

GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare Qualification Outline – Consultation Version



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Introduction

This document provides a high-level overview of the WJEC GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare qualification available for first teaching from September 2026.

It is based on Qualifications Wales's Approval Criteria ([gcse-health-and-social-care-and-childcare-approval-criteria.pdf \(qualifications.wales\)](https://www.qualifications.wales/gcse-health-and-social-care-and-childcare-approval-criteria.pdf)). Our qualification **must** meet these requirements.

The qualification outline will provide a guide for the development of the Specification and Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs). Aspects of the outline may need to be revisited if issues arise during the development process.

Qualification Overview

The GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare qualification will support the Curriculum for Wales by:

- supporting the statements of what matters¹ by giving learners the opportunity to:
 - understand the factors that affect physical health and wellbeing throughout the lifespan including health-promoting behaviours e.g. physical activity, including an understanding of health-harming behaviours
 - develop positive, informed behaviours that encourage learners to care for and respect themselves and others in a health and social care, and childcare context
 - help learners explore the connections between their experiences, mental health and emotional wellbeing
 - create a culture where talking about mental health and emotional wellbeing is normalised in health and social care, and childcare
 - develop the critical-thinking skills necessary to consider their decision-making in terms of possible implications including risks, for themselves, and others
 - engage critically with social influences within their own culture, as well as those of others, to understand how norms and values develop
 - understand how decisions and actions impact on themselves, on others, and on wider society, both now and in the future
 - help to understand the factors that influence decision-making, placing them in a better position to make more informed and considered decisions around health and social care, and childcare
 - develop the critical-thinking skills necessary to consider decision-making in terms of possible implications in the health and social care, and childcare sectors.
- supporting the principles of progression² by encouraging learners to:
 - develop their independence and agency in matters relating to health and wellbeing, resulting in a growing responsibility for their own health and wellbeing
 - develop conceptual knowledge and critical understanding in a range of aspects of health and wellbeing and personal behaviour
 - develop connections between aspects of health and wellbeing and a wide range of topics and issues in health and social care, and childcare contexts
 - develop an appreciation for the needs of others in health and social care, and childcare contexts and the impact of decisions, actions and circumstances
 - become more socially responsible

¹ <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/health-and-well-being/statements-of-what-matters>

² <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/health-and-well-being/principles-of-progression>

- develop the understanding of advocacy on behalf of themselves and of others through health and social care, and childcare contexts.
- supporting the subject specific considerations for GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare³ by giving learners the opportunity to:
 - develop literacy skills, being able to organise writing and adapt language confidently, enabling learners to apply for learning pathways and a preferred career, possibly in health and social care and/or childcare
 - support learners to explore and understand in depth, developmental changes across the lifespan, as well as how those changes affect individuals in a range of different ways
 - learn and understand how to assess and manage risk so they can keep themselves and others safe, including safeguarding within a health and social care, and childcare context
 - reflect on the short-term, medium-term and long-term implications of the decisions they make. It should be recognised that learners do not necessarily have responsibility for many of the decisions affecting them and this responsibility grows over time
 - understand the role that social influences can play on learner behaviour and the influences that can promote and encourage healthy prosocial behaviours, as well as those that lead to issues such as discrimination, racism or prejudice throughout the health and social care, and childcare sectors
 - understand the role and importance of relationships such as family and friends, pets/animals, peers, professional, virtual, romantic, sexual, religious and spiritual – through health and social care, and childcare contexts, and those relationships which they may not yet be familiar with but are highly likely to encounter in their lives or whilst working in the sectors.

³ <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/health-and-well-being/designing-your-curriculum/>

Qualification Structure

The following structure is prescribed by the Approval Criteria published by Qualifications Wales, June 2023.

<p>Unit 1: Living in Wales Written examination 40% of the qualification Available digitally and on-paper</p>
<p>Unit 2: Adult Health and Social Care Non-examination assessment 30% of qualification Set by WJEC Marked by the Centre and moderated by WJEC</p>
<p>Unit 3: Childcare Non-examination assessment 30% of qualification Set by WJEC Marked by the Centre and moderated by WJEC</p>

These are the proposed percentages for the three assessment objectives:

AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of concepts, values and issues in health and social care, and childcare.	30%
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding of concepts, values and issues in health and social care, and childcare.	40%
AO3	Investigate, analyse, and evaluate values, issues and provision in health and social care, and childcare, making reasoned judgements and drawing conclusions.	30%

This will be a unitised qualification. Unit 1 should be taught before Unit 2 and Unit 3, as the content provides core knowledge and understanding for the whole qualification. There is no hierarchy implied by the order in which Unit 2 and Unit 3 are presented.

Unit 1 will be available annually from Summer 2027. It will be set and marked by WJEC and will be available both digitally and on-paper. It can be taken in the summer of Year 10 or Year 11.

