

The status of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification: Summary of survey responses

October 2018

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is looking at the status of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ). As part of its inquiry, the Committee conducted a survey to help it to understand how both young people and parents/guardians viewed the qualification.

Survey promotion and analysis

Secondary school pupils and their parents or guardians were encouraged to take part in the survey through Education and Youth Engagement school visits, Outreach workshops and through the Committee and Assembly Twitter and website presence. Facebook advertising was used to target a wide geographical spread.

To compile this summary an analysis of a complete data set was conducted; all data can be sourced to individual responses and further analysis can be undertaken upon request.

Results are calculated from the number of respondents who answered the specific question and not the overall number of respondents of the survey.

Survey respondents

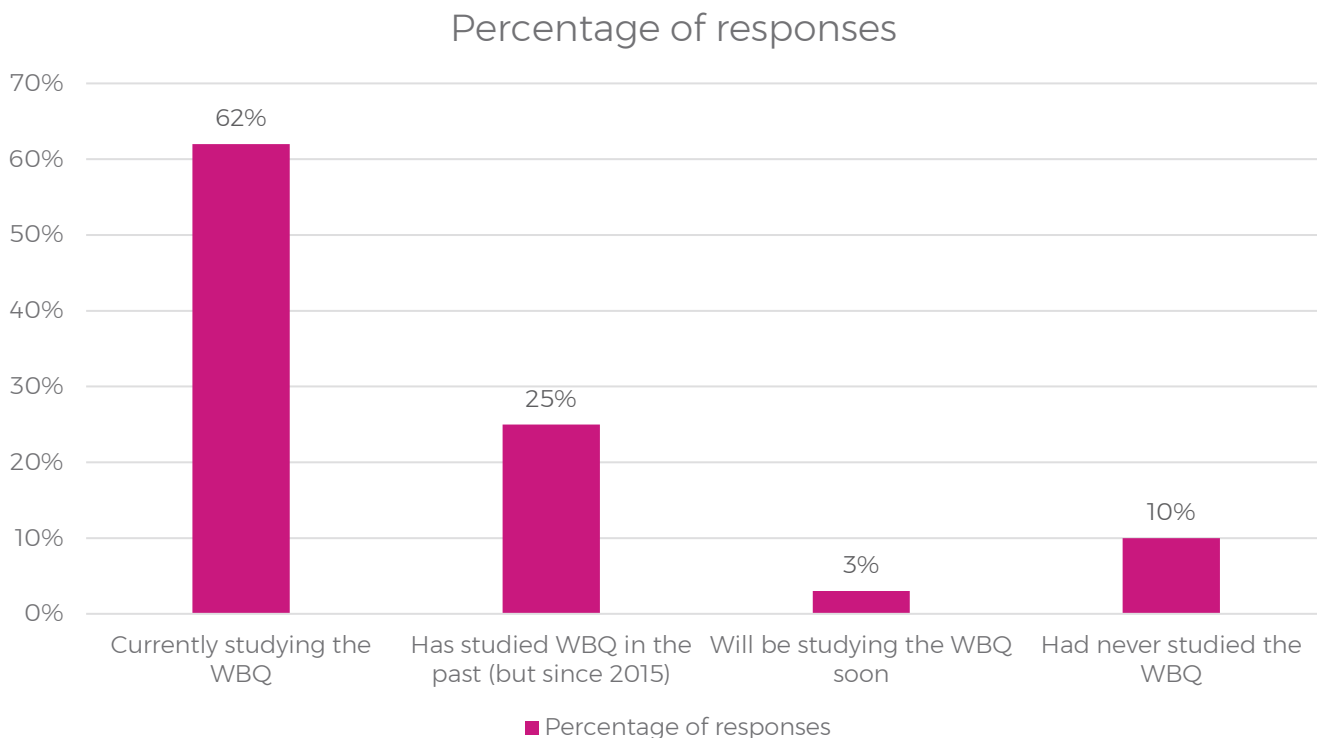
1,203 survey responses were collected. Responses can be categorised into the following groups:

- All responses - **1,203** total responses
- Parents/guardians - **426** responses*
- Pupils - **777** responses



*Parents and guardians were asked to answer survey questions relating to their child's experience of the Welsh Bacc. Separate statistics have been included where these views differ significantly to that of the pupils responses.

Respondents specified their experience of the WBQ:



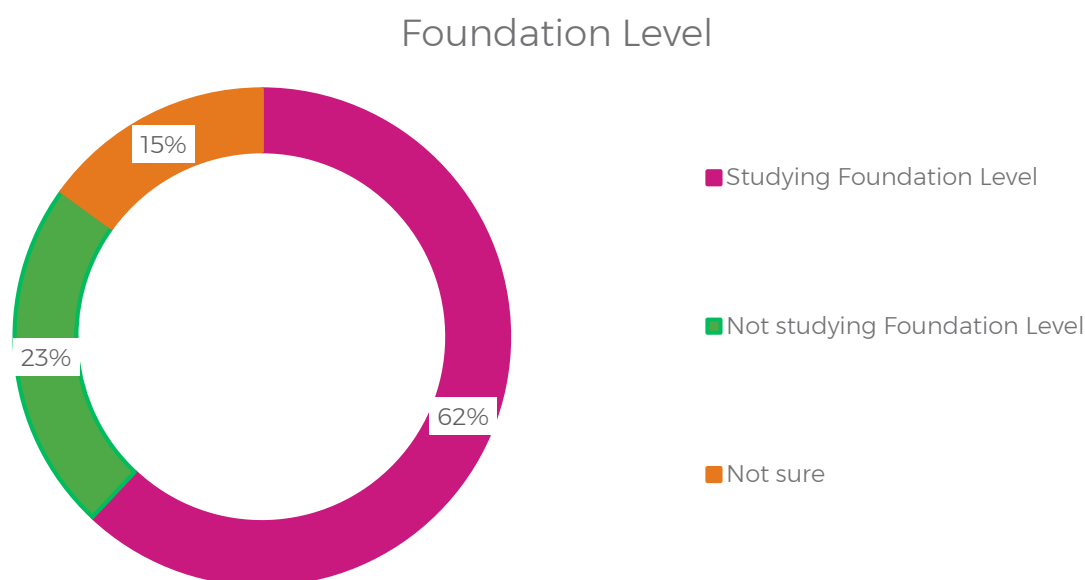
Choice

91% of respondents told us they were not given a choice whether to study the WBQ or not.

