

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

WJEC :: CBAC

## THE WELSH BACCALAUREATE PROJECT

A Report to National Assembly for Wales

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

9 February 2005

### 1. AIMS and STRUCTURE of the WELSH BACCALAUREATE

The first objectives of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ), as set out in the tender document from National Assembly for Wales, were to develop a curriculum programme and qualification, through the medium of both English and Welsh, that would:

- i) meet the needs of a wide range of students in Wales;
- ii) promote access and inclusion;
- iii) encourage participation in, and successful completion of a Welsh Baccalaureate, ensuring that it is attractive to centres, students and parents;
- iv) ensure breadth of study, including provision for community action and partnership so that students can better meet the economic and social needs, including the skills needs of employers and the wider community on leaving full-time education;
- v) give parity of esteem to academic and vocational routes;
- vi) cover appropriately the distinct and diverse culture and heritage of Wales, as well as the broader international domain;

vii) safeguard the interests of those students included in the pilot project.

In responding to these objectives, the WJEC project team considered, and still believes, that the biggest challenge for the WBQ is to promote inclusion, retention and completion. The curriculum developed is in the form of a "Core plus Options" model: the "Core" contains elements which ensure that the curriculum objectives are met, whilst the "Options" are drawn entirely from existing qualifications, thereby safeguarding students' progress. It should be noted that:

- this structure is curriculum-led rather than assessment-led
- the choice available within the "Options" is intended to give parity of esteem to vocational and academic programmes, keeps restrictions to a minimum, and thereby meets a range of different students' needs.

In order for the Welsh Baccalaureate to be attractive to centres, students and parents, the "Core" curriculum was developed in partnership with practitioners, and is delivered through a range of activities and experiences.

## 1.1 Curriculum Content

The four elements of the "Core", with indicative student contact hours (over a two-year programme), are as follows:

### (i) Wales, Europe and the World – 90 hours

The aim of this component of the Core is to focus on the political, economic, social and cultural issues in Wales, and to set them in the context of Europe and the wider world. It includes a language module and an Individual Investigation.

i)	Political, economic, social and cultural issues. 60 hours.  Common content, delivered by teams of lecturers or teachers and visiting speakers as well as appropriate visits. All issues comparing Wales and elsewhere.
ii)	Language module. 20 hours.  Choice of language and levels for individual students determined by the institution. Students pursuing advanced language courses in their options are excused this element.

	iii)	<p>Individual Investigation. 10 hours.</p> <p>An individual investigation on a topic determined by the student and based on this component, but using knowledge skills and applications gained from the student's entire programme.</p>
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(ii) Personal and Social Education – 60 hours

This component includes citizenship, positive relationships, good health and sustainable development and is linked to an active community participation element, through which the student develops and uses a range of key skills. It is delivered as two elements - a Community Participation element (30 hours) and an element in which students will consider and participate in the range of issues listed above (30 hours).

(iii) Work-Related Education – 60 hours

In this component, elements include preparation for the world of work, careers education and guidance, and entrepreneurship. It is delivered as two elements - a work experience element (30 hours) and an enterprise activity (30 hours).

(iv) Key Skills – 60 hours

The development of Key Skills is embedded in the student's programme, both Core and Options. There are six key skills: Communication, Application of Number, Information Technology, Improving Own Learning and Performance, Working with Others, Problem Solving. The time available is used in one or more of the following ways: individual student support; individual private time; or formal teacher-led sessions.

2. Curriculum Delivery

The delivery of the "Core" varies from institution to institution, depending particularly on their treatment of the Key Skills, with guidance from the WBQ Team. The WBQ encourages the delivery of the key skills through the "Core", the Individual Investigation and the student's optional subjects. The "Options" are delivered through the present arrangements in the centres, and would typically include GCSEs, GCEs (A/AS) and vocational courses.

Central to every student's programme is the advice and guidance of his or her tutor, who has a vital part to play in ensuring that individuals' programmes are not only appropriate to the student's needs, but achieve breadth, balance and coherence. Every student following the WBQ programme is seen on a one-to-one basis with a tutor at least once

every half-term.

