MINUTES

# CQFW Advisory Group Meeting

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| **Date:** | **Time:** | **Venue:** |
| 30 April 2024 | 10:30 – 12.00 | Virtual – MS Teams |

**PRESENT**

Sinead Gallagher (SG) – Higher Education Division Deputy Director, Welsh Government – Chair

Adrian Sheehan (AS) – ColegauCymru

Jeff Protheroe (JP) – ColegauCymru

Phil Whitney (PW) – ColegauCymru

Nicola Hunt (NH) – HEFCW

Rachel Mooney (RM) – Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)

Judith Archer (JA) – Agored Cymru, representing Federation of Awarding Bodies

Sacha Davies (SD) – Careers Wales

Cheryl Stevens (CS) – Social Care Wales

Lisa Mytton (LM) – ASL Training, representing NTfW

Jamie Insole (JI) – University and College Union, Cymru (new member)

Emma Evans (EE) – Welsh Government

Gail Evans (GE) – Welsh Government

**APOLOGIES**

Cliona O’Neill (CO’N) – HEFCW

Sarah John (SJ) – ASL Training, representing NTfW

Jon Day (JD) – Social Care Wales

Tim Opie (TO) – Welsh Local Government Association

Chris Laity (CL) – Universities Wales

Fiorella Topazio (FT) – Qualifications Wales

Denver Davies (DD) – Qualifications Wales

Donna Hooper (DH) – Adult Learning Community Network

1. **Welcome & Introductions**

The Chair welcomed new member Jamie Insole representing the University and College Union, Cymru. Denver Davies, Qualifications Wales will be replaced by Fiorella Topazio as the new representative. The Chair extended her thanks to Denver for his support to the CQFW Advisory Group.

Phil Whitney, ColegauCymru, joined the meeting for agenda items 6 and 9. Jeff Protheroe joined the meeting from agenda item 4 onwards.

1. **Minutes and actions from previous meetings (25/04 and 20/10/2023) – Paper 01**

The Chair confirmed the minutes had been circulated and handed over to GE to run through actions and status.

Meeting - 25 April 2023 - Actions

* GE to publish 23/24 Operational Objectives on CQFW website – *completed.*
* EE/GE to share updated CQFW resources when available – *Fan and Pillar diagrams were included in Toolkit circulated to members, publication of e-brochure remains outstanding.*

Meeting - 20 October 2023 - Actions

* EE/SG to discuss University & College Union approach invitation – *completed with Jamie Insole attending.*
* GE to update Terms of Reference – *completed.*
* EE to share working Wales Statements of Comparability graphs/stats – *completed.*
* AS/EE to update SCQF/CQFW comparison paper and recirculate (Paper 2) – *completed.*
* Raise CQFW Review recommendations 10 and 13 at April 2024 meeting – *on today’s agenda.*
* EE to share CQFW Review documents with Jeff Protheroe *– completed.*
* SG to raise thoughts on operational activity of CQFW/Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) and ownership of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and follow up with colleagues – c*ompleted.* SG added that RPL and credit transfer are referenced within the CTER Statement of Priorities which will provide a strategic steer over the next 5 years for CTER. The Commission is in the process of developing its strategic plan which they will consult on, with the aim of submitting this to Welsh Government by the end of the calendar year. See link below for information:

[Statement of strategic priorities for tertiary education and research and innovation [HTML] | GOV.WALES](https://www.gov.wales/statement-strategic-priorities-tertiary-education-and-research-and-innovation-html)

Members agreed the minutes as a true/accurate record and noted the status of the actions.

1. **Terms of Reference (ToR) – Paper 03**

The ToR are reviewed at each meeting to ensure accuracy and reflect revised membership and circulated with the meeting papers. Members were asked to raise any updates and the following were noted: revise HEFCW/CTER transition timescale to 01/08/2024, include University and College Union. GE subsequently noted that Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning to be updated to reflect restructure in the Welsh Government.

