

Excerpts from Hansard and the Welsh Parliament Record pertaining to the project qualification

Baker, P. (2018, November 11)

Chief Executive, Qualifications Wales

It's interesting, isn't it, because there's a slight similarity with a qualification that is more commonly delivered in England, which is the extended project qualification? So, the extended project isn't universally included in offers from universities. It sits in that similar territory to the skills challenge certificate. It's half the size of the skills challenge certificate and it's just about the project. So, if you think about the skills challenge certificate, it's the EPQ-plus—so it's got more around it, it's got more skills development around it. So, what we want to understand—another thing—is if a university has a policy about the extended project qualification, is that congruent with their position on the skills challenge certificate? Because it should be at least congruent with that. If not, the skills challenge certificate is held in slightly higher value.

Balls, E. (2009, May 7)

Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families (LABOUR)

I also said that I take seriously the concerns that some have raised about key stage 2 testing and accountability, so I announced the establishment of an expert group to advise us on the future of testing and assessment and its role in school accountability.

Over the past six months, the group has widely consulted head teachers, teachers, parents, subject associations and academics, as well as schools engaged in our stage not age single-level test pilots. I have now received the group's final report, and I have placed copies of it and my reply in the Libraries of both Houses. I should like to thank the group's members for all their hard work.

The expert group has recommended that we improve the transition between primary and secondary school, including through stronger links between schools, an extended project and a new primary graduation certificate that recognises each child's achievements; intensify our focus on catch-up learning during years 7 and 8 for those who fall behind during primary school, including through developing a progress check for those children at the end of year 7; strengthen the quality of teacher assessment, including in IT; continue to make key stage 3 tests available to all secondary schools, including the 75 per cent. of schools that have requested them this year; use a national sample test to ensure that standards are

maintained; and strengthen the school accountability system by introducing a new school report card.

Baroness Grey-Thompson. (2018, January 11)

House of Lords, (CROSSBENCH)

There is a great deal of positivity, and there are very responsible outlets that work hard to educate. My daughter is 15, and at her school they educate pupils through delivery of the EPQ skills lessons, with sessions on data literacy. They are taught to have a healthy scepticism about statistics; there are separate sessions on evaluating sources, both on and offline, and they cover fake news. So education gives you a choice. I understand that the Government may not want regulation; there is an element of Big Brother to that. Does the Minister agree, however, that social media companies should take much greater responsibility for the content distributed through their platforms?

Boles, N. (2014, July 21)

Minister for Skills, Enterprise and Equalities (CONSERVATIVE)

This feels a little like machine gun fire, but I am always happy to take bullets from the hon. Lady. The technical baccalaureate will be available in all schools and colleges from this September. Students will need to pass one or more tech levels and a maths qualification, such as AS maths or the new core maths qualifications, and to undertake an extended project.

Gove, M. (2013, April 22)

Secretary of State for Education (CONSERVATIVE)

We are introducing a new school and college performance table measure which recognises the highest level of technical training achieved by students aged 16 to 19. This will be known as the technical baccalaureate measure. It will recognise the achievement of students taking advanced (level 3) programmes which include a DFE-approved occupational qualification, core maths, and an extended project. This builds on the radical reforms of 16 to 19 vocational qualifications on which we are currently consulting. Establishing a measure for excellence in technical provision will end the perception that vocational education in the UK is a poor second to academic study. Students will be well prepared to enter technician and higher apprenticeship roles in industry, or professional training or university.

It is part of a wide range of reforms that will help to repair the broken link between the qualifications students take, and the training that British industry needs. This will give employers and universities confidence that the vocational qualifications students achieve at 19 will be of a high standard and of real value to students with ambition and talent. The policy statement provides further details on the technical baccalaureate measure, and will be published on the Department's website today.

Introduction of new technical baccalaureate measure for 16 to 19-year-olds.