### 1.3 Assessment of the "Core"

In addition to the assessment of the six Key Skills, the curriculum aspects of the "Core" are assessed through the production of a portfolio, which consists of:

- student logbook / diaries
- an Individual Investigation
- ratification statements relating to the student's work experience and community participation elements.

### 1.4 Overall Requirements for the Welsh Baccalaureate Diplomas

The Welsh Baccalaureate Diploma is currently available at Intermediate Level (Level 2, corresponding to GCSE grades A\*-C), and at Advanced Level (Level 3, corresponding to A Level).

The minimum requirements for each of these levels are as shown below:

	Core	Options
Intermediate  Diploma	Core certificate at Level 2: requires <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● three Key Skills at Level 2, one of which must be from the first three</li><li>● three other Key Skills at Level 1</li><li>● verification statements from Work Experience and Community placement</li><li>● Individual Investigation at Level 2</li><li>● curriculum covered.</li></ul>	Four A* - C at GCSE  or equivalent

<p>Advanced  Diploma</p>	<p>Core Certificate at Level 3: requires</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● three Key Skills at Level 3, one of which must be from the first three</li> <li>● three other Key Skills at Level 2</li> <li>● verification statements from Work Experience and Community placement</li> <li>● Individual Investigation at Level 3</li> <li>● curriculum covered.</li> </ul>	<p>Two grades A - E  at A Level  or equivalent</p>
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### 1.5 Attraction of the Diplomas

The Diplomas are designed to be attractive to pupils, schools and colleges, and parents because they provide an externally accredited learning framework which enriches learning, rewards students for work that they do outside the classroom and prepares them for the future. For most students, it will raise their overall volume of study and provide them with a broad, challenging and more relevant and coherent curriculum experience. UCAS have recognised the Advanced Diploma by allocating it 120 tariff points (equivalent to an A level grade A); however, it should be noted that there is currently no equivalent external recognition for the Intermediate Diploma.

The evidence available from Baccalaureate students indicates that there is considerable variation between Higher Education institutions in the status attributed to the Diploma when making "offers" to students. There are examples of situations in which students have received "offers" along the lines of "three D's plus the Baccalaureate" where they might otherwise have required "three B's"; on the other hand, there have been examples of HE institutions in both Wales and England seemingly not taking the Baccalaureate into account when formulating an "offer".

### 2. Current Status of the Project

The project is currently in its second year of delivery to students. A first cohort of 18 centres started to deliver the Welsh Baccalaureate to students in September 2003, and are now in their second year.

Nine of these centres entered students for the Intermediate Diploma after one year with a variable degree of success. When the first Diplomas were awarded in August 2004, 13 students succeeded in gaining the Intermediate Diploma, which is a significant achievement given that the Baccalaureate curriculum is intended as a two-year programme. It should also be noted that many other students, although not succeeding to

complete the whole Diploma within the year, made considerable progress in Key Skill areas alongside their chosen options; this can be attributed to the curriculum structure which demands balanced learning across the core areas.

A further 6 centres (the second cohort of pilot institutions) started to deliver the programme to students in September 2004, and a third cohort of 7 centres will start to deliver the programme in September 2005. Details of current centres and provisional student numbers are provided in the table (figures for Intermediate 2006 not available until start of 2005-06 academic year):

	Student Numbers by Level of Welsh Baccalaureate Diploma			
	Intermediate Diploma		Advanced Diploma	
	Aiming for Completion:		Aiming for Completion:	
First cohort centres	2005	2006	2005	2006
Coleg Glan Hafren	4	n/a	15	29
Coleg Gwent	85	n/a	0	25
Coleg Llandrillo	30	n/a	2	146
Coleg Meirion Dwyfor	0	n/a	8	16
Coleg Morgannwg	0	n/a	7	30
Coleg Powys	28	n/a	0	0
Coleg Sir Gâr	119	n/a	0	0
Deeside College	4	n/a	7	18
Neath Port Talbot College	0	n/a	22	89
Swansea College	38	n/a	0	0
St David's College	0	n/a	94	225
Barry Comprehensive School	4	n/a	0	0
Builth Wells High School	0	n/a	37	71
Cardinal Newman School	9	n/a	6	11
Pen-y-Dre School	23	n/a	50	82

