

CITB welcomes the opportunity to input into the Children, Young People and Education Committee's inquiry into the status of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.

In partnership with WJEC, CITB has been involved in developing Welsh Baccalaureate skills challenges that introduce students to construction.

These modules include:

- the Enterprise Challenge at Foundation and Advanced level
- KGA9 Inclusive Employment (with Bouygues)
- AEA5 Design a 21st Century School
- AEA6 Design your own world (with Willmott Dixon)
- Individual Project Sustainable Architecture (with Welsh School of Architecture)
- Global Citizenship and FGA2 Eco Friendly material (with Dawnus.)

Recommendations

The Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification can provide an introduction to a variety of skills that a student may not have had exposure to.

However, present delivery of the qualification is inconsistent.

Engagement with employers has historically been varied, and limited access to information on which schools are undertaking which challenges has inhibited partnership working between schools and industry. In order to maximise the benefits to students undertaking the Welsh Baccalaureate, Welsh Government should:

- Improve information and awareness of the benefits of the qualification to learners, parents and higher education bodies
- Provide more support for employers who would like to be a part of the skills challenges. This could include information packs for employers that wish to take part.
- Consider introducing an optional work experience placement
- Introduce administrative support for the qualification, which would create a database of all participating schools and employers for WJEC to deliver a co-ordinated approach that supports schools and FE colleges to develop links with employers and deliver the challenges.
- Ensure that there is more training and support in place for participating schools and employers. This could include developing a programme of ongoing training for teachers delivering the Welsh Baccalaureate, who may not have delivered this type of qualification in the subject area.
- Engage closely with universities across the UK to communicate the benefit of the Welsh Baccalaureate, with the aim to increase the number of FE and HE providers that acknowledge the qualification as part of a degree application.
- Explore the option of creating more opportunities to incorporate work skills into the Welsh Baccalaureate, including a review of the current levels of employer engagement.
- Engage closely with Regional Skills Partnerships to create stronger links between employers and the qualification.

1. Perception of the Welsh Baccaulaurate

- 1.1 There is a lack of understanding from learners around the value of the Welsh Baccaulaurate. Since being rolled out to all schools, the qualification has been seen by some as lacking value and taking up resources that could be spent on traditional subjects. This has led to petitions against the subject becoming compulsory.¹
- 1.2 Parents have fed back that they do not know how the Welsh Baccaulaurate compares to A levels, alongside concerns that time spent completing the qualification takes pupils away from their chosen subject areas.
- 1.3 This lack of understanding is also mirrored in schools, who have reported difficulties in knowing what students should be achieving as part of the qualification. As the skills are acquired from working through the Welsh Baccaulaurate, rather than an end result or examination, schools have struggled to adapt to this new way of working.
- 1.4 The recognition of the Welsh Baccaulaurate by higher education has been variable. It is not universally accepted as part of a university application, with subjects such as medicine and engineering often not formally acknowledging the qualification as equal to A Levels.
- 1.5 Reception from employers who are aware of the Welsh Baccaulaurate has been more positive. The skills challenges elements are seen as important, however many have reported difficulties in engaging with schools to co-deliver the programme. As there is no administrative support alongside the qualification, WJEC often do not know which schools are delivering which challenge, and what employers are willing to be involved.
- 1.6 The autonomous way of learning during the Welsh Baccaulaurate does provide a similar learning environment to working and university. This has been well received by employers who have previously expressed concerns about work readiness.

2. Impact of universal adoption of the Welsh Baccaulaurate

- 2.1 The Welsh Baccaulaurate should increase employability and help ease the transition from learning to earning. The exposure to new career routes should also help guide students as they make plans for the future.
- 2.2 It is not currently mandatory for schools providing the Welsh Baccaulaurate to link with an employer. As a result, not all students are benefiting from skills challenges with employers. If the qualification becomes mandatory then levels of engagement with employers should also be reviewed, to ensure maximum value for the learner.

¹ <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/welsh-baccaulaurate-puts-students-disadvantage-12146350>

2.3 However, given the current inconsistency in the delivery of the Welsh Baccaulaureate, making completion of the qualification compulsory at A level could exacerbate these issues and result in more damage to the reputation of the qualification.

2.4 If the Welsh Baccaulaureate was to become mandatory, improvements need to be made in the sharing of information between schools, WJEC, employers and or representative bodies. This in turn will improve the quality of the challenges that students can undertake, and provide a more uniform experience for learners.

2.5 Across learners, employers, parents, schools and higher education there has been a reported lack of understanding of the benefits of the Welsh Baccaulaurate and its comparability to traditional qualifications. Before any compulsory expansion, there needs to be clear communication on the benefits of the Welsh Baccaulaurate. This should include channels for feedback and further support for providers.

3. Conclusion

3.1 The Welsh Baccaulaurate has potential to equip learners with the skills they need to succeed both at work and at university. Working as part of a team, managing various tasks and working with an employer are all invaluable to learners as they progress beyond school.

About CITB

CITB is the Industrial Training Board (ITB) for the construction industry in Great Britain (Scotland, England and Wales). CITB is working to ensure that construction employers have the right skills, in the right place, at the right time by investing funds and providing a wide range of industry-led skills and training solutions. It does this through employer engagement in training, providing labour market insights on future skills needs and developing standards and qualifications for the sector. For more details on CITB's work visit: www.citb.co.uk.

Our specific work to improve sustainability in the built environment includes:

- Supporting the Qualification Wales Sector Review of Construction with expert advice and evidence.
- Delivering the widely recognised Site Environment Awareness Training Scheme (SEATS) which help employers comply with environmental legislation
- Funding the Supply Chain Sustainability School to encourage uptake of sustainability learning through the supply chain.