6% of respondents told us they had been given a choice and **3%** were not sure.

Foundation Level of the Skills Challenge Certificate

62% of respondents were studying the Foundation Level of the Skills Challenge Certificate.



How do you think the Foundation Level SCC compares to other qualifications you are studying?

Preparing for work and life

58% of those who studied the Foundation Level SCC felt it was less useful than other qualifications they were studying/had studied alongside it in preparing for work and life. **27%** felt it was the same and **15%** felt it was more useful.

70% of **parents/guardians** felt the Foundation Level SCC was less useful than other qualifications. **15%** felt it was the same and **15%** felt it was more useful.

Developing knowledge and skills

55% of those who studied the Foundation Level SCC felt it was less useful than other qualifications they were studying/had studied alongside it in developing knowledge and skills. **30%** felt it was the same and **15%** felt it was more useful.

67% of **parents/guardians** felt the Foundation Level SCC was less useful than other qualifications. **22%** felt it was the same and **11%** felt it was more useful.

Amount of time it takes

67% of those who studied the Foundation Level SCC felt it was more time consuming than other qualifications they were studying/had studied alongside it. **22%** felt it was the same and **10%** felt it was less time consuming.

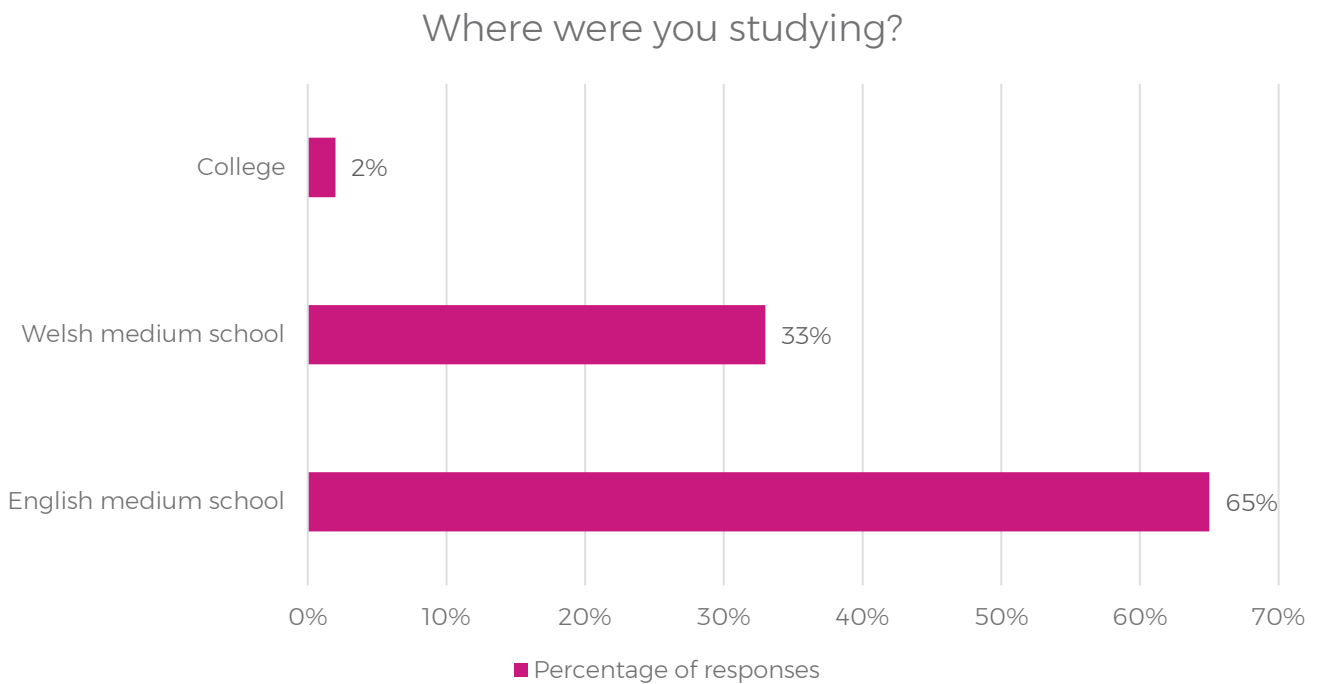
Level of difficulty

44% of those who studied the Foundation Level SCC felt it was the same level of difficulty as other qualifications they were studying/had studied alongside it.

39% felt it was less difficult and **17%** felt it was more difficult.

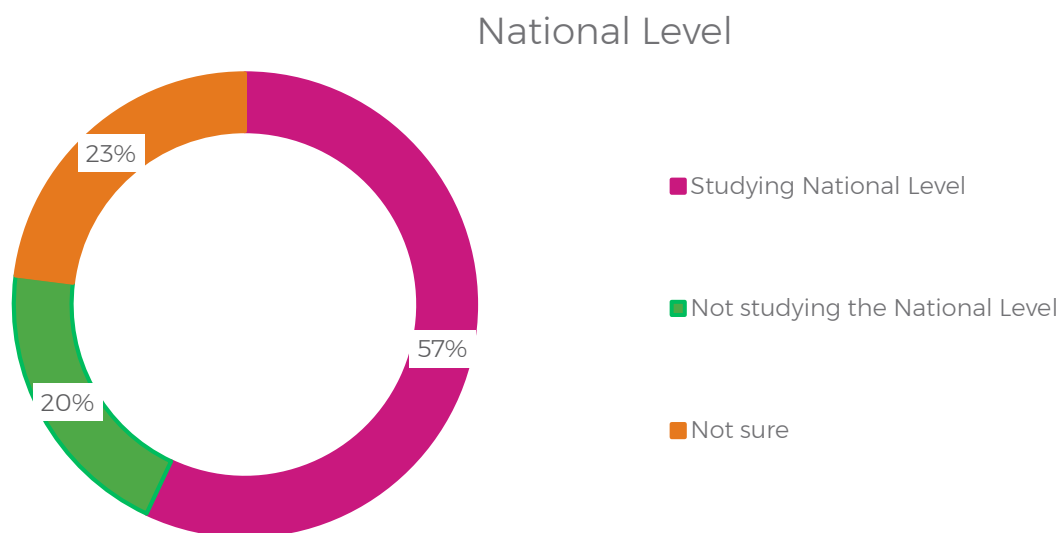
Institution of study

Respondents were asked where they studied the Foundation Level SCC:



National Level of the Skills Challenge Certificate

57% of respondents were studying the National Level of the Skills Challenge Certificate.