Porth County Community School	68	n/a	67	112
First cohort centres continued	2005	2006	2005	2006
St Alban's RC School	0	n/a	14	30
St Cyres' School	0	n/a	130	136
		n/a		
Second cohort centres		n/a		
Coleg Menai	39	n/a	0	15
Pembrokeshire College	0	n/a	0	44
Ysgol Bryn Elian	0	n/a	8	57
Ysgol Brynhyfryd	0	n/a	0	115
Ysgol Morgan Llwyd	0	n/a	0	72
Ysgol Plasmawr	0	n/a	5	80
Total	451	n/a	472	1403

### 3. Issues Needing to be Progressed

#### 3.1 Increased Programme Diversity within the Project

Although the project has a good linguistic and geographical spread of participating centres, the same is not true for the programme areas followed by the students. The great majority of participating students are following academic "options", and where vocational programmes are being followed these tend to belong to a fairly restricted range.

Most of the schools are entering complete Year 12/13 cohorts, but the range of programmes followed by the sixth formers is predominantly academic with very few following vocational programmes. Where vocational programmes are followed, these are mainly in the areas of Health & Social Care, Travel & Tourism, and Business Studies.

The situation in colleges is different, with limited numbers only following the WBQ programme in the AS/A Level subject areas. There is a wider range of vocational programme areas pursued by Welsh Bac college students, but even here these are not

comprehensive being mainly in the Social Care, Public Services, Business and Tourism programme areas. There are a few students pursuing ICT, Hairdressing and Construction but none in Engineering and Creative Arts.

The project team is currently encouraging colleges, in particular, to encompass the Construction, Engineering and the Art & Design programme areas within their WBQ portfolio, and meetings are taking place with appropriate staff from the centres.

Meetings have also been held with those centres who are offering the WBQ to a restricted range of students - either confining their programme to one Level (i.e. Intermediate Level or Advanced Level only) or in restricted programme areas. The intention is to encourage these centres to expand their provision.

### 3.2 Extension of WBQ to Foundation Level

It is clear from visits to centres that there is a demand for a Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification at Foundation Level (i.e. Level 1 of the National Qualification Framework, corresponding to the GCSE grades D-G). Such a development was included in the initial tender specification for the project, and the WJEC has always regarded the Foundation Level as an intended extension to the existing pilot.

Colleges, in particular, are indicating that the availability of a Foundation Level Diploma for post-16 students would have relevance to students who are not well provided for at present: this, in turn, would bring a greater diversity of vocational programmes within the scope of the Baccalaureate. However, it would also add to expectations that students in the 14-16 age range should be able to take the WBQ at both Intermediate and Foundation Level, allowing them to gain accreditation within an overall framework for their progress in "Core" areas as well as in vocational or other studies.

The WBQ project team is in the process of submitting proposals to the Welsh Assembly Government indicating how it would take forward developments relating to the Foundation Level. It is understood that funding is already earmarked for this, for utilisation from April 2005 onwards. A key requirement is the appointment of a Project Officer with experience of developing and supporting Foundation Level provision. A further extension to encompass the 14-16 stage would need to be considered separately.

## 4. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER THEMES

### 4.1 Parity of esteem – Vocational and Academic

All existing qualifications, including both vocational and academic, are encompassed within the Welsh Baccalaureate Diploma framework. The Welsh Baccalaureate builds on



the strengths of good vocational provision by providing some extra breadth and balance, and providing opportunities for achievement and progression in the same ways as academic studies.

In a similar manner, students pursuing an academic route have an enriched and broader programme through pursuing elements of the Core. The Work-related Education aspect of the programme requires students to work with an employer and to engage in an enterprise activity. This experience gives the students valuable insights into the world of work and contributes to the development of the wider key skills of "Working with Others" and "Problem Solving".

