



Review of the implementation of the new Welsh Baccalaureate from September 2015

March 2016

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1 Executive summary

The new Welsh Baccalaureate was introduced for first teaching in September 2015. It was designed and developed in response to the 2012 *Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19 year-olds in Wales*¹.

September 2015 also saw the establishment of Qualifications Wales as the new independent regulator of qualifications in Wales. We regulate awarding bodies and the qualifications they offer to ensure that they meet the needs of learners in Wales. In line with these aims, we have monitored the introduction of the newly re-designed Welsh Baccalaureate, working closely with WJEC, the awarding body offering it.

In general, there is widespread support for the Welsh Baccalaureate and its aims of developing learners' skills and experiences for further study and employment. It is clear that stakeholders agreed with reforming and strengthening the Welsh Baccalaureate:

'Schools are determined to get this right as they see value in the qualification...'

'I believe that the National BAC course is good and, as a result, is worth doing well...'

The design of the new Welsh Baccalaureate is considerably different from its predecessor, and has required significant change in practice within schools and colleges. For example, the structure of the new Welsh Baccalaureate now includes a new Skills Challenge Certificate qualification to assess skills for further study and employment which, at the advanced level is equivalent in size and demand to an A level, it is also graded in the same way and carries the same UCAS tariff points.

It is not unusual for the implementation of substantial change such as this to require close attention. In October and November 2015, stakeholders began to identify aspects of the new Welsh Baccalaureate where such attention might be needed. Qualifications Wales moved quickly to investigate these issues and to identify what action was needed. This report describes the findings of that investigation and the resulting recommendations.

Through our investigation, we aimed to assess and validate the issues raised by stakeholders, identify the underlying causes, propose recommendations to address them, and support the continued implementation of these qualifications.

Given the nature of the review, much of this report focuses on issues and concerns raised about the implementation of the new Welsh Baccalaureate. However, it is important to emphasise that all the stakeholders who took the time to send us their views were keen to register their support for the Welsh Baccalaureate, and to explain that their aim in highlighting issues was to help improve and strengthen the qualifications - as the quote below illustrates:

¹ <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/121127reviewofqualificationsen.pdf>

'It is important to emphasise that the vast majority... of Welsh Bacculaureate Co-ordinators are very positive and extremely supportive of the revised Welsh Bacculaureate and are keen for it to succeed. All concerns raised have been done so in a positive manner. It must also be noted that feedback received from pupils / students has been positive.'

Our intention in this report is to identify the issues that have emerged during the introduction of the new Welsh Bacculaureate and explain how they are being addressed. We also clarify how we will continue to monitor its implementation and delivery, so that learners, providers and others can continue to have confidence in the new Welsh Bacculaureate.

Our review identified issues in relation to the following aspects of the new Welsh Bacculaureate:

Resources, training and supporting materials

Much of the supporting documentation, guidance and training that was needed to help deliver the new qualifications was not available until after teaching had already started in September 2015.

Administration

The documents setting out the requirements for the Welsh Bacculaureate and the new Skills Challenge Certificate, and guidance on their delivery include unnecessary duplication. They also include some inconsistencies, and the specific requirements within them are not always clear.

E-Portfolio

Many centres were not aware of the requirement to use the e-portfolio system when making initial plans to deliver the Skills Challenge Certificate. The confusion caused by this, and the resulting changes made by centres to meet this requirement has, in many cases, led to an increased administrative burden. The initial set-up of the system and the time required to train staff has also meant that centres have faced additional challenges in delivering the qualifications.

Assessment

More guidance and exemplar materials are required to support reliable and consistent assessment of the Skills Challenge Certificate. We also found that the time required for assessing the Skills Challenge Certificate is high relative to its size, and that assessment of the same skills is duplicated across its components. This has added to the burden of assessment and increased the time required to deliver and assess the qualification as a whole.

Structure

Questions were raised about the structure, both of the Skills Challenge Certificate, and of the Welsh Bacculaureate as a whole. These related to:

- The overall size and manageability of the Skills Challenge Certificate

- The potential duplication of learning and experiences across the different levels of the Welsh BaccaLaureate
- Whether the Welsh BaccaLaureate should be focussed solely on the Skills Challenge Certificate, to allow for more individualised programmes of learning
- The requirement for all components of the Welsh BaccaLaureate to be taken at the same level.

In response to these issues, we will be undertaking a more detailed review of the Welsh BaccaLaureate structure.

In relation to the new post-16 Welsh BaccaLaureate, stakeholders were concerned that:

- from September 2016, new GCSEs will be the only literacy and numeracy qualifications that can contribute to the Welsh BaccaLaureate;
- unlike the KS4 Welsh BaccaLaureate, learners who do not meet the requirements of the National post-16 Welsh BaccaLaureate cannot be awarded the qualification at a Foundation level.

