

Curriculum for Wales – Draft Statements of What Matters Code

Consultation response form

Your name: Stuart Williams

Organisation (if applicable): NEU Cymru

e-mail/telephone number: stuart.williams@neu.org.uk

Your address: Tŷ Sinnott, 18 Neptune Court, Vanguard Way, Cardiff. CF24 5PJ.

Responses should be returned by 16 July 2021 to:

Curriculum Realisation Unit
Curriculum and Assessment Division
The Education Directorate
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: curriculumforwales@gov.wales

About NEU Cymru

The National Education Union Cymru (NEU Cymru) stands up for the future of education. It brings together the voices of teachers, lecturers, support staff and leaders working in maintained and independent schools and colleges to form the largest education union in Wales.

The National Education Union is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC), European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and Education International (EI). It is not affiliated to any political party and seeks to work constructively with all the main political parties.

Together, we'll shape the future of education.

NEU Cymru response

NEU Cymru welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We have answered the questions below.

Respondent type (please select one from the following)

Child or young person	<input type="checkbox"/>	Employer/business representative	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent/carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional body/interest group	✓
School governor or member of school management committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Voluntary sector (community group, volunteer, self-help group, social or co-operative enterprise, religious, not for profit organisation)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mainstream school practitioner (head, teacher, teaching assistant, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regional consortium	<input type="checkbox"/>
EOTAS provider (PRU staff, independent school staff, other provider, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local authority	<input type="checkbox"/>
Higher education (including universities/academic institutions)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Further education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Politician (Senedd member, county councillors, MP, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other respondent group not listed above, please specify:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lobbyist	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of a school, setting or organisation?

<input type="checkbox"/>	As an individual
✓	On behalf of a school/setting/organisation

Question 1 – In response to feedback on the draft Curriculum for Wales guidance in 2019 the statements of what matters are being made mandatory through the development of this Code. Do the 27 statements as refined through this draft Code sum up the priorities for children and young people’s learning throughout the continuum for 3- to 16-year-olds?

Yes	✓	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

The refinements made to the ‘what matters statements’ in Expressive arts, Humanities, Languages, literature and communication, and Science and technology strengthen the content and sum up the priorities for children and young people’s learning throughout the continuum for 3- to 16-year-olds.

However, these refinements have only been made to 8 of the 27 statements, whilst the other 19 statements remain unchanged from the previous statements published as part of the Curriculum for Wales Framework guidance on 28 January 2020.

Question 2 – The statements of what matters will become the key organising curriculum structures for each area of learning and experience. Are the amended statements clear and accessible, providing understanding of the breadth for curriculum development?

Yes	✓	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

As mentioned in question 1, refinements have only been made to 8 of the 27 statements, whilst the other 19 statements remain unchanged from the previous statements published as part of the Curriculum for Wales Framework guidance on 28 January 2020.

Expressive arts

The amendment in the first statement, which now mentions Wales' history, and the impact of influences and history from diverse cultures and societies are welcomed, easy to understand and widen the breadth of content for curriculum development in this area.

Humanities

The amendments in the third statement, which now mentions the climate emergency and climate change are welcomed.

The two amendments in the fourth statement, the first of which now refers to including the stories of black, Asian and minority ethnic people within the curriculum are welcomed. In addition to this, the second addition of enabling learners to develop a common understanding of the diverse history, cultural heritage, ethnic diversity, identities, experiences and perspectives of their local area, Wales and the wider world is also greatly welcomed.

The amendments in the fifth statement, which now mentions climate change and the ecological impacts, which allows learners to engage with the contemporary challenges and opportunities that face them are welcomed.

Languages, literature, and communication

The amendments in the first and second statements, which now mention equipping learners to be plurilingual and develop and understand a range of languages are welcomed.

The amendment in the third statement is welcomed.

However, we are concerned that there is now no explicit reference to the Welsh language within any what matters statements within this Area of Learning and Experience. This is concerning as the statements of what matters will become the key organising curriculum structures. We feel therefore that a reference the use of Welsh needs to be included within these statements.