It is hoped that the structure of the Diploma programmes which are common to both academic and vocational routes will act as an incentive for more students to pursue vocational programmes. This requires that more centres, and schools in particular, have the confidence and resources to offer a greater range and take up of vocational programmes. The broadening of performance measures to include a wider range of vocational qualifications will be an important condition for this. It is essential that qualifications are sufficiently flexible to be incorporated within timetables on which there are many pressures: in this context, it is interesting to note that the regulatory authority for Northern Ireland has accredited Vocational GCSEs as "single" awards with a view to encouraging take-up, whereas for Wales and England these are available only as the equivalent of "double" GCSEs.

#### 4.2 14-19 Learning Pathways Framework

The design of the Baccalaureate is consistent with the six key elements of the Learning Pathways framework. In relation to the Learning Core, a detailed analysis is provided as an annexe to this report in order to illustrate the efforts currently being made to fine-tune these relationships. Work is in train in conjunction with the Department and ACCAC to harmonise and align Learning Pathways and WBQ requirements as both evolve.

It is worth noting one specific implication for resources that has been identified: the flexibility and individualisation of the Baccalaureate programme is underpinned by support which is represented by two strands within the Learning Pathways Framework, i. e. the "Learning Coach" and "Personal Support". Evidence available from centres involved in the pilot project confirms the importance of adequate resourcing for these elements, which are fundamental to individual students' progression as independent and lifelong learners.

#### 4.3 Future Arrangements for the "Core"

For those areas of the Baccalaureate "Core" which are fundamentally related to specific mainstream GCSE subjects, there is an urgent need to resolve the curriculum inter-

relationship. This will ease the perceived difficulties of managing learning programmes which need to accommodate, for instance, "communication" as well as GCSE English and GCSE Welsh, "application of number" as well as GCSE Mathematics, and "information technology" (planned to be a compulsory element of the 14-16 curriculum from 2008) as well as ICT at GCSE. This could, for example, be via a 'functional core' and extended studies, in say, Mathematics, as proposed by Tomlinson. The next revisions of GCSE, expected to be in 2008, will provide the opportunity for improved alignment: in the meantime, the further guidance on the learning core within the Learning Pathways framework will illustrate good practice in the development of these skills in relevant and meaningful contexts such as provided by the WBQ Core.

#### 4.4 Three / Four Nation Developments, including Credit Frameworks

Whilst there is no particular need for each nation within the UK to adopt a similar or identical approach to the detail of its curriculum and qualifications structures, we have a responsibility to students to ensure that their qualifications (whether in individual subjects or in aggregate Diplomas) have currency across the UK, and indeed in a wider European context.

It is therefore important that policy developments take account of comparability issues, and in this context a major priority from a Baccalaureate perspective is the adoption of a standard approach to Credit Frameworks. Provided that there is agreement on the basic definitions that underpin credit systems (i.e. Level and Volume), a Baccalaureate style award will be able to benefit from being able to embrace a diversity of academic and vocational elements (offered by a wide range of Awarding Bodies) whilst at the same time having currency across the UK.

It is equally important that Wales should learn from the policy stances and the practical experience of other nations within the UK in relation to the development, implementation and take-up of aggregate awards akin to the Baccalaureate approach.

#### 4.5 Modernisation of Examinations

WJEC, as well as all other major Awarding Bodies offering "general" qualifications, are participants in a current government-funded initiative designed to modernise examinations systems. Particular emphases include the convergence of administrative systems which relate to all stages of processing, from "entries" to "results", such that examination centres deal with an identical systems interface irrespective of the particular Awarding Body with which they are entering. These developments should facilitate the tracking of candidates' progress and outcomes across the diverse range of individual elements that can contribute to a student's overall Baccalaureate. It is possible to recognise in these developments the potential future basis for maintaining, within an accredited context, transcripts which

relate to wider evidence of students' attainment and participation.

In the meantime, WJEC has benefited from the co-operation of other Awarding Bodies and UCAS in progressing the new data processing arrangements which need to be undertaken with due attention to accuracy, completeness and timeliness, in order to be able to award an aggregate Advanced Diploma within the agreed schedule for the issue of A Level results. It is important, however, to stress that these arrangements are in the context of the pilot scheme, and to recognise the considerable technical challenges that lie ahead in aggregating outcomes from what will be an increasingly wide range of qualifications and for full cohorts of students.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Experience to date with the development and delivery of the Welsh Baccalaureate pilot programme provides clear evidence of the curricular benefits that accrue to students from the balance, breadth and diversity available. There is also encouraging evidence regarding the gradually increasing acceptance of a Baccalaureate style aggregate award amongst stakeholders, including Higher Education.

