



LEVEL 3

APPROVAL CRITERIA

Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales

DRAFT

Draft Approval Criteria for the Design of the Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales (level 3)

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline draft Approval Criteria for the design of the Advanced Skills BaccaLaureate Wales (level 3) qualification. They set out the requirements that an awarding body must address when developing the specification, assessment materials and guidance for teaching for this qualification. The current Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate and the related Welsh BaccaLaureate framework will expire on 31 August 2023. This new qualification will replace these and will come into effect from September 2023.

The design requirements of this qualification have been developed by Qualifications Wales with the support of many stakeholders. We consulted on our proposed design for this qualification in Autumn 2020. The draft Approval Criteria set out in this document are reflective of the outcomes of that consultation.

The draft Approval Criteria included in this document formed part of the suite of tender documents used for commissioning an awarding body to develop and deliver the new qualification and will be used as a basis for drafting final Approval Criteria. Following any approval, the awarding body must comply with all relevant regulatory requirements, including the Standard Conditions of Recognition and any regulatory documents relating to this qualification.

In developing the qualification to meet these requirements, awarding bodies must have regard to:

- a) [Guidance for awarding bodies to develop, deliver and award qualifications through the medium of Welsh.](#)
- b) [Fair Access by Design - Guidance for awarding organisations on designing high-quality and inclusive qualifications.](#)
- c) [Mark schemes in knowledge-based qualifications: A good practice guide.](#)

The Rationale that is referenced in this document is required from the awarding body at the time of submitting the specification for approval by Qualifications Wales.

1. Purpose

The Advanced Skills BaccaLaureate Wales enables learners to develop and apply skills in relevant contexts in preparation for employment, lifelong learning, and active citizenship. The main focus of the qualification is to develop the skills of Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving; Creativity and Innovation; Planning and Organising and Personal Effectiveness. These are the four skills referred to in the new Curriculum for Wales as the Integral Skills, with appropriate progression for level 3 learners.

The qualification is designed to appeal to a broad range of learners at age 16-19, who study a wide range of subjects as part of their individual learning pathways. Central to the qualification is the importance it places on allowing learners to exercise autonomy and personal choice in selecting areas of study that are of interest to them and which are relevant to their future progression pathways. To prepare learners for lifelong learning, employment and active citizenship, the design of the qualification provides real-life, authentic learning experiences and there is an emphasis on learning inside and outside of the classroom and on developing independent learning.

To support skills development, the qualification is designed to include broadly defined learning contexts that are relevant and current. Learners are not assessed directly on these contexts or their knowledge of them; rather the contexts are used to provide engaging and accessible frameworks which help to frame the development and assessment of skills. The qualification also provides embedded opportunities for learners to develop literacy and numeracy skills and digital literacy, but it does not assess these directly.

- 1.1. The Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales is a level 3 qualification primarily taken by learners aged 16-19 who are following level 3 programmes of study, such as A levels. The qualification specifically focuses on skills development to support progression pathways.
- 1.2. The qualification's purpose is to enable learners to develop and apply specified skills (see 2.1) in relevant contexts in preparation for employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship.

RR1 – Rationale requirement: *on submitting the specification for approval by Qualifications Wales, the awarding body must provide a rationale of how the specification fulfils the purpose of the qualification.*

2. Aims and objectives

- 2.1. The aim of the qualification must be to develop the skills of Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving; Creativity and Innovation; Planning and Organising and Personal Effectiveness. These are the four skills referred to in the new Curriculum for Wales as the Integral Skills.

- 2.2. This qualification must be designed to allow progression from the development of the Integral Skills at level 2.
- 2.3. Learners must be supported in selecting areas of study that relate to their personal interests and individual learning pathways to achieve the aim of supporting learners with progression to Higher Education, apprenticeships, training and employment.

