

Swansea Council

Strategy for Vocational Education for 14- to 19-year-olds

2022 – 2025



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Swansea Council



Strategy for Vocational Education for 14- to 19-year-olds

Our Vision for Swansea

We will develop a shared vision for sustainable vocational learning in Swansea, clearly aligned to the skills and knowledge needed by employers in the region.

Our Priorities

1. We will ensure that vocational education contributes to the breadth of the curriculum at 14 to 16 and 16+ by meeting the vision of Curriculum for Wales and the learning and skills (Wales) measure, 2009, in all schools.
2. We will build stronger partnerships with stakeholders to ensure a collaborative approach to the vocational curriculum, that develops supportive and impartial progression to the next levels of study or training.
3. We will ensure the offer of vocational qualifications at age 14 -19 is fully aligned to employment opportunities made available by the Swansea Bay City Deal now and in the future.
4. We will ensure the delivery of Careers and Work-Related Education (CWRE) at all stages of learning supports the vocational offer at age 14 -19.
5. We will be prepared for the changes to vocational courses as the suite of new qualifications are rolled out from 2025 and 2027.

1. Background

1.1 Developing the employability skills of young people in Swansea is a vital part of our education systems. Through effective models of vocational learning, we want to give our learners an improved understanding of the world of work, an awareness of the skills they need to succeed and a greater awareness of the opportunities and pathways available to them.

1.2 The Education Wales toolkit for supporting the development of Careers and Work-related Experiences in schools and settings (2022) states that

Children and young people are starting out on their journey through life, learning and work. They have choices to make about the educational pathway that they will take, the jobs that they will do and the kind of life that they will lead. They can expect to have to deal with change and uncertainty, adapting their ideas and plans to new circumstances; and as they shape their own careers, they can also make a positive contribution to the wellbeing of others.

Careers matter, they make a difference to every individual, community, and society. Everyone has a career, even if it takes a winding path and includes many stops, starts and changes of direction. Career is about more than undertaking paid work which may not be possible for some learners. It includes the work they do in the home, in their leisure pursuits and in their voluntary work. It is important to help learners engage with the ideas of career and lifelong learning and to empower them to make sense of, and take control of, their own careers and education to the best of their abilities.

1.3 Swansea Bay City Deal is a key driver for the development of vocational provision over the next ten years. A £30 million Swansea Bay City Deal Skills and Talent programme for Southwest Wales has been approved by the UK Government and Welsh Government. Vocational opportunities will be aligned to areas of growth and regional strengths such as the digital, construction, energy, health and wellbeing and smart manufacturing sectors with opportunities for upskilling the current workforce as well as preparing the next generation for jobs of the future in the locality.

1.4 Each Swansea school varies in terms of its vocational provision for learners at pre- and post-16 and there are varying degrees of in-house expertise, facilities, and specialised equipment. This strategy seeks to move forward together to map out existing vocational provision and need, to ensure that future planned provision is grounded in a shared vision for sustainable vocational learning in Swansea, and that any investment in accommodation and facilities is consistent within this vision.

2. Key definitions and sector reviews

2.1 The development of vocational provision requires a common language and widespread understanding of the distinctions between different types of skill sets. Using terminology from Curriculum for Wales, we can identify the role vocational skills play in the development of the vocational curriculum for Swansea.



2.2 Qualifications Wales consider vocational qualifications to be those qualifications that are awarded and certificated by an ‘awarding body’, taken by learners from the age of 14 upwards, and which **assess knowledge, understanding and/or skills that relate explicitly to the world of work**. There are some ‘grey areas’. One example of these is the Welsh Baccalaureate, which is managed as a ‘general’ qualification. Another example is the Essential Skills suite of qualifications – which are managed as vocational qualifications. There are also ‘general’ qualifications that may also be considered as vocational qualifications – for example, GCSEs and A levels in Health and Social Care. (Qualifications Wales: Vocational Qualifications Strategy).

