

Kirsty Williams AM
Minister for Education
Welsh Government

21 March 2019

Dear Kirsty,

Teaching of Welsh history and culture in schools

The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee is scrutinising the teaching of Welsh history, culture and heritage in schools.

During the summer of 2018 we ran a public poll inviting members of the public to select the topic of our next inquiry. Nearly 2,500 people participated in the poll and 44% of them voted for this topic.

In February, we held an event to hear from experts, practitioners and others interested in this issue. There were many comments on the importance of teaching Welsh history to give children a sense of identity. Whilst we are clear that there are requirements to teach aspects of Welsh history in the curriculum and within exam syllabuses, it was clear that there is a perception from professionals that the reality on the ground is quite different. This is obviously of great concern and an issue that we feel must be resolved at a time when the new curriculum is being developed and implemented.

Those attending the event felt strongly that the Welsh Government should not miss the opportunity to improve the teaching of Welsh history with the review of the curriculum. They were concerned that the lack of prescription in the draft new curriculum will be a step backwards for teaching in this area.

The Committee will continue its inquiry by attempting to gather evidence to assess the extent to which Welsh history is actually being taught at GCSE and A level and scrutinising the draft new curriculum once it is published.

As there is clearly great public interest in the teaching of Welsh history, the Committee wanted to share with you the concerns raised by those who attended the event and seek your initial views on some of the points they raised.

I would be grateful if you could provide us with information on the following:

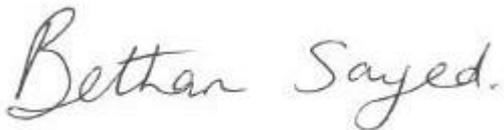
- the timetable for the work of the draft new curriculum. What are the next steps following the publication in April?
- What do the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes include specifically for Welsh history teaching?
- Are you satisfied with the availability of teaching materials for Welsh history?
- Given that the latest GCSE and A level specifications enhance Wales specific content in the curriculum, does the Welsh Government have any information on the amount of time that is spent teaching specifically Welsh history at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 and at GCSE and A level?

I have written to the WJEC to find out what Continuing Professional Development course they offer on this subject and to seek their advice on the extent to which Welsh history is taught at GCSE and A level.

I have also written to Estyn to ask what information they hold that could help inform the Committee's inquiry.

I would be grateful for your response to these questions by 24 April in order to inform our work.

Yours sincerely,



Bethan Sayed

Chair of the Committee



Ein cyf/Our ref KW/05679/19
Bethan Sayed AM
Chair
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

24 April 2019

Dear Bethan,

Thank you for your letter dated 21 March in relation to the Committee's Inquiry into the teaching of Welsh history and culture in schools.

I was interested to receive your feedback from the stakeholder event you held in February which showed that there was a strong feeling from those who attended that we should not miss the opportunity to improve the teaching of Welsh history with the review of the curriculum and there was a concern about a perceived lack of prescription in the drafts circulated.

I will respond separately to each of the specific questions you have raised:

The timetable for the work of the draft new curriculum- What are the next steps following the publication in April?

The Curriculum for Wales 2022 framework will be made available for feedback from 30 April to 19 July 2019. We will be engaging extensively with the teaching profession and wider stakeholders throughout the feedback period. Regional consortia, supported by Welsh Government are organising a series of accessible events in May and June which will provide multiple opportunities for all practitioners across Wales to engage with the draft curriculum framework.

The feedback we receive will be used by the practitioners who are co-constructing the new curriculum with us to refine the guidance. This refinement work will be undertaken by practitioners in Quality Improvement Groups.

The refined Curriculum for Wales will then be made available in January 2020. We are planning a phased roll out of the requirement to teach the new curriculum and assessment arrangements starting in September 2022.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

What do the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes include specifically for Welsh history teaching?

Existing trainee teachers need to know the five aspects of the Curriculum Cymreig (cultural, economic, environmental, historical and linguistic) and four aspects of Wales, Europe and the World (political, social, economic and cultural) as it relates to the age range they are trained to teach. Teachers should look for relevant and meaningful opportunities so that learners' studies can be placed in a Welsh context wherever this is desirable, possible and productive.

All student teachers will in future need to be familiar with the new six areas of learning and experience (AoLE), and with the four purposes which the new curriculum aims to secure for each learner. Our new accredited ITE partnerships have to design and deliver courses that support the four purposes of the new curriculum for Wales and address the six areas of learning and experience (AoLE), including humanities, in order to develop future teachers to meet the needs of all learners.