We address these points in our recommendations.

Policy considerations

Some stakeholders also queried aspects of policy relating to the new Welsh BaccaLaureate, including the policy of universal adoption. Although outside our direct control, we have identified in this report the key issues raised, so that the Welsh Government can consider whether or not to address them, and if so, how it will do so. The concerns raised include:

- Uncertainty about the practical implications of universal adoption for individual learners; for example, what the expectations are for learners moving from one Welsh BaccaLaureate level to another
- The feasibility and manageability of the funding expectation for students leaving Key Stage 4 with grades D and below in GCSE Welsh/English and Mathematics / Mathematics-Numeracy
- A lack of awareness and understanding of the Welsh BaccaLaureate among centres, students, parents, higher education and employers.

Conclusion

The Welsh BaccaLaureate is viewed very positively by stakeholders and there is widespread support for efforts to strengthen its design and its reputation. For the reasons set out in this report, the introduction of the new Welsh BaccaLaureate has been more challenging than it might otherwise have been. The late availability of detailed operational requirements and training have been the sources of frustration and confusion, and more guidance is needed to support the assessment of the new Skills Challenge Certificate qualifications. Concerns also remain about the proportion

of assessment required in the new Skills Challenge Certificates and about the structure of the Welsh Bacalaureate as a whole.

Our recommendations below address the causes for concern identified in our review to support the continued and successful implementation of the Welsh Bacalaureate for the benefit of learners in Wales.

2 Recommendations

| | Recommendations | When | Who |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1. | <p>Qualifications Wales should fund WJEC, Regional Consortia and Colegau Cymru to continue delivering training and guidance for centres to support the delivery and assessment of the new Skills Challenge Certificates.</p> <p>The agreed package of support must ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any new resources produced do not duplicate existing materials, or are clearly aimed at consolidating and replacing existing materials • All resources, training materials and seminars are produced in a timely manner, are bilingual, use clear and appropriate language, are easily accessible to all centres - preferably online – and are subject to rigorous quality assurance | May 2016 | Qualifications Wales |
| 2. | <p>All centres must register on the new e-portfolio system during the 2016/17 academic year and, from September 2017, they must use the e-portfolio system to manage the assessment of all learners taking the Skills Challenge Certificates.</p> <p>Qualifications Wales should work with WJEC, Regional Consortia and Colegau Cymru to continue providing advice and training to centres during this period to help them prepare for the full-scale roll-out of the e-portfolio system from September 2017.</p> | Ongoing until Sept 2017 | Centres and WJEC Qualifications Wales |
| 3. | <p>WJEC should produce case studies highlighting examples of how different centres are successfully timetabling and delivering the new qualifications, including examples of how sufficient access to IT facilities can be secured.</p> | May 2016 | WJEC |

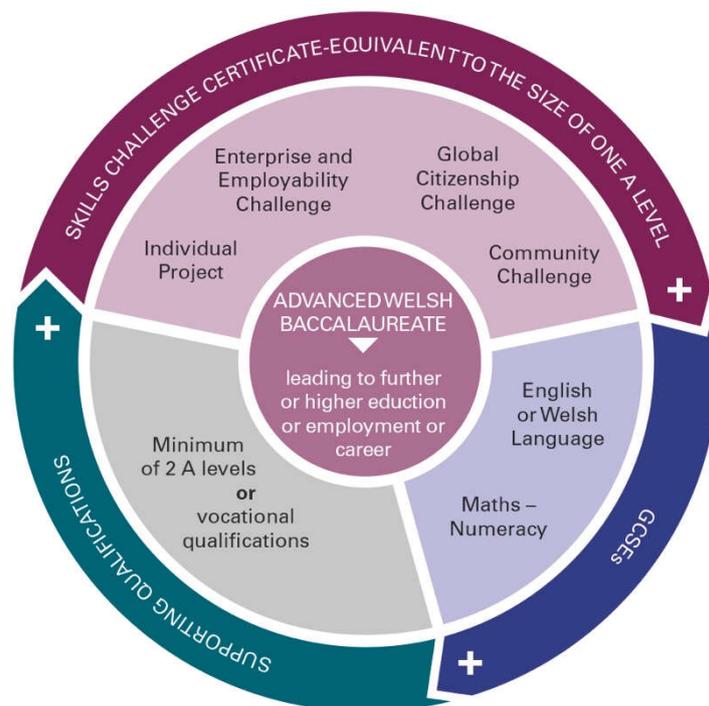
| | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 4. | WJEC should review, revise and rationalise the supporting documents (handbooks etc.) for the new Welsh BaccaLaureate to remove unnecessary duplication and ensure they are accurate, consistent and user friendly. The revised documents should clarify and confirm the requirements for the delivery and administration of the new qualifications. | June 2016 | WJEC |
| 5. | WJEC should publish exemplar assessment materials to illustrate the expected assessment standard for the components of the Skills Challenge Certificate. WJEC should continue to add to the bank of exemplar materials following each assessment series to ensure a comprehensive range of examples is established and maintained for each component and at each level of the Skills Challenge Certificate, together with commentary. | May 2016 Sept 2016 | WJEC |
| 6. | Qualifications Wales should review how the Skills Challenge Certificate is assessed and structured, including the proportion of assessment of its individual components, and its place in the overall structure of the Welsh BaccaLaureate. | Sept 2016 to Dec 2016 | Qualifications Wales |
| 7. | For learners beginning their studies in 2016, WJEC should reinstate the restriction (cap) on the grade that can be awarded for a resit of a component of the Skills Challenge Certificate. Qualifications Wales should review the effectiveness of this restriction as part of the wider evaluation of the Welsh BaccaLaureate. | Sept 2016 Sept to Dec 2017 | WJEC Qualifications Wales |
| 8. | Qualifications Wales should work with other stakeholders to plan and conduct an evaluation of the new Welsh BaccaLaureate following the summer 2017 awards. The evaluation should confirm whether any changes should be made to the design and delivery of the Welsh BaccaLaureate and the policy framework in which it is delivered. Evidence should be gathered from summer 2016 and the following year to inform the evaluation, including direct feedback from learners and providers. | Sept 2016 to Dec 2017. | Qualifications Wales |