How do you think the National Level SCC compares to other qualifications you are studying?

Preparing for work and life

54% of those who studied the National Level SCC felt it was less useful than other qualifications they were studying/had studied alongside it in preparing for work and life.

28% felt it was the same and 18% felt it was more useful.

Developing knowledge and skills

56% of those who studied the National Level SCC felt it was less useful than other qualifications they were studying/had studied alongside it in developing knowledge and skills.

29% felt it was the same and 15% felt it was more useful.

Amount of time it takes

70% of those who studied the National Level SCC felt it was more time consuming than other qualifications they were studying/had studied alongside it.

22% felt it was the same and 8% felt it was less time consuming.

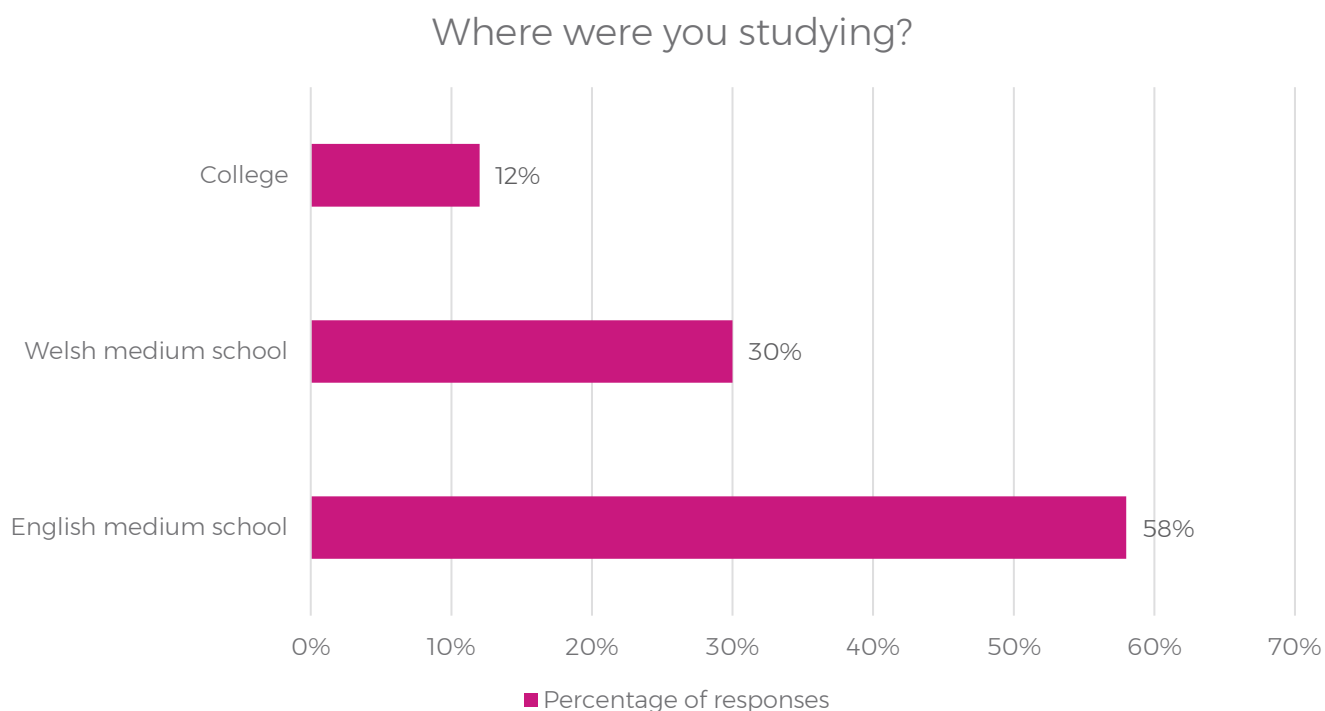
Level of difficulty

45% of those who had studied the National Level SCC felt it was the same difficulty as other qualifications they were studying/had studied alongside it.

35% felt it was less difficult and 20% felt it was more difficult.

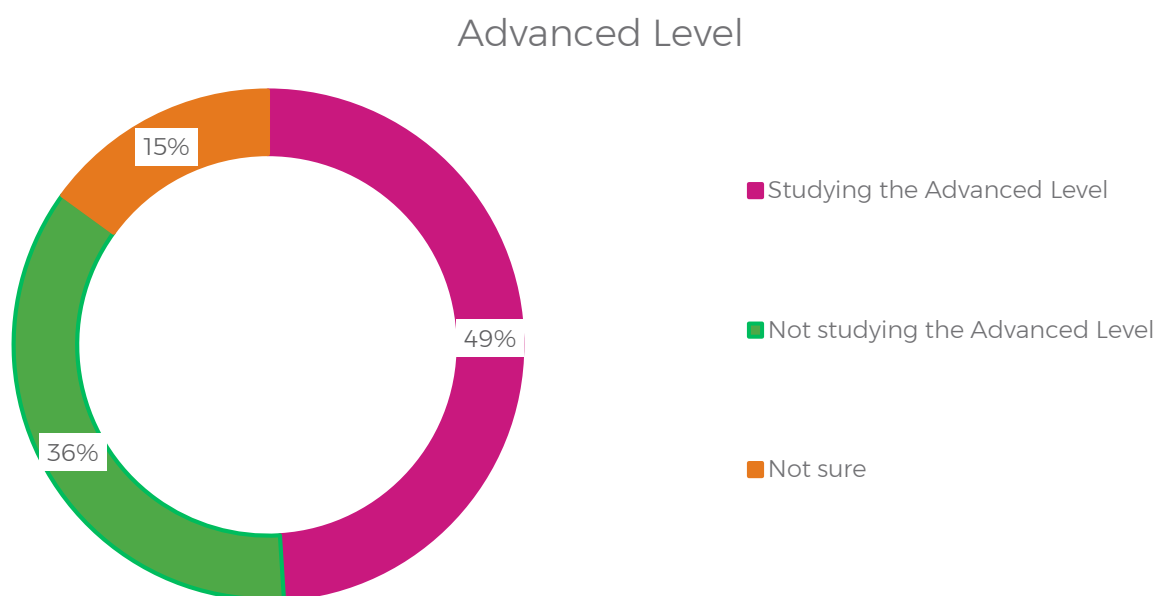
Institution of study

Respondents were asked where they studied the National Level SCC:



