



## Consultation response on the new GCSEs for Wales from the Wales Alliance for Global Learning

### Introduction

The [Wales Alliance for Global Learning](#) is an alliance of organisations that cares passionately about our young people, now and for future generations. We want to see Wales' young people thrive responsibly in a globalised world as informed, skilled and empowered citizens.

Our alliance brings together more than 70 organisations and individuals, including NGOs, local authority representatives and education practitioners. We share a commitment to ensuring the education system supports Wales to be a stronger, world leading nation – informed about social justice in Wales and around the world, with the skills to compete on the global market while contributing to a more sustainable future for all. We believe Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) is the route to make that happen.

Our approach to the consultation has been to review a selection of GCSEs from each AOLE to identify how well (or not) the elements of ESDGC in the curriculum are embedded in the GCSEs. We highlight below some overarching points drawn from this review and then some more specific feedback on the selection of GCSEs we reviewed.

### Key themes across the GCSEs we reviewed

1. We felt it wasn't consistently clear that the GCSEs were asking pupils to demonstrate if they had met the four purposes of the curriculum. This needs to be a clear part of the assessment process for pupils if the Curriculum for Wales is to be successful.
2. With few exceptions, we felt there was a lack of assessment of the application of skills through, for example, action based projects. Implicating skills and knowledge through concrete action is a core part of ESDGC and ethical citizenship as well as being a crucial element of employability. We want to see pupils being assessed for demonstrating citizenship, not just learning about it.
3. With a few exceptions, the approach to the inclusion of diverse perspectives gives a sense of 'them and us'. For example, the instruction to look at one Welsh text and one other text. Across subjects, we feel pupils should be assessed on their engagement with a diverse range of texts and perspectives from Wales and around the world. These perspectives should be recognised as

equally valid and valuable.

4. Generally, we felt the aims for the GCSEs were clear and the interconnected nature of the New Curriculum is represented.
5. The degree to which ESDGC and the wider skills are represented is variable across GCSEs. Stronger examples were in humanities subjects and, in particular, the Business GCSE where the presence of ESDGC advisors in the development process was apparent.
6. Much assessment is left to teacher discretion and this is appropriate, as long as we also embrace the fact that not all teachers will be comfortable in tackling ethical and informed citizenship across the curriculum.
7. In some areas more than others, the perspectives and potential of many different groups in creatively solving problems is represented and this could also be strengthened. There is a really clear emphasis on making greater use of digital means and this means we can reach a wider audience than ever before.
8. The importance of the role of critical thinking in the new GCSEs can't be overstated for topics across the board including scrutiny of texts and even language in LLC, sources and relationships in PE and the influence that money would have in Maths and Numeracy.
9. Across the subjects, there is a clear aim to make the new GCSEs relevant. It therefore is essential to make problem solving and real life contexts an *essential component* for all qualifications.
10. In the Business GCSE an example is given. We think this is really helpful and would be happy to contribute ideas towards more examples in each GCSE. .

<p><b>Geography GCSE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Good to see an emphasis on <i>both Wales and the World</i> although we'd like to see more understanding of the two being part of the same system (Wales in the world and interacting in the world). Wales has a diverse population and identity, plus as a country it also has a role in decisions being made.</li> <li>● Good to see the effort to decolonise the curriculum and incorporate minority perspectives.</li> <li>● Digital requirements will enable learners to have a more globalised perspective</li> <li>● With Teacher Assessments so flexible, will there be training to ensure that these incorporate key skills and global perspectives? Without these, there's a danger that schools will do what they've always done.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Drama GCSE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The drama GCSE seems to largely consist of "watch and respond" objectives. Should there be an effort to integrate some <b>diversity</b> in what they watch and respond to? Ethical citizenship could well begin by focusing on <b>minority stories</b> and stories from around the world.</li> <li>● When we reflect on work from the last 100 years, <b>critical thinking</b> should be highlighted in addressing meaning, for example, the way that understanding of racial equality, disabilities and gender roles have changed.</li> <li>● Explore the role of drama inspiring and planning <b>community action</b>, particularly in the devising unit.</li> </ul>