3 Background

The new Welsh Baccalaureate was introduced for first teaching in September 2015. It was designed and developed in response to the 2012 *Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19 year-olds in Wales*². The Design Principles for the new Welsh Baccalaureate were published by the Welsh Government in June 2014³. Based on these principles, the specifications developed by WJEC were accredited by the Welsh Government and published in October 2014.

There are four versions of the Welsh Baccalaureate available at levels 1, 2 and 3:

| Title | Level | Description |
|---------------------------------------|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Advanced | 3 | A two-year course delivered in sixth forms and further education providers |
| National/Foundation Key Stage 4 (KS4) | 1 & 2 | A two-year course delivered in schools |
| Post-16 National | 2 | A one-year course delivered in sixth form and by further education providers |
| Post-16 Foundation | 1 | A one-year course delivered in sixth form and by further education providers |



² <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/121127reviewofqualificationsen.pdf>

³ <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/20943/1/140630-welsh-baccalaureate-design-principles-en.pdf>

As the diagram above shows, each Welsh Bacallaureate is based on a common model and is composed of multiple qualifications.

The main component of each Welsh Bacallaureate is the Skills Challenge Certificate. This qualification assesses the skills that young people need for education, employment and life:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Digital Literacy
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Planning and Organisation
- Creativity and Innovation
- Personal Effectiveness

The detailed design of the project and challenge components for the Skills Challenge Certificate differs for each Welsh Bacallaureate level. Each Skills Challenge Certificate is based on the following common structure:

| Component | Weighting |
|----------------------------------------|-----------|
| Individual Project | 50% |
| Enterprise and Employability Challenge | 20% |
| Global Citizenship Challenge | 15% |
| Community Challenge | 15% |

The Skills Challenge Certificate is a stand-alone qualification and is awarded and graded in its own right. Each component of the Skills Challenge Certificate is also graded individually. In the Advanced and National Skills Challenge Certificates these are graded as Pass, Merit and Distinction.

| Skills Challenge certificate components | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | Challenges | | |
| | <i>Individual project</i> | <i>Enterprise and Employability</i> | <i>Global Citizenship</i> | <i>Community</i> |
| <i>Purpose</i> | To develop learners' research skills | To develop enterprising skills and attributes and enhance employability | To develop knowledge and understanding of world issues | To identify and participate in community-based opportunities |
| <i>Emphasis</i> | Future educational or careers aspirations | Skills and attributes required for work and higher education | Understanding and responding appropriately to global issues | Encouraging learners to identify, develop and participate in opportunities that will benefit a community |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Skills demonstrated</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills and knowledge • High level of independent study | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • numeracy • digital literacy • creativity and innovation • personal effectiveness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • literacy • critical thinking • problem-solving • creativity and innovation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning and organisation • personal effectiveness |
| <i>Assessment</i> | Extended written account or artefact/product supported by written evidence | Challenge brief | Challenge brief | Challenge brief |

Each of the individual Challenges is supported by a range of challenge briefs. Each challenge brief sets out the context in which learners will complete the tasks set by WJEC. There are two types of challenge brief: generic briefs, which centres can amend, and approved briefs, which have been developed in partnership with employers and organisations. For each Welsh Baccalaureate, the generic briefs and a bank of approved briefs is available on the WJEC website.