Advanced Level of the Skills Challenge Certificate

49% of respondents were studying the Advanced Level of the Skills Challenge Certificate. (69% of parents and guardians were answering on behalf of pupils studying the Advanced Level).



How do you think the Advanced Level SCC compares to other qualifications you are studying?

Preparing for work and life

54% of those who studied the Advanced Level SCC felt it was less useful than other qualifications they were studying/had studied alongside it in preparing for work and life.

25% felt it was the same and 21% felt it was more useful.

Developing knowledge and skills

53% of those who studied the Advanced Level SCC felt it was less useful than other qualifications they were studying/had studied alongside it in developing knowledge and skills.

30% felt it was the same and 17% felt it was more useful.

Amount of time it takes

69% participants felt the Advanced Level SCC was more time consuming than other qualifications they were studying/had studied alongside it.

23% felt it was the same and 8% felt it was less time consuming.

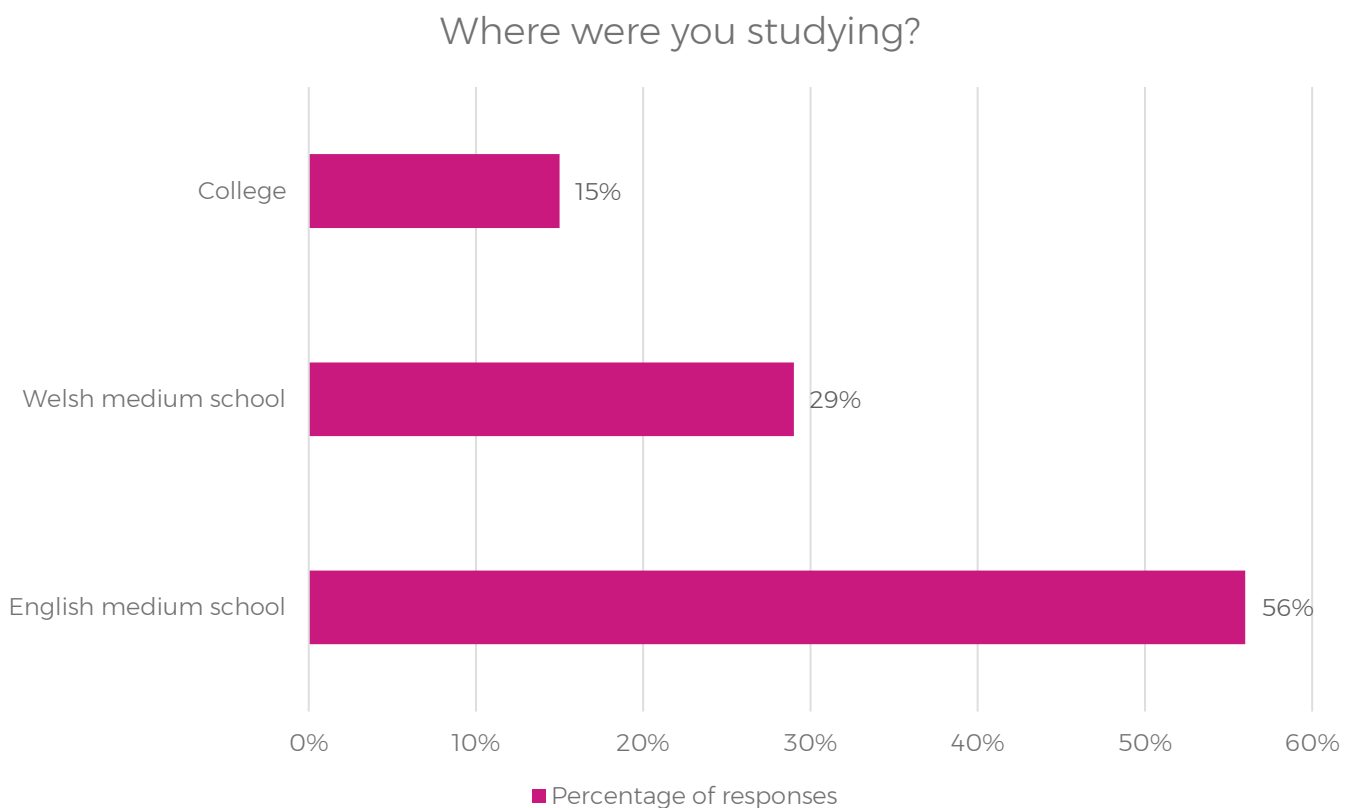
Level of difficulty

42% of those who studied the Advanced Level SCC felt it was the same level of difficulty than other qualifications they were studying/had studied alongside it.

36% felt it was less difficult and 22% felt it was more difficult.

Institution of study

Respondents were asked where they studied the Advanced Level SCC:



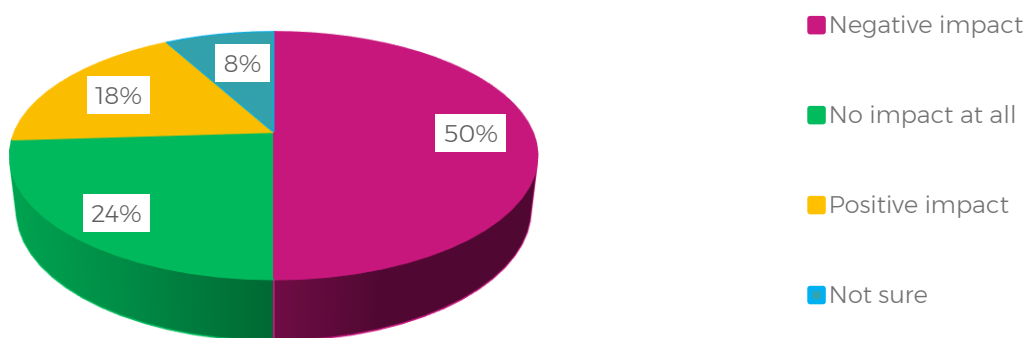
Impact of studying the Welsh Bacc

Respondents were asked what impact they felt that studying the Welsh Bacc had on studying other qualifications.

