

Qualification and standards updates for managers and employers

Changes to health and social care and children's care, play, learning and development qualifications.

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Information, updates and resources for managers and employers about health and social care and children's care, play, learning and development qualifications and standards.

Update for employers and managers: health and social care, and early years and childcare qualifications.

Earlier this year we told you about our work with awarding bodies (City & Guilds and WJEC) and Qualifications Wales to deal with qualification challenges related to health and social care, and early years and childcare qualifications.

We want to make sure the workforce is competent, safe and professionalised, and qualifications play a huge part in this. But, you've consistently told us that some process and assessment requirements are adding pressure to the sector.

We want the process and assessment of qualifications to be manageable for the workforce and straightforward to access and complete, so we're pleased to tell you that significant progress has been made towards resolving these challenges.

1. What you told us

There were delays in staff receiving their certificates once they had completed their qualification. This affected their ability to register with us, and in some cases the delay affected the staff member's pay.

What we've done:

The delays were caused by a quality restriction, called the Direct Claim system. Awarding bodies placed this temporary restriction on all learning providers while centres built up the confidence to deliver the new qualifications.

In late spring 2023, awarding bodies began to lift the Direct Claim restrictions for learning providers who met agreed criteria. This means these centres can now directly claim certificates when a learner completes their qualification, reducing delays. Not all centres have Direct Claim status, but awarding bodies are working with the centres that don't yet meet the criteria.

2. What you told us:

Qualifications assessments put more pressure on services. Managers said that staffing issues made it difficult to release staff from work to attend taught sessions, the controlled assessments on case studies and Multi Choice Question (MCQ) tests. The number of observations caused issues for settings.

What we've done:

We worked with the awarding bodies to submit a proposal to Qualifications Wales to change how Level 2 and 3 health and social care and early years and childcare qualifications are assessed. The proposal was accepted and 'reduced' assessments have been in place since March 2023.

You may notice that:

- the end point assessment for the Level 2 Core qualification has reduced from three case studies and multi-choice questions to one case study and a multi-choice question test. From 1 January 2024, this assessment will be a multi-choice question test only. The case studies will be removed from the end point assessment and will only be used in teaching and learning

- The number of mandatory observations for Level 2 and Level 3 Practice qualifications have been reduced from six to four. We hope that this will reduce pressure for the learner and for you as the employer.

3. What you told us:

Qualification requirements for registration cause issues for some parts of the workforce, for example part time workers. Because they work fewer hours, it's more difficult to get the observations and assessment tasks completed within the registration renewal period.

What we've done:

We've consulted with the sector about increasing the time required to complete a qualification, from three years to six years over two registration periods. The aim of this proposal was to take pressure off social care workers, particularly those who work part time. The consultation has concluded, and all social care workers will now have six years to complete their qualification.

What else is happening?

1. What you told us:

Learning providers don't always use the All Wales induction framework (AWIF) evidence in the Core qualification, so there's duplication of learning, and service and cost implications for managers.

What we've done:

The AWIF mirrors the Core qualification. Learning providers are encouraged to recognise prior learning linked to the Core and should consider any AWIF evidence the learner has. But, it should also be recognised that the AWIF is the

start of a learning journey, and expectations about an individual's knowledge, skills and understanding should reflect their experience and where they are in that journey.

The initial meeting between the manager, learning provider and learner is important to make sure any previous learning is identified and recognised within the assessment process.

We're continuing to raise awareness of the links between the AWIF and the Core qualification through monthly sessions. The AWIF is still our induction programme, recognised in the Welsh Government Statutory Guidance for service providers and Responsible Individuals.

2. What you told us:

The Essential Skills Wales (ESW) requirements of the Apprenticeship framework puts added pressure on learners. Feedback suggests that learners struggle with the ESW Application of Number and Communication because the learning isn't relevant to health and social care or early years and childcare. Some employers have withdrawn their staff from qualification programmes because staff struggled to study and complete the essential skills.

What we've done:

We'll be reviewing the teaching and learning resources used to deliver Essential Skills Wales qualifications to Health and Social Care and Children's Care Play Learning and Development learners. The review will aim to collect and share with learning providers, best practice examples of essential skills resources that have been developed for health and social care, and early years and childcare. This will make sure that the learning is more relevant to the individual's role and reduce some of the anxiety around essential skills for the learner.

3. What you told us:

The assessments and academic requirements for the current Level 4/5 qualifications can be challenging for staff. Some employers and learners still don't fully understand the demands and the higher level academic expectations of these awards.

What we've done:

We've been working with awarding bodies and learning providers to better understand the issues faced by learners studying the current Level 4/5 qualifications. We recognise that these qualifications are new and we're still in a natural embedding period. We're pleased to see a steady increase in learners successfully completing the awards. But, some parts of the assessment strategy are still causing concern, particularly around the resit/retake requirements at Level 4.

We've continued to work with the awarding body (City & Guilds) and learning providers to find appropriate solutions. City & Guilds are developing resources to support learners, with the emphasis on **passing first time**. These resources will include a checklist to make sure all the necessary evidence is included, a glossary of terms, guidance around the assessment language used and a suggested word count. The resources will be reviewed and monitored so they're effective and support learners to achieve.

We're also planning to run Level 4/5 employer engagement sessions from January 2024 onwards, to promote awareness and understanding, so look out for those dates.

What's next?

We are continuing to work on responding to the feedback on the level 4 and 5 qualifications as well as monitor the impact on the changes made and being made to all qualifications and so will update you on these as we go along.

We'll keep in touch to tell you about our work with the awarding bodies, Qualifications Wales and other relevant stakeholders. We'll let you know how we're working together to make sure qualifications are manageable for the workforce and straightforward to access and complete.

We'd also like to hear from you about good news stories or examples of best practice we can share with colleagues across the sector. Or, let us know if there are issues we should continue working on with our Consortium partners.

Please contact us at qualsandstandards@socialcare.wales.

Level 2 Core qualifications assessment changes

Following sector feedback changes have been made to the assessments of the following qualifications:

- Level 2 Health and Social Care: Core
- Level 2 Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development: Core

The changes can be found on the [Health and Care Learning Wales website](#).

Level 2 and Level 3 Practice qualifications assessment changes

Changes have also been made to the Level 2 and Level 3 Health and Social Care and Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development Practice qualifications.

You can find out more on the [Health and Care Learning Wales website](#).

Contact us

If you have a question or if you can't find what you're looking for [get in touch with us](#).