To gain the Welsh Baccalaureate, a learner must achieve the relevant Skills Challenge Certificate, as well as the specified literacy and numeracy qualifications and other supporting qualifications. Depending on which Welsh Baccalaureate a learner takes (KS4, Post-16 or Advanced), these other supporting qualifications will either be GCSEs, A levels or vocational qualifications. Further details about the structure and specific requirements of each qualification can be found on WJEC's website⁴.

In October and November 2015 Qualifications Wales, stakeholders began to raise concerns about the new Welsh Baccalaureate, particularly the Skills Challenge Certificate. We decided to investigate these concerns further. This report describes the findings of that investigation and resulting recommendations.

4 Aims and Objectives

Through our investigation, we aimed to assess the concerns raised by stakeholders, identify and validate the issues, propose recommendations to address them and support the continued implementation of these qualifications.

The objectives of the review were to:

- classify and evaluate the concerns raised about the Welsh Baccalaureate by various stakeholders;

⁴ <http://qualificationswales.org/qualifications/welsh-baccalaureate/?lang=en>

- seek further feedback, clarification and evidence where appropriate, using a range of sources and approaches to increase the reliability of our findings;
- critically assess the validity of identified concerns;
- review documents relating to the qualifications;
- make informed recommendations.

5 Approach

Between November 2015 and January 2016, we reviewed a range of evidence relating to the implementation of the new Welsh Baccalaureate, including the Skills Challenge Certificate qualifications. This included:

- Documentation relating to the qualifications themselves, including the Design Principles⁵, Specifications⁶, Centre Code of Practice⁷, Administration Handbook⁸, Delivery Handbooks^{9 10 11 12}, and documents relating to the accreditation of the new qualifications;
- All queries, comments and feedback from various stakeholders received by Qualifications Wales, the Welsh Government and WJEC;
- Collated concerns, comments and issues from centres provided by each of the Regional Consortia and by Colegau Cymru;
- Information about the training provided by WJEC to support the introduction of the new qualifications including attendance records and feedback from the sessions;
- Feedback from Qualifications Wales’s External Relations Team based on their discussions with range of stakeholders in schools and colleges.

In our review, we focused on triangulating and corroborating concerns and, where possible, ascertaining their root causes. We also explored what impact – if any – had occurred as a result.

⁵ Design Principles - [here](#)

⁶ Specifications - [here](#)

⁷ Centre Code of Practice - [here](#)

⁸ Administration Handbook - [here](#)

⁹ Delivery Handbook (KS4) - [here](#)

¹⁰ Delivery Handbook (Foundation Post-16) - [here](#)

¹¹ Delivery Handbook (National Post-16) - [here](#)

¹² Delivery Handbook (Advanced) - [here](#)

6 Findings

6.1. Resources, training and supporting materials

Documentation essential for the effective delivery of the new qualifications, including the Delivery Handbooks and Code of Practice, were not available until after the new Welsh BaccaLaureate was introduced and teaching of the new Skills Challenge Certificate qualifications had begun.

This delay affected the timing, and therefore the effectiveness, of training. It also meant centres were unable to plan effectively for delivering the new qualifications, for example, timetabling the necessary access to computers for students. This subsequently placed an additional burden on centres and teachers attempting to revise their plans after term had already started.

In some cases, inconsistency and unnecessary duplication within supporting documentation and training materials added to the administrative burden and was the cause of confusion and frustration.

Critical to the successful delivery of any new qualification is the timely provision of key supporting documents. The delayed availability of the key documents relating to the delivery of the new Welsh BaccaLaureate, including the Skills Challenge Certificate, has contributed to many of the concerns discussed in this report. Although our recommendations focus on how to secure the continued delivery of the new Welsh BaccaLaureate, the impact of the delay to the production of these materials serves to highlight the importance of establishing and adhering to clearly communicated timescales from the outset when developing policy and designing and implementing new qualifications on a national scale.

6.1.1 Operational and supporting documentation

The following key documents relating to the delivery of the new Welsh BaccaLaureate were not available until October 2015 – after the teaching of the new Skills Challenge Certificate had started:

- The Code of Practice, which sets out requirements for internal quality-assurance and standardisation procedures, and is aimed at those managing, delivering or assessing the Welsh BaccaLaureate.
- The Administration Handbook, which gives essential information for the administration of the new qualifications, including entry deadlines, moderation arrangements and coding information.
- The Delivery Handbooks, which provide guidance and advice on the delivery of each Welsh BaccaLaureate.

6.1.2 Challenge briefs

Challenge briefs are the assessment briefs used by candidates within their summative assessment. There are two types of challenge brief: generic briefs, which

centres can amend, and approved briefs, which have been developed in partnership with employers and organisations. For each Welsh Baccalaureate, the generic briefs and a bank of approved briefs is available on the WJEC website.

