

EWC response to the Welsh Government consultation, Public good and a prosperous Wales – building a reformed PCET system

Introduction

1. The Education Workforce Council (EWC) is the largest regulator in Wales, having over 75,000 education professionals on our Register. We independently regulate teachers and support staff in maintained schools and further education institutions, work-based learning practitioners and youth / youth support workers. Our legislative remit charges us with raising the status of the education workforce by maintaining and promoting the highest standards of professional practice and conduct in the interests of education practitioners, learners, and the general public.
2. Our current remit includes the further education and work-based learning sectors, but we also have a role in the accreditation of programmes of initial teacher education and training which may be delivered by HEIs. Our response will mainly focus on areas within our remit or which relate to our remit.

General comments

3. The EWC broadly welcomes the proposals for a new body and we hope that it will help to raise the profile of the further education and WBL sectors and their valuable contribution to education, skills and the economy in Wales. We want to emphasise that whatever final model emerges, it is fundamentally important that it be better than the system it replaces.
4. On a more cautious note however, we know that the FE sector in particular is already being impacted by the substantial reform programme being pursued by the Cabinet Secretary for education, developments like curriculum reform, changes to GCSEs and A levels, and ALN reform.
5. This is a sector which bridges schools and HE, and we think it's important that policy makers remain aware of the bigger picture and other, perhaps competing pressures that various sectors potentially affected by their proposals may be under.
6. Council would like to point out that the EWC itself provides a model for establishing a body that covers the whole range of education sectors and settings, it is our hope that the new FE/HE body will like the EWC, champion

collaborative and cohesive working across sectors to raise standards of teaching and learning. We would be very happy to assist officials in any way with the reforms they are introducing.

7. Pages 17 and 18 of the consultation document describe the current arrangements for oversight and responsibility of diverse bodies in the PCET sectors. The EWC is disappointed to note that it is not mentioned as a regulator in relation to the FE and WBL sectors with a legislative remit for standards. We think that our remit and reach across sectors has the potential to be a harmonising and coherent influence on complex sector and we would welcome working (within our remit) with Welsh Government on their agenda for PCET reform.
8. The consultation document mentions 'parity of esteem for vocational and academic routes' (page 10). The EWC of course welcomes such an aspiration, however, reforms to the qualification system and accountability and reporting measures at KS4 actually seem to be mitigating against this. Specifically, we would draw attention to the changes to the L2plus measure which now excludes vocational qualifications.
9. Pages 27 and 28 refer to a complaints resolution arrangement for learners unable to take their unresolved complaints to an independent body. We wish to point out that any person, including a learner may raise concerns about a EWC registrant's conduct to us as a regulator. The Council has an established procedure for investigating these matters.

The workforce and the role of the EWC

10. The consultation document deals in detail with matters around structural and policy reforms, but we are disappointed that there is hardly a mention of the professionals who will be required to deliver the high quality learning that is aspired to. This is especially important, for example, in policy areas such as Welsh medium PCET.
11. Unlike school teachers, there is no professional award for PGCE (FE) students. The EWC administers the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) to trainees who successfully complete programme of initial teacher education in Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government.
12. Having only recently registered FE staff and WBL practitioners, the EWC is beginning to develop a picture of the workforce, their age, gender, Welsh

language abilities and qualifications. We think workforce data like this will be useful to all stakeholders working on PCET reform.

13. There are several policy areas that could be developed to the benefit of the workforce, learners, and the reforms themselves. These are:
 - a suite of developmental professional standards for the sector which would facilitate clear career pathways within and across education sectors
 - development of suitable, high quality entry qualifications, accredited by the EWC
 - a supported and quality assured framework of continuing professional development

14. We are concerned that the proposal on page 28 of the consultation document suggests that Welsh Government –‘intend to place the Commission under a duty to promote enhancement in the quality of teaching and learning across the whole sector for which it would be responsible’. As the EWC already has a statutory remit for standards of teaching in the FE and WBL sectors, we are concerned that this proposal potentially duplicates a function already being undertaken, or at the least might contribute to further complexity and confusion in the sectors. Standards at FE institution level, are already the responsibility of Estyn, standards of professional practice and conduct at individual level are the core remit of the EWC.

15. Finally, we note the proposal to introduce a registration system for institutions and providers. While the Council has no objection to this, it highlights the requirement for practitioners employed within FE and WBL to be registered with the EWC. In this regard, it is also pertinent to point out that HE practitioners are not currently required to register with the EWC, unlike those in school, FE, WBL and youth work settings in Wales. The Welsh Government may wish to consider this.