called the—

[64] **Keith Davies:** The database of accredited qualifications Wales.

[65] **Huw Lewis:** That's the one.

[66] **Ann Jones:** DAQW.

[67] **Keith Davies:** Yeah, yeah. I know that. [*Laughter.*]

[68] **Ann Jones:** Yeah, we've had evidence on this.

[69] **Huw Lewis:** If you don't make it on the database, you don't get the public money. So, that system is already in place.

[70] **Keith Davies:** I thought we actually funded schools on the number of pupils and not on anything else.

[71] **Huw Lewis:** Well, but what—. In terms of qualifications, you know, I mean, you have to be offering a qualification that is on the database in order to qualify, for the money to flow. The local authority then has oversight of making sure that the school under their jurisdiction is not doing something untoward.

10:15

[72] **Keith Davies:** I can give you situations where headteachers of schools have actually told parents, 'Your children haven't been working hard enough and I'm not paying for the resit. You have to pay for the resit, parent', and the parents have to pay for the resits.

[73] **Huw Lewis:** Well, that's a different issue.

[74] **Keith Davies:** That could be with any board.

[75] **Huw Lewis:** Well, the whole question of resits is a different issue. Of course schools, to some extent, also have their operational independence when it comes to deciding where they allocate their budget, and so on, but they certainly can't go off buying exotic GCSEs from, you know—

[76] **Bethan Jenkins:** Ipswich. [*Laughter.*]

[77] **Huw Lewis:** Ipswich—from some sort of Del Boy somewhere. [*Laughter.*] You know, this is why we need the regulation.

[78] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Aled.

[79] **Aled Roberts:** What's the scale currently of schools, particularly in border areas, who actually buy in qualifications from English examining boards at the moment rather than from the Welsh system? Given the point that Keith's made, quite a few of the border schools are foundation schools, previously grant maintained. Do the same degrees of control operate as far as local authorities are concerned in those instances?

[80] **Huw Lewis:** Well, there is some permeability. In fact, I think I'm right in saying that, actually, Wales is a net exporter of qualifications because of the work of the WJEC. In terms of quantity, Cassy, would you have any idea?

[81] **Ms Taylor:** I don't have an idea on quantity, but I may have some additional information that might assist in this matter—

[82] **Ann Jones:** It could assist or it could open a Pandora's box, knowing our committee, but never mind. [*Laughter.*]

[83] **Ms Taylor:** —to the extent that the present arrangements are that there are controls on the awarding bodies so that, if the criteria for a qualification in Wales are set, they can't offer another version of that qualification that doesn't meet those criteria. So, the onus is on the awarding body, which is what the regulator regulates. Moving forward, that's one of the reasons for the priority qualifications list. For qualifications about which there is a concern that a particular form needs to be used, then if that qualification's on the priority qualifications list, it has to be approved, in that sense. So, the mechanisms are there to make that happen in terms of the relationship with awarding bodies, which are what are being regulated, rather than the local authorities and the schools directly.

[84] **Huw Lewis:** Just to add, Chair, I think I am encouraged that, even at this very early stage, of course, we do have awarding bodies that I think have appeared before you, and they have been relaxed and even enthusiastic about competing for the provision of restricted qualifications in Wales. Awarding bodies are no strangers to this way of working. You know, some of them are global in their reach, and they do this in jurisdictions all across the world.

[85] **Aled Roberts:** But if you're convinced that you have those levers at the moment, as far as the use of public money is concerned, are those same levers available? My understanding is that those levers are not as strong, as far as local authorities are concerned, if you're saying that local authorities police the situation. Are those levers as strong as far as foundation schools are concerned, because they are concentrated on those border areas, where there is greater permeability?

[86] **Huw Lewis:** I've not encountered this as a problem ever before—as an issue that's been raised with me. Chair, if you'll allow me, I think we'll need to go and ponder on Aled's point.

[87] **Simon Thomas:** Can I ask my question now?

[88] **Ann Jones:** Yeah, well, let Simon ask his question first and then you can ponder on his as well.

[89] **Simon Thomas:** Just to follow up on some of these points, assumptions, I think, were made that I'm not quite so clear about now, because, in other correspondence with the committee, you've set out some replies to questions we asked about some of the initial work you've been doing in limiting qualifications. These are particularly around the academic ones, and basically my understanding is that you've asked and agreed with the WJEC that some core general qualifications will be offered by the WJEC in Wales—English and Welsh, and the two maths, and all the rest of it. Now, the read-across from the assumption, I think, that's been made is that, in effect, every school in Wales will offer only those—

[90] **Huw Lewis:** Yes.

[91] **Simon Thomas:** —and that you will control that by public money, in effect.

[92] **Huw Lewis:** Yes.

[93] **Simon Thomas:** But this does raise the question as to whether, (a), you can actually

control that and, (b), if you were to control it, is it wise to control it. Now, I have my own personal view, which is that I would like to see that control, to be honest with you, because I think the market has got too diverse and there are too many options that don't, therefore, maintain standards. If you've got that element of competition, then it is quite difficult to maintain standards and you've got the ability for schools to buy in GCSEs or A-levels that they think are slightly easier, or suit them better. So, there are issues there. So, I'm quite open to the idea that we've got a more controlled list, and that that is the way it's done. But it's not clear to me, from what you've told us today, that you have the sufficient controls in place, either in this Bill or elsewhere, to really insist that a school in, say, Powys only offers WJEC for the two maths, and doesn't go off and decide that it's going to do some sort of Edexcel qualification. Is that—?