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Establishing a measure for excellence in technical provision will end the perception that vocational education in the UK is a poor second to academic study. By recognising excellence, it will incentivise the development of the highest value provision and encourage the most able students to study demanding technical study programmes.

Students who achieve the qualifications that are included in the technical baccalaureate measure will be equipped to apply for technician roles and higher apprenticeships in a wide range of industry sectors. Alternatively, they could enter professional training or university.

Who is it aimed at?

The technical baccalaureate measure will be aimed at ambitious, talented students who want to pursue a technical career. It will give young people the opportunity to be stretched and demonstrate their personal best.

The group most likely to opt for qualifications included in the technical baccalaureate measure are those who choose to study advanced vocational qualifications having already achieved a grade C or above in GCSE maths. This means that over time, and as standards are raised, the proportion of students able to study at advanced level is likely to increase further.

The qualifications included in the technical baccalaureate measure will be most suited for young people interested in occupations that require significant theory and knowledge acquisition, such as:

STEM technicians (e.g. lab technicians, IT technicians, various engineering technician roles, construction professionals);

Service technicians (e.g. retail and hospitality management, personal services, junior accounting positions);

Creative technicians (e.g. digital media, other media, creative industries, sport industry, material/textiles, design).

What does it include?

The technical baccalaureate measure is made up of three components.

To achieve the measure, a student would need to successfully complete an advanced (level 3) programme of at least one DFE-approved occupational qualification, level 3 maths qualification(s), and an extended project...

iii) The Extended Project

The extended project will develop and test students' skills in extended writing, communication, research, self-discipline and self-motivation. Such skills are in high demand by industry and academia. The extended project also gives students the opportunity to undertake research projects with an industry focus relevant to their vocational programme, encouraging them to explore further aspects of the occupation to equip them with a breadth of knowledge and understanding to reinforce their employability.

Hancock, M. (2014, June 18)

Minister for Skills and Enterprise (Matthew Hancock)

In addition to the new types of technical and vocational qualifications, I am also announcing the first tech bac trailblazers. These are high performing schools and colleges that will deliver the three components of the technical baccalaureate (tech bac) performance tables measure to talented students from September 2014. The tech bac measure will recognise the achievement of students completing a tech level, level 3 mathematics (including AS level mathematics or the new core maths qualification) and an extended project qualification. It will be reported for the first time in school and college performance tables in January 2017.

Hinds, D. (2014, July 9)

House of Commons (CONSERVATIVE)

This Government are determined that all qualifications will have rigour, because with rigour come respect and value. I welcome tech levels that involve local employers, and I welcome the tech bac, including the core maths qualification and the extended project. I also welcome the massive increase in the number of apprenticeships—it is up 86% in my constituency—the higher apprenticeships fund and the huge growth in UTCs.

Hopkins, R. (2020, February 25)

House of Commons (LABOUR)

For the past five years, I have been a governor at Luton Sixth Form College, which is the oldest in the country and, with more than 3,100 students, one of the largest. It is the college that I am proud to have attended. I have seen how vital further education provided by sixth-form colleges is to improving young people's life chances and laying the foundations for a successful life. In deprived areas or places with limited employment opportunities, education is integral to setting young people up with the skill set to improve their living standards and their surrounding community.

I welcome the comments already made about ensuring that we retain a mix of A-levels, BTEC and T-levels to meet students' varied demands; that applies equally to the vital opportunities that some students at Luton Sixth Form College have to take the extended project qualification, for example, enabling them to broaden their horizons in independent study. Those things are at risk as a consequence of underfunding.

Johnson, A. (2007, February 8)

Secretary of State for Education and Skills (LABOUR)

Part of the Further Education and Training Bill currently before the other place deals with the funding issue that she mentions. The diplomas resemble IBs, in that students have to undertake an extended project, but no institution on its own can deliver them. The fact that schools, sixth form colleges and FE colleges must collaborate in that provision has implications for the different levels funding that, for various reasons, have been inherited. We are trying to tackle the important point that my hon. Friend raises. When the FE Bill comes to this end of the House, she will see that an important part of the debate will be about funding.

