

WELSH GOVERNMENT INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Title of proposal:	Delivery of the Skills Challenge Certificate as part of the Welsh Bacculaureate
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Department:	Education and Public Services
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Cabinet Secretary/Minister responsible:	Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education
Start Date:	01 September 2019

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Describe and explain the impact of the proposal on children and young people.

Proposal

The revised Welsh Baccalaureate (Welsh Bacc) was introduced for teaching from September 2015. The Welsh Bacc is a composite qualification, based on a Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC), which is graded, and other supporting qualifications. The Welsh Bacc is not statutory within the national curriculum.

The [*Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales*](#) (2012, Qualifications Wales), recommended that *Welsh Government should encourage the universal adoption of the Welsh Baccalaureate as the basis for programmes of learning, by schools at 14 to 16 and by schools and colleges at 16 to 19*. The Welsh Government has an ambition that by the academic year 2019/20, every school and Further Education Institution across Wales will deliver the Welsh Baccalaureate, allowing time for a phased introduction. At Key stage 4, this was supported by its inclusion as a published performance measure since 2018. This means that schools are judged on their performance of students' achievement in the SCC.

The 'interim' (new evaluation and improvement arrangements to replace the current accountability system are in development) Key Stage 4 measures for 2019 continue to include the Welsh Bacc SCC as a headline performance measure, as well as including the achievement of this qualification, where it features in a pupil's best results, in the revised 'Capped 9' - a composite measure which will reflect attainment at all levels and the breadth of curriculum offered within a school.

The Welsh Bacc is not statutory at post-16, however the Welsh Government policy is to encourage all 6th Forms and colleges to offer it as part of their learning programmes - every learner should therefore have the opportunity to benefit from taking the Skills Challenge Certificate which leads to the Welsh Bacc. As part of the new post-16 performance indicators (which are applicable to sixth forms and further education institutions), the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate is included as an A level equivalent in the new achievement and value added measures. In addition we will be measuring the proportion of those learners enrolled on the Advanced Welsh Bacc who complete and achieve the full qualification framework, and the grades achieved for the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate.

Background

The Welsh Bacc was first introduced in 2007. The revised more rigorous Welsh Bacc was designed and developed in response to the 2012 Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19 year-olds in Wales, which considered a large body of evidence from education stakeholders, employers and experts from across the UK.

In 2015-16, Qualifications Wales, the independent regulator of qualifications, published a report on how the SCC was developed and the arrangements in place to support its delivery. The review concluded that appropriate support and resources were in place.

Following this, Qualifications Wales commissioned Wavehill, in partnership with University College London's Institute of Education, to undertake a more detailed review of the structure and assessment of the SCC. The report, published in 2018, included 8 recommendations that related to: improving information/awareness; training and support; and, improving the design, assessment and award of the qualification.

In response to the 2018 report, Qualifications Wales has established a design group to develop ideas for proposals based on the report's recommendations. A wider group of stakeholders, including students, teachers, employers and universities is being used to refine and validate the design group's proposals.

The National Assembly's Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) committee opened an inquiry into the status of the Welsh Bacc in autumn 2018 and published their report and recommendations in April 2019.

Although there were some issues highlighted, the evidence gathered by the committee showed clear merit to studying the qualification. Some of the negative perceptions were attributed to some key stakeholders and intended benefactors being under informed about the qualification.

One of the recommendations for the Welsh Government, subsequently accepted, was to:

'...issue as a matter of priority strengthened and more detailed guidance on the policy of universal adoption. The guidance should set out clearly the circumstances in which learners may be exempt from studying the SCC, and be subject to a rigorous and comprehensive children's rights impact assessment' (review of the design and assessment model of the Skills Challenge Certificate and its place within the Welsh Baccalaureate, Wavehill (2018)).

How will the proposal affect the lives of children, positively and negatively?

The primary aim is to enable learners to develop and demonstrate an understanding of and proficiency in essential and employability skills: Communication, Numeracy, Digital Literacy, Planning and Organisation, Creativity and Innovation, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, and Personal Effectiveness. The emphasis is on applied and purposeful learning and to provide opportunities for assessment in a range of real life contexts through three Challenge Briefs and an Individual Project.

The SCC has been designed with input from employers, colleges and universities to provide learners with skills to support their transition to further study or work.

Achievement of the SCC can also support young people developing independent learning skills and with their acceptance to Higher Education as it is recognised by

most universities as being equivalent to an A-Level, and contributes to strengthening a learner's personal statement. The SCC also provides the foundations for learners to develop the wider skills and knowledge that align with the four purposes of the new curriculum for Wales, which is being rolled out for teaching from 2022.

The negative impacts on young people, as highlighted in the CYPE report, include the attitude that studying the SCC is inhibitive in terms of its impact on learner choices. There is also evidence to suggest that in some cases it is poorly delivered, especially where the school does not dedicate adequate resources to support the teaching of the SCC. There is also the issue that some universities do not recognise the SCC in their offers; however, the number of universities that accept the qualification is increasing year on year.