In October 2015, only a limited number of approved challenge briefs were available to centres. Since then, the number of approved briefs available for each Skills Challenge Certificate has increased, although the number available for each specific challenge varies, and there is still only a limited range of approved briefs for some challenges. For example, only one approved brief is available to support the Global Citizenship Challenge at Foundation Post-16 level. The number of approved briefs increased during the autumn term; Table 1 shows the number available as of January 2016:

Table 1: Summary of approved challenge briefs available in January 2016

| Advanced | Approved briefs available |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Community | 11 |
| Enterprise and Employability | 14 |
| Global Citizenship | 9 |
| National Post-16 | Approved briefs available |
| Community | 11 |
| Enterprise and Employability | 6 |
| Global Citizenship | 5 |
| Foundation Post-16 | Approved briefs available |
| Community | 4 |
| Enterprise and Employability | 7 |
| Global Citizenship | 1 |
| KS4 National/Foundation | Approved briefs available |
| Community | 9 |
| Enterprise and Employability | 4 |
| Global Citizenship | 9 |

6.1.3 Training activities and materials

Stakeholders were concerned that the training events provided as preparation to deliver the new Skills Challenge Certificate qualifications were too late. Concerns were also raised about the quality and effectiveness of the training, in particular that there was inconsistency across different training events, and that the training was more focused on the design of the qualification than on how to deliver it. Training was offered by a number of providers including WJEC, Regional Consortia and Colegau Cymru. Concerns about training were often generalised and difficult to attribute to specific training events.

Training events were provided by WJEC in autumn 2014, spring 2015 and autumn 2015. The autumn 2014 and spring 2015 events gave a general overview of the Welsh Baccalaureate at all levels and some preparation guidance regarding the

challenges, but did not provide detailed advice on delivering the new Skills Challenge Certificate.

The training provided in autumn 2015 was more targeted, with sessions on the KS4 and Post-16 levels in October, and on the Advanced in level in November. This was too late, however, to support effective preparation, as teaching had already started; this had the greatest effect on the post-16 qualifications that are delivered in one academic year.

We found some instances of inconsistency in the information provided at the different training events, for example, in the number of sources that should have been included in the resource pack for the Global Citizenship Challenge.

There were positive aspects to the training provided. The training materials and resources produced by WJEC were available bilingually and gave the names of staff who could be contacted for additional support. Feedback from attendees was generally positive, with many calling for the continued provision of training as the new qualifications become established.

6.1.4 Availability of bilingual resources

A number of stakeholders have raised concerns that not all resources are available (or easily available) bilingually, not only English to Welsh but also Welsh to English. This relates specifically to the challenge briefs and some of the handouts provided at continuing professional development (CPD) training events.

From our review of training and supporting materials, it is clear that most (but not all) events were delivered bilingually and that most (but not all) handouts were bilingual. Of the challenge briefs available on the WJEC website, we found two examples where there were fewer resources available in Welsh than in English, and two where there were more Welsh resources than English. These instances were due to technical issues on WJEC’s website and have since been addressed.

| Recommendation 1: | When |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <p>Qualifications Wales and the Welsh Government should fund WJEC, Regional Consortia and Colegau Cymru to continue delivering training and guidance for centres to support the delivery and assessment of the new Skills Challenge Certificates.</p> <p>The agreed package of support must ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any new resources produced do not duplicate existing materials, or are clearly aimed at consolidating and replacing existing materials • All resources, training materials and seminars are produced in a timely manner, are bilingual, use clear and appropriate language, | <p>May 2016</p> |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| are easily accessible to all centres - preferably online – and are subject to rigorous quality assurance. | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

6.2 Administration and E-portfolio

Increased administrative burden of delivering the new Welsh Baccalaureate was a common concern – most often expressed in relation to the e-portfolio system. The e-portfolio system is an online portal that allows learners to produce and store their assessment evidence digitally; the system also allows teachers and tutors to record marks for the work and for the evidence and marks to be submitted to WJEC for moderation.

6.2.1 E-portfolio

The requirement for all centres to use the e-portfolio was not made clear until after teaching of the qualification had already started. In the main, training on how to use the system was also not available until late in the 2015 autumn term and early in the 2016 spring term. For some, this meant that their timetabling did not allow for learners to have sufficient access to computers at appropriate times during the course. For others, there was not enough time to train staff in how to use the system confidently.

Many of the concerns raised about the operation of the e-portfolio system itself appear to be based on a lack of familiarity with the system, rather than any failings in the system itself. Similarly, concerns about the additional administrative burden of using the system reflect – at least, in part – the arrangements that centres have made, or anticipate making, to upload evidence on behalf of candidates, rather than timetabling for candidates to have access to computers to generate evidence digitally as part of the course.

