

Remove compulsory Welsh Bac for students looking to go to University

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 26 Ionawr 2020
Petitions Committee | 26 January 2020

Reference: RS20/14886

Petition Number: P-05-1091

Petition title: Remove compulsory Welsh Bac for students looking to go to University

Text of petition: Although Welsh Bac provides many important employability skills, and is good for those going straight into a profession after college, it only holds students who wish to go to University back.

Previously students could take up to 4 A-levels, even 5 for the best students, but Welsh Bac limits them to 3, in some schools even limits them to 2, stopping students from getting a broad education.

Stopping the Welsh Bac for those who wish to go to University would allow Welsh students to not only go to the top universities, but get a better education. Welsh Bac is full of topics that educated students already know, and is on par with General Studies for a lot of universities. Abolishing it for those who know they wish to go to University would allow students to be more educated, and thus allow us to achieve a more educated workforce and help the Welsh economy.

Another option I'd like to put across to be considered is creating an AS qualification, and only having AS level Welsh Bac be compulsory, therefore allowing students to have more time towards their exams and still be able to do 4 subjects. Schools could choose whether this is done over a 2 year period or in one year.



Welsh students are constantly looked down upon, and having a better attitude to education (like what was done with maintaining the AS's) would allow us to be stronger and more respected as Welsh people.

1. Background

The original Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (Welsh Bacc) was first piloted in September 2003 and made available to all schools and colleges in Wales in September 2007. The Welsh Bacc was revised following the Welsh Government's Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales (2012) and a new Welsh Bacc was introduced in September 2015.

The Welsh Bacc is currently awarded at three levels, Foundation (level 1) at key stage 4; National (level 2) at key stage 4; and Advanced (level 3). The Welsh Bacc comprises:

- The Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC). This is central to the Welsh Bacc and has four components: the Individual Project; the Enterprise and Employability Challenge; the Global Citizenship Challenge; and the Community Challenge
- GCSEs in English or Welsh Language, and Mathematics or Mathematics-Numeracy. The literacy and numeracy components of the Essential Skills Wales qualification can also be used; and
- A choice of supporting qualifications - GCSEs, A levels or vocational.

At Foundation and National levels, the SCC is the same size as a GCSE, and at Advanced level the SCC is the same size as an A level. The Advanced SCC carries UCAS tariff points. To be awarded the Welsh Bacc, learners must achieve the SCC and the other qualifications that it specifies. The SCC is a standalone qualification which can be achieved and awarded without the other qualifications that make up the Welsh Bacc.

2. Welsh Government action

There are no statutory requirements for a learner to take any external examination. However, the Welsh Government has a policy of 'universal adoption' of the Welsh Bacc by schools and colleges.

3. Welsh Parliament action

3.1. Children, Young People and Education Committee

In September 2018 the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee began an inquiry into the status of the Welsh Bacc qualification. The Committee found that 'there is a lack of clarity about the meaning and implementation of the Welsh Government's universal adoption policy' and recommended that, as a matter of priority, the Welsh Government should issue more detailed guidance on the policy of universal adoption which should set out clearly the circumstances in which learners may be exempt from studying the SCC.

The Welsh Government published guidance in October 2019. It states:

We encourage sixth forms and colleges to ensure that their young people follow two or three A Levels (or equivalents) according to the requirements of higher education course they intend to pursue, in addition to the Advanced SCC, universities are generally supportive of this view.

It also states:

For some learners, undertaking the SCC may not be the right choice, and we therefore need some flexibility. Schools and colleges should be 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 SCC.

3.2. Petitions Committee

The Committee has considered a number of previous petitions in relation to the Welsh Bacc:

- Remove the compulsory aspect of Welsh Baccalaureate (2019). The Petition was closed in light of the removal of the specific exercise referred to in the petition, the scrutiny of the Welsh Bacc carried out by the CYPE Committee, and the Minister for Education's commitment to publish updated guidance.
- Remove the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (2016). The Petition was closed due to absence of contact with the Petitioner.
- Make Welsh universities consider the Welsh Baccalaureate as an A Level (2020). The Petition was closed in light of the Minister for Education's position that it is for universities to establish the entry requirements for their courses and the work underway respond to recommendations made previously by the CYPE Committee.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.