Qualifications for the Construction and Built Environment Sector

A review of qualifications in Wales, including comparisons with those in Germany, Canada, Australia and New Zealand

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Qualifications Wales

Aim of sector review

To identify whether qualifications, and the qualifications system are meeting the needs of employers and learners in the construction and built environment sector.

Including

- The range and nature of qualifications
- Assessment
- Content including currency
- Comparability
- Efficiency
- Welsh-medium
- Roles of bodies in the system

Scale of publicly fundable Construction related qualifications in Wales

	Number of qualifications	Certifications in Colleges and Training Providers	Certifications in Schools	Total combined certifications
Entry Level	6	233	53	286
Level 1	71	2553	612	3165
Level 1/2	4	12	45	57
Level 2	150	2585	20	2605
Level 3	169	1893	9	1902
Level 4	11	2	0	2
Level 5	3	0	0	0
Level 6	7	0	0	0
Total number	421	7277	740	8017

Methodology

- Involvement of Construction Industry Training Board
- Stakeholder advisory panel
- Interviews and discussion groups – *117+ employers, 70+ others*
- Learner engagement – *focus groups 940 learners*
- Technical review – *23 qualifications, 14 reviewers*
- International comparison work – *Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Germany*
- Online survey

Findings 1 – The qualifications system

- A **non-strategic**, complex, confusing and proliferated qualification system
- **Progression** routes neither clear nor sufficient – dead ends, repetition, gaps
- **Specialisation** too early - core, inter-personal and multi-skills are needed
- Apprenticeships too **short**
- Challenges in **recruiting** able learners
- Lack of **information** for learners, employers and parents
- **Shared apprenticeships** add value for learners and employers
- Learners on apprenticeships do benefit from **learning** programmes
- Learners feel **well supported** by their tutors

Findings 2 – The qualifications

- **Inflexible and not responsive** to the needs of employers and the wider economy
- **Content** is sometimes outdated, irrelevant and/or insufficient
- Poor coverage of skills for **traditional** buildings and **new** buildings/techniques
- The **balance** of theory, practice and real work is not right
- **Assessment** low on validity, reliability, manageability and engagement
- Problems with '**Levels**'
- Internal and External **quality assurance** of assessment inconsistent and/or poor
- Gaps in the technical knowledge and skills of the **assessment workforce**
- Limited assessment through the medium of **Welsh**.

Problems with assessment

- **burden** of assessment
- **language, terminology and format** of knowledge assessments
- **validity** of simulated assessment activities
- organisation and sufficiency of **work-based assessment**
- **availability and validity** of naturally occurring evidence
- **inconsistency** of assessment and quality assurance
- **poor engagement** with employers in the assessment process
- lack of **differentiation** in pass/fail qualifications
- availability and expertise of **assessors**
- availability of **Welsh-medium** assessment.

Problems with Levels

- Significant repetition across levels 1, 2 and 3
- Difference in performance between levels unclear/insignificant
- Level of complexity across different trades not equivalent across the ‘same’ level
- Real progression within a skills area may be represented by broadening or deepening the learner’s skills and knowledge *within* a level rather than progression to the next level
- Equating level 2 vocational qualifications with GCSEs is unhelpful
- Some assumptions about autonomy = supervision
- Mismatch between skills for work and skills for Higher Education.

Problems with Levels

“We are actually assessing vocational students who have chosen a vocational route academically. We are possibly stopping those who could be the best trades people from progression simply because we are judging them on academic values.”

Head of Construction in a Further Education College

International Comparisons

Country/State/ Province	Length of apprenticeship – Carpentry/Joinery and Plumbing/Heating
Wales	Not fixed. Typically 6 to 18 months – employed as an apprentice, 1 day per week in college *(may or may not follow 1-3 years in college – approx. 540 hours per year)*
Germany	3 to 3.5 years Work based and school-based learning.
Canada (Alberta)	4 years 1560 hours per year on-the-job; 8 weeks per year school-based
New Zealand	4 years On-the-job learning supplemented by teaching by tertiary education organisations.
Australia	4 years – continuous on-the-job training. Involvement of regional training organisations.