RR2 – Rationale requirement: *on submitting the specification, the awarding body must demonstrate how the design of the qualification supports progression from level 2 to level 3 in the development of the Integral Skills.*

RR3 – Rationale requirement: *on submitting the specification, the awarding body must demonstrate how the design of the qualification provides flexibility for learners to select specific areas of study which are of interest and relevance to them.*

3. Learning contexts

- 3.1. To prepare learners for employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship, the qualification must be designed to include broadly defined learning contexts that are relevant and current (please see 6.2). The contexts in which learners develop and apply their skills must allow a focus on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, as defined in the United Nation's sustainable development agenda, and Wales' Well-being Goals, as defined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. More information on these learning contexts can be found at [United Nations Sustainable Development](#) and [Well-being of Future Generations Act: The Essentials](#).
- 3.2. Learners must not be assessed directly on these contexts or their knowledge of them; rather the contexts must be used to provide engaging and accessible opportunities for the development and assessment of skills.
- 3.3. To support learners to prepare for employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship, the qualification must provide real-life, authentic learning experiences that are relevant and meaningful. There must be a focus on learning inside and outside of the classroom.
- 3.4. The qualification must allow learners to exercise personal choice in selecting particular themes with which to engage within the broadly defined contexts stated in 3.1.

4. Embedded skills

- 4.1. The qualification must also provide embedded opportunities for learners to develop literacy and numeracy skills and digital competence, but it must not assess these directly:

Table 2: Application of skills in the Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales

Application of skills in the new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate	
Assessed skills Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Creativity and Innovation Planning and Organising Personal Effectiveness	Embedded skills Literacy Numeracy Digital Competence
Learners will be assessed on the application of these skills.	There will be opportunities for learners to develop these skills, but they will not be explicit learning outcomes.

- 4.2. The specification and submitted materials must clarify the relationship between the assessed skills, embedded skills and the learning contexts. The awarding body must include sufficient guidance for centres to ensure that expectations for teaching and assessment in relation to the assessed skills, embedded skills and the learning contexts are clearly communicated.

RR4 – Rationale requirement: *on submitting the specification and other materials for approval, the awarding body must clearly explain the relationship between the assessed skills, embedded skills and the learning contexts within the specification design.*

5. Content and learning outcomes

- 5.1. The awarding body must develop content that meets the qualification’s purpose, aims and objectives as stated above.
- 5.2. The specification content must enable learners to achieve the following learning outcomes:

Table 3: Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes	
Learning outcome 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To apply critical thinking & problem solving in a range of specified contexts
Learning outcome 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To apply creativity & innovation in a range of specified contexts
Learning outcome 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To apply planning & organising in a range of specified contexts
Learning outcome 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To apply personal effectiveness in a range of specified contexts

5.3. The content must include, but not be limited to, the specific skills below:

Table 4: Amplification of the Integral Skills

Learning outcomes	Specific Skills
To apply critical thinking & problem solving in a range of specified contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and address complex and non-routine problems using meaningful questions and focused research techniques. Evaluate the reliability of sources of information. Analyse key and complex issues and data. Select, synthesise and reference information from primary and secondary sources. Propose and justify solutions.
To apply creativity & innovation in a range of specified contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate ideas independently and collaboratively using a range of knowledge and skills. Make connections across different experience, knowledge and skills. Explore and justify alternative courses of action and points of view. Share and exchange information and ideas. Communicate to different audiences for different purposes using a range of media and formats.
To apply planning & organising in a range of specified contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select appropriate skills and methods/ procedures to outline, plan and organise. Define priorities and success criteria in order to set goals and make decisions. Monitor progress and results, developing and adapting to unforeseen developments. Manage resources, activities, timescales and risk.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on learning processes, techniques, and outcomes against success criteria and in response to feedback.
<p>To apply personal effectiveness in a range of specified contexts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse, manage and modify own behaviour and performance. • Work independently and collaboratively in different contexts. • Consider and respond to the values and opinions of others, including when taking the lead. • Adapt behaviours to different roles and contexts including responding to feedback and giving feedback to others. • Recognise and evaluate the implications of their actions and arguments.