[94] **Huw Lewis:** No, no. It can't. You know, in that regard, if it's a school in Wales that's using public funding in order to deliver, that is its only option—you know, the two new maths GCSEs. The power to make sure that happens is already part of the system. I'm saying the right thing here, Catherine, I think?

[95] **Ms Lloyd:** Yes.

[96] **Huw Lewis:** Oh, if I could, I'll pass that to Siwan.

[97] **Ms Daniel:** It might be helpful if I just draw the committee's attention to section 29(6), which does indicate that the Welsh Ministers can designate a certain qualification so that it can receive public funding, and that it's treated as an approved qualification. So, there's scope there to consider what can be done.

[98] **Ann Jones:** If you're going away to ponder on what Aled was asking you, could you ponder quite quickly, though, because we need to—

[99] **Huw Lewis:** Absolutely, yes. This issue of particular schools in particular parts of Wales is not something, as an issue, that's been put to me before, but I think it is important, Chair, because there are some misconceptions here about the issues that Simon Thomas was touching upon. We do have an over-complex landscape and I would see, over time, Qualifications Wales trying to make better sense of the landscape, using their professional judgment, reaching back, then, to their mission around the needs of learners in Wales. At the same time, we don't want to destabilise the current situation and end up disadvantaging learners in some way because of that.

[100] I think, in part, there are some misconceptions amongst some stakeholders about this issue because of this mention of priority qualifications. Now, there is mention of a priority list, priority qualifications, but that is there to enable Qualifications Wales to take a strategic view about what it's going to concentrate its efforts on at a given point in time. So, in other words, it might, for instance, prioritise IVETs—initial vocational education and training—as something for the next few years that it's going to sort out in terms of the Welsh context. It doesn't mean that Qualifications Wales can't approve qualifications that are not on the priorities list. They can. So, that whole forest of options is not necessarily shut down by drawing up a priorities list. You can still get the qualification approved, even if it's not on the priorities list.

[101] **Ann Jones:** Keith, we're still on the lists associated—

[102] **Keith Davies:** Yes. It's really what the Federation of Awarding Bodies said. They said that if you have Wales qualifications, then we might not get awarding bodies, then, keen to do it, because the number of candidates would be small. My question really, then, is: listening to universities, they like what we're doing in Wales, which is the AS and the A, and

in England they're thinking of just doing the A at the end of two years. Now, will schools in England be allowed to do the AS and A that is provided by an awarding body that's working for us?

[103] **Huw Lewis:** Well, that will be up to the Secretary of State in Whitehall, and I'm sure the WJEC will be very glad to supply what schools in England might want or need. But you touch on very important points, Keith, and it will be part of the job of Qualifications Wales to recognise the complexity of this market that's out there, and to realise that there are some awarding bodies that would bear in mind economy of scale when they're thinking about offering or entering into the Welsh context. It would be the job of Qualifications Wales to make sure that they bore that in mind, so that we weren't shutting out providers because we couldn't be bothered to recognise that this was an issue that needed to be addressed. But it will be for them—it will be for Qualifications Wales—to steer a way through, going back always to their key purpose of serving the needs of learners in Wales.

[104] **Ann Jones:** David, you wanted to come in.

[105] **David Rees:** It's on priorities, Chair.

[106] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Right, because we do need to make some progress. We're going to move on to prioritising and restricting qualifications. Do you want to do prioritising first, because I know Bethan's got some points on others? You do yours first on prioritising and then I'll come to Bethan.

[107] **David Rees:** On this point about priority, you just mentioned about prioritisation and your priority list. I need some clarity as to what is the purpose of the priority list, because there's a reference to the priority list being very able to build public confidence in the qualifications, and you've talked previously about a demand-led approach rather than a supply-led approach to qualifications. So, what is the purpose of the priority list? Is it actually to look at which qualifications the education institutions should be prioritising, or which qualifications you want Qualifications Wales to look at to establish them, and to ensure they are appropriate? What is the purpose?

[108] **Huw Lewis:** The purpose is there to enable Qualifications Wales to strategise, to make priorities. You see, the alternative, to my mind, is we set up Qualifications Wales to deal with a constant bombardment of submissions from awarding bodies on a limitless range of subjects at different levels, general and vocational, and not distinguish in terms of its strategic take on where we want to go in Wales, and just have to try and continually keep up with submissions from the market.

[109] So, what the priority qualifications list does is it's simply a tool that says, 'We will now concentrate our efforts on, as I say, perhaps IVETs; we will draw up a strategy for how we move forward with IVETs in Wales over the next few years; our key aims will be this, this and this; and we will consult these stakeholders in order to make sense of this', because as Members will be aware, apart from anything else, as well as the needs of learners, we will also be attempting to tackle the over-proliferation of qualifications that's out there, which is widely perceived to be a problem. So, that'll be part of the consideration as well.

[110] It's about having a clear basis in law for Qualifications Wales to be able to be strategic in terms of where it concentrates its effort. The list will be the result of detailed consideration of the qualifications landscape as it is at the moment, and in which direction we need to travel—or they need to travel.

