MINUTES

# CQFW Advisory Group Meeting

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| **Date:** | **Time:** | **Venue:** |
| 15 October 2024 | 10:30 – 12.00 | Virtual – MS Teams |

**PRESENT**

Adrian Sheehan (AS) – ColegauCymru

Nicola Hunt (NH) – Medr

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)

Tim Opie (TO) – Welsh Local Government Association

Chris Laity (CL) – Universities Wales

Donna Hooper (DH) – Adult Learning Community Network

Fiorella Topazio (FT) – Qualifications Wales

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

Jo Trott (JT) – Welsh Government

Emma Evans (EE) – Welsh Government

Gail Evans (GE) – Welsh Government

**APOLOGIES**

Cliona O’Neill (CO’N) – Medr

Sarah John (SJ) – ASL Training, representing NTfW

Jon Day (JD) – Social Care Wales

Jeff Protheroe (JP) – ColegauCymru

1. **Welcome & Introductions**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Jo Trott, new Deputy Director for Learner Pathways Division.

1. **Minutes and actions from previous meeting – 30 April 2024 – Paper 01**

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

Meeting – 30 April 2024 - Actions

* Update Terms of Reference (GE) – Completed
* Update wording in e-brochure (GE) – *Ongoing*
* Advisory Group members to inform Welsh Government of interest in Republic of Ireland (RoI) Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) presentation *– No requests were received.*
* Table outstanding recommendations for interim October meeting (GE) Completed – *agenda item 5.*
* Advisory Group members to consider wider objectives/budget and submit suggestions to Welsh Government (EE) – *Outstanding* - n*o suggestions/comments have been received – agenda Item 3.*
* Circulate RPL recommendations once received from ColegauCymru (EE) – *Completed – agenda item 4.*
* Consider new objective proposed by JA (EE) – *Completed, added to list of 2024/25 operational objectives.*

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

1. **Operational Objectives 2024/25 – update on progress – Oral update**

The Chair reminded members that 6 Objectives were agreed for 2024/25. GE provided an update against Objectives 1-3 and 6 and EE summarised progress on 4-5.

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

* The CQFW 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 updated accordingly. The e-brochure update is still outstanding and will be recirculated to Members for review. Materials will be uploaded onto the Business Wales pages, currently in transition to mirror Welsh Government format, as well as CQFW webpage. CQFW Guides for Employers/ Learners (inc. Welsh translations) have been updated. The CQFW webpage is currently being reviewed to ensure all content is up to date.

**Action:**

* GE to update wording within the e-brochure and send to AG members for light touch review.

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

* The CQFW Animation has been updated and awaiting upload to the webpage. The e-learning module has been reviewed and GE will consider further comments received from e-brochure to feed in.

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

* Renewed to end March 2025.

Objective 4: Ensure the CQFW continues to support RPL and facilitates the understanding and comparison of international qualifications (EE)

EE reminded members that this is an ongoing/recurring objective to ensure and demonstrate continued support of the Advisory Group in relation to the CQFW action in the Anti Racist Wales Action Plan and noted the following points:

* The new Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan action proposed this year is very similar to earlier actions and relates to maintaining and promoting framework alignment to support sanctuary seekers to have their qualifications recognised.
* Referencing between the CQFW and the European Qualifications Framework remains valid and to support this objective a communications toolkit for Advisors to Sanctuary Seekers/People Seeking Sanctuary was published and shared in May with a wide range of stakeholders. The toolkit promotes the benefits of the CQFW to understand and compare international qualifications.
* Separately, WG has purchased membership of the UK ENIC International Comparisons database and provides 10 licences, 8 of which have been allocated to Careers Wales Advisors. Initial feedback is that the database will be useful for colleagues and help them to assess if an application for a Statement of Comparability is warranted. In terms of statistics, in the first quarter of 2024-25 (April-June) 90 Statement of Comparability applications were made on behalf of customers.

