



# SECTOR REVIEW OF QUALIFICATIONS AND THE QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEM IN






# *TRAVEL, TOURISM, HOSPITALITY AND CATERING*

Executive report

March 2023



1. Welcome to the executive summary report of our sector review of qualifications, and the qualifications system, in Travel, Tourism, Hospitality and Catering. This is the fifth and final of the phase 1 sector reviews carried out by Qualifications Wales, the regulator of qualifications, other than degrees, in Wales. In sector reviews, we take a cross-cutting look at the qualifications in a particular employment sector, to see if the needs of employers and learners in that sector are being met. We also look at the underpinning qualifications system, including the way that different organisations work together to deliver those qualifications. We focus primarily on qualifications that are eligible for use on publicly funded programmes of learning for learners under the age of 19 – those taken in secondary schools and further education colleges, and as part of apprenticeship programmes. However, if we discover issues with other relevant qualifications, we take those into account too.
2. We addressed the questions posed by the review through a series of workstreams, including detailed stakeholder interviews, focused discussion groups with learners, an online questionnaire, a technical review of qualifications and an international review. We used evidence from each of these workstreams to inform the findings that are presented in the [full report](#).

Stakeholder engagement	Learner engagement	Online questionnaire	Technical review	International review
145 interviews	279 learners	140 responses	27 qualifications	5 countries
				

3. In relation to the **overall qualification offer** for the Travel, Tourism, Hospitality and Catering sector, the review identified the following:
  - When discussing travel and tourism qualifications, stakeholders generally felt that the range of qualifications available was suitable. However, employers told us that they were not familiar with the qualifications being offered in secondary schools and further education colleges.
  - Hospitality and catering employers felt there was a lack of qualifications available for some front-of-house roles, such as reception and housekeeping. They also told us that a qualification with optional front-of-house routes, enabling learners to transfer between roles, would be useful.

- The value placed upon qualifications in this sector was different compared with some of the other sectors that we have reviewed. Generally speaking, qualifications in this sector, particularly within travel and tourism, did not serve as 'a licence to practise' as they were not a requirement for employment.
- The importance of developing high-quality customer service skills and embedding these skills within qualifications in this sector was expressed by many employers and by representatives from learning providers.
- Learning providers noted that there are limited options for learners to undertake qualifications in this sector through the medium of Welsh.
- Secondary schools, in particular, expressed concern about the lack of quality continuing professional development (CPD) training available through the medium of Welsh for teachers. We were also told that the resources at Welsh-medium CPD events are often either only in English or are not of a comparable standard to the English-medium resources.
- In post-16 education, the reasons given by learners for choosing qualifications in travel and tourism were different to those in hospitality and catering.
- It was noted by stakeholders that travel services apprenticeship frameworks mostly feature business administration or customer service qualifications rather than competence-based sector-specific qualifications. They also explained that there are very few opportunities for learners to undertake the travel services apprenticeship frameworks.
- In contrast, there were many hospitality and catering apprenticeship pathways and opportunities, and employers often spoke highly of the value of apprenticeships within the sector while suggesting that the number of hospitality and catering apprenticeship pathways could be streamlined.

**4.** In relation to the **content and currency of qualifications** in the sector, the review identified the following:

- Stakeholders generally spoke positively about qualifications in travel and tourism, expressing the view that they were broadly fit for purpose. However, there was also a view that the qualifications would benefit from being updated and refreshed to meet the current industry needs.
- The lack of Welsh context was also mentioned, with concerns that learners were progressing to employment with a limited awareness of the industry in Wales. Stakeholders also emphasised that it is important for qualifications to reflect the range and variety of highly skilled jobs which are available.

- Learning providers delivering travel and tourism qualifications often offered qualifications from more than one awarding body. This was to meet the needs of different learner profiles, with several learning providers offering Pearson BTECs as an academic route (for progression to university) and City & Guilds or NCFE qualifications as a vocational route (for progression into apprenticeships or employment).
- Sustainability, using digital technology and experiential tourism, were highlighted as topics that stakeholders felt should be introduced into all qualifications to reflect modern industry.
- Many hospitality and catering stakeholders felt that some of the content covered by the current qualifications is not relevant to industry today and that some potential content is missing. They were keen that the qualifications should be reviewed to allow for more involvement from industry in their design and delivery. They felt that this would make the qualifications more relevant to Wales.
- Employers pointed out that the current hospitality and catering qualifications are almost ten years old and do not reflect the significant changes brought about by developments such as digital technology and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Learning providers also expressed concerns that the qualifications included within hospitality and catering apprenticeship frameworks were outdated and do not reflect the current industry trends and needs or include modern culinary methods and techniques.
- Employers and representatives from further education colleges also suggested that there should be more integration between front-of-house and back-of-house qualifications.
- Many learners talked about how they prefer practical learning rather than written theory work and how they often learn better through hands-on, practical tasks.

5. In relation to the **assessment of qualifications** in the sector, the review identified the following:

- Stakeholders had a range of different views about the assessment of travel and tourism qualifications. While some subject leaders in further education colleges told us that they felt assessment was generally fit for purpose, others had concerns that the number of written, theory-based assessments that learners need to complete was excessive.
- In relation to travel and tourism qualifications, particularly at level 3, feedback from representatives from further education colleges and the findings of our technical review suggested that there are inconsistent

levels of demand between different awarding bodies' qualifications, with some qualifications being viewed as more demanding than others.

- Several further education college subject leads told us they had decided to move from one awarding body to another due to the challenging nature of the assessments and introduction of examinations in travel and tourism qualifications.
- However, further engagement found that the less demanding qualifications even though they were less challenging could be overly prescriptive and less effective at preparing learners well for higher education.
- A number of learning providers delivering hospitality and catering qualifications felt that there is simply too much assessment, which puts pressure on learners and reduces the amount of time available both for teaching and for learners to practice and refine skills.

6. In relation to the **wider qualifications system**, the review identified the following:

- The impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the sector has been staggering. As has been widely reported in the media, this was an extremely challenging time for the industry. The sector had not only experienced a recruitment crisis but was having to continually adapt to changing customer needs and expectations.
- Many employers, learning providers and learners told us about the importance of work experience and how much they valued opportunities to learn in a hands-on, real-life environment. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on opportunities for work experience across both travel and tourism, and hospitality and catering.
- We were told by stakeholders that more could be done, particularly by schools and careers advisors, to raise awareness of the sector and promote the opportunities that are available. Many employers expressed strong views around negative and outdated perceptions of the industry that persist, such as it being low skilled and involving long hours and low pay. Employers also felt that apprenticeships within the sector could be promoted more effectively by secondary schools.
- When discussing their equipment and facilities for hospitality and catering qualifications, most representatives from further education colleges told us that they generally have the appropriate resources needed to deliver the qualifications effectively. However, through our stakeholder engagement it became clear that secondary schools do not have access to the same standard of equipment as further education colleges when delivering hospitality and catering qualifications.

- Both representatives from further education colleges and secondary schools shared concerns around the cost of delivering hospitality and catering qualifications, referencing the increase in the price of food ingredients.
- Several secondary school teachers delivering travel and tourism qualifications also told us that they would like to see more teaching resources, such as textbooks and exemplar materials.
- When asked about their challenges and concerns, a number of learning providers, particularly those in secondary schools, told us that recruiting and retaining specialist travel and tourism and hospitality and catering teachers was a key issue.
- Overall, there were few issues raised around access to CPD for teachers of both travel and tourism and hospitality and catering.
- Several larger companies, such as Bluestone and Compass Group, have developed their own hospitality academies that offer work-based learning opportunities, work experience and outreach programmes. This is an aspect of the sector which is different from many of the other sectors that we have reviewed, where training tends to be external.



## Our response to findings of the review

7. In Chapter 9 of the full report, we set out the actions we will be taking to address the issues raised by the review. We explain how we think the actions set out in the report could strengthen the qualifications offer and address the issues raised while building on the strengths of the sector.
8. The actions we have taken, and propose to take, are set out in the table below. We have already begun to implement some of the actions through our *Qualified for the Future* project, which is looking at qualifications for 14 to 16-year-olds and working with awarding bodies and stakeholders on the immediate challenges and opportunities. In table 1 below, we summarise the actions that we propose to take. In Chapter 9, we outline our considerations when deciding on each course of action.