**Action:**

* GE to update TOR as noted.

1. **Operational Objectives 2023/24 – update on progress – Paper 04**

The Chair reminded members that 7 Objectives were agreed for 2023/24 and referred members to Paper 04 which outlines a progress update.

GE provided an update against Objectives 1-3 and EE summarised progress on 4-7.

Objective 1: Light touch review of CQFW materials (GE)

* Work is ongoing to update the CQFW website (delayed due to staff sickness). The e-brochure, fan and pillar diagrams were previously circulated to Members for review and comments collated. Accessibility reviews have now been undertaken for both the fan and pillar diagrams and materials will be updating accordingly. The revised Qualifications can Cross Boundaries leaflet is referenced on the CQFW website with a link signposting to ColegauCymru and CQFW/RPL web page. Business Wales pages have been updated with the fan diagram and Guides for Employers/ Learners (inc. Welsh translations).
* Clarification was sought on the CQFW toolkit, specifically why Scotland isn’t referenced when it refers to the framework for HE qualifications in England, Wales and NI being aligned to the EQF. The following wording was agreed: “*The Qualification Frameworks set out the different levels of higher education qualifications and the requirements for each of these. There is one framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and a separate one for Scotland. Both are combined in one publication.”*

NH confirmed no further amendments were required.

**Action:**

* GE to update wording within the e-brochure.

Objective 2: Updates to CQFW animation and e-learning module (GE)

* Updates to CQFW Animation and e-learning module – ongoing. Amendments can now be taken forward as accessibility checks for the fan and pillar diagrams have been undertaken.

Objective 3: Renew CQFW e-module hosting – Completed - (GE)

* Renewed to end March 2025.

Objective 4: Agree skills recognition management high level principles (HLP) with the purpose of sharing with the CTER once established (EE)

* EE noted that the CTER Statement of Priorities includes a requirement for the CTER to “*explore the opportunities for and barriers to achieving credit transfer across the tertiary system and consider how they may be addressed including [consider] how to incorporate the recognition of prior learning to facilitate the movement of learners throughout the tertiary sector.”*
* PW provided an update on the ColegauCymru 2-day RPL study visit to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQF) on 25 and 26 March. Attendees included PW (ColegauCymru), Michell Hiller-Forster (CAVC), Karina Scott (ALW), Kay Smith (Learning and Work Institute), Janet Davies (Careers Wales) and CQFW Advisory Group Members: Rachel Mooney (HEIW) and Chris Laity (Universities Wales). The objective of the visit was to learn more about RPL in Scotland and the role of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP) in relation to key groups, such as military leavers, refugees, apprentices and for institutions. The group will reconvene with a follow-up meeting in May to consider recommendations for developing High Level Principles for Wales. A report summarising findings and recommendations is being prepared by ColegauCymru. Kay Smith (Learning and Work Institute) has written a blog which is on the ColegauCymru website (link below):

[ColegauCymru leads visit to Scotland to explore developments in recognition of prior learning policy and practice (colleges.wales)](https://www.colleges.wales/en/blog/post/colegaucymru-leads-visit-to-scotland-to-explore-developments-in-recognition-of-prior-learning-policy-and-practice)

* As part of the RPL activity, EE noted that the Republic of Ireland (RoI) is also doing a lot of work on RPL. A case study developed by Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, Ireland, relating to RPL processes in the hairdressing sector was circulated with meeting papers. RPL processes were developed and applied to achieve accreditation of a L6 Advanced Hairdressing Certificate. Without the RPL process the only route for applicants to access the qualification would be to complete the entire apprenticeship programme. It allowed the pilot group of applicants to complete the validation process in approx. 9 months, compared to 3 years required for the programme. The Training Board are actively embedding RPL processes across the college’s campuses and Alan Hogan has offered to present to the CQFW Advisory Group including RPL working group participants.

**Action:**

* Members are asked to inform EE if interested in an RoI RPL presentation.

