

**NTFW Essential Skills Wales Working Group**

**Minutes 8th October 2025**

Present South: Lisa Harris Talk training (Chair)

Andrew Shipway Qualification Wales

Nathan Evans Qualification Wales

Naomi Davies AMG

Amanda Kelly C&G (AMG)

Matthew Friend Century

Ollie Bailey Century

Nicola Murray ALS

Sam Azzopardi ISA Training

Eloise Crout ITEC

Lynsey Cremin ACT

Ceri Griffiths ACT

Natalie Evans ACT

Ani Davies Urdd

Edina Raboczi ALS Training

Dawn Rice Portal Training

Jade Jones ISA Training

Huw Barnes ACT Training

Karen Crockett CAVC

Kim Ford Portal Training

Lindsay Sandall TSW

Claire West Learning Curve Group

Donna Heath Cambrian

Hayley Phipps JGR

Nicolette Powell Apprenticeship Wales

Apologies South: Sharon Cook JISC

Adam Serpell Talk training

Claire Morris Cambrian

Lynne Morris Educ8

Julie Maughan ACT

Sera Loveluck-Frank ACT

Sioned Roberts Urdd

Beverley Joyce ALS

Lisa Fflur Urdd

Michelle Watkins Educ8

Michelle Birkin T2

Claire Badham Babcock

Janine Massey ACT

Beverley Cullen ALS

Leah Bennett NPTC

Heidi Gunter ITEC

Jenny Brophy Learning Curve

Anne Morgan T2

Kim Jenkins ALS

 Lydia Harris JGR

Present North: Moya Seaman GLLM

Jennifer Pitts Cambria

Chris Moss GLLM

Apologies North: Alun Sibeon Coleg Cambria

Amanda Morgan Cambria

Glenda Roberto GLLM

Julie Evans NW Training

Natalie Owens-Jones Glyndwr

Justine Le Comte GLLM

Claire Howells Cambria

Present West: Alison Newby Ceredigion

Apologies West: Melisa Elek Ceredigion

LH opened the meeting and welcomed Andrew Shipway (Qualification Wales), Oliver Stacey (Qualification Wales), Naomi Davies (new Chair AMG), Matthew Friend (Century) and Ollie Bailey (Century).

LH gave apologies for absence. Sharon Cook (JISC) was unable to attend due to another engagement but has provided LH with an update.

LH confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting and went through actions/agenda.

**Notes from last meeting**

1. **WEST**

LH advised that for Medr’s Apprenticeship Commissiong Programme Wales Framework programme specification and guidance was updated in August 2025 with new guidance for WEST. [Apprenticeship Commissioning Programme Wales Framework 2025-26 V8](https://www.medr.cymru/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Apprenticeship-Commissioning-Programme-Wales-Framework-2025-26.pdf)

LH stated that she had received responses to the WEST 2.0 issues raised in the previous meeting from Tribal:

1. Issues with passwords, plus the new authentication method must be used.

**Tribal response** – The authentication on offer in WEST2 is delivered via Azure B2C and as standard (and as part of any Cyber Essential Plus certification) requires each user to login using MFA either via an authenticator app or, via email. This is the same for WEST1, albeit delivered via different technology platform.

1. Problems searching for learners (you will need to use one of their names) and this is very slow. Some resources are not available and there are glitches with answers i.e. saying they are incorrect, but they are correct, therefore, manual support must be utilised.

**Tribal response** – The performance was reporting by Cambrian as part of their migration, and we have since begun work on optimizing some of the code of WEST2 to ensure a better experience. It has not been reported to Tribal that there are any glitches at this point. If more details can be

provided we are happy to look into them.

1. Can learner results be transferred from WEST 1 to WEST 2 from one provider to another?

**Tribal response** – The WEST2 migration process migrates all WEST1 users from WEST1, into WEST2, including learner results. Within WEST2, it is possible to move a learner, and their associated data, from one provider to another.

