
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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Pwnc / Subject:	Consultation on the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate and the Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate

Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, Estyn is independent of the Welsh Government.

Estyn's principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, Estyn must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Estyn's remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary schools, all age schools, secondary schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and teacher education and training.

Estyn may give advice to the Assembly on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, Estyn has set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

Introduction

Estyn supports the developments to streamline aspects of the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate, although we are concerned about the proposed loss of the Welsh Baccalaureate brand. This has been a unique aspect of the Welsh education offer for 14-19 learners for over 15 years and we would welcome further discussion about this matter. In particular, we are concerned about how the recent consultations on new qualifications and the Welsh Baccalaureate fits into a coherent strategic vision for learner progression from the Curriculum for Wales to 16-19 curriculum and PCET reforms. The purpose of the Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification was to provide 16-19 year old learners in schools and colleges with a broad and balanced curriculum.

We support many of the proposals made as part of this consultation. We welcome the proposals that:

- the Advanced Skills Certificate becomes a standalone qualification
- the new qualification will not rely on outcomes of results in other subjects
- there is a focus on developing lifelong skills for future employment and training
- the number of components is reduced in the new qualification
- there is a focus on integral skills

Estyn have noted a number of considerations. These are:

- greater consideration about how this qualification will promote the development and assessment of learners' skills. In particular, the assessment of literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
- opportunities for developing enterprise and employability skills should not be reduced as part of this change to the qualification
- learners should be expected to pass every component of this qualification in order to gain an overall grade.

Consultation questions

Consultation Question 1

The overarching Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate framework should be discontinued allowing a focus on the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate as a standalone qualification.

A) To what extent do you agree with this proposal?

- Partly agree and partly disagree

B) Please explain your answer in the space below

While Estyn supports the proposal to strengthen the focus on developing learners' skills through the streamlining of aspects of the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate, we are concerned about the proposed loss of the Welsh Baccalaureate brand. This has been a unique aspect of the Welsh education offer for 14-19 learners for over 15 years and we would welcome further discussion about this matter. In particular, we are concerned about how the recent consultations on new qualifications and the Welsh Baccalaureate fits into a coherent strategic vision for learner progression from the Curriculum for Wales to 16-19 curriculum and PCET reforms. The purpose of the Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification was to provide 16-19 year old learners in schools and colleges with a broad and balanced curriculum.

We support the proposal that the new qualification will not rely on the outcomes of results in other subjects. The emphasis on developing learners' skills in the Skills Challenge Certificate is welcomed. We believe that this may provide a useful opportunity to promote the development of learners' literacy, numeracy, digital and wider skills, such as problem solving and personal development.

Consultation Question 2

The purpose of the new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate should be to enable learners to develop and apply skills in relevant contexts in preparation for employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship.

A) To what extent do you agree with this proposal?

- Agree

B) Please explain your answer in the space below

Estyn generally supports this proposal and we believe that it is important that this qualification encourages the development of these important skills. The design of this qualification needs to allow sufficient flexibility for learners on a wide range of programmes, including vocational programmes, to demonstrate their skills through meaningful contexts and activities.

As part of the design process, there will need to be sufficient guidance for teachers to plan activities. Mechanisms for 'approving' activities need to be efficient and avoid placing unnecessary burden on teachers and centres. Where possible, the new qualification should build upon the work of Curriculum for Wales, particularly the development of the four purposes.

We believe there should be greater consideration about how this qualification will promote the development of learners' skills. In particular, consideration about how learners' literacy, numeracy and digital competence, as well as the integral skills mentioned in the proposal will be developed. Where possible these skills should be developed through meaningful experiences for learners. Schools should be encouraged to ensure that work-

related experiences build on learners' interests and career aspirations. Emphasising the importance of partnerships with employers and with vocational providers should support this further.

Consultation Question 3

To prepare learners for employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship, the new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate should require learners to develop and demonstrate their skills in contexts based on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Wales' well-being goals.

A) To what extent do you agree with this proposal?

- Agree

B) Please explain your answer in the space below

We support this proposal. It links well with the developments of Curriculum for Wales and will build upon centres' work to promote and develop the four purposes. This element should encourage schools to promote sustainability and support young people well.

Consultation Question 4

The structure of the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate should be revised to include a reduction in components from four to three. The three components included in the new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate should be:
Component 1 - Global Community Project
Component 2 - Future Destinations Project
Component 3 - Individual Project

A) To what extent do you agree with this proposal?

- Partly agree and partly disagree

B) Please explain your answer in the space below

We generally support the reduction in the number of components in the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate. This is likely to be clearer for learners and will allow centres to focus on these important aspects more closely. In addition, this will reduce duplication from the Level 2 Welsh Baccalaureate.

The enterprise component of this qualification is valued, particularly by vocational learners. Through our thematic work, we have suggested that there needs to be an

increased focus on developing learners' enterprise and employability skills. Consideration will need to be given to this when the Level 2 qualification is designed to ensure this aspect is not lost altogether. It may be helpful to consider including this aspect in both qualifications. In the Advanced qualification it may be worthwhile to consider learners' career pathways in college and school settings as part of the future destinations project, with closer links to employers and the local community.

Consultation Question 5

The three components of the new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate should

contribute to the overall qualification as follows:

Global Community Project – 25%

Future Destinations Project – 25%

Individual Project – 50%

A) To what extent do you agree with this proposal?