Lord Adonis. (2008, February 4)

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Children, Schools and Families (LABOUR)

My Lords, all I can do is quote from the report by the universities, to which I referred in my Answer. The report was by the 1994 Group of universities, which includes Exeter, Durham, Essex, Reading, Warwick and York. In a statement at the launch of the report, Professor Steve Smith, who is vice-chancellor of the University of Exeter and chairman of the 1994 Group, said:

"The 1994 Group welcomes the significant steps the government has taken to reform the 14-19 curriculum. The centre-piece of this package of reform is the launch in September 2008 of the 14-19 Diplomas, alongside the introduction of the Extended Project and changes to the structure and grading of GCE A-level courses ... We recognise the strong potential the diplomas offer, coupled with A-level reform and the Extended Project, to provide the stretch that is needed to demonstrate the quality of school leavers at the highest level of achievement".

We see no reason to believe that the universities lack confidence in the current system.

My Lords, neither I nor the current Government started calling A-levels the "gold standard". The issue here is whether universities have confidence in them. All the evidence that we have shows that they have confidence in the existing A-level and also welcome the changes that we are making, which include reducing the number of units in A-level from six to four, the introduction of the extended projects and a new A* grade to reward best performance. We are mindful of the need to continue improving the A-level, but do not see any lack of confidence in them on the part of universities.

Lord Filkin. (2004, October 18)

House of Lords, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Skills (LABOUR)

"The working group's report covers all aspects of the curriculum and qualifications framework for the 14 to 19 phase. Its recommendations have far-reaching implications for the structure of education and training. They include: proposals to introduce the study of core skills in literacy, numeracy, communication and ICT for all 14 to 19 year-olds; direct

employer engagement in the development of vocational programmes; provision of coherent routes to fulfil vocational aspirations; the introduction of an extended project to replace coursework; and a more academically stretching system of assessment.

"Each of these will require short and medium-term reforms. On that basis, the report recommends development of the diploma, with the recommendation that over time all existing academic and vocational qualifications would be brought within its framework. The report argues that this approach has many advantages. It would establish a single coherent, understood qualifications framework for the first time. It would put vocational and academic qualifications on a common footing, again for the first time. It would promote greater personalisation of the curriculum to meet the needs of individuals and greater choice for young people. The report also argues that a diploma would stretch our most able young people while re-engaging with those who currently drop out of learning. Such an approach would, of course, bring great challenges, as the working group acknowledges. It would be the biggest single reform of qualifications in any of our lifetimes.

"Mr Tomlinson's report states that there is a need for further work by the Department for Education and Skills and its partner organisations before there is a blueprint for reform, and that the reforms would take at least 10 years to introduce. I agree with the careful, deliberate, approach to reform the working group has adopted, and accept that approach. Above all, in this complex area, we owe it to our young people to ensure that the stability of the qualification system is paramount in our thinking, and that reform is based on consensus, evolution, careful planning and the rigorous piloting of any change.

"For those reasons I shall of course be considering the report carefully. My intention is to make positive and detailed proposals in the form of a White Paper early in the new year. The White Paper will include my assessment of how the working group report measures up to the five tests that I set when the interim report was published, which are as follows.

"Excellence—will it stretch the most able? Vocational—will it address the historic failure to provide a high quality vocational offer that motivates young people? Employability—will it prepare all young people for the world of work? Assessment—will it reduce the burden of assessment? Disengagement—will it stop our high drop-out rate at 16?

"In preparing the White Paper I shall of course work with my colleagues with responsibility for education and training in Wales and Northern Ireland, who share our qualifications framework, and with our statutory partners. I am writing today to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to ask it to undertake the necessary work to enable us to develop our detailed proposals for the White Paper.