WJEC has taken steps to address the difficulty centres have had in securing access for all of their learners to the e-portfolio system. For centres offering the post-16 Welsh Baccalaureate, WJEC has revised requirements about the extent to which the e-portfolio system must be used. For the Advanced and the Key Stage 4 Welsh Baccalaureate, WJEC has recently confirmed that use of the e-portfolio system will be optional for the first cohort taking the qualification. Online training and guidance materials developed by regional consortia to supplement the training provided by WJEC are also now available.

| Recommendation 2: | When |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| All centres must register on the new e-portfolio system during the 2016/17 academic year and, from September 2017, they must use the e-portfolio system to manage the assessment of all learners taking the Skills Challenge Certificates. | Ongoing until Sept 2017 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Qualifications Wales should work with WJEC, Regional Consortia and Colegau Cymru to continue providing advice and training centres during this period to help them prepare for the full-scale roll-out of the e-portfolio system from September 2017. | |
| Recommendation 3: | |
| WJEC should produce case studies highlighting examples of how different centres are successfully timetabling and delivering the new qualifications, including examples of how sufficient access to IT facilities can be secured. | May 2016 |

6.2.2 Administration

In most cases, we found the requirements placed on centres are reasonable and justified in terms of securing reliable assessment. In some instances we found that the requirements could be stated more clearly.

During the review, we also noted that a number of the key documents are very similar. For example, there are four separate Specifications and four separate Handbooks covering each Welsh Bacallaureate within the suite, with much of the information being generic, and therefore repeated. This is particularly the case at KS4 and Post-16. This potentially increases the administrative burden on staff who are delivering several different levels of Welsh Bacallaureate. The contents of the 'skills development folder', for example, are listed in a number of documents including KS4 Specification, KS4 Delivery Handbook and the Centre Code of Practice.

Some of the concerns about administrative burden relate specifically to the requirement for centres to create resource packs to support the Global Citizenship Challenges in the KS4 and Post-16 qualifications. The burden on staff that this represents was exacerbated by the late publication of supporting documentation, which meant that some staff had to revisit schemes of work and other prepared resources.

| Recommendation 4: | When |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| WJEC should review, revise and rationalise the supporting documents (handbooks etc.) for the new Welsh Bacallaureate to remove unnecessary duplication and ensure they are accurate, consistent and user friendly. The revised documents should clarify and confirm the requirements for the delivery and administration of the new qualifications. | June 2016 |

6.3 Assessment of the Skills Challenge Certificate

Issues were raised about the following aspects of how the Skills Challenge Certificate is assessed.

6.3.1 Assessment guidance and exemplar materials

A common concern was about the insufficiency of, and lack of clarity in, the guidance on how to assess the different elements of the challenges and individual project. Additionally, concerns were raised about the limited amount of exemplar material that has been produced to illustrate how the assessment grids should be applied to candidates' work.

Our review found evidence to support these concerns. To be effective and reliable, internally marked tasks require the assessment criteria to be supported by samples of marked work. The design and development process for the new Welsh Baccalaureate did not provide sufficient opportunity for these materials to be generated, and so far only limited exemplar materials have been made available to support assessment of the Skills Challenge Certificate.

The learning outcomes, performance band statements and assessment grids for the Skills Challenge Certificates require the support of exemplar material to secure effective standardisation of marking within centres. For example, within the Enterprise and Employability Challenge, differentiation in the top two bands of Learning Outcome (LO)2 relies on the difference between '*Detailed and reasoned*', and '*Detailed and well-reasoned*'. These distinctions, without the support of exemplar materials, do not provide a strong basis for assessment and standardisation. The limited availability of exemplar assessment materials may lead to an increased variability of marking within and across centres, which may result in adjustment of centre marks following external moderation.

Some of the learning outcomes also lack focus and specificity. An example of this is LO3 for the Challenges across all levels, which are often based on general terms, without a clear underpinning of an expected skill, such as 'Be able to participate in a Community Challenge,' 'Understand issues involved in a Global Citizenship Challenge' or 'Understand factors involved in an Enterprise and Employability Challenge.' This ambiguity could also add to the difficulty of securing reliable, consistent marking.

Concerns were also raised about the appropriateness and accessibility of the language used in some of the challenge briefs, particularly in terms of what was expected of learners taking one of the Foundation qualifications. On further investigation, we find that these concerns are largely a product of the issues discussed above about the limited examples available of the standard expected.

| Recommendation 5: | When |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| WJEC should publish exemplar assessment materials to illustrate the expected assessment standard for the components of the Skills Challenge Certificate. | May 2016 |
| WJEC should continue to add to the bank of exemplar materials following each assessment series to ensure a comprehensive range of examples is established and maintained for each component and at each level of the Skills Challenge Certificate, together with commentary. | Sept 2016 |

6.3.2 Proportion of assessment

Another issue raised was that the proportion of time spent on assessment of the components of the Skills Challenge Certificate is disproportionate and does not allow sufficient time for the skills being assessed to be taught and developed. Concerns were also raised about the manageability of the assessment and its accessibility to all candidates particularly those taking the foundation qualifications.