2.3 At a national level Qualifications Wales are designing new frameworks within vocational areas. Sector reviews have taken place in Health and Social Care (2016), Construction and the Built Environment (2018), Information and Communication Technology (2018) and Engineering, Advanced Manufacturing and Energy (2020). Further reviews will take place for financial services, customer services and retail, travel and tourism and hospitality and catering.

2.4 Following recommendations from the sector reviews and to align with the new Curriculum for Wales there will be a new GCSE offer in 2025 in Construction and the Built Environment, Digital Technology, Engineering and Manufacturing and Health and Social Care. These specific ‘made for Wales’ qualifications will be vocational in nature and further aligned to post-16 frameworks, which are yet to be confirmed.

3. Mapping vocational provision in Swansea

3.2 Throughout Swansea vocational qualifications are taken by learners at a number of ages and stages and in a range of settings.

Current situation - summary

3.3 **At ages 14 to 16**, learners can take initial vocational qualifications alongside more traditional GCSEs. Sometimes these vocational options are also GCSEs; sometimes they are other qualifications such as BTECs, WJEC L1/2 vocational courses or similar. The courses leading to these qualifications provide an introduction to areas of work, but they do not require the assessment of competence. These qualifications are mostly at Levels 1 and/or 2 and are often taken in conjunction with the Key Stage 4 Welsh Baccalaureate at National and Foundation level. (Adapted from Qualifications Wales: Vocational Qualifications Strategy)

Vocational qualifications in Swansea for 14- to 16-year-olds are delivered in a number of ways

- Vocational courses delivered on school site by school staff, for example Health and Social Care
- Vocational courses delivered on school site by college staff, for example Children's Care and Learning Development
- Vocational courses delivered off site by college staff, for example Engineering and Construction
- Full-time vocational course and work-related experience (Junior Academy) delivered off site by college staff and industry links, for example Landscaping & Horticulture and Hair & Beauty

All Swansea schools deliver some vocational courses by staff within their own setting. This is most common for courses such as Travel and Tourism, Health and Social Care, Children's Care and Learning Development (CCLD) and Sport and Coaching. One school uses staff expertise from Gower College to design and deliver a curriculum in CCLD. These courses are typically delivered for three hours per week.

Gower Junior College is a 'paid for' provision offered by the college to all schools. These courses are offered at the college to make best possible use of facilities, equipment, and staff expertise. Some schools use this as part of their options open to all key stage 4 pupils while others use the provision for learners who, for various reasons, are following an alternative curriculum. Courses offered include Construction, Engineering, Landscaping and Horticulture, Hair and Beauty and Catering and Hospitality.

Coleg Sir Gâr and Neath Port Talbot College are able to deliver vocational programmes to learners who live near county borders. In previous year they have provided construction courses at Bryngwyn Vocational Skills Centre (Coleg Sir Gâr) and Llansamlet Construction Centre (NPTC Group of Colleges). However, no schools currently take up this offer.

In addition, Gower College and Inspire Training are vocational provisions as part of the framework of providers offered to schools through the Cynnydd programme. The Cynnydd project aims to meet the requirements of Specific Objective 2 (To reduce the number of those at risk of becoming NEET, amongst 11–24 year-olds) European Social Fund Operational Programme, by providing several interventions targeted at young people who are identified

as being at the very greatest risk of becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). In the case of both these providers, programmes have been developed to introduce learners to a wide range of vocational areas and aid the transition to further vocational training and apprenticeship opportunities within local post-16 settings. The Cynnydd programme will come to an end as of September 2022.

In 2019/2020 a new full time vocational programme was offered to all schools in Swansea as part of Welsh Government's Junior Apprenticeship model. Known as the Junior Academy in Swansea and operating from Gower College's Tŷ Coch campus, this is a four day a week programme for learners. Learners on the programme spend one day a week in their school completing Mathematics, English and other requirements of the statutory curriculum not covered at the college.