The Unit 2 and Unit 3 assignment briefs will be released annually via Portal at the beginning of September, starting from September 2027. Unit 2 and Unit 3 may be completed at any time during the second year of study (Year 11) and submitted to WJEC in May. Centres must ensure that assessment of both Unit 2 and Unit 3 is completed **only** when learners have undertaken the necessary teaching and learning and developed the required skills and knowledge.

Unit Information

Learners will be given opportunities to explore human rights and diversity throughout the three units, including consideration of:

- access to service provision across health and social care, and childcare
- the impact of service provision and delivery on outcomes in relation to health and social care, and childcare
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic perspectives, identity, culture, experiences and contributions.

Unit 1 Living in Wales – Written Examination

The purpose of this unit is to develop knowledge and understanding of:

- the life cycle and the factors that affect growth and development
- the promotion and maintenance of health and wellbeing and tools that can be used to measure and support this
- core principles and values, underpinned by legislation and service provision within a Welsh context across the health and social care, and childcare sectors.

This unit will focus on:

- the promotion and maintenance of health and wellbeing of individuals throughout their life
- human growth, development and wellbeing across the life cycle
- factors affecting growth, development and wellbeing across the life cycle
- indicators and tools to measure and support health and wellbeing
- core principles, values and approaches when working in health and social care, and childcare
- legislation and service provision across health and social care, and childcare
- Welsh language and culture in health and social care, and childcare.

The unit will be assessed via a written examination (digital or on-paper) available in the summer series of the course and will be available annually from the 2027 summer series onwards, with a mix of question types that will target AO1, AO2, and AO3. AO1 will have the higher weighting. The duration of the examination is likely to be approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Unit 2 Adult Health and Social Care – Non-Examination Assessment

The purpose of this unit is to gain knowledge and understanding of:

- individual needs and key conditions and illnesses in adulthood
- how professionals work in adult health and social care to achieve positive outcomes
- the role of health promotion in public health in Wales.

This unit will focus on:

- types of care to meet individual needs and achieve positive outcomes
- how professionals work to meet needs in adult health and social care
- public health and health promotion in adult health and social care
- key conditions and illnesses in adulthood.

The unit will be assessed via non-examination assessment, submitted in the final year of the course as part of the summer series. The non-examination assessment must be submitted digitally. The mix of tasks for this unit will target AO2 and AO3. AO2 will have a higher weighting than AO3. This unit will be set by WJEC, marked by the centre and externally moderated by WJEC.

Unit 3 Childcare – Non-Examination Assessment

The purpose of this unit is to gain knowledge and understanding of:

- Physical, intellectual, language, emotional, and social (PILES) development
- key conditions and illnesses of children
- how professionals work, including play and play work, to meet the needs of children in Wales to achieve positive outcomes.

This unit will focus on:

- PILES
- play and play work
- types of care and intervention to meet children's needs and achieve positive outcomes
- how professionals work to meet children's needs
- health promotion and early intervention in childcare
- key conditions and illnesses in children.

The unit will be assessed via non-examination assessment, submitted in the final year of the course as part of the summer series. The non-examination assessment must be submitted digitally. The mix of tasks for this unit will target AO2 and AO3. AO2 will have a higher weighting than AO3. This unit will be set by WJEC, marked by the centre and externally moderated by WJEC.

Consideration of manageability, engagement, validity, and reliability

In developing this proposed qualification outline, we have considered manageability, engagement, validity and reliability, and how to balance these considerations in the context of the requirements of the Approval Criteria.

The Approval Criteria require that 40% of the qualification is assessed by written examination set and marked by WJEC, available digitally in the summer series of Year 10. We have some comparability concerns around offering the paper in both digital and paper formats; we have a question on this in the survey and would welcome your views. We believe that the purpose and content of Unit 1 can be validly assessed by examination, and a mix of question types can help us maximise validity. When we develop assessments, we will ensure that all tasks target the relevant construct, that there is an appropriate balance of content covered over time and that there is alignment between assessment items and learning outcomes. Where appropriate we will use data available to us on how an assessment has functioned. To ensure reliability, we will make sure that the examined units target the same assessment objective weightings and have a consistent level of demand each series. Marking criteria will be developed and assessors will be trained on how to apply them consistently.

