

Welsh Curriculum 2022 consultation

Written feedback submitted by Nesta

Nesta strongly welcomes the level of ambition in Wales' curriculum reform and its focus on the development of 'wider skills' alongside high academic standards. Our specific recommendations are:

Recommendations

1. **The Welsh government should provide more detail and guidance around:**
 - a. **How each Area of Learning links to the skills identified in Wales' [wider skills framework](#).**
 - b. **How inspectors will monitor provision for wider skills in schools, and what indicators school leaders should be looking for to know if their provision is of high quality.**
2. **The Welsh government should publish a rationale for the content and organisation of its [wider skills framework](#) and clarify the role and significance of skills grouped at its centre.**
3. **Teachers should be supported to make more effective use of technology. The government should continue the Digital Pioneers programme; offer high quality professional development for teachers; and set up an EdTech testbed to generate and share evidence of what works in technology.**
4. **The Welsh government should consider how it can make its framework for wider skills responsive to changes in the labour market.**

Introduction

1. Nesta is a global innovation foundation that brings bold ideas to life to change the world for good. We are a UK charity that works all over the world, supported by a financial endowment.
2. Through rigorous research and funding programmes, Nesta aims to foster a broader, fairer and smarter education system in the UK. We want to support young people to develop as rounded individuals, well-prepared for life and work. This means developing essential future skills alongside academic success and digital skills to thrive in a changing labour market and lead fulfilled lives. We also

want to support learners, teachers and learning institutions to make more effective use of technology and data.

3. Jobs of the future will look different to those today, and school students must be prepared for a rapidly changing labour market. In Wales, automation and new technologies will reshape key industries such as manufacturing and distribution. To navigate these changes, Wales should develop learners who have both core skills and understand the value of lifelong learning. Through programmes such as [Future Fit](#) and the [Adult Learning Technology Innovation Fund](#), Nesta is supporting programmes which help people navigate the changing labour market and develop the skills they need for the future of work.
4. Wales' new draft curriculum is built on a clear purpose about the role of education in preparing young people for this rapidly changing world. Nesta strongly welcomes the level of ambition in this curriculum reform, where non-academic competencies are valued alongside high academic standards, including in literacy and numeracy. This focus brings Wales in line with other leading education systems, such as [Singapore](#), which prioritise learners' holistic development.
5. The inclusion of 'wider skills' as a cross-cutting element is a welcome addition to the draft curriculum. Nesta's [Future of Skills: Employment in 2030](#) report found that many of the wider skills identified in the [Welsh framework for wider skills](#) – such as problem-solving, creativity, critical thinking and decision making – are also likely to be in demand in the future of work. Interpersonal, social and emotional skills such as leadership, self-awareness, confidence, resilience and self-esteem will also be important in the [future labour market](#) and are linked to young people's [academic and long-term outcomes](#). Through our [Future Ready Fund](#), Nesta is supporting ten high-potential projects that build social and emotional skills in young people.
6. We are also pleased to see that the Welsh curriculum is prioritising mental health by including it as part of the Health and Wellbeing area of learning. [According to the NHS](#), one in eight 5 to 19 year olds in the UK had at least one mental health problem when assessed in 2017. While it is important to note the clear links between the 'wider skills' strand and the Health and Wellbeing area of learning, their separation will help to raise the profile and importance of proactive mental health support in schools. Nesta's [recent work](#) in mental health includes supporting emerging initiatives, such as the 'Movement for Social Approaches in

Mental Health', that aim to reduce mental health inequalities and broaden public understanding of mental health issues.

Recommendations on school- and teacher-level guidance for the implementation of wider skills

7. Research from the [Sutton Trust](#) and [UNESCO](#) (see also [Care & Luo, 2016](#)) have highlighted the importance of providing educators with guidance and resources to support the school-level implementation of policies on wider skills. We recommend that the Welsh curriculum provides schools with more detail and evidence-based guidance to assist them in integrating wider skills into the curriculum. This applies to the following areas in particular:
 - a. Each Area of Learning guidance document should make more specific links between the subject discipline and the sub-skills identified in the Welsh curriculum's [wider skills framework](#). Without this, there is a risk that skills which we know to be important to the future of work – such as decision-making and resilience – will be overlooked in schools' curriculum planning.
 - b. The draft curriculum describes wider skills as 'an essential school-level curriculum design and development consideration'. Further guidance on what this might look like in practice will help school leaders better integrate provision into their planning – or provide clarity if there is no specific approach that will be promoted.
8. Resources and guidance to support educators implement the wider skills curriculum component at the school and classroom-level should be based on the best available evidence of what works in developing these skills. This will help schools prioritise approaches that will benefit their students. The National Academy for Educational Leadership and Education Workforce Council could provide support to ensure that educators engage with and share these resources and guidance.