We found that the time required for assessment, relative to the overall suggested guided learning hours for the qualification is high. We also found that assessment of the same skills is duplicated across the different Challenges included in the Skills Challenge Certificate, which adds to the burden of assessment and increases the time required to deliver and assess the qualification overall.

Further Education providers are especially concerned about the overall time required, in the context of a one-year course, for learners taking the Post-16 Skills Challenge Certificates to develop the necessary skills and to demonstrate them in line with the assessment requirements. Some are concerned that the size of the qualification appears to be the same as the KS4 version, which is delivered over a two-year period. Others point out that a significant proportion of 16 year-old learners entering further education will have gaps in their literacy and numeracy skills that need to be addressed before they can access the assessment of the Skills Challenge Certificate.

| Recommendation 6 | When |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Qualifications Wales should review in detail how the Skills Challenge Certificate is assessed and structured, including the proportion of assessment of its individual components, and its place in the overall structure of the Welsh Baccalaureate. | Sept 2016 to Dec 2016 |

6.3.3 Resit Opportunities

The restriction (or 'cap') on re-sitting components of the KS4 and Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate has been a cause of concern for schools.

The specifications for these qualifications describe the restriction as follows (taken from the specification for the KS4 qualification):

“Learners will have one re-sit opportunity for each assessed component i.e. the three Challenges and the Individual Project. If a learner re-sits, their grade for that Challenge or Project will be capped at the minimum points required to achieve a Level 2 Pass – they can only be awarded a ‘pass’.”

*“a learner **resitting** a Challenge may revisit the original challenge brief or choose a different one.”*

Some stakeholders disagreed with the imposition of the cap, or queried the reason for it. Others were unsure about whether learners who resit would have to produce a completely new piece of work. Some schools indicated that uncertainty about resits had contributed to their decision not to enter candidates’ work for moderation in the January series.

For the first cohort of learners taking the KS4 and Advanced qualifications, WJEC requested the relaxation of the restriction to mitigate the impact of the issues related to delayed materials referenced earlier in this report. We agreed the restriction should be relaxed for the first cohort taking these qualifications and reinstated for learners starting their studies in September 2016.

| Recommendation 7 | When |
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| For learners beginning their studies in 2016, WJEC should reinstate the restriction (cap) on the grade that can be awarded for a component of the Skills Challenge Certificate attempted for a second time. | Sept 2016 |
| Qualifications Wales should review the effectiveness of this restriction as part of the wider evaluation of the Welsh Baccalaureate. | Sept to Dec 2017 |

6.4 Structure of the Welsh Baccalaureate

Some stakeholders have raised questions about the structure, both of the Skills Challenge Certificate, and of the Welsh Baccalaureate as a whole.

In relation to the Skills Challenge Certificate, some stakeholders asked whether one of the Challenges could be made optional, so that students would only be required to complete two of the three challenges. Others suggested merging the Community Challenge with the Enterprise and Employability Challenge, because there is overlap in the skills they are assessing.

The following questions were raised about the structure and design of the Welsh Baccalaureate:

- Some questioned the need for three different offers at National and Foundation level and whether these are sufficiently well-aligned to secure progression for learners moving from one to the other, particularly from the KS4 to the post-16 Welsh Bacculaureate.
- Others questioned whether the structure of the Welsh Bacculaureate should be retained, noting that the Skills Challenge Certificate is itself a stand-alone qualification, and that removing the Welsh Bacculaureate structure would allow centres to offer programmes more suited to individual learners' needs.
- Another question raised was why the supporting qualifications contributing to each Welsh Bacculaureate had to be taken at the same level as the Skills Challenge Certificate. This was seen as restrictive and contrary to the idea of designing learning programmes for the individual; for example, no consideration is given to post-16 learners taking level 1 vocational courses who could manage the Skills Challenge Certificate at level 2.

As well as these more general comments relating to the structure of the Welsh Bacculaureate, specific issues have been raised about the requirements for the supporting qualifications that contribute to the post-16 Welsh Bacculaureate.

Currently, the specifications for these qualifications state that:

- from September 2016, the only literacy and numeracy qualifications that can be counted towards the award of the qualification are the new English, Welsh and Mathematics – Numeracy GCSEs; and that
- all components of the Skills Challenge Certificate must be completed in a single academic year