The remaining 60% of the qualification will be split between two non-examination assessments set by WJEC, marked by the Centre and moderated by WJEC. They must be submitted digitally. One of the non-examination assessments must focus on the application, knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to the health and social care of adults in Wales, accounting for 30% of the qualification (Unit 2). The other non-examination assessment must focus on the application, knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to childcare in Wales, also accounting for 30% of the qualification (Unit 3). This poses some potential manageability challenges which we propose to minimise by allowing centres to spread the workload and assessment over the final year. We will therefore release **both** Unit 2 and Unit 3 assignment briefs annually at the beginning of September starting from September 2027. This will ensure that centres have some choice in deciding when to undertake the non-examination assessments, as teachers will have the flexibility to choose which of the NEA units to complete first in the final year of study. We have also considered the assessment time that we have allocated to both non-examination assessments to try to reduce the impact on teaching and learning and propose approximately 10 hours for each unit (the current GCSE Unit 2 and 4 NEA is approximately 25 hours for each unit). Both non-examination assessments will feature tasks that require researching a case study and to aid manageability we foresee a low level of control for the research element of the task, as is the case with the current qualification. A higher level of control will be in place when candidates undertake the assessed tasks to assure reliability and equity for learners.

We believe that our proposed qualification should provide opportunities for centres to develop an engaging programme of study for its learners, in line with the expectations of the Curriculum for Wales. Unit 1 will provide a broad 'core' knowledge of Health and Social Care in Wales. We believe that the non-examination assessments we propose for Unit 2 and Unit 3 will be engaging for learners and will provide a valid approach to assessing the purpose and content because they allow learners' skills to be assessed in appropriate contexts. To ensure the reliability of the non-examination assessments, we will ensure each unit will target the same assessment objective weightings each series. For both non-examination assessments, assessment criteria will be developed, and teachers will be provided with a package of support to ensure consistent application of the assessment criteria across centres and over time. We will ensure that tasks are standardised to assess the same skills with common assessment criteria and a standard approach.

We will continue to consider the balance of manageability, engagement, reliability and validity, at each stage of qualification development.

APPENDIX

Key information from Approval Criteria

The following information has come directly from Qualifications Wales's ([GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare](#)) – our qualification must meet these requirements.

Purpose

1. **GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare** must:
 - 1.1. be designed primarily for *Learners* between the ages of 14 and 16
 - 1.2. build on the conceptual understanding *Learners* have developed through their learning from ages 3–14
 - 1.3. support teaching and learning by providing appropriately broad, demanding, relevant and engaging content and assessment that relates to and supports the Curriculum for Wales, including its four purposes
 - 1.4. allow *Learners* to develop a strong foundation of knowledge, skills and understanding which supports progression to post-16 study and prepares them for life, learning and work
 - 1.5. provide meaningful, fair, and accurate information on *Learner* achievement within a subject that highlights what *Learners* know, understand, and can do

Aims

2. **GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare** must:
 - 2.1. allow *Learners* to explore a range of knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to health and social care, and childcare
 - 2.2. provide opportunities for *Learners* to be assessed in a variety of relevant and meaningful contexts support learning that aligns with the Curriculum for Wales Relationships and Sexuality Education Code, where appropriate
3. The **GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare** qualification must support *Learners* to:
 - 3.1. understand the principles of human development, health and wellbeing
 - 3.2. explore how the health and social care, and childcare sector supports and promotes the development, health and wellbeing of individuals
 - 3.3. describe the principles, values and approaches that underpin the work of health and social care, and childcare professionals in Wales
 - 3.4. understand key conditions and illnesses in adulthood and childhood
 - 3.5. explore the cross-cutting theme of human rights and diversity, particularly in relation to service provision in health and social care, and childcare

Assessment objectives

13. The assessment of the knowledge, understanding and skills required in the qualification must target the following assessment objectives in line with the indicated weightings, within a tolerance of +/- 5 percentage points.

AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of concepts, values and issues in health and social care, and childcare.	30%
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding of concepts, values and issues in health and social care, and childcare.	40%
AO3	Investigate, analyse and evaluate values, issues and provision, making reasoned judgements and drawing conclusions.	30%

Scheme of assessment

14. The **GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare** qualification must be unitised.
15. The **GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare** qualification must show the range in the proportion of marks allocated to each assessment objective and to each unit.
16. The **GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare** specification must include the following assessment arrangements:
 - 16.1. an examination assessment that:
 - 16.1.1. assesses a *Learner's* knowledge and understanding of health and social care, and childcare
 - 16.1.2. accounts for 40% of the qualification
 - 16.1.3. is set and marked by the awarding body
 - 16.1.4. is available digitally
 - 16.1.5. is available in the summer series of Year 10 for the first cohort of *Learners*
 - 16.2. two non-examination assessments that:
 - 16.2.1. are set by the awarding body, marked by the *Centre* and *Moderated* by the awarding body
 - 16.2.2. must be able to be submitted digitally
 - 16.3. one of the non-examination assessments must focus on the application of knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to health and social care of adults in Wales – this must account for 30% of the qualification
 - 16.4. one of the non-examination assessments must focus on the application of knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to childcare in Wales – this must account for 30% of the qualification
17. The awarding body must specify its rules in regard to resits and resubmissions for **GCSE Health and Social Care, and Childcare** in accordance with the *National GCSE Conditions and Requirements*.