Individual teachers, including subject specialists such as Historians in secondary schools, will draw upon the different Areas of Learning and Experience in their planning. Teachers should be encouraged to work creatively and collaboratively across subject boundaries, in the context of the four curriculum purposes, aiming to avoid compartmentalisation in subject teaching.

Subject studies will include knowledge of content appropriate to student teachers' chosen age-phase or subject specialism, including the subject's key concepts, substance and structure, as well as pedagogical content knowledge, appropriate to age-phase or subject specialism.

Are you satisfied with the availability of teaching materials for Welsh history?.

We have invested considerably in supporting subjects across the curriculum, including History, through promoting the use of creative approaches to teaching and learning. Investments include the First World War and 'Go and See' grants, First World War resources and funding for resources to support the new History GCSE - which now has an enhanced focus on Welsh History and the Welsh perspective.

There are currently a range of teaching materials available on Wales' digital learning platform – Hwb. for schools and teachers to use, across all key stages,

For the Foundation Phase, to develop a learner's Knowledge and Understanding of the World, there is entire section of materials dedicated to exploring learners' local communities.

For Key Stages 2 and 3, there are materials available to study the Welsh perspective of a range of historical periods and events, the history of Wales, the United Kingdom, Europe and the world, and the impact of major global events in Wales. You can view the available resources on Hwb via each of these links to Hwb: [Key Stage 2](#), and [Key Stage 3](#)

Additionally there are resources available for subjects other than history, to explore Welsh culture. For example, studying Welsh poets in English or Welsh lessons.

At Key Stage 4 the WJEC guidance document for practitioners to support the teaching of the GCSE advises that a substantial proportion of Welsh history should be embedded in the required content for the specification in both Units 1 and 3 and teachers are directed to

illustrate their teaching with relevant and appropriate examples that demonstrate both a Welsh perspective and the impact of the specified developments on Wales.

There are opportunities to build on this further in developing resources, including resources which integrate issues across AoLEs, for the new curriculum.

Given that the latest GCSE and A level specifications enhance Wales specific content in the curriculum, does the Welsh Government have any information on the amount of time that is spent teaching specifically Welsh History at Key stages 2,3,4 and at GCSE and A level

We do not hold information on the amount of time that is spent teaching specifically Welsh history at the various key stages. However, I can outline the following requirements on Welsh content in relation to qualifications.

The GCSE specification for History requires that learners must consider a Welsh perspective if the opportunity arises naturally from the subject matter and if its inclusion would enrich learners' understanding of the world around them as citizens of Wales as well as the UK, Europe and the world.

The GCSE History WJEC guidance document for practitioners advises that a substantial proportion of Welsh history should be embedded in the required content for the specification in both Units 1 and 3, and teachers are directed to illustrate their teaching with relevant and appropriate examples that demonstrate both a Welsh perspective and the impact on Wales of these developments.

Specifically, Units 1 and 3 will require candidates to make reference to the impact of historical change on Wales or on a Welsh perspective. Unit 1 of the GCSE is 'Studies in Depth – Wales and the wider perspective' and Unit 3 offers a choice of four Thematic Studies that cover a specific aspect of history in breadth, with a particular emphasis on how this impacted on Wales – and the people of Wales.

A list of suggested topics for each of the four themes is included in the teaching guidance and the themes are purposely broad enough that aspects of Welsh history fall within one or more Units. For example, for themes 3B - Changes in Health and Medicine, c.1340 to the present day and 3C - The Development of Warfare, c.1250 to the present day, suggestions to study the work and role of Betsi Cadwaladr are included under both.

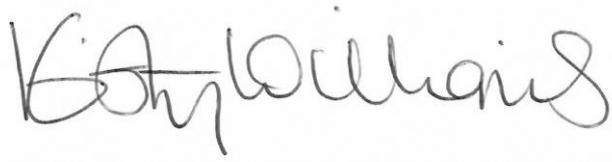
The specification for AS and A Level, introduced for first teaching in 2015, also includes Welsh History options under each Unit of teaching. The specification is divided into a total of five units, two AS units and three A2 units. Learners must choose one Unit on the history of Wales and England to study at AS and at A level.

Suggestions for study include: the Rebecca Riots, Chartist Movement, the impact of the First World War on industry and life in Wales and England, the Lloyd George Coalition 1916-1922 or political change in Wales; the decline of religion in Wales; changing attitudes to the Welsh language and culture; social, religious and cultural change in Wales 1918-1980.

In terms of the new curriculum, this will also not prescribe anything in terms of timetabling or school organisation.

I hope I have been able to clarify all the points you have raised.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kirsty Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K" and a long, sweeping underline.

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education