<p><b>GCSE Maths and Numeracy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An effort is being made to make the Maths/Numeracy GCSE link to business and work. It would also be helpful to train teachers in some of the dilemmas that come with this, for example, the role of money in ethical businesses, the role that money makes in climate adaptations.</li> <li>● It would be helpful to undertake investigations in the role that money has in power and control and link to a general understanding of how the economy works.</li> <li>● Could part of the assessment be a local or global community project where pupils are applying mathematical methods and skills to explore issues and plan practical projects? This would support them in making links between the theory and how maths can be applied in practice.</li> <li>● Adding to the theme of ethical business mentioned above, case studies include looking at tax/tax evasion - who suffers? Another example could be looking at the budget sizes and spending of governments and multinationals and comparing countries.</li> </ul>
<p><b>GCSE Double Award Science</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● This area was hearteningly connected with global skills and attitudes. Given the focus on climate change, it would be great to see the use of scientific exploration to give answers to complex global problems, and the recognition of the link between the science and the human dimensions of the implementation of science is also important in this regard. For example, modified foods present a great opportunity for a more sustainable diet, but there are huge social challenges relating to equality of access to such technologies.</li> <li>● It would also be good to see the role of discussion and debate in negotiating solutions and ideas.</li> <li>● In particular, the diversity of voices feels important in negotiating solutions and ideas. With the increased emphasis on digital competencies, looking at how scientists from across the world can and do cooperate to ensure fairness would be really helpful. For example, the development and delivery of COVID vaccination is a complex case study in scientific advancement and fairness in who gets the benefits.</li> </ul>
<p><b>GCSE English Language and Literature</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Good to see a focus on at least one global text and one Welsh one but presents a little as 'them and us'. Varied perspectives in the texts chosen would also be helpful.</li> <li>● The Language and Literature GCSE seems to largely consist of "read and respond" objectives. Should there be an effort to integrate some <b>diversity</b> in what they watch and respond to? Ethical citizenship could well begin by focusing on <b>minority stories or minority perspectives on popular tales</b> from around the world as well as critical readings of stories through time.</li> <li>● When we reflect on work from the last 100 years, <b>critical thinking</b> should be highlighted in addressing meaning in how our perspectives have changed.</li> <li>● Good to see a focus on links between languages and cultures (including the rest of the curriculum). Might it be helpful to look at intercultural understandings and misunderstandings through texts?</li> </ul>

<b>GCSE Health and Physical Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Good to see some effort made to describe socio-cultural influences on sport and leisure for participation. Strong resources or teacher training with case studies for international relationships in sport would be very helpful, with interesting themes around the role of sport in cultural diplomacy and links to social movements for change.</li> <li>● The ability to use creative and critical thinking skills when devising and reflecting on performance is central to this</li> <li>● The equity for different people coming to sports would be a really useful thing to cover in PE. Certain countries always winning the World Cup for example, and why this might be &amp; in general, the global dimension and potential of sport. Also open discussions on inclusion and exclusion in sport and how to remove barriers would be welcome.</li> <li>● Another aspect would be the impact of geography and socio-economics on people's health and wellbeing – What can richer countries can do to address inequalities in sport? What is sport's potential in bringing people together for intercultural exchange?.</li> </ul>
<b>Health and Social Care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There are opportunities to study a range of issues hopefully this will lead some pupils to studying the impact of big global issues on people's mental health (e.g. anxiety about climate, inequality, poverty, etc), the need to adapt to the impacts of climate change such as warmer weather or flooding, and the need for new and innovative ways of learning – outdoor learning or learning in sustainable outdoor buildings including the move to zero carbon schools.</li> <li>● Good that students will analyse factors which affect the sustainability of health and social care, and childcare provision and activity in Wales. Perhaps this could be compared to global experiences - what are the best systems in the world and what can we learn? What are the links between global issues (climate change, biodiversity loss, poverty, inequality) on access to health and social care? What are different systems and how can we glean learning from them?</li> <li>● Perhaps the students could also be involved in creative problem solving activities working with external agencies - How can we reach zero carbon in our approach to healthcare?</li> </ul>
<b>GCSE Food and Nutrition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We welcome the inclusion of an understanding of the journey of the food we choose, prepare and eat, from field to fork. Examples of assessment could include working with community food groups to experience this in practice - could students explore and take part in real life problem solving and/or appreciative inquiry where possible?</li> <li>● We welcome the criteria 'Explore the economic, environmental, ethical, and socio-cultural influences on food availability, production processes, diet, and health choices'. In these categories, we'd expect to see covered the impact of climate and nature emergencies and globalisation on food supply and production, including in relation to new technology in developing the foods of the future. Work could include health implications of ultra processed foods and the impact of food technology ownership on who has access. .</li> </ul> <p><b>Some examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A comparison of the nutritional make up of vegetables when mass produced vs grown organically at home/farms.</li> </ul>