Of those who responded:

50% thought it had a negative impact (*this rose to 67% of parents*).

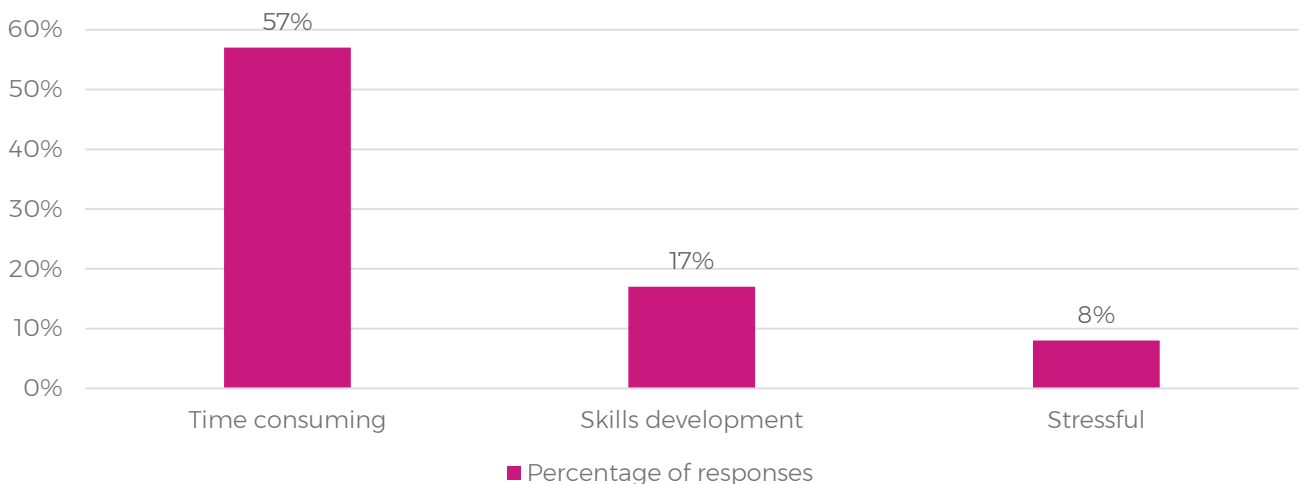
Impact on other qualifications



Respondents were asked to explain their answers.

Qualitative data analysis revealed the following themes amongst the 662 responses received:

Themes



Time consuming

Of the total responses received **57%** mentioned the time spent on the Welsh Bacc:

It seems like it is taking more time off the GCSEs that I need to or want to study.

Extremely time consuming - not enough time to revise for other subjects especially during exam time . Too much work to complete and not enough time to complete it.

I have often had to stay in during break times or lunch times to do Welsh Bacc work instead of attending revision sessions for my more important subjects. It has taken up time that I could spend on work for my other subjects. I have spent more time working on Welsh Bacc than any other subject and have ended up staying up through the night to get the work for my other subjects completed on top of my Welsh Bacc work. It's a complete nuisance as a subject and I feel it's not having a positive impact on my school work.

The Welsh Bacc, a subject I was forced to take has detracted from my other, more useful studies due to time wasted on monotonous tasks. This time could have been used furthering my knowledge of the subjects I am interested in, that will aid my university education and future career.

It takes time away from other subjects and reduces options- both at GCSE and A'level. It is an absolute disgrace that students like my daughter, who would like to study 4 subjects at A'level, are being hindered from doing so by being forced to do the Welsh Bacc. It essentially limits their subject choices from GCSE onwards by taking up valuable time. (...)

Less time to focus on my other subjects. It takes up an option at GCSE (I would have studied French, but I didn't have enough options).

Skills development

17% of the responses received mentioned skills. Some felt they had developed skills as a result of the Welsh Bacc, others did not feel they had benefited from skills development as a result of the qualification:

Positive impact

It develops many skills not found in other subjects.

The projects gave me skills I am using in university. I became a better leader through the Community challenge. Critical thinking skills and research skills were massively advanced compared to my peers in an English uni. It also bolstered my application through offers and enhanced my personal statement. It's no good having lots of knowledge with poor skills to use that knowledge.

I think my son has gained or developed many transferable skills which he has been able to apply in his other curriculum subjects. In addition to the core Welsh Bacc skills, he's gained confidence, communication and teamwork skills which are invaluable. In addition, he's had the opportunity to undertake a research project and complete tasks that will certainly prepare him for life in future.

Negative impact

My child already learns the skills within humanities A Levels.

I found that the skills used in completing my Welsh Bacc work are skills I have already developed through my compulsory education and GCSEs, such as IT skills, and are developing in my A level studies. Particularly at A level, I have had to take time away from studying for my AS exams to complete Welsh Bacc work which I felt was unnecessarily difficult and time consuming and added nothing to my personal skills. It has added another layer of stress onto an already heavy workload and, due to my subject choice, does very little for me in terms of universities.

I don't think the knowledge and skills gained from Welsh Baccalaureate are necessarily transferrable to other subjects, however the advanced level has many elements / skills that are very useful life skills (not so much with foundation / national level)

Stressful

8% of the responses received mentioned stress as a contributing factor to the negative impact of the qualification:

I have had to stop revising for other subjects I have chosen to be able to complete a draft of one of the Bacc challenges. It also takes a very long time to reach a high enough standard and I think it causes students too much stress.

I believe that the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification has taken masses of my time away from my other subjects and has caused massive stress on my life. I firmly believe that by making me study Welsh Bacc my school has disadvantaged my ability to get into university compared to English students. Welsh Baccalaureate causes much more stress than it's worth.