In order that the initiative is able to mature effectively beyond the pilot stage, one of the major requirements is that all policy developments which impact on the Baccalaureate and its various curricular components are taken forward in a timely and coherent manner. The other major consideration is that adequate resourcing is available for all centres in order that they can successfully manage and implement those evolutionary changes in the provision of learning which are prerequisites for the delivery of an enriching Baccalaureate programme.

### Comparison of WBQ and Learning Core models

	WBQ	Learning Core
1. Age Range and levels	16-19.  Levels 2 and 3.	14-19.  All levels: pre-entry, entry, 1, 2, and 3.

<p>2. Core</p> <p>a. Skills</p> <p>Key Skills</p>	<p>Level 2: three at level 2, including one of first three and the rest at level 1</p> <p>Level 3: three at Level 3 including one of first three, and the rest at level 2.</p>	<p>14-16: all six key skills (or entry levels) to be developed at level appropriate to individual learners.</p> <p>16-19: Communication plus two others (and access to remaining three as enhancement), at levels appropriate to individual learners.</p>
<p>Welsh Language Skills</p>	<p>Language module of 20 hours minimum can be in Welsh (as 2<sup>nd</sup> language option) or any other language.</p>	<p>14-16: NC requirement for all.</p> <p>14-19: access as enhancement.</p>
<p>Other work-related skills</p>	<p>WRE element currently covers working with an employer and a team enterprise activity.</p>	<p>14-19: work-focused skills as per CEG and WRE frameworks</p>
<p>b. Knowledge and understanding</p> <p>Wales Europe and the World</p>	<p>Diary/record required plus individual investigation with written or oral outcome.</p>	<p>14-16: Curriculum Cymreig as common requirement</p> <p>16-19: Access to WEW as enhancement.</p>
<p>Personal, social, sustainability and health matters</p>	<p>Diary/record required. Individual exploration of one area from relationships, health, citizenship and sustainability; plus compulsory community involvement.</p>	<p>14-16: common requirement as per PSE framework.</p> <p>16-19: access as enhancement.</p>
<p>Careers education/ guidance</p>	<p>No current explicit requirement</p>	<p>14-19: statutory requirement, as per CEG framework for learners in f/t education.</p>

<p>c. Attitudes and values</p> <p>Respect for self, others and for diversity</p> <p>Responsibility for personal and social development, sustainability and health</p>	<p>WBQ sets strong emphasis on personal development and on social responsibility.</p>	<p>Progressive development with emphasis on integration of learning experiences and setting goals for personal development.</p>
<p>d. Common experiences</p> <p>Work-focused experience</p>	<p>30 hours working with an employer.</p> <p>Diary/record plus self evaluation.</p>	<p>14-19: requirement based on WRE framework. Aim is three weeks in total with at least one in 14-16 phase.</p>
<p>Community participation opportunities</p>	<p>Compulsory element in PSE requirement.</p>	<p>14-19: voluntary so seen as enhancement.</p>
<p>Cultural/sporting/aesthetic/creative experiences</p>	<p>Not specifically required although opportunities are clearly evident.</p>	<p>14-16: NC requirement in PE.</p> <p>14-19: access as enhancement.</p>
<p>3. Options</p>	<p>Level 2: four A*-C at GCSE, NVQ level 2 or BTEC pass in six units.</p> <p>Level 3: two A-E at advanced level, NVQ level 3 or BTEC National pass in twelve units.</p> <p>In practice, qualifications used include:at level</p>	<p>Flexible pathways allow very wide range of possible qualifications. No minimum volume required.</p>

2 a range of GNVQ, BTEC and NVQs; at level 3 NVQs in	CACHE (Childcare) and Travel and Tourism, as well as a range of GCEs and VCEs
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Note: this analysis has been undertaken for learners in full-time education. It does not include work-based learning, including modern apprenticeships, because of the incompatibility that there currently appears to be between such programmes and the WBQ model.