Objective 5: Agree skills recognition management high level principles with the purpose of sharing with Medr once established

* This will be discussed under agenda item 4 as linked to Recognition of Prior Learning.

Objective 6: Manage stakeholder enquiries relating to the CQFW

* Consider new objective proposed by JA – *Completed, added to list of 2024/25 operational objectives.*

In addition to managing operational objectives, the Chair noted that further objectives were proposed by Welsh Government at the April meeting. Members had an action to consider the CQFW budget and submit comments/suggestions as this would dictate the majority of how the remaining CQFW budget would be allocated – approx. £25,000. The overall CQFW budget of £53,000 is made up of £20,000 for CQFW alignment and £33,000 for CQFW maintenance. No comments/emails were received. GE noted that amendments to the e-learning module and e-brochure would result in a small amount of spend.

SG updated members that Welsh Government staffing resource is yet to be confirmed following internal restructuring and transfer of CQFW policy to the Learner Pathways Division. SG proposed that a decision on spend, and additional objectives be paused until Welsh Government staffing is confirmed to allow that team to consider/comment during the rest of the financial year.

Members provided the following comments to utilise remaining budget:

* AS noted, that Scotland have lots of examples of active use of qualifications framework and RPL and to consider spending remaining budget on enhancing visibility of CQFW, to demonstrate its use and encourage more take up.
* CL was supportive of AS proposal and suggested providing a visible example of what works and has a tangible effect on a particular group, e.g. school or healthcare setting.
* DH queried if funding is available to develop a training package for providers.
* JI noted in terms of Medr establishment, it would be timely to focus on actions that bridge educational opportunities and overcome barriers to learnability. SG noted this aligns with ministerial priorities.
* RM said Agored produced a specification of training for people to undertake RPL, but no one ever used it other than Cardiff Met. who trialled it and may be worth looking at what was/wasn’t useful from that exercise.
* SG will take away comments/suggestions. JT and her team will discuss feasibility on suggestions raised in terms of what they can deliver with the remaining time available and update the AG when they have clarity.

**Actions:**

* Members to note progress of 6 agreed operational objectives.
* Members agreed to pause 2024-25 budget until Welsh Government staffing is confirmed.
* EE to find out more about RPL assessor training (Agored Cymru).
* Jo Trott and team to discuss feasibility of additional objective proposal in terms of what it can deliver with time/resource available. Update to be sent to AG members when clarified.

**4. Recognition of Prior Learning**

The Chair reminded members that an objective was agreed for 2024-25 to ‘*agree skills recognition management high level principles with the purpose of sharing with the CTER once established’* and AS provided a progress update. Members were asked to note progress and agree next steps.

The report suggests the study visit was a worthwhile exercise and highlighted the impressive resources developed in Scotland. The establishment of Medr will provide an opportunity to explore a centralised and consistent approach to RPL in Wales and the development of a national strategic approach. To note there is currently no national RPL policy in Scotland despite the existence of an RPL strategy.

Members discussed RPL in further detail. AS noted, that there is a great deal of RPL practice in Wales, but this tends to exist in individual silos. There is widespread acknowledgement of the value of RPL, and the Advisory Group could contribute to developments. AS suggested that the proposed high-level principles could raise the profile and standardise the use of RPL. CL noted that principle 4 within an HE setting should be compliant with the UK quality code. JA and AS considered principle 6 and whilst implied, it would be helpful to include detail on competency level. Members discussed currency and it was felt that principle 2 covered this. Members felt that principle 1 recognised different types of learning and in line with widening participation, it offers flexibility including progression from vocational courses to higher education qualifications. FT noted that in terms of regulations Awarding Bodies are permitted to use their discretion whether to permit RPL, linked to RPL statements [guidance-for-awarding-bodies-on-recognition-of-prior-learning.pdf (qualifications.wales)](https://qualifications.wales/media/3rvfzfn2/guidance-for-awarding-bodies-on-recognition-of-prior-learning.pdf). Detail on this is to be added to the HLP notes.