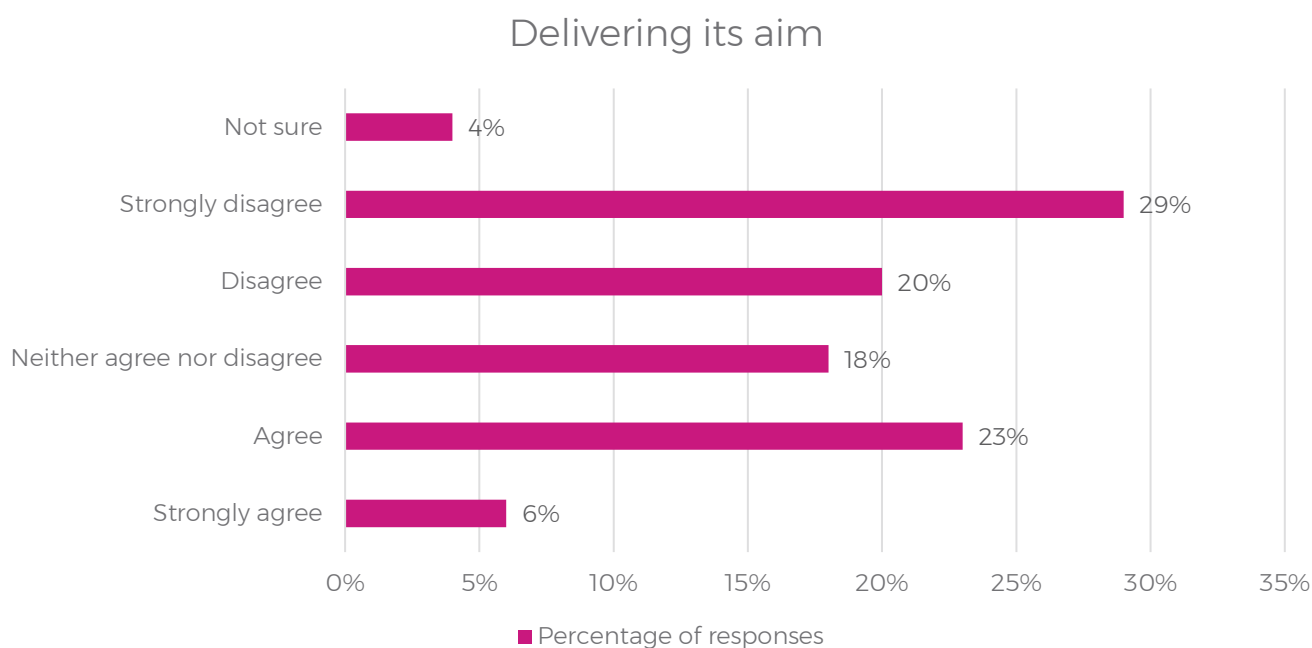
It has made my time at school extremely stressful as it is very time consuming and I should be focusing on my actual GCSEs rather than a "subject" which is more common sense than actually helping me in the future.

It was a compulsory subject alongside A Levels which created a lot of stress . It adds a lot of pressure as it is important to do well in it but sometimes it can take the focus of other subjects which, for most people, are more important especially when it comes to applying for university. I did not want to take it as I was more interested in taking more A Level courses but I was forced and had to drop one of my A Level options in order to do it.

Developing the skills for education, employment and life

Respondents were asked to what extent they thought the Welsh Bacc had or would deliver the aim of enabling learners to develop the skills for education, employment and life.

29% strongly disagreed (*this rose to 35% of parents*)

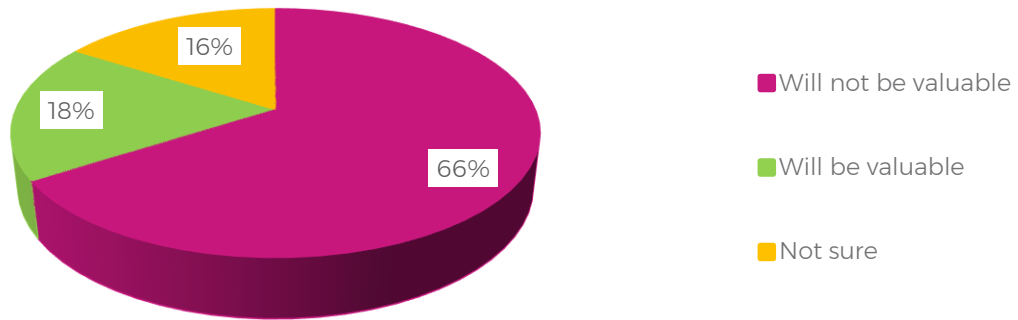


Value to career progression

Respondents were asked whether they felt the Welsh Bacc would be valuable to the career they wanted to pursue.

66% did not feel it would be valuable (*this rose to 72% of parents*)

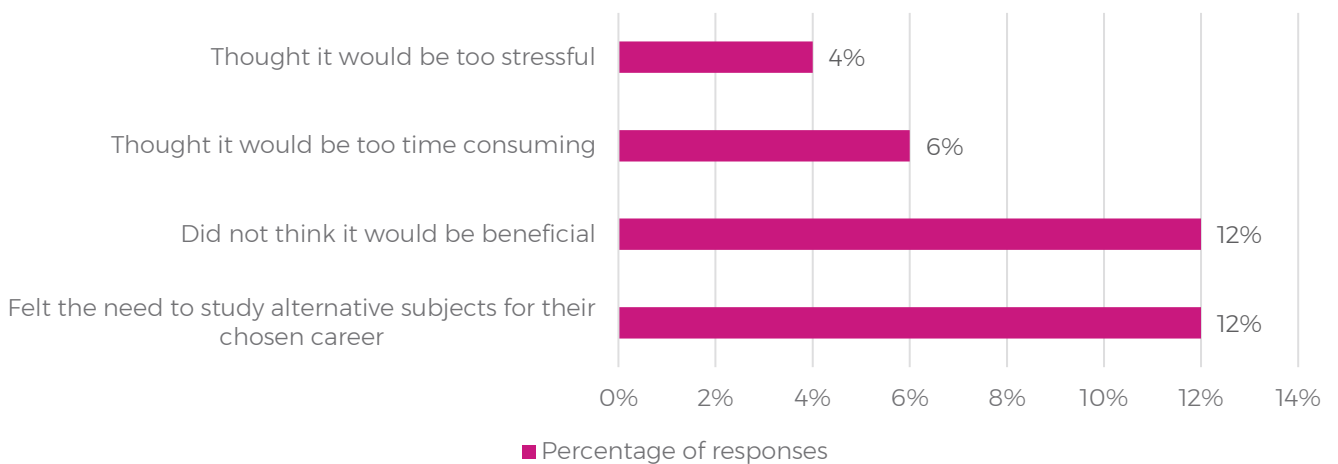
Value to career progression



Not studying the Welsh Bacc

Respondents who had not studied the Bacc were asked what reasons had contributed to this (respondents could select a number of reasons):