The results since its implementation in September 2015 have been encouraging.

At Key Stage 4 there were 27,846 entries for the Welsh Baccalaureate; a slight increase of 0.2% on 2018 and 27,347 entries for the KS4 Skills Challenge Certificate; an increase of 1.4% on 2018. 94.2% of learners achieved the National and Foundation Level Welsh Baccalaureate; whilst this is an increase of 0.8 percentage points on 2018, it should be noted that 52.7% of learners passed the National Welsh Baccalaureate, which is a decrease of 3.6 percentage points on 2018. 98.5% of learners achieved the National Level and Foundation Level Skills Challenge Certificate; as part of the National/Foundation Welsh Baccalaureate (an increase of 0.5 percentage points on 2018). 83.9% of learners passed at National Level (an increase of 1.1 percentage points on 2018).

The number of entries for the Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate were 12,246, a decrease of 3.8 percent. 97.8% of candidates achieved the Skills Challenge Certificate – equivalent to an A level, an increase of 0.1 percentage points from 2018.

The current Welsh Bacc will continue to develop over time, and the Qualifications Wales Design Group will be consulting on their proposals to changes to the SCC next year. This will provide stakeholders, including young people, with the opportunity to provide feedback.

How will the proposal affect different groups of children (e.g. children who have experienced adverse childhood experiences (aces), children living in poverty, children with a disability, children living in Welsh speaking households and children in Welsh medium education etc.)

The SCC has been designed to be inclusive and is available at three levels:

- Foundation (level 1) at key stage 4 and post-16;
- National (level 2) at key stage 4 and post-16;
- Advanced (level 3).

The qualification is available through the medium of English and Welsh in order to ensure accessibility for learners.

Schools and colleges should be providing opportunities which are in the best interests of their learners, and we expect them to use their professional judgement in determining which learners should be undertaking the Welsh Bacc.

What evidence have you used to inform your assessment, including evidence from children or their representatives?

Wavehill as part of their review conducted focus groups with learners from a sample of schools and Further Education (FE) colleges (centres) across Wales, as well as interviews with teachers, lecturers, and Welsh Bacc coordinators.

Learners reported that they had enjoyed specific aspects of the SCC, such as going out into the community or learning business skills and identified tangible progression in learning gained through the SCC that are not available in other subjects, such as interpersonal communication skills, public speaking, leadership skills, and financial skills.

As part of CYPE's inquiry into the Welsh Bacc, a number of case studies were collected from WJEC newsletters. These included examples where students cited benefits such as: gaining confidence; being able to discuss their Individual Projects at University interviews; and, positive experiences working in the community.

Explain how the proposal is likely to impact on children's rights.

Due regard has been given to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child in the decision to promote the universal adoption of the Welsh Bacc. Our assessment identified the articles 1-4, 12 and 29 of the UNCRC as being most relevant to the proposal.

Articles 1-4 and 12 apply in a general sense and Article 29 is more specifically relevant:

'Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full. It should encourage children to respect their parents, and their own and other cultures'

In addition to the positive outcomes identified under question 1, the Global Citizenship and Community Challenge aspects of the SCC promote respect and the importance of community engagement, in a local and wider sense.

Although the expectation is that all young people aged 14-19 have the opportunity to study the Welsh Bacc and associated SCC, they have the right not to. It is not statutory and schools and colleges should be using some flexibility to ensure that they are providing opportunities that are in the best interests of their learners. We expect schools and colleges to use their professional judgement, by giving due consideration to each young person's wellbeing and their ability to reach their full potential, in determining whether an individual learner can be exempt for taking the Welsh Bacc and the Skills Challenge Certificate.

The Welsh Government will also continue to work with Qualifications Wales, WJEC, regional consortia Schools and FE Colleges whilst the work to revise the SCC moves forward, to ensure that we provide support for any emerging resource, training or other implications that could arise from future changes to the qualification and minimise the risk of any adverse impacts on learners.

There will be further engagement with young people as we take forward a communications plan, jointly with Qualifications Wales, WJEC and regional consortia to raise awareness of the benefits of studying the Welsh Bacc.

Explain any negative impact on children’s rights arising from the proposal, including any reduction in resources available to support policies or programmes.

At Key Stage 4, maintained settings are funded by local authorities via the Regional Support Grant.

At post-16, the Skills Challenge Certificate is funded in General Education programmes as a separate qualification. It will be funded as an equivalent to that of an A Level.

Vocational programmes are funded to the same value whether they are delivered with the Skills Challenge Certificate or not; with the Skills Challenge Certificate being funded at 135 hours of learning as part of the ‘core’ element of a programme. We will be reviewing this further for 2020/21.