If Welsh language has not been included because the expectation is that it will be embedded across the curriculum, or for another reason, this should be made explicit.

We would highlight that if Welsh Government are to meet their target of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050, it is critical that Welsh Language training is available for the current workforce. Whilst those new to teaching may have had more opportunities to learn Welsh they will not be as experienced classroom practitioners. The new curriculum will require both experience and innovation to be a success, so it is critical Welsh Government invests in the workforce now.

Science and technology

The amendment in the first statement, which now mentions climate change is welcomed.

Question 3 – The statements of what matters have been refined following consideration of issues as part of the passage of associated legislation through the Senedd in 2020/21.

3a – Are the amendments to statements in respect of Welsh histories and diversity suitably clear?

Yes. Also see response to question 6 below.

3b – Are the amendments to statements in respect of the climate emergency suitably clear?

Yes

3c – Are the amendments to statements suitably clear to ensure relevance for the full range of languages that learners may encounter?

Yes. However, we are concerned that there is now no explicit reference to the Welsh language within any what matters statements within this Area of Learning and Experience. This is concerning as the statements of what matters will be used by educators to map out the structure and content of their curriculum. We feel therefore that a reference the use of Welsh needs to be included within these statements.

If Welsh language has not been included because the expectation is that it will be embedded across the curriculum, or for another reason, this should be made explicit.

Investment in the workforce to meet Welsh language requirements is critical now, as we have stated above.

Question 4 – We would like to know your views on the effects that the Statements of What Matters Code would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- i) opportunities for people to use Welsh
- ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Supporting comments

It is vital that there is parity of provision in both languages and that provision should reflect the linguistic nature of the school and its catchment area.

The guidance will also be available in Welsh, for those Welsh medium and bilingual schools, and this will ensure that Welsh is treated no less favourably than English.

We believe it is vital that all education professionals have access to training to ensure they can learn Welsh, at a level appropriate to their professional needs. We believe if Welsh Government is to meet their aims of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050, they must provide training and support for the current education workforce.

Question 5 – Please also explain how you believe the proposed Statements of What Matters Code could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- i) positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language
- ii) no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Supporting comments

See Question 4

Question 6 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

Whilst the addition of including the stories of black, Asian and minority ethnic people to enable learners to develop a common understanding of the diverse history, cultural heritage, ethnic diversity, identities, experiences and perspectives of their local area, Wales and the wider world is greatly welcomed, we are concerned that there is no mention of anti-racist education within the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience. Whilst this may be implied within the statements, it is not explicit. We believe that anti-racism education needs to be embedded across the new curriculum in Wales.

We welcomed the petition P-05-1080¹ submitted by Fatima Altaiy, and supported by Show Racism the Red Card Wales, to *introduce anti-racist teaching materials to children in schools in Wales to reduce hate crimes*.

This petition was considered alongside petition P-05-1000 - *Make it compulsory for Black and POC UK histories to be taught in the Welsh education curriculum*.

We are pleased that the Committee considered correspondence on the petitions and agreed to pass the petitions to its successor committee following the Senedd election to enable it to continue to scrutinise the development of new teaching resources and professional learning needs.

Autonomy

Whilst we welcome these additions to the 'what matters' statements, it is really important that we retain the spirit of autonomy for education settings to adapt the curriculum for their learners' needs. This may mean some schools and settings have slightly different priorities than others, and it is critical we get this balance right.

Qualifications

Members tell us that a critical part of ensuring that the curriculum fulfills the aspirations of the Donaldson Report is that we need to act now to re-imagine qualifications and decouple qualifications from accountability.

We have an opportunity to ensure qualifications truly capture what learners can do, and are not dictating and narrowing the curriculum. It is critical we reflect on the last couple of years and use this opportunity to have a national conversation about the qualifications system.

¹ <https://business.senedd.wales/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=35066&Opt=3>

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: