

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ann Jones AM
Chair of the Children's Group
People and Education Committee
National Assembly for Wales

Ann.Jones@Wales.gov.uk

July 2014

Dear Ann,

The creation of Qualifications Wales as an independent expert body will underpin the reforms to qualifications in Wales that are now well underway. Drawing on experience and best practice in setting up new organisations, we have discussed previously the advantages of appointing an interim CEO to Qualifications Wales ahead of the body being formally established. An early appointment will ensure that there is strong and consistent leadership from the outset and that Qualifications Wales is well positioned to shape the future qualifications landscape for Wales. Appointing an interim CEO now means that we can continue to deliver improvements at pace and ensure that Qualifications Wales will be highly effective from day one.

You will be aware that we began the recruitment process earlier this year and I am now writing to inform you of the outcome of that process. Following an open competition and a rigorous selection process, the Permanent Secretary of the Welsh Government has appointed Philip Blaker as Chief Executive (interim) of Qualifications Wales. I enclose a copy of the embargoed press release.

As you are aware the circumstances mean that the appointment has initially been made into the civil service. Once Qualifications Wales is legally established I will be able to confirm the public appointment of Philip as its CEO.

I am looking forward to sharing ideas with Philip over the coming months, and I would encourage you to invite him to meet with your committee in due course.

ours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Huw Lewis'.

Huw Lewis AC / AM

Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills

Annex

Monday 7 July 2014

New head of Qualifications Wales announced

Following an open competition, chaired by a Civil Service Commissioner, Philip Blaker has today been named as the new head of Qualifications Wales.

From September 2015 Qualifications Wales will be responsible for the regulation and quality assurance of qualifications in Wales. In time, the new arms length body independent from government will award most GCSEs, A levels and the revised Welsh Baccalaureate.

The decision to establish a new regulatory and awarding body for Wales followed the independent Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds.

The independent Review was commissioned to consider how the Welsh Government can achieve the vision of qualifications that are rigorous, valued and meet the needs of our young people and the Welsh economy.

Currently Director of Operations at Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) Mr Blaker will take up his new position in the autumn, initially with the Welsh Government before moving to Qualifications Wales when it is established as a statutory body.

Making the appointment Owen Evans, Director General Department for Education and Skills, said: "I'd like to congratulate Philip on his new role. He brings with him a raft of experience in the UK qualifications system which I'm sure will be a huge benefit in this role."

Welcoming the appointment Education and Skills Minister Huw Lewis said: "We want a robust, rigorous and respected qualifications system here in Wales. Qualifications Wales is the body that is going to have the regulatory and awarding powers to make that happen.

"If Qualifications Wales is to be successful and effective it needs strong leadership from the start. I'm therefore delighted we have someone of Philip's calibre to ensure

this new body is a resounding success. I wish him well and look forward to working with him in the future.”

Notes

A copy of Philip Blaker’s biography is attached below:

As Interim Director of Operations Philip is accountable for the day-to-day delivery of UCAS’ admissions services, including the processing of applications, collection of course data and verification services.

He joined UCAS in November 2011, having previously worked with the organisation as a management consultant.

Philip’s career has been focused on the delivery of large scale complex operations, and before becoming a consultant with PwC he had a background in the delivery of national assessments and examinations. Philip was Director of Test Operations with the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency and part of the senior management team with examinations board AQA.

Philip has postgraduate qualifications in business management and is a qualified project and programme manager.

The appointment is, initially, a Civil Service appointment until such time as Qualifications Wales is established as a statutory body (September 2015).