5.4. The awarding body must provide sufficient breadth and depth of content to meet the demands of a qualification at level 3.

5.5. The subject content must provide enough detail for the Integral Skills to be broadly defined and applied and not be limited in scope. The subject content must be sufficient to support coverage of the skills which are appropriate to the assessment of each component whilst avoiding any unnecessary duplication of learning.

RR5 – Rationale requirement: *on submitting the specification for approval, the awarding body must explain the reasons for including any additional content that is not listed above.*

RR6 – Rationale requirement: *on submitting the specification for approval, the awarding body must explain how the content has been integrated into each component in relevant and meaningful ways, whilst avoiding unnecessary repetition.*

6. Overall structure

6.1. The Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales must be a total of 360 Guided Learning Hours (GLH).

6.2. The qualification must be comprised of three mandatory components as illustrated in table 5:

Table 5: Components in the Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales

Components in the Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales	
Component 1: Global Community Project	Learners will develop and demonstrate application of the Integral Skills whilst considering complex global issues and participating in community activities (approximately 15 hours) to promote citizenship in a sustainable world and Wales.
Component 2: Future Destinations Project	Learners will develop and demonstrate application of the Integral Skills whilst exploring future destination goals for life, employability and citizenship in a sustainable world and Wales.
Component 3: Individual Project	Learners will develop and demonstrate application of the Integral Skills whilst planning, managing and conducting an independent research project (extended written project or artefact).

6.3. The components in the qualification must contribute to the overall qualification as illustrated in table 6:

Table 6: Contribution of the components to the overall qualification grade (weighting)

Component	Contribution to overall qualification grade (weighting)
Component 1: Global Community Project	25%
Component 2: Future Destinations Project	25%
Component 3: Individual Project	50%

RR7 – Rationale requirement: on submitting the specification for approval, the awarding body must explain how the content coverage in each individual component is proportionate to the contribution of each individual component to the overall qualification grade (weighting).

7. Assessment

7.1. The qualification will assess learners' ability to apply the Integral Skills in the contexts of:

- **A Global Community Project**
- **A Future Destinations Project**
- **An Individual Project**

- 7.2. The Global Community Project must be designed to enable learners to develop skills for active citizenship whilst drawing links between local, national and global issues. The component must include a Community participation activity of approximately 15 hours.
- 7.3. The Future Destinations Project must encompass a broad understanding of the range of considerations that can influence learners' choices and aspirations about their future destinations. Learners must be encouraged to consider the many ways in which their future destinations decisions will have an impact on their wellbeing, as well as the wellbeing of others.
- 7.4. The Individual Project must allow learners to submit either an extended written project or an artefact. The assessment structure must be sufficiently broad to support the assessment of the different types of evidence that are required for each option.
- 7.5. In addition to assessing the Integral Skills, the assessment must also provide opportunities for learners to develop, and apply where relevant, the embedded skills of numeracy, literacy and digital literacy. These skills will not be assessed but will enable learners to demonstrate appropriate knowledge, understanding and skill in the application of the integral skills.
- 7.6. Each of the components must include the assessment of all four of the Integral Skills.
- 7.7. Each of the Integral Skills must be of equal weighting within the Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales at qualification level, as shown in table 7:

Table 7: Contribution of the Integral Skills to the qualification

	Critical Thinking & Problem Solving	Creativity & Innovation	Planning & Organising	Personal Effectiveness
Global Community Project	√	√	√	√
Future Destinations Project	√	√	√	√
Individual Project	√	√	√	√
Weighting Total	25%	25%	25%	25%

