

## The Royal Society of Chemistry's Response

As part of the Qualified for the Future reform work, we responded to a consultation on reshaping the full qualifications offer in Wales which will be available to all learners aged 14 to 16 alongside the new GCSEs. These proposals range from entry level to Level 2 qualifications and include:

- a Skills Suite with an Integral Skills Project qualification and units/qualifications in Skills for Life and Skills for Work
- pre-vocational qualifications in broad occupational areas
- foundation qualifications to supplement the new GCSEs

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- Neither agree nor disagree

Overall, we feel that the proposed full offer at 14-16 should enable schools to deliver the Curriculum for Wales. We feel that the four purposes (ambitious, enterprising, ethical, healthy) will be met through the combination of GCSE qualifications on offer, alongside appropriate foundation qualifications for learners who struggle with level 2 content. For consistency and equity of opportunity for all learners, appropriate funding for schools would need to be provided so that all schools can offer all qualifications.

Having said this, we do have concerns over the number of new qualifications on offer. With GCSEs, foundation qualifications, skills suite (at three different levels), and pre-vocational qualifications, this is a huge number of diverse qualifications that schools have to choose from. It is likely to be the case that not all schools can offer all qualifications, which will lead to inequity and some learners missing out on opportunities afforded to others. This is likely to be particularly acute in areas of high socioeconomic deprivation, where schools likely have tighter budgets, fewer specialist teachers<sup>1</sup> and may therefore struggle to offer the full range of proposed qualifications.

- Neither agree nor disagree

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rsc.org/policy-evidence-campaigns/chemistry-education/education-reports-surveys-campaigns/the-science-teaching-survey/2022/impact-of-understaffing/>

There is a current lack of progression routes at post-16 into the sciences at level 2 and above, for those learners who are not intending to take A levels. Therefore, Qualifications Wales should review the current offer at post-16, and work with post-16 providers to ensure that there are a variety of progression routes for learners undertaking the foundation qualifications, including opportunities in the sciences at level 2 and above. This may include clear messaging around the level and grading of the qualifications, so that they can be included in any entry requirements for appropriate post-16 courses. Qualifications Wales should also ensure that apprenticeship routes are available for these learners. It will need to be made clear what these foundation qualifications and associated grades mean to all relevant stakeholders, so that these learners are not disadvantaged by not having a more well-recognised GCSE-style grade.