1. When will WEST 1 stop working?

**Tribal response** –There is no definitive date for this as yet however we are progressing with our migration rollout and are looking for 90% of WEST1 organisations to be utilising WEST2 by the end of 2025.

1. **Staff undertaking Essential Skills Wales qualifications**

ND (AMG) advised that the Level 3 EDLS teacher task is available in Welsh. ND stated that it takes a long time for AMG to develop a bank of tasks, so they require a better understanding of the demand for both Communication and Application of Number staff-controlled tasks. ND asked providers to confirm numbers for follow up.

Centres working collaboratively on end test invigilation

ND confirmed that AMG have agreed that centres can work collaboratively on invigilating end tests for each other as this is a localised agreement, when sharing technology (laptops), normal security guidelines will apply.

1. **Bilingual Tasks**

Having no bilingual tasks may be challenging as some learners prefer to undertake their tasks in both Welsh and English e.g. speaking and listening in Welsh and written tasks in English. MS stated that there are several learners who wish to have their certificate recognising they have completed their qualification bilingually. OS said this was a good point to raise and he will look into this.

AS stated, that in the original proposal QW were looking at two separate qualifications (Cymraeg and English) but this will now be one qualification with recognition of the language.

1. **Andrew Shipway – Qualification Wales’s Essential Skills qualifications review update**

AS (QW) confirmed that a lot of things have changed since the initial response, QW have listened to Stakeholders and the focus of QW’s amendment proposals are now more manageable. AS confirmed that QW have drafted purpose names for qualifications which draws on the purpose and transferable skills, but these will need to be amended.

AS confirmed that there is a more finished product and consultation will start at the beginning of November and will close February 2026, responses will be reviewed, and publication is scheduled for May 2026.

AS stated there has been some good conversations on the high-level content on what stays and what goes, and draft versions have been produced which shows better progress in levels, this will be discussed in detail in the consultation.

Assessment

AS advised, there was disappointment in the original proposals and concerns were raised about the manageability, so QW have taken this on board. There is still a validity issue and QW will need to look at what we need to assess and the reliability, this is continually evolving.

Application of Number – Levels 1 & 2

Two assessments

* 1. Current test on screen – on demand – auto marked with a paper alternative – calculator and non-calculator (calculator will be available on screen with calculator questions in the test). Feedback from Stakeholders confirmed that non-calculator is still important. Paper based tests for AON will require invigilators to manage this process for the calculator/non calculator questions (like Functional Skills).
* 2. Externally set test – on screen – on demand – paper alternative (TBC) – multi marked questions with a calculator allowed throughout. QW to confirm if this will be marked by the centre or AO after looking at how much content is in the test.
* Increase in test time but overall, a third of the assessment time.
* Two end tests may be difficult for some centres to manage but there will be an opportunity to schedule these on the same day.
* Financial literacy has been added, and the planning has been taken out.
* Questions will be set in a range of contexts e.g. economic, financial like the new GCSE’s.
* AS believes the GLH will be the same.
* QW will continue to work through the high-level proposals.

Communication – (excluding entry levels)

Two assessments with two parts

* Part 1 – Reading and test for comprehension with two writing tasks – externally set on demand. Duration 1.5 hours – 30 minutes reading and 1 hour writing.
* Part 2 – Speaking and listening which will be similar times to the current ESWs which will be internally marked.
* Communication will remain as one qualification and this will be written in the Design Principles.

AS confirmed that Stakeholders only wanted to see one task, but employers would like to see two different pieces of writing.

Concerns raised:

* Externally marked tests which could lead to a delay in results – QW will need to work through this and look at a turnaround time.
* Writing task – discrimination of learners who cannot type fast if online - AS will follow this up and stated that not everything will be completed online, some things will require paper.
* AI will be an issue – QW to look at logistics and rules.

Digital Literacy

* This qualification does not lead itself very well to be assessed by an end test and will need to continue as a task, but QW will consider the length of task and reduce timing.
* The structured discussion has been removed and replaced with an onscreen short test (no more than 30 minutes) which will be more manageable in assessing. Feedback received from Stakeholders confirmed that the SD is not working and is difficult to manage.