[111] **David Rees:** So, you want to the Bill to give Qualifications Wales permission to be strategic.

[112] **Huw Lewis:** We're making it explicit that they will need to be, and that, clearly in law, they are not a body that is expected to be purely reactive to whatever is thrown at them by this multifarious awarding body landscape.

[113] **David Rees:** But this wouldn't stop them responding to demand, because obviously demand is going to be variable, depending on how the economic situation moves and employers' demands are moved, more importantly, and how learners' demands move, but it's not going to stop that and that the priority list will actually allow that demand to be considered as well.

10:30

[114] **Huw Lewis:** Oh, yes, of course. As you quite rightly said, things can change relatively rapidly in terms of demand for, and offer of, qualifications. Being on the priority qualifications list doesn't mean you're in some kind of band index; it doesn't mean that at all. You can still be a recognised qualification and not be a part of the priority list.

[115] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Bethan.

[116] **Bethan Jenkins:** Ie, jest i ddilyn ymlaen o'r drafodaeth ar flaenoriaethu cyn symud ymlaen i'r cyfyngiadau, rwyf jest eisiau deall graddfa'r sialens o ddewis y rhestr, yn enwedig gan fy mod, yn yr wythnosau diwethaf, wedi bod yn siarad â cholegau addysg bellach, ac maen nhw yn mynd i orfod gwneud toriadau i gyrsiau penodol oherwydd y sefyllfa ariannol, gyllidebol sydd o'u blaen nhw nawr. Felly, fy mhroblem i gyda hyn yw efallai na fydd yna gyrsiau, hyd yn oed pe tase Cymwysterau Cymru yn eu blaenoriaethu nhw mewn rhai colegau dros Gymru. Sut wedyn fydd hynny yn effeithio ar eu gallu nhw i lunio strategaeth a meincodi yn hynny o beth, gan fod yr hinsawdd yn newid nawr cyn i'r corff newydd yma hyd yn oed gael ei sefydlu. Felly, hwnnw oedd y cwestiwn cyntaf.

Bethan Jenkins: Yes, just to follow on from the discussion on prioritisation before moving on to the restrictions, I just want to understand the scale of the challenge of choosing the list, particularly as I have, in the last weeks, been talking to further education colleges, and they are going to have to make cuts to specific courses because of the financial, budgetary situation they now face. So, my problem with this is that perhaps there won't be courses, even if Qualifications Wales prioritises them in some colleges across Wales. How then will that affect their ability to strategize and benchmark in that sense, given that the climate is changing now before this new body is even established? So, that's the first question.

[117] **Huw Lewis:** Well, I mean, the point has been made, and it's true, that the climate is ever-changing. Financial considerations are a part of that. This legislation doesn't deal with financial pressures on FE, neither should it, really. Those are matters of public debate and difficult decisions that have to be made. But, in terms of how we set off on this road now, I will be having early discussions with Philip Blaker, the chief executive officer of Qualifications Wales, about how that first priority list is actually drawn up. It will be a decision for the board of Qualifications Wales, working alongside, and consulting obviously, with me. It is about recognising the fact that the qualifications landscape is complex, overly complex in fact. Also, we need to proceed without destabilising the system because there would be disadvantage for learners in that. But, we would need to be also talking through how we make better sense of that qualifications landscape, and, simply put, where to begin, because, if we were to fall down from heaven in complete ignorance of the situation at the moment, it would be a classic situation of, 'We certainly wouldn't start from here' in terms of what the qualifications world looks like? So, it will be a question of Ministers, as representatives of the public interest, working with this new body to think about how we

begin to tackle some of the questions that Members have, quite rightly, referred to this morning.

[118] **Bethan Jenkins:** Tybed a fyddech chi jest yn fodlon ehangu ar pam rydych chi'n gweld bod '*myriad of different awarding bodies*' yn rhywbeth gwael? Oherwydd, pan wnaethon ni siarad â'r sector galwedigaethol yn benodol—ymddiheuriadau os yw rhywun arall am ofyn y cwestiwn—roedden nhw'n dweud bod cyrsiau yn wahanol; maen nhw'n cynnig y cyrsiau mewn ffyrdd gwahanol ac efallai bydd un ffordd yn siwtio myfyriwr, yn wahanol i gymhwyster arall. Mae'n rhaid i ni feddwl am y dysgwr yn hyn i gyd, ac efallai fyddai rhywbeth yn cael ei gyfyngu neu ei flaenoriaethu na fyddai wedyn yn siwtio'r dysgwr. Ac, felly, rwyf jest eisiau deall pam y mae'n beth gwael bod dewis eang. Ai oherwydd nad oes strategaeth y tu ôl i hynny—hynny yw'r pwynt—neu oherwydd bod jest gormod a'i fod yn 'saturate-o' y farchnad, fel petai, jest er mwyn i fi ddeall yn iawn beth yw'r sefyllfa?

Bethan Jenkins: I wonder whether you could just expand on why you see that a myriad of different awarding bodies would be a bad thing? Because when we talked to the vocational sector specifically—apologies if anybody else wants to ask this question—they said that courses are different; they offer the courses in a different way and maybe one way will suit a student differently to another qualification. We have to think about the learner in all of this, and maybe something would be restricted or prioritised which would not then suit the learner. And, so, I just want to understand why it's a bad thing that there is a broad range of choices. Is it because there is no strategy behind that—that's the point—or is it because there is just too much and that it saturates the market, as it were? I just want to understand exactly what the situation is.