- Agree

B) Please explain your answer in the space below

We believe that these important aspects should remain a fundamental part of this qualification. We welcome the suggested structure and believe that placing a greater emphasis on the individual project will be a positive for learners.

We would wish to note that any design specifications will need to ensure that these projects are suitably demanding and that they show clearly how learners' skills will be assessed.

Consultation Question 6

The new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate should focus on assessing the Integral Skills of: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Creativity and Innovation, Planning and Organising and Personal Effectiveness.

A) To what extent do you agree with this proposal?

- Partly agree and partly disagree

B) Please explain your answer in the space below

Generally we support this proposal, although we also believe it is important to place an emphasis on literacy, numeracy and digital competence.

With regard to the assessment of skills in this qualification, it is important that guidance is developed to clarify the expectations for these skills and outline how they may be assessed. This will support teachers to put a suitable emphasis on learners' skills

development. In addition, if the literacy, numeracy and digital skills are not assessed as part of this qualification, they may be neglected/seen as not being important for learners' progression. Inspection evidence suggests that often these skills are not developed well as part of the more general teaching and learning within the current Welsh Baccalaureate.

Consultation Question 7

The new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate should require learners to develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills and their digital competence. These skills should not be learning outcomes in their own right, and learners should not be directly assessed on them.

A) To what extent do you agree with this proposal?

- Partly agree and partly disagree

B) Please explain your answer in the space below

We believe that elements of these important skills should be assessed as part of the qualification. However, these should be embedded and not presented as standalone assessments or tasks.

The individual projects will provide a useful opportunity for centres to enable learners to apply and develop these skills. Estyn would wish to note that any assessment of these skills should be sufficiently challenging and show progression.

As noted previously, it will be important that guidance provides clarity about how these skills will be assessed.

Consultation Question 8

Each component of the new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate should assess all four of the Integral Skills. Each skill could be weighted differently at component level, but all four skills must contribute equally to the overall qualification.

A) To what extent do you agree with this proposal?

- Partly agree and partly disagree

B) Please explain your answer in the space below

Estyn supports the proposal that the new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate should assess all four of the integral skills. This will encourage centres to support learners to develop and apply these skills across all components.

However, assigning weighting to these skills in each of the components would be potentially confusing and impractical. It would be very difficult for teachers to quantify the proportion of each of these skills used in any one task.

Consultation Question 9

The new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate should continue to be graded A*- E.

A) To what extent do you agree with this proposal?

- **Strongly agree**

B) Please explain your answer in the space below

Estyn fully supports this proposal as it is would remain in line with the current A level grading system and would be clear for all stakeholders. It would also provide parity for this qualification with other A level qualifications. Grading the qualifications also helps to motivate and support learners.

Consultation Question 10

Learners should be able to achieve a grade at qualification level without having to pass every component of the new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate. In the interests of fairness, learners should continue to be entitled to one re-sit per component and the highest grade achieved for that component should count towards the qualification grade.

A) To what extent do you agree with this proposal?

- **Partly agree and partly disagree**

B) Please explain your answer in the space below

We support the proposal that learners should be entitled to one resit per component. This is important for all learners and will ensure fairness of the system.

We support the concept of compensatory assessment in this qualification. However, we believe that a learner should be required to pass every component, at a minimum level, in order to receive an overall grade.

If we go ahead with these plans for a new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate, it may need a new name or title. We are not able to make this decision now, but would like to hear your views.

What do you think we should call it?

Tystysgrif Sgiliau Uwch Cymru Advanced Skills Certificate Wales

Tystysgrif Sgiliau Uwch Cymru Advanced Skills Wales

Diploma Sgiliau Uwch Cymru Advanced Skills Diploma Wales

We think these proposals would:

- put learners' needs first
- improve learner engagement
- reduce assessment and avoid work being duplicated
- make the qualification more manageable
- keep the size and value of the qualification
- help learners choose their own areas of study to focus on
- promote wellbeing of learners, now and in the future
- support learners to set goals and prepare for life
- promote learners' rights through the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) by giving opportunities for them to become more confident and informed citizens.

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What do you think?

Generally, we agree with this statement.

It is important that there is sufficient flexibility in the design of the components to allow vocational learners, in particular, to access the qualification. This will help to ensure fairness and equity for all and to continue to put the needs of all learners first.

Consultation question:

We think these proposals would:

- make sure learners from different geographical backgrounds (for example, learners living in more rural areas) have the same opportunities to benefit from the input that employers and organisations can offer
- make sure all learners have the same opportunities to focus on community activity and preparation for future employment
- help learners from different socio-economic groups benefit from support and guidance in their learning
- help learners focus on active citizenship and engage with issues that affect their lives, their families, their community, Wales and the world
- help learners understand different social and cultural groups so they become more tolerant and informed citizens.

What do you think?

Estyn generally agrees with these comments. However, it should be noted that in order to secure all of these factors the way in which the qualification is designed and used by centres will be key.

Consideration should be given to developing a marketing campaign showing the purpose and benefits of this qualification to learners, parents and teachers.

We think these proposals would:

- promote awareness of the Welsh language's official status as part of the well-being goals for Wales
- give learners the opportunity to learn about the national priority to promote Welsh culture and language.

What do you think?

Estyn generally agrees that these proposals will support these developments. However, it will be important that all learners and centres can access bilingual documentation and guidance. It is essential that all aspects of the qualification, including support materials are offered bilingually.

The word 'Wales' or 'Welsh' should be included in the title to ensure it's a Welsh/Wales unique brand.