Objective 5: Ensure the CQFW continues to support RPL and facilitates the understanding and comparison of international qualifications (EE)

* Objective is ongoing and recurring to demonstrate Advisory Group support towards CQFW actions in the Anti Racist Wales Action Plan.
* Officials have received confirmation that the reports referencing the UK Qualifications Frameworks to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) which were conducted pre-Brexit, continue to be valid and as such UK Qualification Frameworks continue to refer to the EQF.
* UK ENIC Membership – the Welsh Government has purchased a 12-month membership which provides access to the international qualifications databases and licences. This will be shared with Working Wales, who are the main referral point for refugees in Wales, seeking advice/referral to UKENIC on international quals.
* EE confirmed that she continues to participate in the Welsh Government Nation of Sanctury Working Group, providing updates in relation to qualification/framework alignment.
* Anti Racist Wales Action Plan (ARWAP) – Paper 4 includes a copy of the February progress update. An amendment has been proposed for the refresh of the Nation of Sanctuary chapter in the in the ARWAP in relation to CQFW actions – to maintain and promote qualification framework alignment to support sanctuary seekers to have their existing qualifications recognised.

Objective 6: Share/promote the comms toolkit with stakeholders to support awareness raising and promotion of the CQFW – Completed - (EE)

* EE shared the toolkit with Advisory Group members last year for use with their own communication/promotion and shared with other stakeholders seeking background and information on the benefits of the CQFW.

Objective 7: Commission marketing agency to enhance the comms/toolkit assets – Completed – Completed - (EE)

* Advisory Group members agreed last year the comms focus for this year would be on refugees/asylum seekers to address actions in the Nation of Sanctuary Action Plan and the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan. Due to budgetary pressures/spending restrictions, a toolkit has been developed in-house and EE has engaged with the relevant stakeholders (e.g. Advisory Group members, Nation of Sanctuary colleagues, REACH+ Working Group (ESOL hubs in Wales) and the Welsh Government Ukraine support team). A presentation was developed by Golley Slater to mirror the styling/imagery of the presentation in the other toolkit and a copy of the final version will be distributed.

Members to note progress made and agreed the closure of completed Objectives 6 and 7.

1. **CQFW Review 2020 – open recommendations**

* Recommendation 10 – consider future management options for the CQFW including potential transfer to an outside agency.
* Recommendation 13a – Consider who should be responsible for funding and management of RPL in Wales in future.

SG noted these recommendations remain open pending the establishment of the CTER, now timetabled for 1 August 2024. Following the establishment of the CTER, and prior to the October Interim CQFW Advisory Group meeting, conversations will have taken place with the CTER on how relationships will work between various partner organisations and explore proposals to agree a collective steer.

Members provided some comments:

RM queried if Recommendation 10 only related to the implementation of CQFW as it was important that it did. SG agreed that was correct and noted that subject to conversations the Advisory Group will continue in its current role/capacity.

JP queried Recommendation 13a and the funding element of RPL. SG acknowledged the inter-connectivity between funding and management of RPL in terms of ongoing conversations with the CTER and specific reference to RPL in the Statement of Priorities. SG stated that this could potentially result in different recommendations, however we shouldn’t pre-determine this. JP commented that this was a fundamental question that needs to be asked, if we are to realise ambitions of the CQFW. RM agreed with JPs comments. SG added there is some budget to put towards RPL to build the knowledge base and research and it’s important to recognise the role of the CTER as the funder for tertiary education and feed into that.

LM queried if there was CQFW Advisory Group representation on the CTER Quality Commission Board that is being established in relation to RPL. SG added that CO’N is a member of the Advisory Group and queried if that link was sufficient or do we need to put forward a proposal to the Quality Committee. NH updated that the first meeting of the Quality Committee will take place in a couple of weeks’ time and the focus is on bringing it together, information sharing and knowledge building. RPL will be considered as part of the whole system, but not specifically on the initial agenda. NH updated that it would be an issue the Committee needs to advise on but once the board has met and a clearer view. The Remit of CTER is broader than HEFCW, FE and other sectors and is not able to provide any guidance on RPL currently as HEFCW is trying to get a clear view of everything across the post-16 system.