[119] **Huw Lewis:** Well, it isn't necessarily the case that it's a bad thing, and there would be cases, I'm sure, where a restriction wouldn't be necessary and the open market is doing its job and meeting the needs of learners and so on. But, there are other forces that need to be balanced alongside that. You know, it's common currency within the debate around qualifications that there is a bewildering array in some areas of qualifications and they've proliferated over time. There is duplication in the system; it's overly confusing and that can lead to problems in terms of public confidence and the portability of qualifications, and the learner has to be at the centre of all these considerations.

[120] There is also the question of making sure that we—Wales, I mean—remain a place where we can attract awarding bodies to compete with each other to meet the needs of those learners in consultation with Qualifications Wales, so that we can begin to have the strategic conversation about how we're prioritising things for the benefit of learners, for the benefit of our economy, for the benefit of our communities. But, that doesn't mean to say that, always and everywhere, we're going to shut down the current qualifications market. It may well be, as you say, that there are good arguments for keeping that a broad offer, and that would be part of the job of Qualifications Wales to steer us through those complicated decisions, to listen to the stakeholders and to come up with a sensible response.

[121] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rwy'n clywed hynny ac rwy'n derbyn hynny. Ond, y broblem y gwnaethom ni ei chlywed yr wythnos diwethaf oedd, unwaith i un corff gael ei wrthod am y tro cyntaf, yr honiad oedd na fydden nhw â diddordeb yng Nghymru rhagor a fydden nhw ddim yn aros yma i weld beth fyddai'n digwydd yn y dyfodol, oherwydd y ffaith eu bod yn teimlo wedyn eu bod wedi cael eu gwthio mas ac yn

Bethan Jenkins: I hear that and I accept that. But, the problem that we heard last week was that, once one body is rejected for the first time, the claim was that they wouldn't have any interest anymore in Wales and they wouldn't stay here to see what would happen in the future, because of the fact that they feel that they've been pushed out and they miss out, commercially, therefore, and the fact that they see that there's less innovation in Wales.

colli allan yn fasnachol, felly, a'r ffaith eu bod yn gweld bod yna lai o *innovation* yng Nghymru wedyn. Felly, mae'n rhaid eich bod yn poeni am y dystiolaeth hynny, fel Gweinidog.

So, you must be concerned about that evidence, as a Minister.

[122] **Huw Lewis:** Well, we should all be concerned if someone is coming out with that kind of comment, and then we should move on swiftly to making sure that it's a baseless comment. You see, this will be a matter for Qualifications Wales: to make sure that the strategy enables stakeholders to have a fair crack of the whip. So, in other words, you know, it'll have to sit down with awarding bodies. It'll also have to sit down with employers, for instance, so, if employers are saying, 'Look, this particular aspect of qualifications is good; this is a good thing, in terms of our view, as employers. This diversity over here, that's something we need to look after', Qualifications Wales will be there to listen to that voice and then make the judgment.

[123] **Ann Jones:** Are you happy?

[124] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes.

[125] **Ann Jones:** Okay. If we move on, then, to the strategic approach to vocational qualifications. David.

[126] **David Rees:** Thank you, Chair. I actually want to take that restriction question a little bit further, because it links into the vocational side. Obviously, what we heard, very much, from the last evidence, from qualification spokespeople—. I think the concern they have is how to implement a restriction approach, because, I think it was Bethan who has already pointed out, that they mentioned you could have one qualification but there would be three different outcomes, effectively, from each qualification being offered—three different qualifications offering the same title, but different outcomes to meet different learners' needs.

[127] I think there's the implementation question, and that comes under the detail as to how you can ensure that a qualification actually meets the specific outcomes you might want to decide, as a Welsh Government, and that the specifications that are built up meet those outcomes, so that they're not going to be excluded, necessarily, from the market purely because of the concept of restriction. So, how can you reassure us that the communications with boards and awarding bodies is going to allow that conversation to take place to ensure that a qualification meets the outcome that you want?

[128] **Huw Lewis:** That conversation would be a required part of the work of Qualifications Wales. Certainly, if those conversations were not taking place, that would be a matter of serious concern in terms of the Assembly's oversight of the way that they're doing business. You'll see in the eight matters within the Bill that that includes the needs of employers, for instance, within there. In my view, if that kind of situation did arise, then we would be in a situation where the law was being breached, essentially.

[129] **David Rees:** Okay. Let's move on to vocational qualifications in that case, then. I was very pleased to hear you say this morning that you consider that parity of esteem is important and you don't intend to distinguish, because that will be part and parcel of ensuring that parity of esteem in the qualifications. But, the restrictions—are they going to be less flexible or more flexible with vocational aspects? Clearly, we've heard very much that—. There's very much been geared a restriction for GCSEs and A-levels, but what's your view on the vocational side? Will restrictions apply as strongly there?

