

## Wales - Briefing - Packs

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: 10 September 2012 17:53  
To: 'Jeremy Benson'  
Subject: Wales - briefing packs  
Importance: High

Jeremy

Thanks again for this and the call

We are fielding various briefing requests here that are due tonight or tomorrow. Is there anything that you have prepared on the facts of the situation that we could crib, not least to try to ensure we don't across your messaging? For example we have had questions about the history of who told WJEC to do what, when and facts and figures on WJEC including their penetration of the English market - do you have anything like that on the stocks pl?

Any help gratefully received - *Reply Attached*

—Original Message—

From: Jeremy Benson [mailto:Jeremy.Benson@Ofqual.Gov.Uk]  
Sent: 10 September 2012 15:06  
To: [REDACTED]  
Subject: FW: Diane has acknowledged GCSE English Language  
Importance: High

As discussed - to see in confidence

Jeremy

Jeremy Benson  
Deputy Director - Policy, Ofqual  
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Yr Adran Addysg a Sgiliau  
Department for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Glenys Stacey  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ofqual  
Spring Place  
Coventry

10 September 2012

Dear Glenys

#### GCSE English Language

Please find attached a copy of the Welsh Government's report on its investigation into GCSE English Language and the outcomes for candidates in Wales in 2012. It is our intention to publish this report later this afternoon.

The Minister for Education and Skills has had sight of the report and has indicated his intention to accept all the recommendations therein. You will therefore need to be aware that a central finding and key recommendation of the report is that:

"Having considered all the available evidence, it is the conclusion of this investigation that the published provisional outcomes for candidates in Wales for GCSE English Language at Grade C and above, which show a fall of 3.9 percentage points from the equivalent outcomes in 2011, are not secure or supported by any reasonable justification. It is therefore recommended that the Minister for Education and Skills, representing the Welsh Ministers in fulfilling their responsibilities in relation to relevant qualifications as set out in Section 30 of the Education Act 1997, should:

**request that WJEC undertake a regrading of GCSE English Language in order to achieve outcomes that are as similar as possible to the outcomes achieved by candidates in 2011, on the basis that there is no reason to believe that the 2012 Wales cohort was significantly different to the 2011 Wales cohort. It would be strongly preferable for this regrading to be applied to all of WJEC's candidates in both Wales and in England but, in the event of the regulator in England (Ofqual) refusing to endorse this regrading, it should be applied only to candidates in Wales."**

We note the correspondence and discussions that have taken place between Welsh Government officials and Ofqual officials over the last two weeks and we understand that Ofqual's current position is to *not* request a regrade in relation to the GCSE English Language or GCSE English awards. We would like to take this opportunity to re-iterate our preference for a regrade of



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candidates across both England and Wales. However, if you wish to proceed with an option not to regrade in relation to English candidates, we will request that WJEC undertakes a regrading for candidates in Wales alone.

I would be grateful if you would let us know how you wish to proceed, preferably before 3:00pm today though discussions can of course continue beyond this.

I am sure that, like me, you will acknowledge the exceptional and difficult nature of this issue. Our preference is that we should take similar action in both England and Wales. However, we must act in a way that is in the best interests of fairness to candidates in Wales.

I am copying this letter to Roger McCune in CCEA.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'K. Crabtree', with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

**Kate Crabtree**  
Acting Deputy Director  
Qualifications and Learning Division  
Welsh Government

[REDACTED]  
From: [REDACTED] DfE official  
Sent: 01 November 2012 15:48  
To: [REDACTED] DfE official  
Subject: FW: WJEC  
Attachments: WJEC English and English Language GCSEs.docx

This is what followed my request to Jeremy

From: [REDACTED] ofqual official  
Sent: 10 September 2012 18:57  
To: [REDACTED] DfE official  
Cc: Jeremy Benson  
Subject: WJEC

[REDACTED] here's some first lines on WJEC.

I can refine this tomorrow - tell me if there's specific information you need. I'd like an opportunity to check some of the figures at the end - I've taken these from other draft documents on which we've been working.

Thanks  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
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## WJEC English and English Language GCSEs

- WJEC offer GCSEs in England and Wales
- C 60% of the English GCSEs it offers are taken by candidates in England
- It is regulated by both the Welsh Government (the Minister is the Chief Regulator) and Ofqual
- There is an established tradition of the regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (CCEA) working together where the same qualifications are taken in 2 or more of the countries
- Because of relative sizes and resources, Ofqual provides considerable support to the Welsh Government and CCEA to enable them to fulfil their regulatory functions
- 95% candidates in Wales take WJEC English Language GCSEs and 5% take AQA English GCSEs.
- In Wales pupils are not able to take GCSE English – they must take GCSE English Language and English Literature. Schools in England and Northern Ireland have a choice. This is a result of policy differences.
- GCSEs are widely understood across the countries; we have always considered it important that those who take and rely on these qualifications can be assured they are of the same standards wherever the learner who took them was based. This is why they regulators work together to secure a common standard
- Because of the significance of WJEC's share of the GCSE English Language market we considered it essential that the same approach to securing the standard of this qualification as is used for other GCSEs was applied – the comparative outcomes approach
- The comparative outcomes approach makes use of Key Stage 2 national assessment outcomes to inform predictions about GCSE achievements for each year's cohort
- Wales does not use externally set national assessments. It uses teacher assessment instead
- GCSE achievements in Wales are consistently lower than achievements in England and Northern Ireland. Welsh pupils' performance in the PISA international tests confirms there is a gap
- Two regulators' awarding meetings happen each year – one for A and AS levels and one for GCSEs. They are significant meetings. They are attended by the exam board heads and by the three regulators – Ofqual, the Welsh Government and CCEA
- The regulators' role is to challenge any results that look out of line – out of tolerance – either way.
- At the regulator's GCSE awarding meeting, the regulators considered with exam boards their provisional results for all GCSEs for all exam boards.
- There were particular issues with WJEC's English suite which we worked through with the Welsh Government
- There were particular difficulties there because of policy differences between England and Wales about how the subjects were to be combined in schools, because of differences in prior attainment, and prior attainment measures between the English and Welsh cohort and because WJEC's candidature was mostly from English schools, but they were the awarding body for most Welsh schools.

- After an exchange of data and information between WJEC and the two regulators (Ofqual and the Welsh Government), the two regulators wrote to WJEC
- WJEC adjusted its position
- In the case of WJEC it was not the only change made: in 43 of their 46 awards, the provisional results were up on last year's results, and as their cohort base includes a good number of students in England this was out of line with results overall.