**Table 1: Summary of Qualifications Wales' actions.**

Action	
1.	Through our <i>Qualified for the Future</i> project, we are developing requirements for a range of new qualifications, including GCSEs, for learners aged 14 to 16. Key actions relevant to this review include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing a new <b>GCSE Food and Nutrition qualification</b>, which will support learners to understand the journey of food and drink 'from field to fork', as well as to develop a range of practical cooking skills</li> <li>• Exploring opportunities for proposed content in <b>GCSE Geography and GCSE Business</b> to include areas of tourism such as sustainability and Welsh urban and rural tourism</li> </ul>
2.	As part of our <i>Qualified for the Future</i> work, we are reviewing the full 14 to 16 offer of qualifications, including GCSEs and a wide range of other qualifications, to meet the needs of all learners aged 14 to 16. We are proposing that there should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• entry level, level 1 and level 2 pre-vocational qualifications in <b>travel and tourism</b> as part of the Full Offer for learners aged 14-16.</li> <li>• entry level, level 1 and level 2 pre-vocational qualifications in <b>hospitality and catering</b> as part of the of the Full Offer for learners aged 14-16.</li> </ul>
3.	We will introduce a set of high-level approval criteria for the development of priority, unrestricted approved <b>travel and tourism qualifications</b> to replace the qualifications that we identified are in need of updating. The new approval criteria would require awarding bodies to demonstrate:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that the qualification content is <b>up-to-date and relevant</b> (including Welsh context and customer service units)</li> <li>• that the qualification content reflects <b>the needs of industry</b> and, where relevant, that the views of industry have been considered during the development and/or review of the qualification</li> <li>• that they have considered, and sought to overcome, the issues identified by the review in relation to <b>assessment</b></li> <li>• that they are available for learners to take <b>in Welsh as well as in English</b></li> </ul>
4.	<p>We are proposing to consult in the spring of 2023 on our proposal to commission a new suite of priority, restricted approved <b>hospitality and catering qualifications</b>.</p> <p>By commissioning a new suite of qualifications, we would hold a market competition to select a single awarding body to develop bilingual Made-for-Wales qualifications. We will be seeking views on this proposal in our consultation.</p>
5.	<p>To review the <b>level 3 provision in Food and Nutrition</b> to be part of Qualifications Wales' wider review of level 3 qualifications to follow the work of the <i>Qualified for the Future</i> project.</p>
6.	<p>We will continue to prioritise, for our <b>Welsh Language Support Grant</b>, qualifications in full-time programmes of learning for learners aged 14-19 and apprenticeships, and will continue to encourage awarding bodies who develop new or replacement qualifications in the sector to apply for this grant.</p>
7.	<p>Qualifications Wales will share with Careers Wales the findings of the review relating to the provision of <b>careers advice</b> to learners.</p>
8.	<p>We will share the evidence of the review with Welsh Government, ColegauCymru and other relevant bodies, and bring to their attention the findings of the review relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the need for greater <b>awareness of careers</b> in travel, tourism, hospitality and catering, particularly in schools</li> <li>• suggestions that the <b>hospitality and catering apprenticeships</b> should be reviewed (including the entry requirements of apprentices, access to funding, the required length of apprenticeships and the range of experiences that learners needed to cover)</li> <li>• the need to encourage links between <b>the industry</b> and learning providers</li> <li>• the challenges of <b>recruiting and retaining</b> specialist teachers, particularly in schools and further education</li> </ul>



## Conclusion

9. Having tested the different options with employers, learning providers, sector experts, awarding bodies and with our Stakeholder Advisory Group, we believe that the actions that we set out in this report would appropriately address, as far as reasonably possible, the issues identified by the review. These actions will allow us to maintain the current strengths of the sector whilst overcoming the specific qualification issues identified by the review. We are confident that the actions set out in the report will significantly strengthen the effectiveness of qualifications in the sector.

Following the publication of the report we will, in the early spring of 2023, launch a consultation on our proposal to restrict and commission the hospitality and catering qualifications.

The full report includes a detailed explanation of the findings and the actions that we plan to take. The full report can be found [here](#).