[130] **Huw Lewis:** As you quite rightly said, there's no distinction in the Bill between

vocational and other qualifications. So, that toolkit around restriction and commissioning is exactly the same in terms of the two strands of qualification. So, essentially, it would be up to Qualifications Wales to utilise that toolkit as it saw fit, in terms of what it saw as the best strategic way forward. The toolkit is there, and it is exactly the same toolkit, no matter what kind of qualification we're talking about.

[131] **David Rees:** So, are you able to give us the strategic direction of vocational qualifications that you expect Qualifications Wales to actually take?

[132] **Huw Lewis:** Well, no, not in terms of writing that into law, no. I mean, I could give you a political opinion on it.

[133] **Simon Thomas:** You should have the same political opinion. [*Laughter.*]

[134] **Huw Lewis:** Well, you never know, it might actually be.

[135] In terms of this piece of legislation, I can't write that in, and I shouldn't.

[136] **David Rees:** Do you believe it will provide that and that it is a vehicle to actually ensure that takes place?

[137] **Huw Lewis:** Yes. I mean, to prejudge that would be wrong. It would be naïve as well, because qualifications are a moving target. There is change all the time.

[138] **David Rees:** Obviously, we've talked about and heard evidence about the sector qualifications advisory panels and the role they play in advising, particularly in vocational areas. What relationship do you see between Qualifications Wales and those panels in establishing the qualifications for the vocational arena?

[139] **Huw Lewis:** Well, it has to be an intimate relationship, really—a constant, well-maintained relationship. The advisory panels are going to be key in terms of stakeholder engagement for Qualifications Wales. We don't specifically mention the panels in the Bill, I think I'm right in saying, because, of course, once you get into the listing of particular stakeholders you have to talk to, and so on, and you time-limit the legislation as well—. So, if the advisory panels change their name, then we're into all sorts. But, clearly, they are relevant stakeholders that need to be in contact with the new body.

[140] **David Rees:** The other issue we had on this aspect is apprenticeships and apprenticeship frameworks, and the strengthening of the role of Qualifications Wales to perhaps be the issuing authority for apprenticeship frameworks. What's your view on that?

[141] **Huw Lewis:** Well, we're currently going through the review of the apprenticeships system and we'll have to take into account the results of that review that'll come along later in the year.

10:45

[142] We do have existing legislation with the 2009 Act, which allows Welsh Ministers to designate, or would allow Ministers to designate, Qualification Wales as a Welsh issuing authority for apprenticeships—in other words, issues and publishes the frameworks for apprenticeships. So, that role is compatible with the powers that Qualifications Wales would have, but we also need to take into account what the review—the important review that is going on at the moment—is actually going to tell us.

[143] **David Rees:** So, again, you believe that you have the powers or you'll do that, so

that's not necessarily in the Bill.

[144] **Huw Lewis:** It's already in law.

[145] **David Rees:** Have you had discussions with employers and the employment sector to actually look at whether it would be an advantage to actually have that in law in this Bill?

[146] **Ms Taylor:** We're hearing broad advice through the Qualifications Wales advisory board that they would like to see a role for Qualifications Wales in apprenticeships, but the landscape is shifting and it wouldn't be appropriate at this time to specify what that is. The most likely role that people feel they should have is already provided for in law.

[147] **Ann Jones:** Simon.

[148] **Simon Thomas:** Just on that point, to take Qualifications Wales that step further seems to me to be starting to trespass on it becoming an awarding body, at least in the grey area where that happens, which it is clear that this legislation is not about delivering. Apprenticeships are such a hybrid beast of in-work training, of qualifications, yes, but also of who decides the framework—it's getting close to some of that kind of awarding approach. Yet, clearly, apprenticeships are changing and they are becoming more important, I would hope, as a way of delivering some qualifications to people in Wales. So, there is an issue here, perhaps, where it's not completely clear where different pieces of legislation will interface. There is a consultation, but you also need this Bill to be quite future-proofed, I would have thought. So, are there any issues that are being brought to you at the moment where you think there needs to be a specific reference on the face of this Bill to apprenticeships?

[149] **Huw Lewis:** I think that if you start getting into the business of specific references, then we are sort of tying down our options for the future. There are options in law that are already available, so I don't think this Bill tramples on any options that we might want to keep open. Once we've had an opportunity to listen to all the input on the review, and you've given a piece of input here this morning, which matters—. As you say, this is not legislation about an awarding body, although I've signalled politically that I would like to move towards that in the future; at this point in time, this is not what this Bill is about. So, I can't see any avenues that are shut down to us by taking this approach.

[150] **Simon Thomas:** The question I have is that, in a sense, the review, which I think the Deputy Minister launched this last week, on consultation and a look at apprenticeships, might come up with some suggested approaches and the question must be: are this current legislation plus this new Bill together sufficiently flexible to try and deal with the probable, possible things that you might want to do with apprenticeships going forward? At this stage, is it possible to have a note just to show how you see the current legislation and this Bill interacting on apprenticeships?

[151] **Huw Lewis:** Of course. I can't envisage a circumstance that would lead us there, but we'll give it deeper thought and come back on that.

[152] **Ann Jones:** Aled, on financial and commercial issues.