NE (QW) advised that there is a sampling approach of practical element which could be targeted but this might not be the best approach, QW are trying to explore prior to consultation. The content is broad enough to keep the relevant volume of content very similar; this is flexible for a practical task by the AO and contextulised.

Concerns raised:

* Currently part 4 (review/evaluation) is time consuming for the learner and takes the longest.
* Number of people involved in group collaboration – will there be options and flexibility on numbers? QW to confirm approval criteria with AO’s and feedback.
* Security is a challenge due to live materials.
* Needs to be fit for purpose and not prescriptive.
* Will AI go into this? NE advised that QW have strengthened this and QW will need to consider and explore with all AO’s.
1. **Asset Management Group update – Naomi Davies**

ND confirmed that AMG carried out their test performance review meetings on EAONS and ECOMMS confirmatory test papers throughout August and September 25. The next review is due to take place in February and March 2026.

In November 2025 AMG have their standardisation meeting which will run over 2 days and will look at qualifications and controlled tasks. AMG will look at good practice and common areas of weakness.

Discussions with QW with developments are now being held separately with AO’s and not directly with AMG.

AMG’s next meeting is scheduled for 23rd October 2025 and if there is anything you wish raised, please contact Naomi.

1. **JISC update**

Sharon Cook gave apologies for the meeting but provided an update on JISC activities.

**Medr Projects**

Medr has asked Jisc to support the development of an **evidence base to inform future funding and** **strategy for digital learning across the tertiary sector in Wales**.  The projects for 25/26 are:

* + **Evaluation and next steps for the Digital 2030 framework** – a significant project to review and make recommendations for updates to the Digital 2030 framework.
	+ **Use of AI across the tertiary sector** – to produce an assessment of AI needs and priorities across the tertiary sector in Wales. This will deliver recommendations for collaborative activities and identify differentiation for individual sectors.
	+ **AI pilots for apprenticeship providers** – working closely with FEIs and ITPs to pilot AI resources to support delivery of apprenticeships aligned to Welsh curriculum and language.
	+ **Digital learning needs of apprenticeship providers** – a piece of work with FEIs and ITPs to surface on the digital learning needs, interests, and priorities of apprenticeship providers.

Alongside direct engagement with institutions, we will also work closely with **ColegauCymru, NTfW, Qualifications Wales, Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol**, and other key partners.

**Essential digital skills question set**

Jisc are delighted to announce that our new 'essential digital skills' question set is now live and ready for you to use as part of the [Jisc building digital capability discovery tool](https://digitalcapability.jisc.ac.uk/our-service/discovery-tool/).   What makes 'essential digital skills' different?

* + Pared back text and simplified language
	+ New short explainer videos that bring the concepts to life
	+ A simplified but still personalised action plan (report)
	+ Smaller but focused resource banks

Jisc are very proud of this question set and keen to know what you think - it's live now and waiting for your feedback. Senior consultant Andrew McFadyen has written an accompanying [blog](https://digitalcapability.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2025/09/29/essential-digital-skills/) about the development of the concept thinking behind this new question set.

**Jisc Connect More conference**

The **December 2025 Connect More** and the **call for speakers form is now live**.  If you think you might have an interesting session idea, please [submit here](https://www.jisc.ac.uk/forms/submit-your-programme-session-ideas-for-connect-more).  The deadline for session submission is Friday 10 October so it’s fast approaching! We will also keep the form open in case anyone wants to submit a session idea for the Connect More May 2026 event.

**Making the Most of Existing Tools**

Jisc have produced some top tips based on the findings from a recent project, Making the Most of Existing Tools, funded by Medr.  We will share a different tip in the fortnightly update over the next 8 weeks. **If you don’t receive the fortnightly update and would like to let me know and I’ll get you added on!**  Here’s a sneak peek at Top Tip 1 - Learn how organisations are using digital design tools for engaging and inclusive learning - [Top Tip1:digital design tools](https://webmedia.company.ja.net/content/html/training/usingexistingdigitaltools/english/index.html#/lessons/uNDkkvn8JmWQLhFuXCM23SJjhbKTBWPO)

**Wales AI Community**

The community is going into its third year and welcomes Sue Attewell, Head of AI at Jisc, as a new Co-Chair.  Sue will be a great asset to the community, supporting our work and representing AI in Wales as we pursue our goals, with continued engagement from Jisc AI and Medr.

