

REGULATORY APPRAISAL

EDUCATION WALES

THE EDUCATION (NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR WALES) (DISAPPLICATION OF SCIENCE AT KEY STAGE 4) REGULATIONS 2006

Background

1. The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) has been reviewing the school curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales and from 1 April 2006 the Qualifications and Curriculum Group of the Assembly's Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills will be drawing up detailed proposals for all National Curriculum subjects, including science, for formal consultation with a wide range of stakeholders in 2007. It is intended that revised National Curriculum requirements will be introduced in September 2008.
2. ACCAC and the qualification regulatory authorities in England (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) and Northern Ireland (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) are also in the process of accrediting revised specifications for science GCSEs and other qualifications in the sciences for first teaching from September 2006. This process will continue in Wales after 1 April 2006 by the Qualifications and Curriculum Group of the Assembly's Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. However, the revised specifications will not align with the requirements of the existing National Curriculum Programmes of Study for science, leading to a mis-match between the National Curriculum requirements for science at Key Stage 4 (pupils broadly aged 14-16 years) and the specifications of the revised science GCSEs between September 2006 and August 2008.

Purpose and intended effect of the measure

3. These Regulations will disapply the requirements of the existing National Curriculum Programmes of Study for science at Key Stage 4, between September 2006 and August 2008, for pupils that are taught a course leading to a science qualification, which is approved under Section 99 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, for the purposes of section 96(2) (b) of that Act.
4. The disapplication will apply for a limited period of 2 years (expiring at the end of July 2008). This will allow schools to teach science subjects to the revised specifications for GCSEs and other approved qualifications. Maintained schools will thus be required to teach pupils science either through a course leading to an approved qualification, or in accordance with the existing National Curriculum Key Stage 4 Programme of Study.

Risk Assessment

5. If this legislation is not made, teachers preparing pupils for approved science qualifications will, without authority, be failing to adhere to the

National Curriculum Key Stage 4 Programme of Study, unless they also teach additional science material that does form part of the Programme of Study, but is not included in the specifications for revised science qualifications.

6. In addition, the additional curriculum flexibility that the revised science qualifications and the revised National Curriculum requirements will provide will not be possible until September 2008.

Options

Option 1: Do Nothing and keep current requirements

7. This would involve the risk set out in paragraph 5 above. To ameliorate that risk it might be possible to keep the current Key Stage 4 National Curriculum requirements and, in approving the new GCSE specifications make clear that the GCSEs do not fully cover the National Curriculum requirements, so schools would have to deliver more than just the GCSE. However, the changes to GCSE science for 2006 have been made to provide greater flexibility so that schools can choose courses that better meet learners' needs. The existing National Curriculum requirements are highly prescriptive and the existing GCSEs in science subjects reflect that level of prescription. It would make no educational sense to approve the revised, more flexible approved science qualifications, but expect schools to continue teaching additional material that has been explicitly removed as a requirement for all learners.

Option 2: Make the Legislation

8. The Regulations suspend the requirements of Programmes of Study for science at Key Stage 4 for the period September 2006 to August 2008 and will give schools the flexibility to either teach to revised specifications for science GCSEs and other approved qualifications in science subjects or, for pupils not engaged in these qualifications, to continue in accordance with the existing National Curriculum Key Stage 4 Programme of Study. After September 2008 schools will be required to teach a revised Programme of Study, which will be consistent with the range of specifications available.

Benefits

9. The disapplication of science at Key Stage 4 will give schools the flexibility to either teach to revised specifications for science GCSEs and other approved qualifications in science subjects or, for pupils not engaged in these qualifications, to continue in accordance with the existing National Curriculum Key Stage 4 Programme of Study.

Costs

10. It is not envisaged that there will be any costs for schools or awarding bodies as a result of these Regulations. The extended range of revised science qualifications is being developed and introduced in any event as part of the normal cycle of review of qualifications.

Consultation

With Stakeholders

11. Stakeholders were consulted on the proposal and the draft Regulations between 31 October 2005 and 3 February 2006.

12. The consultees were;

- The Governing Bodies of Secondary Schools (10% sample of all Secondary Schools in Wales);
- Local Education Authorities;
- GTC Wales;
- Teaching Unions and professional organisations;
- Careers Wales;
- Association Science Education;
- The British Association for the Advancement of science;
- Techniquest;
- The Welsh Local Government Association;
- Joint Council for Qualifications; and
- The Federation of Awarding Bodies.