The Junior Academy is aimed at young people 14-16 years old who have a very clear idea of the vocational pathway they wish to follow and would benefit from a less traditional route. The programme particularly suits those who are at risk of disengaging with the school system and becoming NEET. There are currently learners from four different secondary schools following vocational pathways in Landscaping & Horticulture and Hair & Beauty. Alongside their studies, each learner takes part in work related opportunities through a range of work readiness activities and sector related experiences. All learners who successfully completed the Junior Academy in 2021 progressed to higher level vocational studies, apprenticeships, or employment. The Junior Academy is very much a partnership project between Gower College and secondary schools with a welfare and progression coordinator responsible for support and progression to suitable pathways upon leaving.

- 3.4 **At age 16-18**, learners' can study either full time or mixed programmes of learning leading to one or more vocational qualifications at Levels 1, 2 or 3. These learners may either be seeking to progress to higher education or directly into employment – although they may not be sure at the outset of their programme. These learners will often also take the post-16 or Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate.

Six of seven sixth forms in Swansea offer level 3 vocational qualifications at subsidiary diploma level (the equivalent to one A-level). These qualifications sit alongside A-levels as part of learning programmes with progression into further vocational studies, apprenticeships, and employment. Two Welsh medium sixth schools offer level 3 vocational qualifications through the medium of Welsh at diploma level in Business, IT and Sport. Class sizes are often small for these subjects however there are larger cohorts studying Health and Social Care and Applied Science (Forensics).

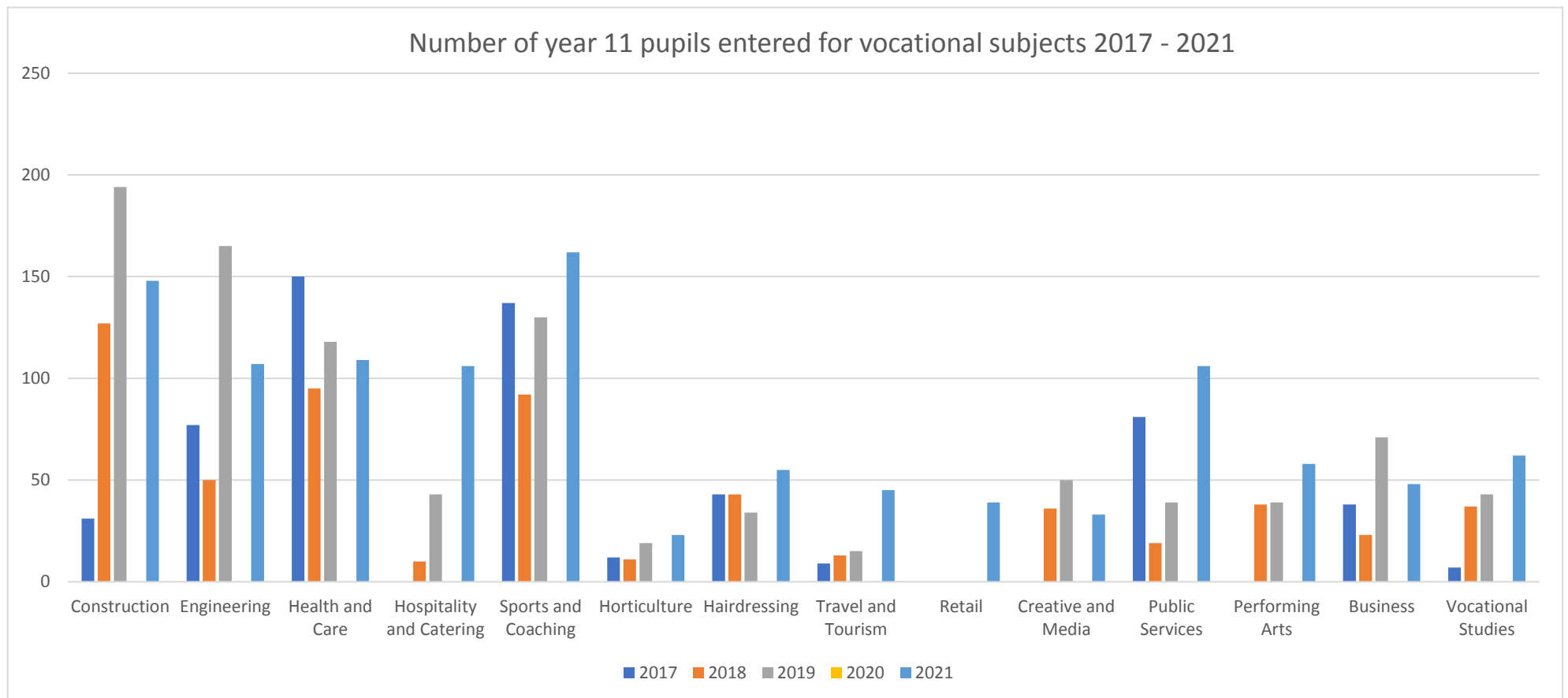
Gower College Swansea and neighbouring FEIs offer a vast range of vocational options at levels 1, 2 and 3 for full diploma (two A-level equivalent) and extended diploma (three A-level equivalent). These courses include those that have been identified by the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership (RLSP) are having skills shortages, for example Health and Social care, Construction and the Built Environment, Digital Technology and Advanced Engineering. Apprenticeships are also offered through Gower College Swansea.

