# Students challenge compulsory nature of Advanced Skills Welsh Baccalaureate amid growing concerns



A group of A-level students in Wales has vocally expressed their concerns over the Advanced Skills Welsh Baccalaureate, a qualification that many claim is more of a hindrance than a help. According to students from Coleg Sir Gar, the Welsh Bacc, while intended to equip them with essential skills for higher education and the workforce, has turned into a source of stress and confusion, detracting from their primary focus on A-level subjects.

Ioan Armstrong and Sam Bartlett, both currently navigating their A-level studies amidst the demands of the Welsh Bacc, argue that the qualification essentially feels compulsory due to the substantial funding attached to its delivery in schools and colleges. They highlighted that their college receives over £360,000 annually to support the programme, creating a de facto requirement for students to enrol. This misleading depiction of the Welsh Bacc as optional has prompted the duo to launch a petition, gathering 137 signatures and directing their concerns to Education Minister Lynne Neagle.

Students have pointed out that despite the Welsh Government's claims of flexibility, the funding conditions exert undue pressure, making the Bacc feel compulsory. They assert that this misalignment contradicts the government’s own guidelines regarding student wellbeing, especially since many students already face significant academic pressures during their A-level studies. Ioan articulated his concern, stating, "I am concerned I might get lower grades because of the time I have to spend on the Welsh Bacc."

The efficacy of the Welsh Baccalaureate has long been debated. A report by the National Assembly for Wales acknowledged that while some students found the qualification beneficial, many others contended that it was excessively time-consuming and negatively impacted their A-level performance. The committee suggested that the Welsh Bacc could indeed be rewarding if properly implemented, yet the concern of its complexity remains pervasive. Many students, like Rhianna Davies, have found that the Welsh Bacc does not significantly aid their applications for higher education, particularly in fields like medicine, where only a limited number of universities recognise it as equivalent to A-level qualifications.

In a broader context, the Welsh Bacc has faced scrutiny regarding its perceived value. Qualifications Wales has labelled it overly intricate, with numerous students and educators struggling to navigate its structure. The qualification operates on a pass or fail basis, where the pass rate is considerably high. However, this raises questions about its true equivalence to A-levels, especially when only a small fraction of students attain top grades in traditional A-level formats.

Bartlett's insights resonate with a wider sentiment reflected in studies and discussions surrounding the Welsh Bacc. Many students have articulated that the qualification often feels like "just ticking boxes," focusing on coursework that may not translate into real-world skills. Critics argue that tasks in the Welsh Bacc, such as personality tests and wellbeing assessments, overlap significantly with subjects already covered in their A-level curriculums, diluting its perceived value.

As conversations surrounding the Welsh Bacc continue, the Welsh Government has acknowledged the importance of reviewing educational guidelines to ensure they align better with student needs. Minister Neagle hinted at upcoming reforms, stating a commitment to refresh the guidance on local curricula to uphold the best interests of learners. There appears to be momentum for change, with students like Ioan and Sam advocating for a system where the Welsh Bacc remains an optional offering, ensuring that funding is not penalised for colleges while also addressing student wellbeing.

The path forward for the Welsh Baccalaureate remains uncertain, but the voices of students are increasingly becoming a critical part of the conversation. As they seek a more equitable balance between the Welsh Bacc and their core academic studies, the push for clarity and reform is likely to shape the educational landscape in Wales in the months ahead.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/wales-post-16-welsh-bacc-31742106), [[2]](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/welsh-baccalaureate-students-criticise-qualifications-16065780)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/wales-post-16-welsh-bacc-31742106), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-19285555), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-14590116.amp)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-43864885), [[6]](https://www.iwa.wales/agenda/2012/05/wales-needs-qualifications-that-measure-educational-attainment/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/wales-post-16-welsh-bacc-31742106), [[2]](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/welsh-baccalaureate-students-criticise-qualifications-16065780)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/wales-post-16-welsh-bacc-31742106), [[4]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-43864885)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/welsh-baccalaureate-students-criticise-qualifications-16065780), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-19285555)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/wales-post-16-welsh-bacc-31742106), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-19285555)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/wales-post-16-welsh-bacc-31742106), [[6]](https://www.iwa.wales/agenda/2012/05/wales-needs-qualifications-that-measure-educational-attainment/)
* Paragraph 9 – [[1]](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/wales-post-16-welsh-bacc-31742106), [[7]](https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Welsh%2BBac%2B%27worth%2BLess%2Bthan%2BA-level%2BA%2Bgrade%27%2BMP%2BRAISES%2BCONCERNS%2BABOUT...-a0256343299)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/wales-post-16-welsh-bacc-31742106> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/welsh-baccalaureate-students-criticise-qualifications-16065780> - A report by the National Assembly for Wales highlighted mixed opinions on the Welsh Baccalaureate (WBQ). While some students found it beneficial, others felt it was time-consuming and hampered their A-level studies. The committee recommended that the WBQ could be rewarding if delivered effectively. ([walesonline.co.uk](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/welsh-baccalaureate-bacc-education-university-16065780?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-19285555> - An A-level student, Rhianna Davies, expressed concerns that the Welsh Baccalaureate did not aid her in gaining a university place to study medicine. Despite achieving high A-level grades, only one university recognised the Welsh Bacc, leading to questions about its value in higher education. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-19285555?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-43864885> - A review by Qualifications Wales found that the Welsh Baccalaureate is too complex, with many pupils, teachers, and parents lacking understanding. While the skills taught are relevant for future study and employment, the qualification's design is considered overly complex and in need of simplification. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-43864885?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-14590116.amp> - The Welsh Baccalaureate is a pass or fail qualification, with 83.5% of students passing and receiving the equivalent of an A grade at A-level. However, only 23.9% of students in Wales who entered an A-Level exam received an A-grade, raising questions about the qualification's equivalence. ([bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-14590116.amp?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.iwa.wales/agenda/2012/05/wales-needs-qualifications-that-measure-educational-attainment/> - An article in the Institute of Welsh Affairs discusses concerns that the Welsh Baccalaureate is perceived as less valuable than an A-level A grade. The qualification is seen by some as a 'waste of time' or 'just ticking boxes,' with students resenting time spent on it that could be used for studying A-levels. ([iwa.wales](https://www.iwa.wales/agenda/2012/05/wales-needs-qualifications-that-measure-educational-attainment/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Welsh%2BBac%2B%27worth%2BLess%2Bthan%2BA-level%2BA%2Bgrade%27%2BMP%2BRAISES%2BCONCERNS%2BABOUT...-a0256343299> - An article raises concerns about the Welsh Baccalaureate's value, citing a student who was told by Cardiff University that it was worth less than an A-level A grade. The article questions the equivalence of the qualification and its recognition by universities. ([thefreelibrary.com](https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Welsh%2BBac%2B%27worth%2Bless%2Bthan%2BA-level%2BA%2Bgrade%27%2BMP%2BRAISES%2BCONCERNS%2BABOUT...-a0256343299?utm_source=openai))