	<p>Studying samples through a “BRIX Refractometer” - mass produced vegetables have a lower nutritional density compared with vegetables grown in organic soil.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Slow food movement” Benefits of fermentation.</li> <li>● How to use your senses to tell if a food has spoiled - rather than just relying on dates and labels - to reduce food waste.</li> <li>● Impact of food waste on the planet as not only a waste of resources but a source of greenhouse gas. Food waste recycling, composting principles.</li> <li>● Globalisation of food. Global supply chains and our place within them as consumers.</li> <li>● “Feeding the world” how must diets change in order to balance our use of resources.</li> <li>● What are the risks of the UK being so reliant on importing food? (Politics, prices, exploitation of workers)</li> <li>● How to have a healthy balanced diet as a vegetarian, vegan, seasonarian etc.</li> <li>● Allergies and intolerances - understanding and catering for</li> <li>● Impact of preservatives and fertilisers on health.</li> </ul>
<p><b>GCSE Business Studies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We can clearly see that ESDGC experts have already fed into this subject and would welcome similar input across other subjects.</li> <li>● Some other areas that could have more focus include Business for Good models (CSR - genuine vs green/blue washing), types of commercial business and social business and the roles they play in sustainability with potential for action projects in developing sustainable plans for social businesses.</li> <li>● In general, it would be good to see an assessment of the understanding of the role of business in achieving well-being and sustainability</li> <li>● An emphasis of diversity in business is important, perhaps looking at entrepreneurship around the world</li> <li>● We liked the good use of experiences in this GCSE</li> <li>● Some examples of projects might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Exploring economic and social groups coming together as resilient communities to find the solutions to social challenges</li> <li>○ Study of the history of cooperatives and how working cooperatively can be an alternative economic model.</li> <li>○ What economic decisions have and are driving social challenges and how this will impact the future?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>GCSE History</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We welcome the inclusion of natural and authentic opportunities to explore human rights and diversity, including Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic history, identity, culture, and contributions, through the lens of History.</li> <li>● We appreciate the element of ‘stories that connect us’ but need to be aware that the stories are seen through different lenses, how globalisation impacts stories and how these stories can impact our wellbeing and the wellbeing of others</li> <li>● there is good use of critical thinking but would like to see problem solving / appreciative inquiry finding creative solutions</li> </ul>

	<p>to historical choices and paths taken perhaps linking with other GCSEs such as drama or expressive arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Flexibility in approach so learners choose historical context – this could mean an inward focus and be repetitive in approach rather than exploring diversity and global voices – will teachers be supported to find the stories that connect us and be innovative and take risks?</li> <li>● Would be good to have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ links to broad range of organisations and training on global citizenship and global voices</li> <li>○ explicit mention of how history has shaped our environment and led to our current reality, including social challenges and benefits (reductions in poverty, climate crisis, etc). Would be good to assess an appreciation of how our ancestors have impacted our lives and therefore the legacy we want to leave for future generations) - how lessons learnt could be used to shape a resilient future, socially, culturally and politically</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Will the Awarding Body set a choice of generic tasks for this historical enquiry that schools can contextualise to their locality which will include ESDGC themes?</li> <li>● -Good to see an emphasis on encouraging learners to use historical enquiry to engage with issues facing humanity – past and present</li> <li>● Positive also that there is an emphasis on developing empathy and on young people taking part in educational visits in person or digitally.</li> <li>● Could we suggest including looking at local, national and global events critically from different perspectives and also to consider the impact of events (e.g. WWI) and power dynamics, up until and including the present time</li> <li>● What about the stories – local, national and global – that don't get told and the dilemmas they still cause today -e.g. conscientious objectors</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Geography</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Good to see an emphasis on <i>both Wales and the World</i> although I'd like to see more of an understanding of the two being part of the same concept. Wales has a diverse population and identity, plus as a country it also has a role in decisions being made.</li> <li>● Good to see the effort to decolonise the curriculum and incorporate minority perspectives.</li> <li>● Digital requirements will enable learners to have a more globalised perspective</li> <li>● With Teacher Assessments so flexible, will there be training to ensure that these incorporate key skills and global perspectives? Without these, there's a danger that schools will do what they've always done.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Religious Studies GCSE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Good that there is an emphasis on critical thinking and applying knowledge to new situations</li> <li>● 'Natural and authentic opportunities' for learners to explore Human Rights and diversity made explicit, including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic history, identity and culture. We wonder if the wording could be stronger here.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We question the wording 'learners <u>can</u> choose to explore other religions and non-religious belief systems'. Shouldn't it be compulsory to look at least one other faith system and / or a humanist perspective?</li> <li>● Good that the syllabus includes 'how religion and belief influence change and how this impacts on local, national and global events. There is nothing, however, about learners being active citizens themselves and influencing change on the basis of their (religious) beliefs. A missed opportunity?</li> <li>● Good that there is a specific reference to 'environmental responsibility'. Surely there should be a reference to peace and critical thinking about how young people can be peacemakers? And other areas of responsibility (social, economic, political, cultural).</li> </ul>
<p><b>French, German and Spanish GCSE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Across languages, it would be good to assess recognition of how languages develop and change over time and the links between languages spoken and power, and minority languages and how they are impacted.</li> <li>● A diagram is included stressing that the 4 purposes are at the heart of this qualification and giving some indication of what this should include – e.g., culture and identity and living sustainably. This is to be welcomed and is not as clear in other GCSEs. Do teachers need guidance as to how to implement this?</li> <li>● Under experiences, the following are also listed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Learn about the culture and society in the countries and communities where the international language is spoken.</li> <li>○ Have direct or indirect contact with speakers of the language.</li> <li>○ Consider content and materials that reflect a diverse society</li> </ul> </li> <li>● This is again to be welcomed so that the study of a language is seen in its context and promotes international understanding and an awareness of where languages are spoken globally. Good also that practical application is considered.</li> <li>● The difficulty may (initially) be teachers accessing source materials that can support them in involving learners in looking at global issues through a foreign language and engaging with native speakers on these topics. It will be interesting to see how good practice emerges and is shared in these areas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cymraeg Language and Literature GCSE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Good that there's an emphasis on developing creativity, imagination, empathy</li> <li>● Good that texts to be studied should include those that explore the cultural identity of others as well as learners' own identity</li> <li>● Good also that text can include newspaper articles, blogs, websites – i.e. texts which allow for an inclusion of diverse and global perspectives</li> <li>● The ability to understand, respond and express themselves critically will to a large extent depend on learners' level of linguistic competence in Welsh</li> <li>● It would be valuable for the curriculum to include examples of Welsh-speaking communities in other parts of the world (eg. Patagonia)</li> </ul>