- 3.5 **At age 16-18**, traineeships (now known as Jobs Growth Wales plus) are delivered through work-based learning providers, such as Inspire training, where learners take vocational and other qualifications on programmes that combine learning with work experience, normally at Level 1, to prepare learners for progression into an apprenticeship or work.

3.6 **At age 16+**, apprenticeships are delivered through Gower College and other FEIs and work-based learning providers such as Inspire training, where learners are employed as apprentices but also complete a programme of learning and assessment, at Level 2 or Level 3. There are also higher-level apprenticeships for older learners.

Vocational subject offer

3.7 The graph below and appendix one shows the range of vocational subjects offered and number of learners completing from 2017-2021 across Swansea (no data available for 2020 due to the impact of Covid). Some learners will choose to study an academic pathway at age 14 followed but a vocational option at post-16. What is a right pathway for one learner may not be the right pathway for another. The greatest number of learners in any specific area are for construction, engineering, health and care and sports and coaching.



4. Five Key priorities

1. We will ensure that vocational education contributes to the breadth of the curriculum at 14 to 16 and 16+ by meeting the vision of Curriculum for Wales and the learning and skills (Wales) measure, 2009, in all schools.
2. We will build stronger partnerships with stakeholders to ensure a collaborative approach to the vocational curriculum, that develops supportive and impartial progression to the next levels of study or training.
3. We will ensure the offer of vocational qualifications at age 14 -19 is fully aligned to employment opportunities made available by the Swansea Bay City Deal now and in the future.
4. We will ensure the delivery of Careers and Work-Related Education (CWRE) at all stages of learning supports the vocational offer at age 14 -19.
5. We will be prepared for the changes to vocational courses as the suite of new qualifications are rolled out from 2025 and 2027.

Priority One: Breadth of Curriculum

We will ensure that vocational education contributes to the breadth of the curriculum at 14 to 16 and 16+ by meeting the vision of Curriculum for Wales and the learning and skills (Wales) measure, 2009, in all schools.

All secondary schools will offer vocational qualifications from age 14 that fulfils the four purposes of Curriculum for Wales and is aligned to the learning and skills measure (2009). That is a minimum of 25 courses offered at age 14, of which at least **three to be vocational** and 30 courses offered at age 16 of which at least **five to be vocational**.

The Curriculum for Wales guidance is a clear statement of what is important in delivering a broad and balanced education. The four purposes are the shared vision and aspiration for every child and young person. In fulfilling these, we set high expectations for all, promote individual and national well-being, tackle ignorance and misinformation, and encourage critical and civic engagement. A school's curriculum is everything a learner experiences in pursuit of the four purposes. It is not simply what we teach, but how we teach and crucially, why we teach it. (Curriculum for Wales guidance)

The four purposes will be the starting point and aspiration for schools' curriculum design. Ultimately, the aim of a school's curriculum is to support its learners to become:

1. ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
2. enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
3. ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
4. healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

Over the next three years we will

- Support schools to design and deliver a broad and balanced curriculum that addresses the needs of Curriculum for Wales and the learning and skills (Wales) measure, to include strong vocational provision.
- Ensure there continues to be a suitable range of vocational provision at 14-19 through the medium of Welsh.
- Ensure the quality assurance systems in schools include vocational provision

Partners responsible for implementing these actions

- Swansea Local Authority
- Schools, colleges, and other stakeholders
- Careers Wales
- Local employers
- Regional Learning and Skills Partnership

Priority Two: Partnerships and progression

We will build stronger partnerships with stakeholders to ensure a collaborative approach to the vocational curriculum, that develops supportive and impartial progression to the next levels of study or training.