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| Recommendation 8 | |
| Qualifications Wales should work with other stakeholders to plan and conduct an evaluation of the new Welsh Bacculaureate following the summer 2017 awards. The evaluation should confirm whether any changes should be made to the design and delivery of the Welsh Bacculaureate and the policy framework in which it is delivered. Evidence should be gathered from summer 2016 and the following year to inform the evaluation, including direct feedback from learners and providers. | Sept 2016 to Dec 2017 |
| Recommendation 9 | |
| WJEC should update the specifications for the post-16 Foundation and National Welsh Bacculaureate to: | May 2016 |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> confirm that Essential Skills Wales qualifications, at the appropriate level, can continue to contribute to the award of the post-16 Welsh Baccalaureate remove the requirements for the Skills Challenge Certificate to be completed in a single year <p>Qualifications Wales and WJEC should explore whether learners taking the post-16 National Welsh Baccalaureate could be awarded a Foundation qualification, where appropriate.</p> | <p>September 2016</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 10</p> | |
| <p>WJEC should update the Welsh Baccalaureate specifications to confirm that either the GCSE Mathematics – Numeracy, or the GCSE Mathematics qualifications can contribute to the achievement of the Welsh Baccalaureate at every level.</p> | <p>May 2016</p> |

6.5 Policy considerations

A number of stakeholders raised concerns about the possible unintended consequences of Welsh Government policy in relation to the new Welsh Baccalaureate. This includes their universal adoption. Although outside our direct control, we have identified the main issues in this report so that the Welsh Government can consider whether and how address them.

The policy of universal adoption reflects the recommendation made in the *Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19 year-olds in Wales* that:

The Welsh Government should encourage the universal adoption of the Welsh Baccalaureate as the basis for programmes of learning, by schools at 14 to 16 and by schools and colleges at 16 to 19 (and work-based learning settings if appropriate). At 14 to 16 all learners should follow the same Welsh Baccalaureate programme of learning, but attainment may be at Level 1 (National Foundation) or Level 2 (National). Post-16 learners should pursue either a National post-16 Welsh Baccalaureate or an Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate. For post-16 learners following a vocational pathway, the content of their Welsh Baccalaureate should be informed by the emerging Learning Area Programme approach.

Through our review, we identified the following concerns:

- A lack of clarity about what the policy of universal adoption means in practice for individual students. Whether, for example, a student leaving school at 16 to enter further education initially on a Level 1 or a Level 2 programme and then later on to a Level 3 programme, would be expected to achieve the Welsh Baccalaureate three times at three different levels. Linked to this are concerns about whether the Skills Challenge Certificate will always be the

right choice for students, particularly if they have already achieved it as part of an earlier programme of learning based on the Welsh Baccalaureate.

- There are concerns about the requirement for all qualifications taken as part of the Welsh Baccalaureate to be at the same level as each other (that is, all at level 1, level 2 or level 3). This is seen as a potential barrier to progression for students who are stronger in some areas and weaker in others; for example, a student taking Level 2 supporting qualifications but for whom the Foundation Skills Challenge Certificate may be more appropriate, or a student taking Level 1 vocational qualifications but who has previously achieved the KS4 Foundation Skills Challenge Certificate and is ready to take on the Post-16 Skills Challenge Certificate at the National level.
- Further education providers have concerns about the feasibility and manageability of expectations set by funding policy for all students embarking on the one-year post-16 Welsh Baccalaureate to achieve a grade C or above in both GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics, where they have not been successful in doing so following a two-year course of study at Key Stage 4.
- Stakeholders from all parts of the system remain concerned about the lack of awareness and understanding about the Welsh Baccalaureate among centre staff, learners, parents, employers and higher educations. This concern was often expressed by those who support the Welsh Baccalaureate and its aims, but who worry that learners' efforts to achieve the Welsh Baccalaureate may be undervalued because stakeholders do not know what it entails.

| Recommendation 11 | When |
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| <p>The Welsh Government, in dialogue with stakeholders, should review its policies relating to the Welsh Baccalaureate and consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to continue raising awareness and understanding of the Welsh Baccalaureate among centres, teaching staff, learners, parents, higher education and employers. • Clarifying its expectations in terms of universal adoption of the Welsh Baccalaureate and what this means in practice for centres and students. • What its expectations are for students to achieve more than one Welsh Baccalaureate qualification. • Clarifying its expectations for students leaving Key Stage 4 with grades D and below in GCSE Welsh/English and Mathematics / Mathematics-Numeracy. | <p>Early 2017</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Its expectations for students enrolled on the post-16 Welsh Baccalaureate taking other vocational qualifications at different levels. | |
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7 Conclusion

For the reasons set out in this report, the introduction of the new Welsh Baccalaureate has been more challenging than it might otherwise have been. The late availability of detailed operational requirements and training has been a source of frustration and confusion, and more guidance is needed to support the assessment of the new Skills Challenge Certificate qualifications. Questions have been raised regarding the proportion of assessment required in the new Skills Challenge Certificates and the structure of the Welsh Baccalaureate as a whole, which we will consider as part of a more detailed review.

Despite these challenges, support for the Welsh Baccalaureate and its aims remains very high among stakeholders. Our recommendations are aimed at addressing the causes for concern identified in our review to support the continued and successful implementation of the Welsh Baccalaureate for the benefit of learners in Wales.