[153] **Aled Roberts:** Rydw i eisiau symud ymlaen at gyllideb y corff newydd; ychydig o gwestiynau ynglŷn â hynny. Rydym wedi derbyn copi o lythyr gan Gadeirydd y Pwyllgor Cyllid atoch chi, Weinidog, sydd, rwy'n meddwl, yn gofyn ynghylch rhai o'r costau technoleg gwybodaeth. Mae'r **Aled Roberts:** I want to move on to the financing of the new body; a few questions about that. We've received a copy of a letter from the Chair of the Finance Committee to you, Minister, which, I think, asks about some of the costs of IT. The committee talks about how there's quite a bit of detail about

pwyllgor yn sôn bod yna gryn dipyn o fanylder ynglŷn â sail y ffigurau ar gyfer costau staffio ac eiddo, ond bod yr un manylder ddim yna ynglŷn â thechnoleg gwybodaeth. Felly, ar ba sail mae'r ffigurau wedi cael eu setlo arnyn nhw, o ran technoleg gwybodaeth, ac a oes yna unrhyw waith ychwanegol sy'n mynd rhagddo ar hyn o bryd i roi rhyw fath o hyder inni ynglŷn â'r ffigurau?

the basis of the figures for staffing costs and property, but the same detail doesn't exist for IT. So, on what basis have those figures been settled upon, in terms of IT, and is there any additional work that is ongoing at present to give some kind of confidence to us with regard to those figures?

[154] **Huw Lewis:** Well, of course, that work is ongoing. It's happening now and, of course, all details of financial question will be provided to committee and to Members whenever they might want them. The budget—the overall 2015-16 budget—is the budget. You know, as is mentioned in there, those are the costs that we have in order to get the body set up and running, and there's no additional money to that. So, the envelope of investment is made very clear in the budget. In terms of the IT, specifically, Cassy, perhaps—

[155] **Ms Taylor:** So, at the time when the original figures were prepared, the IT work was still being scoped, and we will be providing full details of that to the Finance Committee very shortly.

[156] **Aled Roberts:** Ocê. Rydych chi wedi ailadrodd y bore yma yr un pwynt a wnaethoch chi yn ystod eich tystiolaeth ym mis Rhagfyr, sef bod yna ddim arian ychwanegol ar gael ac mai dyma'r gyllideb. Roeddech hefyd yn dweud ym mis Rhagfyr bod yn rhaid canfod y gyllideb yna o fewn yr adran addysg. Erbyn hyn, a ydych chi wedi penderfynu o ba linellau gwariant y bydd yr arian ychwanegol yma'n cael ei ganfod ar gyfer Cymwysterau Cymru?

Aled Roberts: Okay. You have repeated this morning the same point that you made in your evidence session in December, which was that there is no extra funding available and that this is the budget. You also said in December that that budget had to be found from within the education department. Have you now decided from which expenditure lines this additional funding will be found for Qualifications Wales?

[157] **Huw Lewis:** Well, Aled, I don't blame you for trying. It's worth a try. [*Laughter.*] But, the education budget is around £2.5 billion, if I recall. We are talking here about—. I think the overall sum is about £15 million. So, it would be impossible to answer your question, although it's worth a pop. You know, I could say that we are taking the £15 million from your constituency, Aled, but—[*Laughter.*]

[158] **Aled Roberts:** It wouldn't be the first time. [*Laughter.*]

[159] **Huw Lewis:** That's not the way budgets are constructed, of course. We've made the commitment to Qualifications Wales. It is, perhaps, some would say, with some justification, the most expensive option, and I would be unembarrassed in defending ourselves going for the very best and most robust model for independent qualifications regulation in Wales, because the reputation of Welsh qualifications needs to be unimpeachable in terms of the future.

[160] **Aled Roberts:** Mae'n siŵr eich bod chi wedi gwrandao ar, a hefyd wedi darllen, rhan o'r dystiolaeth gan randdeiliaid sydd yn awgrymu bod yna beryg o wrthdaro rhwng y ffordd y mae'r corff newydd yma yn gallu cynnig gwasanaethau ymgynghorol a,

Aled Roberts: I'm sure that you've listened to, and also read, some of the evidence from stakeholders that suggests that there is a risk of a conflict arising between the way that this new body will be able to offer consultancy services and, perhaps, following that, will

hwyrach, ar ôl hynny, yn gorfod rheoleiddio yr union gyrff sydd yn prynu'r gwasanaethau ymgynghorol ganddyn nhw. Rwyf yn meddwl bod cyfeillion o Ogledd Iwerddon wedi dweud eu bod nhw wedi gorfod rhoi rhyw fath o brotocol eithaf cadarn yn ei le fel bod hynny ddim yn digwydd yna. A allwch chi esbonio inni sut yn union, os oes yna beryg y bydd hynny'n digwydd, y bydd y corff yma yn sicrhau bod yna ddim gwrthdaro neu awgrym o wrthdaro?

then have to regulate the exact same bodies that buy those consultancy services from it. Now, I think that colleagues from Northern Ireland said that they had had to put in place quite a robust protocol to ensure that that didn't happen there. Can you explain to us how, precisely, if there is a risk that that will happen, this body will ensure that there will be no conflict or any suggestion of such conflict?