The offer of vocational qualifications in Swansea will encourage working in an open and collaborative way with key partners and stakeholders. We will make the very best use of local expertise, facilities, and equipment within the region. Well-established partnership working with local post-16 providers will facilitate the smooth transition of learners to post-compulsory education and training.

This priority will sit alongside our priority within the post-16 strategy to work with Careers Wales to support young people to make well informed choices that are right for the individual enabling them to make positive transitions for vocational education. We support Careers Wales as a provider of bilingual, inclusive, impartial careers guidance and coaching for the people of Wales.

We understand that 'where schools engage well and work closely with employers, learners have a better understanding of the world of work and the skills and attributes they need for the future' (Estyn thematic report 'Partnerships with employers in secondary and special schools, 2020). We will support Career Wales' vision and goal to 'To develop our work with employers, training providers and entrepreneurs to understand their skills requirements and opportunities for young people and adults' (Careers Wales, Brighter Futures Strategy).

Over the next three years we will

- Meet with Careers Wales, termly, to monitor advice, information and guidance given to all school leavers.
- Establish a network for CWRE leads in each school to support and develop the vision of Careers Wales strategy: Brighter Futures (2021-2026).
- Ensure there are excellent progression routes within Swansea and the region for learners studying vocational courses.

Partners responsible for implementing these actions

- Swansea Local Authority
- Schools, colleges, and other stakeholders
- Careers Wales
- Local employers
- Regional Learning and Skills Partnership

Priority Three: Swansea Bay City Deal

We will ensure the offer of vocational qualifications at age 14 -19 is fully aligned to employment opportunities made available by the Swansea Bay City Deal now and in the future.

The vocational curriculum in Swansea will address the needs identified by the Swansea Bay City Deal (SBCD) in relation to skills shortage areas, which are:

Construction	New skills for SMART house building and retrofitting (Homes as Power Stations), construction is fundamental for all 8 programmes
Digital	Skills to meet the changing needs of businesses, including Cyber, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Robotics, the development of digital skills will be imperative for all the City Deal programmes. (Waterfront and Digital District; Yr Egin and the Digital programme)
Energy	Specific engineering skills for offshore wind, tidal and marine energy. (Pembroke Dock Marine; Supporting Innovation and Low Carbon Growth and Homes as Power Stations)
Health and Wellbeing	Technology within health care and digital assimilation (Pentre Awel and Life Science and Wellbeing and Sport)
Smart Manufacturing	New ways of manufacturing using robotics and new technologies based on Industry 4.0. (Pembroke Dock Marine and Supporting Innovation and Low Carbon Growth)

The Skills and Talent programme (of the SBCD) has been designed to support the eight city deal projects and the wider Swansea Bay economy. The programme aims to identify the skills that will be needed within the region in the future and where shortfalls are identified, design and provide training pathways to address them.

Over the next three years we will

- Give priority to these areas when considering requests for assets within schools to be repurposed or developed to enhance vocational provision.
- Give priority to these areas when considering any shared provision between schools or between schools and other partners.
- Work together to submit bids to the Skills and Talent programme where appropriate.

Partners responsible for implementing these actions

- Swansea Local Authority
- Schools, colleges, and other stakeholders
- Regional Learning and Skills Partnership

Priority Four: Careers and Work-Related Experiences

We will ensure the delivery of Careers and Work-Related Education (CWRE) at all stages of learning supports the vocational offer at age 14 -19.