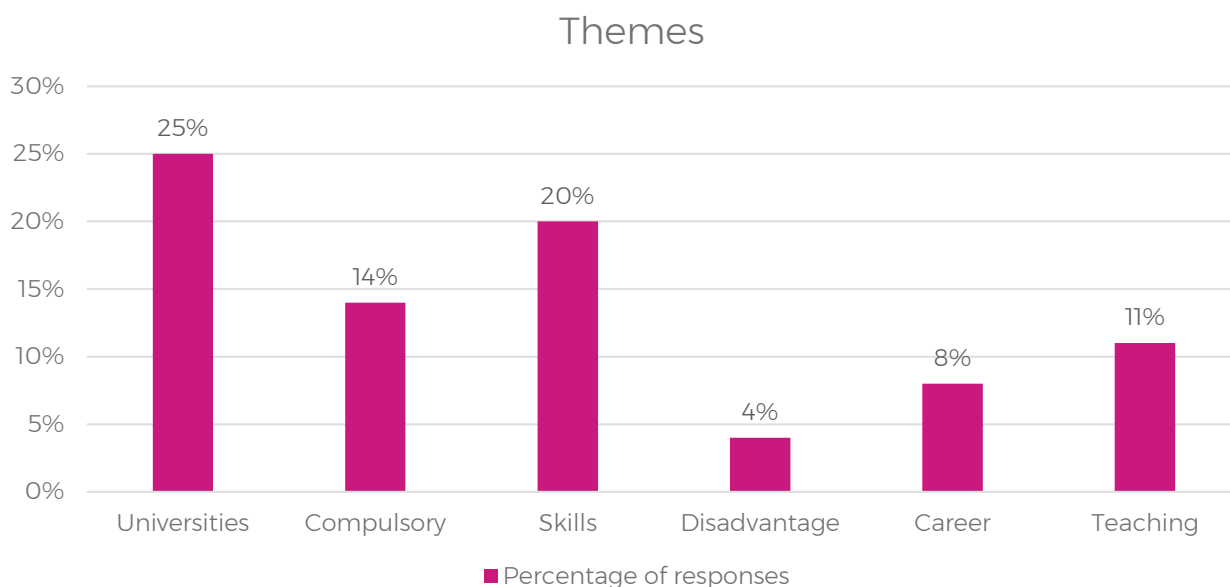
Why didn't you study the WBQ?



Comments

Respondents were given the opportunity to expand on their earlier answers.

Of the 387 responses received, the following themes emerged:



Universities

25% of the responses received mentioned universities. The majority felt the qualification had a negative impact on applying to universities, a small number felt it had a positive impact however.

Negative viewpoints

I believe that Welsh Bacc takes time away from lessons that I'd rather be doing/need for my future. If I decide to go to uni in another country such as England or Scotland, I feel like it would be useless, and that they don't look for any qualification from Welsh Bacc.

My one son started studying maths, physics, electronics and chemistry A levels. The Welsh Bacc ate into his time so much that he stopped studying maths and is now planning a year's foundation course in maths in his choice of uni prior to his degree course. He'd have much preferred to give up the Welsh

Bacc. My other son has just completed his A levels, we asked in his choice of uni if the Welsh Bacc would be acceptable as one of his grades - the allocations officer made a face and murmured that it may be but they'd prefer to have subjects relevant to the course he intended studying!

Positive viewpoints

I think that initially students are put off by the admin side of Welsh Bacc but when I was applying for uni it was a god send...I found that some teachers take their role in Welsh Bacc more seriously than others, but on the whole I do think that Welsh Bacc is important and very useful for students as the extra grade can mean you get into the uni of your choice.

WBQ has had a HUGE and very positive impact on my future and the universities I have been able to apply for. This is because it counts as a full A level which is hugely beneficial for someone like myself who is much better at coursework based subjects. Having WBQ means I have 4 A levels and I am able to say I got an A in A level which is extremely appealing to universities /employers no matter the subject.*

Compulsory subject

14% of the responses received talked about the subject being compulsory. All of these responses believed it should be an optional subject.

The Welsh Bac, especially at A Level standard, should NOT be compulsory. If learners choose to study it then they should be allowed to, but those who don't want / need to study it should not be forced to do so.

I think it is a good course for those who opt to study it however it should not be made compulsory as it creates unnecessary stress and pressure.

Unfortunately, as the Welsh Bacc is compulsory, this means I'll be taking five A-Levels, a heavy course load. This seems to be a common complaint, with many students forced to drop a subject they have a genuine interest in to accommodate a subject with seemingly endless paperwork to do, which appears to contribute nothing but UCAS points. Of course, whilst this is

important and a strong factor in determining whether an applicant gains a place, not every university uses the UCAS points system.

I understand the Welsh Bacc is no longer compulsory (well at least at the School my children attended) at A level and this is certainly a step forward.

Skills

20% of the responses received talked about skills. Although many responses acknowledged the purpose of the Welsh Bacc in developing skills outside of the traditional qualifications studied, many did not feel this was beneficial or appropriately delivered.

No, it will not be helpful towards the career I want to pursue as I will not need to design my own product and try to sell it as a psychotherapist. If I were to open up my own business in psychology, I can do so with the skills I acquire from my business lessons, which I took as an option. We are not taught any actual valuable skills in the Welsh Bacc lessons, and we are taught how to work in groups in PSE (...)

