
Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

National Assembly for Wales
Children, Young People and Education Committee

Kirsty Williams AM
Cabinet Secretary for Education

30 November 2017

Dear Kirsty

Thank you for your letter of 31 October, and for the further information you have provided in relation to the views of Universities on the Welsh Baccalaureate (Welsh Bacc).

Having considered this additional information, together with the evidence you provided at Committee on 18 October 2017, the Committee has some continued concerns relating to the Welsh Bacc, and we would be grateful for your response on the following issues.

The status of the Welsh Baccalaureate at post-16

On 18 October, you told the Committee that the Welsh Government (WG) ‘encourages universal adoption and delivery of the Welsh Baccalaureate’. The Committee is, however, still not clear how exactly you would do that. You confirmed at that meeting that it is not statutory for all learners to undertake the Welsh Bacc, but that WG ‘actively’ encourages the take-up of the Welsh Bacc post-16 ‘where appropriate’.

- Could you provide further explanation of how the WG actively encourages the universal take-up of the Welsh Bacc at post-16?
- Does the post-16 planning and funding system provide any financial incentives to schools and colleges to maximise take-up?
- Your official (at the meeting on 18 October) referred to documentation that uses the term ‘where appropriate’ – is this official guidance and is it publicly available? If not can the Committee receive a copy?

The WG has published guidance, *The post-16 Welsh Baccalaureate: recording and measuring outcomes*, which contains the following targets set by WG for schools and colleges on adoption of the Welsh Bacc:



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2015/16 Maintain 2014/15 percentage or 30%, whichever is the higher
2016/17 Maintain 2014/15 percentage or 50%, whichever is the higher
2017/18 Maintain 2014/15 percentage or 70%, whichever is the higher
2018/19 90%
2019/20 100%

Again, on 18 October, you told the Committee that it would be ‘massively inconceivable’ for a school to force a learner to do a qualification when this would jeopardise their chances of fulfilling their potential. However, from the targets listed above, the direction of travel appears to be one of giving the head teacher less discretion than at present.

- Can you provide details on how these targets are monitored and enforced, and what the implications are for schools and colleges if they don’t meet the 100% target by 2019/20?
- How does this tally with the guidance that learners should only be entered for the Welsh Bacc post-16 ‘where appropriate’ and the discretion given to the head teacher?
- What guidance is given to head teachers on how they should apply such discretion?

The views of universities

Although the Committee appreciates the additional information provided, your letter of 31 October appeared to be focussed more on the regard universities have for the Welsh Bacc in their admission procedures rather than its status and whether it is compulsory or not.

We welcome the fact that you have written to all university Vice Chancellors to seek assurance that their institutions would accept the reformed Welsh Baccalaureate as part of their future entry requirements or as part of an alternative offer, although it is not clear whether this was UK wide. You have stated that you ‘expect’ all UK universities to accept the Welsh Bacc. However, the Committee is concerned that this does not provide an assurance that Welsh students are not disadvantaged by doing the Welsh Bacc.

The Committee very much welcomes your assurance that Universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, value the Welsh Bacc and are taking an increasingly flexible approach to recognising it in their offers, but we remain concerned that some universities and courses do not count it towards their entry requirements.



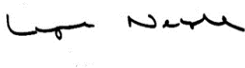
- Can you confirm whether your letter to Vice Chancellors included those all across the UK. Can you also confirm how many responded, and provide an analysis or summary of their responses?
- What analysis has the WG done of whether different schools (departments) within universities have different approaches with regard to the Welsh Bacc?
- Can you confirm what flexibility and discretion is given to post-16 students who want to apply for courses that do not count the Welsh Bacc – would they still have to do the Welsh Bacc? Is this an example of the circumstances where head teacher discretion would come into play?

Finally, you confirm in your letter that Qualifications Wales will be publishing a review of the Welsh Bacc in the autumn term.

- Can you confirm what terms of reference have been set for this? Did the WG request this review or did Qualifications Wales itself decide to undertake the review?

I look forward to your response regarding these matters.

Yours sincerely,



Lynne Neagle AC / AM
Cadeirydd / Chair