JA noted Agored considers RPL on a case-by-case basis. NH suggested learner perspectives should also be sought on the HLP via NUS Wales and noted that Medr intends to develop a workforce forum in the medium term. SG agreed to help facilitate the link with NUS. Members acknowledged the importance of continued engagement with the Learning and Work Institute, in particular regarding “lost” learners who would benefit from RPL.

SG reflected on the general consensus from members regarding the HLP subject to minor changes, and mindful of timing due to Medr consulting on its strategic plan, it would appear sensible to progress and maintain momentum on RPL activity. Members acknowledged this is a complex area of work particularly in relation to the autonomous institutions, however, a consistent approach is required which is likely to be incremental.

SG proposed the Advisory Group forward a letter to the CEO of Medr to encourage ongoing engagement and conversation on RPL.

**Actions:**

WG to contact NUS Wales.

AS to amend HLP content in line with feedback received from members.

EE to draft letter to CEO, Medr on RPL progress.

**5. CQFW Review 2020 – outstanding recommendations**

The Chair noted 2 recommendations remain open and EE provided a recap of the history of these recommendations. Members discussed these at the April meeting and agreed to keep them open pending the establishment of Medr in August.

**Recommendation 10: *Consider future management options for the CQFW including potential transfer to an outside agency.***

* The review proposed that WG should retain policy responsibility due to CQFW reach/impact across multiple government departments. Comments were also made at our April Advisory Group meeting about the importance of this Advisory Group continuing in its current role/capacity.
* Longer term it has been acknowledged there is potential to transfer some operational functions and delivery of CQFW operational objectives to an outside agency, e.g. meeting secretariat and project management of projects.
* With the establishment of Medr the group kept the recommendation open to consider at a later point.

**Recommendation 13a: *Consider who should be responsible for funding and management RPL in Wales in future.***

* The view of the group that Medr would be best placed to consider RPL. Medr statement of priorities includes a requirement for it to *“consider how to incorporate RPL to facilitate the movement of learners throughout the tertiary sector*”.
* To note that Cliona O’Neill and Nicola Hunt have transferred from HEFCW to Medr and CO’N will remain the CQFW lead.
* RPL high level principles are linked to this and as per discussion above will be presented to Medr in due course for consideration.

SG acknowledged that no conclusion had been reached and further discussion/consideration will be needed on future activity, including conversation with Medr on RPL. An update will be provided at the April 2025 meeting. LM noted that Medr is still in transition and NTfW is engaged in high level discussions. SG confirmed that Medr will be picking up the HEFCW role within the CQFW partnership. Members to note discussion.

**6. Five Country Qualifications and Frameworks Group Meeting**

AS summarised the role of the group, qualification regulators meet to exchange information on qualifications and ensure there is continued transferability between different jurisdictions. From a Wales perspective 3 bodies attend: Qualifications Wales, Medr and AS represents CQFW. Rather than different organisations in each country providing update papers they have suggested produce a one country presentation. Opportunity for attendees to take stock of changes happening across the UK and Ireland and reflect on the significance and impact of these for and on our country’s qualifications systems and regulatory processes, and any learnings. The RoI acts as a conduit between Wales and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). EE noted CQFW items - RPL update, partnership changes (Medr) and WG staffing changes.

**Action:**

Members to note and confirm any other items to include in Wales’s presentation by emailing EE/AS.

1. **Any other business**

The Chair asked members if there were any other areas of business to discuss. SG noted that following announcement of portfolio changes, responsibility for CQFW now falls with the Minister for FE and HE (Vicki Howells MS). LM noted that the apprenticeship portfolio sat with Jack Sargeant, Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership. SG advised that Lynne Neagle is Cabinet Secretary for Education and that it is important to maintain relationships across portfolios.

The Learner Pathways Division staffing changes will be confirmed in due course. In the meantime, both EE and GE will continue to caretake.

1. **Next Meeting**

The Chair asked members to note the date of the next meeting – **Tuesday 29 April 2025.**

**Action:**

GE to circulate meeting invitation.