"I shall also discuss my proposals with a wide range of stakeholders, including schools, colleges, universities and employers, and I look forward to hearing the views of the Education and Skills Select Committee in due course. I expect this to be the first of many opportunities to consider those crucial issues in this House.

"I am determined that any evolution of the system must increase public confidence in it. Therefore my approach will be to build on all that is good in the current system, including the real and great strengths of A-levels and GCSEs.

"The Tomlinson report rightly confirms their place in the system and seeks to build on them. They would stay as the building blocks of any new system. As Mike Tomlinson's report makes clear, assessment must and will continue at all levels on the basis of rigorous, trusted and externally marked examinations. But, again, as the report proposes, we will need to consider the number and nature of those exams.

"We also believe that it is essential that full public accountability for results is maintained, including the publication nationally of exam results, school by school, at 16 and 19.

"The Government have made tremendous strides in taking action to raise standards in primary and secondary schools. We have also addressed both the challenges of higher education and the development of the nation's skills base. We now have to move on the reforms of 14 to 19 education and training. A number of the most pressing problems are already being addressed. For example, this September saw the first 1,000 pupils on young apprenticeships start their programmes, and the introduction into the national curriculum of work-related learning for all 14 to 16 year-olds, with an increased take-up of vocational qualifications. The increased flexibility programme allows 14 to 16-year-olds to spend time out of school in colleges or work-based learning. Currently, approximately 90,000 pupils at 2,000 schools are involved.

"The working group's proposals now give us an opportunity to consider more far-reaching reforms that will shape 14 to 19 education for decades to come. Its proposals have implications for every single young person in school, college or workplace, and for those who work with them. It is a great opportunity, but with that opportunity comes the heavy responsibility to turn Mike Tomlinson's vision of a 14 to 19 system that meets the needs and aspirations of all our young people into a practical reality. I hope that all sides of the House will share that objective".

Lord Knight of Weymouth. (2009, January 26)

Minister for Schools and Learners (LABOUR)

I noted Charterhouse's advocacy of the pre-U, which is an international qualification with a global dimension. It is an interesting qualification, but far and away the majority of schools are still doing the A-level and they should continue to do so. It is also still an extremely popular export from this country, and we should be proud of it. We should note, too, the reforms that are taking place to the A-level, such as its moving from six to four modules, the use of the extended project, and the introduction of the A* and more open-ended synoptic questions with longer written answers—of which I am sure that, during an examination, even the hon. Gentleman might approve.

Lord Nash. (2013, July 4)

House of Lords, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (CONSERVATIVE)

Our new technical baccalaureate measure will recognise the achievement of students who take the highest value occupational qualifications, alongside maths and an extended project. The tech bacc will provide a mark of achievement for young people who achieve a recognised standard of technical training. We propose this be endorsed by employers and their representative organisations as a strong grounding for entry to an apprenticeship, skilled trade or technical degree. We have also approved 39 new UTCs and 26 studio schools. I am sure that my noble friend Lord Eccles will be pleased to hear that a number of car manufacturers are engaging with these projects.

Rammell, B. (2008, February 21)

Minister for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education (LABOUR)

The move from six modules to four has been widely welcomed, along with the greater use of synoptic questions and the extended project. All the indications are that universities greatly welcome those changes as a means of improving what is already a very good qualification.

Reckless, M. (2019, July 3)

Welsh Parliament (BREXIT PARTY)

think when people look at the Welsh baccalaureate, and even in some of our conversations today, when we say, 'the bac' or 'the Welsh bac', actually, that's a multiple of things, and part of it's an umbrella that's describing a minimal level of other qualifications, and then you have this SCC that is unique to the Welsh bac, and I think the 50 per cent extended project and what that's trying to do in allowing the student a greater range of options of what they do in that, and something that's a really substantive and extended project to develop their skills, in principle strikes me as something that could work well. And I also think it's something that learners can talk to about in interviews with universities and use to their benefit in that personal statement. But I don't think it's sufficiently well understood by universities and employers and, to a degree, parents, that that SCC is something additional we're doing in Wales that's potentially a real thing they can sell, and it's not clear how that relates to the umbrella that then gives the Welsh bac that that's within, particularly when people, at least to a degree, have a perception of what the English bac is or isn't as well. And I think that's a real challenge for us to sell and explain that. And some of the areas that Suzy highlighted in terms of what learners are saying about it I think adds to that difficulty. I'm not quite ready to say, 'This is wrong', but I really do have concerns about it.