[161] **Huw Lewis:** Aled's quite right. It is section 40 that enables Qualifications Wales to provide things on a commercial basis. It could do that, subject to ministerial approval, through a company solely owned by it. So, we could be talking about delivering training and so on and so forth. I think it's important that we do have that written into the legislation. I mean, first of all, the whole point of Qualifications Wales, as it evolves, is that it should become a repository of expertise. If we were to never let that expertise out of the building, it would be a tremendous waste and a detriment to everyone in education. In terms of conflict of interest, well, Qualifications Wales will be a public body. As such, it's going to have to set up its own protocols for avoiding any conflict of interest. That's part of its self-management as a public organisation, as a regulatory body. I don't see the need, really, to spell that out in the Bill, because it's already there as part of legislation governing the conduct of public bodies.

[162] **Aled Roberts:** Cwestiwn olaf ynghylch adran 10. Rwy'n derbyn bod gennych yr hawl, fel Gweinidog, ar hyn o bryd, fel rheoleidiwr, i godi ffioedd ar gyfer cydnabyddiaeth a hefyd gymeradwyaeth. Ond, rwy'n meddwl ein bod ni wedi derbyn tystiolaeth nad yw'r grym yna erioed wedi cael ei ddefnyddio yma. Mae yna gryn dipyn o bryder—. Mae'n debyg bod yna ryw fath o gydbwysedd yma, achos roeddwn yn clywed bod y grym i godi neu i gynnal gwasanaethau ymgynghorol, hwyrach, yn mynd i greu sefyllfa lle nad yw'r ffioedd yn gorfod cael eu codi. Ond, os yw'r protocol yma'n meddwl nad ydyn nhw'n gallu bod yn rhy fasnachol yn y ffordd maen nhw'n gweithredu, roedd rhai o'r cyrff dyfarnu yn dweud bod ganddyn nhw bryder bod y ffioedd yma yng Nghymru un ai'n mynd i fod yn rhy gostus, er mwyn iddyn nhw dderbyn cydnabyddiaeth, neu bod peryg bod y cyrff arfarnu, hwyrach, yn pasio'r costau yna ymlaen i golegau neu ysgolion, a bod hynny'n mynd i greu cryn dipyn o bwysau ar y cyrff hynny. Felly, sut fydddech chi yn ein sicrhau ni bod rhesymoldeb o ran y ffordd bydd Cymwysterau Cymru yn gweithio o ran y grym rydych yn ei roi iddyn nhw i bennu'r ffioedd yma?

Aled Roberts: A final question about section 10. I accept that you have the right, as Minister, at present, as regulator, to charge fees for recognition and also approval. But, I think we've received evidence that that power has never been used here. There's quite a bit of concern—. It seems that there's some kind of balance here, because we've heard that the power to charge or to carry out consultation services might lead to a situation where fees did not have to be charged. But, if the protocol means that they can't be too commercial in the way that they operate, some of the awarding bodies were saying that they were concerned that the fees here in Wales would either be too expensive, for them to be approved, or there was a risk that the appraisal bodies would perhaps pass on those costs to colleges or schools and that that would create quite a bit of pressure on those bodies. So, how can you reassure us that Qualifications Wales will be reasonable in terms of how it works with regard to the power that you're giving them to set these fees?

[163] **Huw Lewis:** Okay. That's a reasonable question, obviously. This is simply a carry

over, as you say, of powers that I currently have, but no Welsh Minister has actually exercised since devolution came along. It's there to be prudent, I suppose, in terms of not taking—. To change the situation would be to actually strip Qualifications Wales of the power I currently have. The prudence comes in, I suppose, in terms of future-proofing that ability for Qualifications Wales, given that we're in a very uncertain world and that financial considerations might change in the world of awarding bodies in ways in which we can't predict. For all we know, there could be some upheaval coming from Whitehall that changes the landscape around finance and awarding bodies completely. To not have in our armoury the possibility that Qualifications Wales might need to levy fees would be a risky thing to do, in my opinion.

[164] **Aled Roberts:** I think that's why the earlier question on the controls you have for public money becomes even more important. If—for example, because of those pressures—the fees charged by Qualifications Wales were out of sync with other parts of the UK, where similar qualifications were available, I think the issue that we've raised regarding controls would become even more important, because it would not only be a choice as far as the standard of the qualifications is concerned, but actual cost.

[165] **Huw Lewis:** Exactly. You know, we have to remember there are two safeguards here: one is your oversight; the other would be my remit letter—and, of course, the annual report and all that stuff. There is a capping power in terms of the fees, as well. So, it's there potentially, in case it's needed, in case it's the prudent thing to do in the future, in case the landscape changes, but there are those safeguards built in.

11:00

[166] **Ann Jones:** Okay, Simon's got a question on this, and then Angela's got a question.

[167] **Simon Thomas:** Well, it may not be a question, really, but a remark, if I'm allowed.

[168] **Ann Jones:** Oh, right. Okay.

[169] **Simon Thomas:** I am concerned with some of the responses around finance that you've made, because this body is supposed to be up and running in September, and, clearly, you haven't identified where all the money comes from, yet. So, it's—

[170] **Huw Lewis:** [*Inaudible.*]—I have a budget?

[171] **Simon Thomas:** Yes, your budgets, but it's £2 billion, as you say, or £2.5 billion. This is quite significant: £50 million you'd expect to appear as a line in a budget, I would've thought. It sounds like you're going to shake down the budget a little bit, and try to squeeze it out from elsewhere. Is that a fair point?