- 7.8. The weightings of the integral skills at component level are not required to be equal.
- 7.9. The qualification assessment must be designed to avoid unnecessary duplication across the components. The four Integral Skills must be broadly defined and broken down into their constituent elements (sets of sub-skills) which are relevant to each of the components. To be clear, although the Integral Skills will be applied holistically, the assessment tasks must allow learners to demonstrate the Integral Skills in ways which are meaningful to each component, and which avoid unnecessary repetition and duplication in the evidence being generated.
- 7.10. The assessment must provide learners with opportunities for the Integral Skills to be applied independently and collaboratively. The specification must specify which elements are independent and collaborative.
- 7.11. Each component in the Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales must be assessed by non-examination assessment.
- 7.12. The awarding body must demonstrate that there are processes in place to ensure effective quality assurance of assessment decisions prior to, and in sufficient time, for the awarding of the qualification to take place. The timing will also need to be aligned with requirements of any additional regulatory documents relating to the publication of results, provision of data, and appeals and reviews.

RR8 – Rationale requirement: *on submitting the specification for approval, the awarding body must explain the distribution of the weightings of each of the Integral Skills at component level.*

RR9 – Rationale requirement: *on submitting the specification for approval, the awarding body must explain the reasons for the attribution of elements of the Integral Skills to the assessment of each component, including a consideration of how unnecessary duplication of assessment has been avoided.*

RR10 – Rationale requirement: *on submitting the specification for approval, the awarding body must explain the reasons for the hours required for the Community participation activity.*

RR11 – Rationale requirement: *on submitting the specification for approval, the awarding body must explain how the assessment criteria for the Individual Project provides sufficient clarity for the assessment of the different types of evidence that can be submitted (written project or an artefact).*

RR12 – Rationale requirement: on submission of the specification for approval, the awarding body must explain how the qualification is 'fit for purpose', including how it balances considerations of validity, reliability, comparability, manageability and minimising bias. The explanation must include how the assessment arrangements:

(a) are overall, manageable for both centres and learners

(b) will meet the reasonable needs of learners and promote and sustain learners' interest in the subject area

(c) will ensure the reliability and validity of assessment outcomes, at centre and national level and over time, for example by identifying and describing:

- the controls which will be applied to candidates and centres during non-examination assessment, ensuring that there is a balance between engaging learning experience and reliability of assessment;
- the way in which flexibility and choice for learners is balanced against comparability of outcomes;
- the forms of evidence which may be used by candidates when undertaking these non-examination assessments;
- the way in which marking criteria will be set for use by assessors and moderators, avoiding over-simplistic or formulaic approaches to the assessment of evidence

(d) are a valid form of assessment for the skills, knowledge and understanding being assessed and that they ensure the authenticity of learner assessment evidence.

8. Grading

- 8.1. The Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales (level 3) must be graded A* - E at qualification level.
- 8.2. Learners will not be required to pass each component to achieve a qualification grade.
- 8.3. Learners must be permitted one resit per component. The highest mark achieved for that component will be aggregated towards the qualification grade.
- 8.4. The requirements for the grading system are illustrated in table 8:

Table 8: The qualification's grading system

The Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales is graded overall with the same grade scale as an A level qualification (e.g. A* - U)							
Qualification grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
One resit per component is permitted. The highest mark achieved for that component will count towards the qualification grade. <i>Learners do not have to pass each component to be awarded an overall grade</i>							

RR13 – Rationale requirement: on submitting the specification for approval, the awarding body must explain the reasons for the choice of grading structure at component level, including consideration of how any unnecessary complexity has been avoided.

RR14 – Rationale requirement: as part of the submission, if there will be evidence generated by a Learner in an assessment for the qualification and marked by a Centre, the awarding body must explain the reasoning behind its Centre Assessment Scrutiny Strategy (CASS), demonstrating how it supports the submitted assessment strategy and complies with Standard Condition of Recognition H2 in the context of this Qualification. It must also explain its approach to setting specified levels of attainment for this qualification and maintaining standards in line with Standard Condition of Recognition H3.1, as well as its approach for awarding the Qualification.