AG noted that CO’N would be up to date on discussions on RPL as she attended the 5 Country Meeting in January and RPL was a major topic of discussion.

SG updated members on the Welsh Government restructure, a new Tertiary Education Directorate (TED) has been established with 3 new divisions:

1) Strategy and Funding, headed up by SG and responsible for budget, sponsorship functions for both the CTER and student loan company, as well as a strategy function that looks at work across the whole Directorate.

2) Learner Experience, responsible for all policy areas that directly impact on learners including workforce policy and international programmes, lifelong learning, and learner engagement code that is part of the early work of CTER.

3) Learner Pathways, responsible for qualifications, 16-19 Curriculum and the Seren Programme. CQFW policy responsibility will sit within the Learner Pathways Division, and a handover process will be undertaken in the next couple of months.

Members agreed that Recommendations 10 and 13a will remain open to allow for conversations with the CTER and an update will be provided at the next CQFW Advisory Group meeting.

**Action:**

GE to table item at the Interim October meeting.

1. **CQFW Framework Alignment contract 2024-25**

EE advised that the former Minister for Education and Welsh Language agreed to extend the CQFW Alignment contract with ColegauCymru for 2024-25. The extended contract will run from 1 April 2024–31 March 2025. The focus of requirements will remain on providing advice/representation to support continued framework alignment and supporting the establishment for recommendations and policy position on RPL. Following cabinet re-shuffle CQFW responsibility sits with Lynne Neagle MS, Cabinet Secretary for Education. AS informed members that ColegauCymru is happy to continue to support this activity and the implementation of the CQFW.

Members noted the contract has been extended and that continuity will be maintained.

1. **Operational Objectives 2024-25 – Paper 06**

EE summarised the proposed objectives for 2024-25 as outlined in Paper 6. The overall CQFW budget of £53,000 is made up of £20,000 for CQFW alignment and £33,000 for CQFW maintenance.

Objectives 1-3 are recurring (updates to CQFW materials, animation and e-module hosting).

Propose Objectives 4 and 5 continue:

Objective 4: Ensure the CQFW continues to support the recognition of prior learning and facilitates the understanding and comparison of international qualifications. This objective links to cost of the UK ENIC Membership if we want to renew at the end of this year.

Objective 5: Agree skills recognition management high-level principles and share with the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) once established.

A paper will be circulated to members to agree the HLPs before sharing with the CTER.

JA proposed including an item relating to responding to enquiries (mailbox /offender learning/enquiries from policy teams) as these are important and time consuming to deal with. EE agreed with JA.

EE advised the bulk of the CQFW budget remains available. SG has already referred to the restructuring and EE and GE will continue to support another policy area but will continue to support the Advisory Group until resource is identified. Mindful of the fact that the new lead for CQFW may take a different viewpoint, EE didn’t want to commit too much at this time. However, as noted in Paper 6, EE has put forward the following suggestions and happy to seek views:

* Develop rough guides (Ukrainian, Syrian and Afghan) on refugee qualifications in the context of the CQFW. (Scotland and Ireland have developed similar guides and may be useful for WW who deal with a lot of enquiries it may be useful).
* Ongoing communications work to promote CQFW but with a focus on learners. Suggestion is to target teachers, lecturers and careers service, where the CQFW is useful during their learner journey.

Members provided the following comments:

JP queried the timeline for the new CQFW team and the risk involved as losing a lot of knowledge. EE responded that the team is happy to continue to caretake and has developed a comprehensive handover pack. The CQFW won’t be left stranded and hoping that this restructuring will be positive and there may be further opportunities to do more. SG added that recruitment to key posts in that division is ongoing and want the process to be as seamless as possible.