We are committed to the implementation of CWRE as a cross-cutting theme in the Curriculum for Wales for all Swansea's primary and secondary schools and settings. CWRE will make a significant contribution to learners' achievement of the four purposes of learning and the seven wellbeing goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which constitute the shared vision for the new curriculum. (Education Wales toolkit for supporting the development of Careers and Work-related Experiences in schools and settings, 2022).

The Education Wales toolkit for supporting the development of Careers and Work-related Experiences in schools and settings (2022) states that

CWRE is not just for the last few years of schooling, nor for a particular group of learners. From early years onwards, every child starts learning about the opportunities and possibilities that learning, work and career can open for them. The primary phase is critical for fostering exploration and discovery, strengthening aspiration and ambition, challenging stereotypes, widening horizons, keeping options open and building resilience. In the secondary phase learners begin to make decisions about subjects and 4 pathways that will influence the rest of their lives. The power of CWRE to motivate and engage learners is related to their perception of the relevance and usefulness of what they are learning to their everyday lives, both now and in the future. These gains depend on learners having a positive, hopeful, and optimistic view of their career possibilities.

All young people need to leave school with a clear idea of the direction they are moving in. They need to know how to realise their plans, and to have the understanding and skills to be adaptable, resilient, and enterprising in managing unexpected change and transitions. It is important that all primary, secondary and special schools, as well as other settings including pupil referral units (PRUs) and those providing education otherwise than at school (EOTAS), embed CWRE as a cross-cutting theme in the whole curriculum.

Over the next three years we will

- Work closely with Careers Wales to firmly establish CWRE as a cross-cutting theme of Curriculum for Wales.
- Establish a network for CWRE leads in each school, to support the wider vocational curriculum leading to qualifications at age 14.
- Work alongside primary partners to ensure CWRE is fully embedded from early years onwards.

Partners responsible for implementing these actions

- Swansea Local Authority
- Schools, colleges, and other stakeholders
- Careers Wales

Priority Five: Changes to vocational qualifications

We will be prepared for the changes to vocational courses as the suite of new qualifications are rolled out from 2025 and 2027

We will fully support schools in their preparation for a new suite of vocational qualifications being developed to support Curriculum for Wales. Qualifications currently being taken by 14- to 16-year-olds are being reviewed by Qualifications Wales (QW). These include GCSEs, the Skills Challenge Certificate and other qualifications like BTECs, which are referred to as the wider offer.

The GCSE offer (vocational in nature)

Swansea will ensure that all teaching staff are prepared for new GCSE frameworks to be introduced in 2025. That is; new made-for-Wales GCSE qualifications in **Construction and the Built Environment, Digital Technology, Engineering and Manufacturing and Health and Social Care.**

The Wider offer

Swansea will ensure teaching staff are prepared for delivery of the wider offer to be introduced from 2027, these qualifications are more likely to be vocational in nature. The wider offer refers to all non-GCSE qualifications studied by learners aged 14 to 16. QW are looking at qualifications from entry level and up and looking at a wide range of subjects such as the World of Work, Financial Capability, Careers Development, Equality and Diversity, Food Safety, Essential Skills, Sport, and First Aid. To put it into context, there are roughly 1,200 qualifications in this space at present. This part of qualification reform is its early stages of development.

Over the next three years we will

- Attend and feedback to Qualification Wales through stakeholder engagement opportunities
- Provide timely updates to senior leaders regarding changes to the vocational suite of qualifications from 2025 and 2027
- Ensure, through partnership working, high quality staff training for vocational qualifications

Partners responsible for implementing these actions

- Swansea Local Authority
- Schools, colleges, and other stakeholders
- Qualifications Wales