Recommendations on the content and organisation of Wales' framework for wider skills

9. Given the debate that exists both nationally and internationally about which wider skills are most important, we recommend that the Welsh government

provides a short summary for teachers of the rationale behind the selection and organisation of skills in the [wider skills framework](#).

10. We also recommend that more clarity is provided around how the skills grouped in the centre of the [framework](#) – including collaboration, adaptability, persistence and resilience – relate to the wider framework and four ‘umbrella’ categories. Ambiguity around this group of skills and how they relate to the Areas of Learning may lead to them being neglected in school-level planning and implementation, or to school curricula not addressing important skills coherently.

Recommendations for assessment and inspection

11. School leaders need guidance on if and how their provision for wider skills will be assessed, and guidance around the kinds of indicators they should be looking for to know if their provision is of high quality and making a difference to students.
12. We recommend that inspectors should monitor the quality of provision for wider skills in schools. This could include talking to school leaders about their plans to provide students with opportunities to develop wider skills through both the curriculum and enrichment activities, and how this fits with the school's improvement strategy and curriculum. Schools should be expected to understand how their work has an impact on students' skills using a variety of evidence, including student self-reporting.

Recommendations for how technology can support the effective delivery of the curriculum

13. We welcome the inclusion of digital competence as a cross-cutting theme across the Welsh curriculum. In an increasingly technological world, young people must be prepared to use technology effectively and safely throughout their education. However, the responsibility for developing digital competencies for all young people means teachers need support to improve their own digital skills and use more technology in the classroom.
14. Education technology has the potential to tackle key challenges, such as teacher workload, as well as enhancing teaching and learning, particularly in developing young people's digital competencies. Currently, there is a lack of evidence for the impact of many education technologies. There is also inconsistent support for teachers to use technology in the classroom, leading to some technology products being underused or failing to live up to expectations.

15. Nesta is working with the Department for Education in England to support more effective use of technology in schools and colleges. As part of this programme, we will be launching an EdTech Testbed, to connect schools and colleges with EdTech products to evaluate what works and share best practice. We have recently published research into examples of [EdTech Testbeds](#) around the world to understand how technology can be better tested and evaluated with teachers and students involved throughout. The Welsh government should consider how it supports the generation and sharing of evidence for education technology and make this a priority. We recommend the Welsh government should:

- Continue the Digital Pioneer Schools programme to provide opportunities for teachers to co-create and stress-test ongoing implementation of the new framework;
- Support schools to embed technology in their practice and ensure all teachers get access to high quality professional development to use technology for teaching;
- Set up an EdTech Testbed in Wales, to support better evaluation of EdTech, learning from our pilot programme in England;
- Use the Hwb platform to share learning of what works in education technology for all schools and colleges in Wales.

Recommendations for future iterations of the curriculum

16. The world of work will have changed by the time the new Welsh curriculum is implemented in 2022. We encourage the Welsh government to consider how to make its wider skills framework flexible to accommodate future developments in the rapidly evolving labour market, and how teachers might be made aware of developments. We encourage the government to continue to refer to up-to-date data on labour market demands, such as that previously [published by Nesta](#).

Opportunities for collaboration

17. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss opportunities for collaboration with the Welsh government, particularly concerning:

- a. Sharing our research expertise in future skills, including market leading insights into the jobs of the future, and practical learnings about how to build social and emotional skills from the [Future Ready Fund](#).
- b. Funding a number of demonstrators or grant funding programmes to support innovations that develop wider skills in young people across a selection of Welsh Schools.
- c. Supporting more effective use of technology in schools and colleges and improving the evidence base for what works. This could be done through backing the development of new technology in areas that matter most for Welsh Government, or helping promising EdTech innovations to scale and reach more pupils in Wales.

Contact:

Jed Cinnamon

Senior Programme Manager, Nesta

Jed.Cinnamon@nesta.org.uk