SD queried who EE was liaising with at Working Wales (WW) regarding the development of the CQFW Toolkit in relation to refugees. EE confirmed she was liaising with a Careers Wales policy official in the Welsh Government. Following the purchase of the UK ENIC membership, EE now has access to the database and is arranging to meet with WW colleagues. There are 10 licences and 8 will be available for the WW team to access. EE added the referral service is useful and will continue for anyone wanting a statement or transcript to take to an educational institution or employer, providing comparisons to UK qualifications. WW have access to charitable bundles through Welsh Government.

**Actions:**

* Members to consider wider objectives/budget and submit suggestion to EE.
* EE to circulate recommendations for HLP once received from ColegauCymru.
* EE to consider new objective proposed by JA.

1. **UK ENIC TRASE reports**

EE provided an update.

UKENIC oversee comparison of international qualifications. EE has shared with members the UKENIC Tracking Refugee Applications for Study or Employment in the UK (TRASE UK). The project gathered feedback on the impact of a refugee or someone seeking sanctuary in obtaining a Statement of Comparability of their qualifications. The report was also shared with internal policy officials. The report noted the findings were positive, but some learning points were identified from a CQFW policy point:

UKENIC is offering statements on credits for incomplete qualifications and EE suggested there may be an opportunity to share the example Statement of Comparability within the FE/HE sector in Wales to inform RPL processes. The report from UKENIC notes that feedback was mixed and that some employers value the information provided but some disregard it. It contains a recommendation to promote UKENIC and the Statement of Comparability service to employers, so the information is given due regard when assessing employment applications.

EE suggested there is scope for promotion around UKENIC and there may be an opportunity to consider working in collaboration with UKENIC to promote to employers in Wales e.g. UKENIC information session, video, work with Business Wales advisors.

CS noted that Social Care Wales receive queries about incomplete qualifications.

1. **UK Veterans Bill**

EE provided an update on new legislation which intends to place on a Statutory footing the current UK-wide Veterans Strategy. Publication of the Bill is intended to cover the whole of the UK is expected circa May 2024. The Employment section of the Bill will enable civilian employers and regulators to recognise and formally acknowledge the qualifications, capabilities and experience veterans have acquired in the military without needing requalification. The legislation proposes a duty is placed on the UK Armed Forces to automatically provide a transcript to each service leaver of their qualifications, at the end of their service. The transcript will provide a record of military qualifications, training and recognised skills which can be understood within the civilian economy such as regulators, employers, and academic institutions.

Peter Kellam is the Welsh Govt. official if any members wish to find out more. [Peter.Kellam@gov.wales](mailto:Peter.Kellam@gov.wales)

Scotland also has a military Skills Discovery Tool and PW added that this is a co-project between the SCQF, MoD and Skills Development Scotland and allows veterans, or those just about to leave, to understand the range of qualifications and skills they have developed during service and benchmark against the SCQF to build up a skills profile. A similar scheme operates in Ireland (TOBAR) and using RPL processes enabled them to achieve qualifications that would normally take a couple of years. A link to the SCQF RPL resources are also on the ColegauCymru website (link below).

[Support for Veterans | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (scqf.org.uk)](https://scqf.org.uk/support/support-for-individuals/support-for-veterans/)

[RPL Resources (colleges.wales)](https://www.colleges.wales/en/page/rpl-resources)

AS added SCQF also run a School Ambassador Programme (link below) and involves a school in using a credit framework and is a good way of introducing youngsters to the credit framework and its possible uses.

[School Ambassador Programme | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (scqf.org.uk)](https://scqf.org.uk/support/support-for-educators-and-advisers/school-ambassador-programme/#:~:text=The%20SCQF%20School%20Ambassador%20programme%20offers%20schools%20the,and%20giving%20equality%20between%20vocational%20and%20academic%20qualifications.)

**9. Any other business**

The Chair asked members if there were any other areas of business to discuss and none were received.

1. **Next Meeting**

The Chair asked members to note the date of the next meeting – Tuesday 15 October 2024.