13. A full list of consultees is attached at Annex A.

14. There was unanimous support for the Regulations from the thirty consultees who responded. The responses were analysed and a report summarising the key issues is due to be produced and published on 28 March 2006. There were no changes made to Regulations as a result of these responses and a summary of these is attached at Annex.

With Subject Committee

15. This Order was notified to the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee via the list of forthcoming legislation on 21 September 2005 (ELL 2-09-05(P.5), item no: ELL 62-05) and has remained on the list ever since. It was not identified for detailed scrutiny.

Review

16. The regulatory authorities are required to keep under review all aspects of external qualification. A review of the implementation of the revised range of science qualifications will be part of The Qualifications, Curriculum and

Assessment Authority for Wales' (ACCAC's) routine business and following the merger on 1 April 2006, will be undertaken by the Qualifications and Curriculum Group of the Assembly's Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.

Summary

17. The aim of the Regulations is to suspend the requirements of Programmes of Study for science at Key Stage 4 for the period September 2006 to August 2008 after which schools will be required to teach the revised Programme of Study, which will be consistent with the range of specifications available. No costs are associated with these Regulations and the benefits of implementing the Regulations will be to enable schools to comply with statutory requirements whilst also having the flexibility to either teach to revised specifications for science GCSEs and other approved qualifications in science subjects or, for pupils not engaged in these qualifications, to continue in accordance with the existing National Curriculum Key Stage 4 Programme of Study.

ANNEX A – List of Consultees

- The Governing Bodies of Secondary Schools (10% sample of all Secondary Schools in Wales):

Ysgol Y Moelwyn	Blaenau Ffestiniog
Ysgol John Bright	Llandudno
Prestatyn High School	Prestatyn
Ysgol Dinas Bran	Llangollen
Ysgol Morgan Llwyd	Wreccsam
Llanfyllin High School	Powys
Llandrindod High School	Llandrindod Wells
Ysgol Maes-Y-Dderwen	Ystradgynlais
Ysgol Gyfun Aberaeron	Aberaeron
Ysgol Gyfun Dyffryn Taf	Whitland
Birchgrove Comprehensive School	Swansea
Dwr-Y-Felin Comprehensive School	Neath
Maesteg Comprehensive School	Maesteg
Llantwit Major School	Llantwit Major
Ysgol Gyfun Cymer Rhondda	Rhondda
St Ilan School	Caerphilly
West Monmouth Comprehensive School	Pontypool
Caldicot Comprehensive School	Caldicot
Bettws High School	Newport
St Teilo's C.I.W. High School	Cardiff
Corpus Christi Catholic High School	Cardiff
- Local Education Authorities
- GTC Wales
- Teaching Unions and professional organisations
- Careers Wales
- Association Science Education
- British Association for the Advancement of science
- Techniquist
- Welsh Local Government Association
- Joint Council for Qualifications
- Federation of Awarding Bodies

ANNEX B – summary of responses to consultation

The draft was issued on 31st October 2005, with responses required by 3rd February 2006. Thirty responses were received from various organisations including Schools, Local Education Authorities and Unions. The consultation asked one question and respondents had choice of answer of “yes” or “no”. Respondents could also comment on their response.

Responses

Question: Do you agree that the requirements of the Programme of Study for science at Key Stage 4 should be suspended for two years only from September 2006, and until a revised Programme of Study is introduced, to allow a wider variety of science GCSEs and other qualifications to be taught?

All respondents agreed with the statement above. Four respondents commented in more depth.

“This is a sensible interim arrangement until the revised National Curriculum is introduced in September 2008. NUT Cymru looks forward to being fully involved in the consultation on the revised curriculum.”

“Welcomes this document as a sensible and pragmatic approach to developing a relevant KS 4 curriculum for science. It will allow schools to follow alternative science courses and fits in well with the 14-19 agenda.”

“It will be essential to do this if we are to offer a suitable range of courses in science that meets the needs of all our learners.”

“Necessary to promote the introduction of new science courses piloted and trialled in schools.”