We will be continuing with our theme of “Mind the gap, bridge the gap, close the gap”  but focusing on assessment and AI for this academic year.  To join the community please complete this quick[Join Wales AI community form](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=TTn5SBSKJ02CpvNfEjYSBXD_jcu8YmJOgAnBbRDMenBUQ01ZM0JHNzhJUVdSTkpCUzRVT05CRERVRi4u).

If you would like to look at what the community worked on last year please take a look at this [Padlet](https://padlet.com/catherineevans5/wales-ai-community-2025-accessibility-theme-6tx6fu4mt4ppr44j) with all the resources from the June event, including the  [Over a Brew Podcast](https://youtu.be/JgZWY225wnY?feature=shared) where Tibi Dancovici talks to Marian Jebb, and Rhys Daniels about tertiary education, AI and the importance of collaborative work in the sector.

If you have any questions or comments about the above, please get in touch with Sharon Cook (Sharon.Cook@jisc.ac.uk).

1. **Matthew Friend/Ollie Bailey – Century Tech presentation**

Matthew Friend and Ollie Bailey from Century Tech and stated that Century Tech is an award-winning assessment, teaching and learning AI platform for independent training providers.

* Initial Assessment to establish the correct working towards level for your learners
* AI powered personalisation to support and encourage learning
* High quality Functional and Essential Skills courses designed to give each learner a unique learning plan to improve skills and understanding

Century was founded in 2013, and we quickly realised our platform would need tailoring to the adult and education FE marks.

* Launched Functional Skills and GCSE courses for Post-16 providers in England
* Introduced our Smart Initial Assessment allowing providers to assess current working towards level of learners
* Developed an API to allow more custom integrations for providers
* Work with over 200 post-16 providers in England

The Welsh access project at Century launched the Welsh aligned initial assessments and curriculum. Century worked with colleges to start using with learners across multiple departments and subjects. Gathered feedback and thoughts from those taking part to align next steps.

**CENTURY mapped the below content for the project**

* **Initial assessment** in Communication (English) and Application of Number (English and Welsh)
* **ESW content available** in: Application of Number (L3 - E1), Communication Skills (L3 - E1) and Digital Literacy Skills (L1/E3)
* **WJEC GCSE** available for (F/I/H)

OB provided a demonstration of the assessment tool to the group.

If anyone is interested in a further demonstration or to discuss a pilot, please contact Matthew matthew.friend@century.tech

**AOB**

**C&G Essential Skills Qualification Handbook update**

LH advised that C&G sent an email on 18th September 2025 confirming the C&G document update for Essential Skills (Wales):

We have transferred the English language version of the Essential Skills qualification into our latest template.

We have taken the opportunity to update some of the information contained in the handbook, including:

* Clarified details around the use of PCs/laptops/tablets/smartphones. See ‘Permitted equipment and resources’ (Section 4.3.7)
* Clarified details around materials that are not permitted to be taken into an assessment, such as planning templates, guides, or checklists. See 'Permitted equipment and resources'. (Section 4.3.7)
* Updated section ‘assistance with controlled tasks’ to cover details such as the use of artificial intelligence (Section 4.3.8)

The Welsh language version of the qualification handbook remains in the original template, and these sections have been included.

The current versions of the Qualification Handbooks that should be used are:

* English: August 2025 v1-11
* Cymraeg: February 2025 v1-2

**Essential Skills Practitioners Event**

Alison Newby confirmed that the next Essential Skills Practitioners event will be held on 10th December 2025, further information to follow. If there any topic suggestions for this event, please contact Alison.

**Date of next meeting: Wednesday, 4th February 2025 at 9.30am**