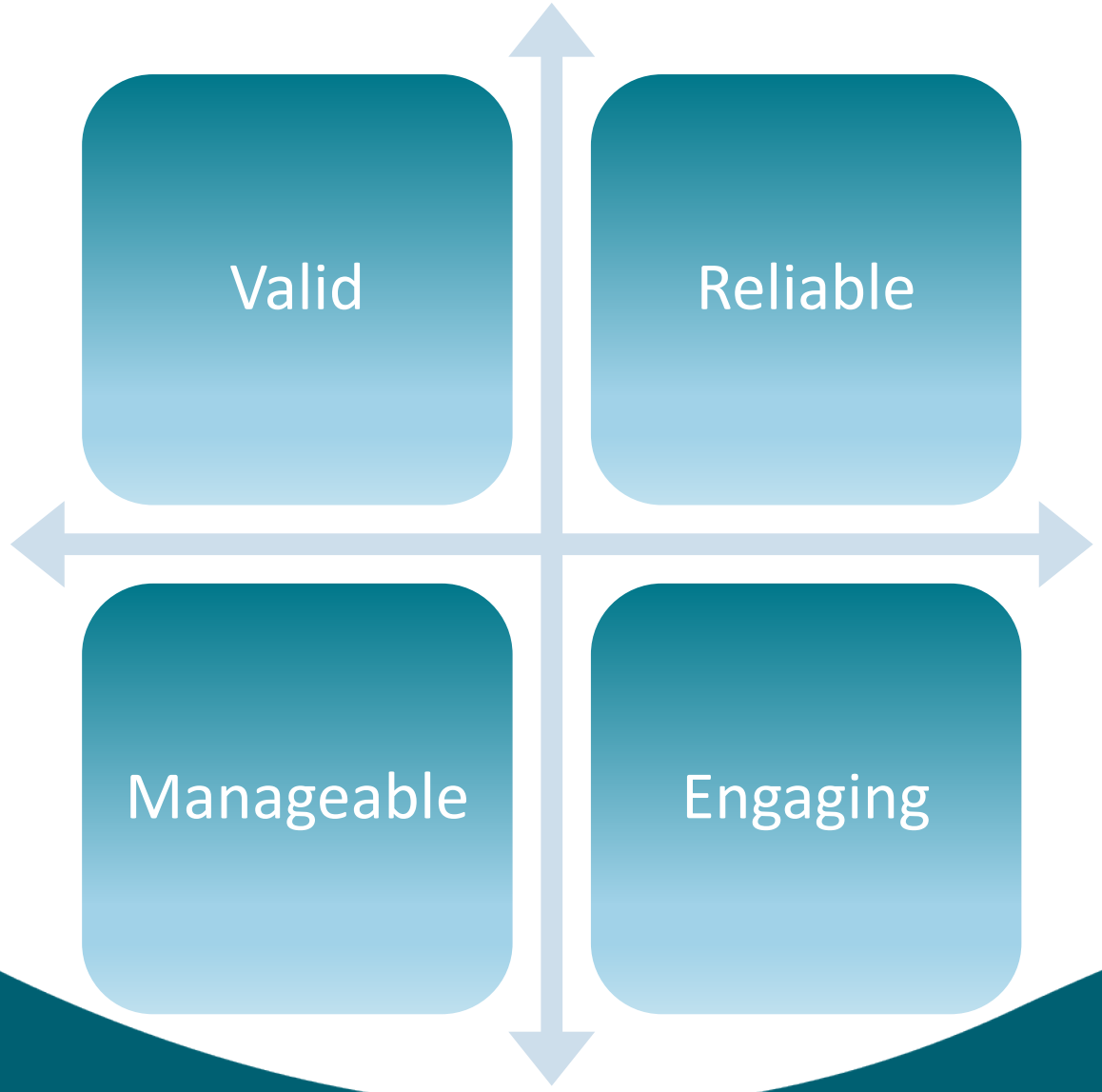
International Comparisons

Country/State/ Province	Type of assessment for apprentices
Wales	Competence-based observation of all skills/portfolio *plus* Technical Diploma – written and practical tests *plus* Gas test (heating) *plus* Literacy and Numeracy
Germany	At end of years 2 and 3: Practical task – either in Chamber or in approved work-based task 3 written exams, including Economic and Social.
Canada	Each year: 2 x 3hr theory exams 1 x practical exam (6 hours in yr 1-3, 26 hours in yr 4)
New Zealand	Competence-based assessment *either on-site or in TEOs, supplemented by documentary evidence*
Australia	Competence-based assessment – 30 units *real, or very closely simulated environment*

Next steps

- Wales currently dependent on qualifications developed for England
- Context of significant change in England
- Considering viable options for reform of CBE qualifications in Wales, to provide a seamless route through from College to apprenticeships, addressing issues in Review
- Consultation to be published in January 2018 on next steps
- For future sector reviews, using a revised model of quality criteria

Model for assessing effectiveness of qualifications



Any questions?

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