5. Three-year strategic plan

Priority	Priority aims	Actions	Responsibility	Timescales
1. Breadth of Curriculum	To ensure that vocational education contributes to the breadth of the curriculum at 14 to 16 and 16+ by meeting the vision of Curriculum for Wales and the learning and skills (Wales) measure, 2009, in all schools.	1.1 Support schools to design and deliver a broad and balanced curriculum that addresses the needs of Curriculum for Wales and the learning and skills (Wales) measure, to include strong vocational provision.	LA/ Schools/ GCS	Ongoing
		1.2 Ensure there continues to be a suitable range of vocational provision at 14-19 through the medium of Welsh.	LA/ Schools/ GCS	Ongoing
		1.3 Ensure the quality assurance systems in schools include vocational provision	LA/ Schools/ GCS	Ongoing
2. Partnerships and progression	To build stronger partnerships with stakeholders to ensure a collaborative approach to the vocational curriculum, that develops supportive and impartial progression to the next levels of study or training.	2.1 Meet with Careers Wales, termly, to monitor advice, information and guidance given to all school leavers.	LA/ Sixth forms/ GCS	Termly
		2.2 Establish a network for CWRE leads in each school to support and develop the vision of Careers Wales strategy: Brighter Futures (2021-2026).	LA/ schools/ GCS/ Careers Wales	By Nov 2022 and termly
		2.3 Ensure there are excellent progression routes within Swansea and the region for learners studying vocational courses.	LA/ Sixth forms/ GCS	Ongoing

3. Swansea Bay City Deal	To ensure the offer of vocational qualifications at age 14 -19 is fully aligned to employment opportunities made available by the Swansea Bay City Deal now and in the future.	3.1 Give priority to identified areas when considering requests for assets within schools to be repurposed or developed to enhance vocational provision.	LA	Ongoing
		3.2 Give priority to identified areas when considering any shared provision between schools or between schools and other partners.	LA	Ongoing
		3.3 Work together to submit bids to the Skills and Talent programme where appropriate.	LA/ Sixth forms/ GCS	Ongoing
4. Careers and Work-Related Experiences	To ensure the delivery of Careers and Work-Related Education (CWRE) at all stages of learning supports the vocational offer at age 14 -19.	4.1 Work closely with Careers Wales to firmly establish CWRE as a cross-cutting theme of Curriculum for Wales.	LA/ schools/ GCS/ Careers Wales	By Dec 2022
		4.2 Establish a network for CWRE leads in each school, to support the wider vocational curriculum leading to qualifications at age 14	LA/ schools/ GCS/ Careers Wales	By Nov 2022 and termly
		4.3 Work alongside primary partners to ensure CWRE is fully embedded from early years onwards.	LA/ schools/ GCS/ Careers Wales	By Dec 2022 and termly
5. Changes to vocational qualifications	To be prepared for the changes to vocational courses as the suite of new qualifications are rolled out from 2025 and 2027	5.1 Attend and feedback to Qualification Wales through stakeholder engagement opportunities	LA	Ongoing
		5.2 Provide timely updates to senior leaders regarding changes to the vocational suite of qualifications from 2025 and 2027	LA	Ongoing
		5.3 Ensure, through partnership working, high quality staff training for vocational qualifications	LA/ schools/ GCS/ Careers Wales	Ongoing

Appendix One: Current vocational curriculum offer 14-16 year olds

	Construction	Engineering	Health and Care	Hospitality and Catering	Sports and Coaching	Horticulture	Hairdressing	Travel and Tourism	Retail	Creative and Media	Public Services	Performing Arts	Business
Birchgrove	✓			✓	✓								
Bishop Gore	✓				✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
Bishop Vaughan		✓				✓				✓			
Bishopston													
Cefn Hengoed	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓				
Dylan Thomas	✓		✓		✓					✓			
Gowerton	✓			✓									
Morrison	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓		✓	
Olchfa		✓			✓				✓		✓		
Pentrehafod			✓	✓	✓						✓	✓	
Penyrheol	✓						✓						✓
Pontarddulais	✓	✓	✓				✓						
YG Bryn Tawe	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				
YG Gwyr				✓							✓		

Current vocational curriculum offer at post-16

	Business	Performing Arts	Public Services	Creative and Media	Health and Care	Computing	Sport	Hospitality	Engineering	Creative Media	Business	Medical Science	Criminology
Olchfa	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓				✓
Morrison				✓				✓				✓	
Bishop Gore					✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Gowerton													
YG Bryn Tawe				✓					✓		✓		✓
YG Gwyr										✓			✓
Bishop Vaughan		✓		✓						✓	✓	✓	✓