Truss, E. (2013a, January 23)

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (CONSERVATIVE)

Question from Emily Thornberry (LABOUR): Many parents will have got the message that the Secretary of State is largely against assessments and in favour of exams. They may therefore be a little confused about the abolition of AS-levels, and will have to get over that. I was interested to note that in her statement, the Minister accepted that it was important for students to learn more, including about extended writing and research skills, which she saw as important for A-levels. Does the Minister expect there to be more assessments during those two years?

Elizabeth Truss: No, I do not expect that. We are talking about the extended project qualification, going alongside A-levels, but the point about A-levels is that there will be a terminal exam.

Truss, E. (2013b, May 16)

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (CONSERVATIVE)

As I said, we think that students should do a common core until 16, and even continue to do so until 18 on the critical subjects, which are maths and written communication, for example

through an extended project qualification. The core is there, following the best traditions of countries such as Germany, which has upgraded its qualifications so that all students do a strong academic core until they are 16. That is the intention behind the new progress 8 accountability measure, which includes English, maths, three EBacc subjects and three additional subjects, so providing a common academic core for all students, plus three additional subjects.

Twigg, S. (2014, July 9)

House of Commons (LABOUR & CO-OPERATIVE)

The motion draws on the excellent work done for the Labour party during the past two years by Chris Husbands, from the Institute of Education in London, on how we can best strengthen the status of vocational and technical education. I particularly welcome the proposal for a national baccalaureate that seeks to put alongside fit-for-purpose qualifications, whether academic or vocational, concepts such as extended projects, personal development and an emphasis on character, resilience and employability. Those things matter, and it is very welcome to have such an emphasis in the motion.

Williams, K. (2018, December 12)

Welsh Parliament (WELSH LIBERAL DEMOCRATS)

think sometimes colleges make the decision that four or five A-levels is of an advantage, and therefore, if you're asking students to carry that workload, which is a considerable workload, that's the preferred route for more able and talented students. Again, what is quite clear in all the conversations that I have had with Russell Group universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, is that this is a myth. What universities tell me they want is not necessarily students with four or five A-levels; they want students with three really exceptional grades at A-level and a Welsh baccalaureate. I think that's really, really an important message to get across—that it is not necessary to do four or five A-levels if you aspire to go to these Russell Group universities, or if you decide you want to apply to Oxford and Cambridge. 117

As I said, in the conversations that we have had—and there is actually some research, and I will let the committee have links to the research. There is some research to suggest that those students who have been involved in project-based work—and, of course, that's not just the Welsh baccalaureate, that would be the EPQ, which is a qualification that is rapidly gaining traction in England. That is an extended project—research based—qualification, very similar to the individual project element of the Welsh baccalaureate. The EPQ in England is seen as a qualification taken by more able and talented students, and what we see in some of the research that is coming forward is that those students who have engaged in that type of work, project-based work, individual-led, research-based work—those skills are the skills that are really attuned to the nature of university-type work. Therefore, that is valued by universities and there is some indication to say that there is a correlation between the students who have undertaken that work and their potential success at undergraduate level. 118

They also tell me that there is a link between, for instance, being able then to use those skills to gain work experience, placements and internships in the private sector and in the world of work, because, as I said, those types of skills are really, really valuable and therefore that's why they value the qualification.

J. Stone, 27.10.2020