<b>Design and Technology GCSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Generally, we welcome the references to the wider world in terms of technology impacts and the links to technology use in communities - it's important to ensure we're also looking at designs from around the world</li> <li>● Regarding aims, we welcome the emphasis on describing ways products can impact environment and society but feel this is quite passive. Can we go beyond describing impacts to suggesting changes so products have a positive impact on environment and society, for example, looking at circularity in materials science?</li> <li>● In general, can we emphasis 'diverse' users as we would hope learners consider different kinds of user at GCSE level</li> <li>● Would be good to assess application of learning to schools and communities - what will societies of the future look like? How can communities be waste free and truly part of the circular economy? What do teaching spaces of the future look like and what is the role of design and tech?</li> </ul>
<b>Engineering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We were unable to access the full proposal as an error message appeared so the below is based on reading the summary. Our feedback is likely to be similar to the elements in computer science (where ESDGC could be stronger) and design and tech (where ESDGC is better represented).</li> <li>● Would be good to assess application of learning to schools and communities - what will societies of the future look like? How can communities be waste free and truly part of the circular economy? What do teaching spaces of the future look like? Perhaps students could take part in an activity with a tangible, real life outcome.</li> </ul>
<b>GCSE Computer science</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We welcome the aim of supporting pupils to explore social, environmental and ethical dimensions of computer systems.</li> <li>● In the knowledge and understanding section, more clarity could be given on how these dimensions will interact with the knowledge areas. What are the broad impacts of computer science on our society? What will the digital future look like and how can we shape it? What are the ethical tensions and dilemmas of new technology, including algorithms and more advanced artificial intelligence?</li> <li>● We would expect to see more on how computer systems interact with wider systems in terms of development and impact? Who develops the code we rely on? What are the implications especially in relation to diversity in terms of who is creating the programmes we use every day?</li> <li>● We'd like to see it made clear in the 'investigating problems and designing solutions' section that problems might be specific problems in different parts of the world (e.g. apps used in different ways across higher and lower countries to improve access to essential services).</li> <li>● In the skills and application of knowledge, explicitly referencing critical thinking to analyse designed systems and creative thinking in the development process would be valuable. We would welcome reference to building user interfaces for specific and diverse users.</li> <li>● In experiences, we recommend including reference to examples from different communities and countries</li> </ul>