I think that the Welsh Bacc needs a massive overhaul. The majority of students don't understand why we have to do the Welsh Bacc which in turn creates a negative mindset towards to qualification. Welsh Bacc is meant to provide us with useful skills, however I can say that I haven't learnt/developed any skills that will be more beneficial to me in future life. A bigger emphasis should be based on life skills such as politics, finances and job applications which would be truly beneficial.

I feel that Skills Challenge could be more applicable to working and adult life. Almost being 16 years of age, my fellow students in my year and I are approaching the age at which we can legally be considered adults in many regards: having the opportunity to work; own property; or start families. Going into adulthood, we need to be learning about how to cope with the aforementioned factors of adult life. I would have assumed this would be the aim of Skills Challenge lessons whereas in reality we do nothing of the sort. In my Skills Challenge lessons, we have concentrated on the 'Community Challenge' from which I have gained little more knowledge than I had prior to the project.

I think Welsh Bacc is very good. It improves people's skills and helps you learn how to make a CV and what jobs want from you, these are skills we need in real life.

Disadvantage

4% of the responses received felt that the WBQ was putting Welsh students at a disadvantage.

It puts Welsh children at a disadvantage because it has to be one of the options. Similarly at GCSE level the fact that Welsh Government make our children take RE and Welsh also puts Welsh children at a disadvantage compared with the rest of the UK.

Welsh students in England will be at a disadvantage with their English peers, as they will have generally a WHOLE SUBJECT LESS at A level from which to draw their knowledge. Welsh Bacc might be good for kids with low academic prospects, but for those who aspire but are not Oxbridge material, it is a hinderance.

Career path

8% of the responses received mentioned career paths. As with the views on how useful the WBQ is for university applications, the majority of responses did not feel the qualification was helpful for specific career paths. However, a small number of responses felt it had been valuable.

I have a positive opinion towards Welsh Bacc, but I see friends that have a set career path where Welsh Bacc will not benefit them and none of their universities they hope to go with accept Welsh Bacc as an A level. I however don't have a particular path and I feel that the destination pathway will really help and I can also use my Welsh Bacc as a fourth A level...If people chose to do Welsh Bacc and take it as an A level maybe universities would view it more highly and let Welsh students use it to get in to universities.

Please make it more career related with a practical in-class focus with trips to real work places instead of written essays and mini dissertations. Otherwise it

might as well be an A-level. The teachers don't even understand how to teach it.

Having the Welsh BaccaLaureate qualification was the reason for my child's university application being approved. Without it she would not have been able to study for her chosen career.

Teaching

11% of the responses received talked about the teaching of the WBQ. Many felt this was inconsistent and did not feel teachers were well equipped to teach the subject.

Also, and probably most importantly, most of the teachers don't know what they have to teach you and when they do it's generally poor. If you're lucky you get the teacher who is head of the teaching of Welsh Bacc in the school but that means that only 10-15 students (A-Level) are lucky enough to get this teacher. As a result of the poor teaching, students are generally left in the dark as to what they have to do and therefore their commitment towards the subject hinders.

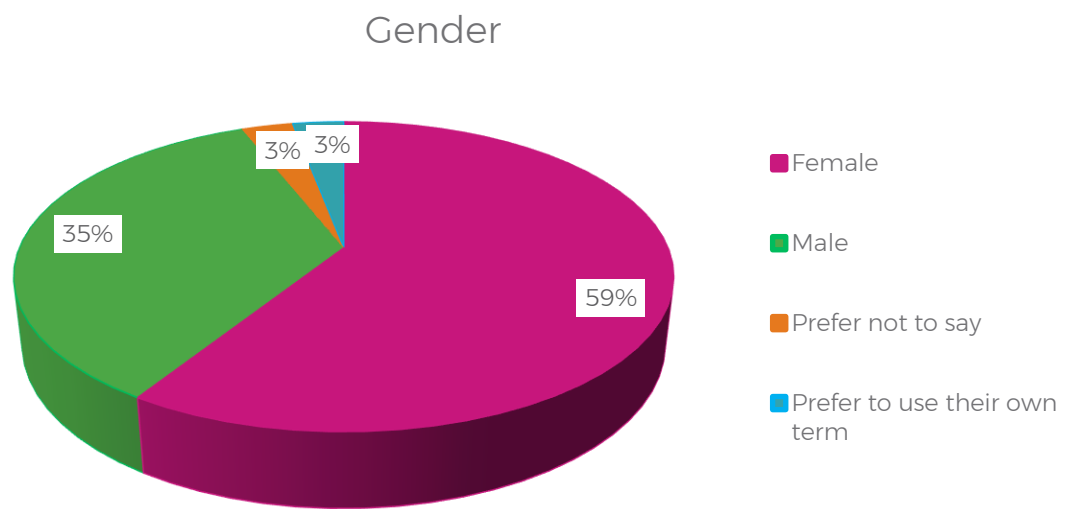
The teachers don't even understand how to teach it. It is unfair to put such a burden on students and schools to teach this thing. It works in theory but not in practice.

Firstly, the standard of teaching is pretty poor, usually not of the teacher's fault. They clearly don't really know what Welsh Bacc is, and none of them are experts on the subject, at least in my experience. Every Welsh Bacc teacher I have encountered has been of another area of expertise, and some even admit that they are only doing it for the extra money.

Demographic of respondents

Gender

59% of the respondents were female and 35% were male.



Location of respondents

Responses were gathered from every local authority in Wales with the highest number of responses submitted from **Newport (26%)**, **Cardiff (15%)** and the **Vale of Glamorgan (16%)**.

15 - Blaenau Gwent

15 - Bridgend

31 - Caerphilly

143 - Cardiff

53 - Carmarthenshire

17 - Ceredigion

12 - Conwy

15 - Denbighshire

20 - Flintshire

19 - Gwynedd

15 - Isle of Anglesey

4 - Methyr Tydfil

26 - Monmouthshire

15 - Neath Port Talbot

256 - Newport

14 - Pembrokeshire

29 - Powys

36 - Rhondda Cynon Taf

18 - Swansea

10 - Torfaen

149 - Vale of Glamorgan

30 - Wrexham