[172] **Huw Lewis:** It is there in the budget.

[173] **Simon Thomas:** It is clearly identified?

[174] **Huw Lewis:** Yes, we can supply the committee with the relevant—

[175] **Ann Jones:** Okay. That would be helpful, then, if you supply the note. Okay.

[176] **Huw Lewis:** This isn't some kind of fly-by-night operation here, you know. [*Laughter.*]

[177] **Simon Thomas:** I didn't suggest for a moment it was. [*Laughter.*]

[178] **Huw Lewis:** This is, you know, a really chunky, important, strategic shift in the way we do business, and the finance for that has been clearly outlined in the budget for 2015-16.

[179] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Angela.

[180] **Angela Burns:** Thank you. In fact, it's a completely different question, on implementation. Now, I appreciate that you've dealt with the capacity issues and financial resourcing issues for Qualifications Wales, but I just wondered if you could give a brief overview, or reassurance, to schools, because many of them have raised concerns with me about the pace of change. Whilst everybody is absolutely behind the standards agenda, as am I, what with this, the implementation of the new school categorisation system, and the implications that accompany that, there's the upcoming curriculum review, and there's the additional learning needs Bill that will be coming through, again all having impacts on schools as well, and a great many schools believe that the time frame for the implementation of Qualifications Wales is too ambitious. I wondered how you're going to take those factors into account, what view you have on that side of it, and what you can do as the Minister to mitigate the additional stresses that this will cause on teachers during this time of great flux, if you like, in education.

[181] **Huw Lewis:** Well, I'd be surprised and disappointed if teachers were saying such things, because I can't see that the setting up in this initial stage, for the foreseeable future—the setting up of Qualifications Wales—involves any kind of greater burden upon schools or upon professionals. You know, we are shifting towards new-style GCSEs, for instance, with first teaching this autumn, but that's not as a result of Qualifications Wales being set up; that's as a result of policy decisions that have been made. I would also anticipate that, over time, of course, as Qualifications Wales finds its feet as an organisation and develops a reservoir of expertise, the situation for our teaching professionals should actually improve, because, instead of having to turn to me for advice in terms of exam regulation or strategic planning in qualifications for the future, schools and colleges would have a professional body, whose full-time work is to engage with stakeholders, make sure that knowledge is exchanged and that there's a strategic direction for the future. I can't see anything in the work of Qualifications Wales that's going to impact on a teacher in the classroom in terms of workload, or a headteacher in terms of their workload, either.

[182] **Angela Burns:** I do appreciate that this could well be just part of a general mood music, because there's just so much going on at the moment—

[183] **Huw Lewis:** There's a lot of change going on.

[184] **Angela Burns:** There's a lot of change, and happening at pace, but this isn't just sort of two or three schools that I've visited; you know, this has come from representatives of teaching organisations, so it could be perhaps more to do with communication as to what their understandings are. Perhaps they're not quite so clear of what part they have to play in this. So, it just may be something that you may want to bear in mind, because there were very strongly expressed concerns, and we all know that our teachers are under an enormous amount of pressure at present, so anything that would help on that communication side, perhaps just to alleviate those concerns, I think would be of great benefit.

[185] **Huw Lewis:** Okay, yes, I'll take that on board. There is a great deal of change going on out there, and obviously I would argue that it's necessary change, but good communication and reassurance is never misplaced, so what I can do is undertake to do two things. One would be to make sure that our electronic newsletter to schools, *Dysg*, has some very clear and basic information about the shift to Qualifications Wales and what this legislation would mean, just so that people are aware. Essentially, it's just replacing me, as a regulator, with a

better option.

[186] **Ann Jones:** We won't have a vote on that.

[187] **Huw Lewis:** Sorry?

[188] **Ann Jones:** We won't have a vote on that.

[189] **Angela Burns:** On the 'better option' bit.

[190] **Huw Lewis:** Some people will vote on it eventually. Also, Qualifications Wales will have field officers who will liaise with schools. It'll be part of their day-to-day business. The shift to Qualifications Wales marks better arrangements in terms of administration, I think. It's very uncomfortable, I think, to have a politician as regulator, but it also shifts things in terms of scale of delivery. It's a better equipped organisation than the small group of civil servants who work with me on exam regulation. It's a specialist organisation. It is expected to provide advice and consult, so the wider educational community should benefit.

[191] **Ann Jones:** Okay, fine. I thought we were going to have plenty of time, but we've gone over. Can I thank you, Minister, for that session? There are a couple of notes, I think, that you're going to just provide us with, and it would be helpful if we could have them to help us. Because it's legislation—well, as always—check the record for accuracy before we publish. Thank you very much.

[192] **Huw Lewis:** You're welcome. Thank you.

11:07

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to note

[193] **Ann Jones:** There are a couple of papers—well, four papers—to note there, a couple of which we can discuss in private later.

11:08

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod

Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting

[194] **Ann Jones:** If committee is happy, under Standing Order 17.42, we'll meet for the rest of the meeting in private.

Cynnig:

Motion:

y pwyllgor yn penderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog 17.42(vi).

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi).

Cynigiwyd y cynnig.

Motion moved.

[195] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thank you.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11:08.
The public part of the meeting ended at 11:08.*