



## Skilled for the future

Consultation decisions on the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate and the Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate

February 2021



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## Summary

In September 2020, we launched our Skilled for the Future consultation. In this consultation, we sought views on proposed changes to the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC) qualification and the overarching Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate (Welsh Bacc) framework. Specifically, we proposed to:

- discontinue the overarching Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate (Welsh Bacc) framework, allowing a focus on the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC) as a standalone qualification; and to
- develop a new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC) qualification.

The consultation closed in November 2020.

In this document, we summarise and explain our decisions and how we will put them into action.

Having carefully considered all responses, we have made the following decisions.

**1. We have agreed that the overarching Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate framework will be discontinued, allowing a focus on a new qualification that will replace the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate) as a standalone qualification.**

This will apply from the point at which a new qualification is introduced to replace the current Advanced SCC (Welsh Bacc). We currently anticipate that this will be from 01 September 2023.

**2. We will develop a new qualification to replace the existing Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate), which will include the following features:**

- a) The purpose of the new qualification will be to enable learners to develop and apply skills in relevant contexts in preparation for employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship.
- b) To prepare learners for employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship, the new qualification will require learners to develop and demonstrate their skills in contexts based on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Wales' well-being goals.

- c) The structure of the new qualification will be: Component 1 - Global Community Project; Component 2 - Future Destinations Project; Component 3 - Individual Project.
- d) The three components will contribute to the overall qualification as follows: Global Community Project – 25%; Future Destinations Project – 25%; Individual Project – 50%.
- e) The new qualification will focus on assessing the Integral Skills of: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Creativity and Innovation, Planning and Organising and Personal Effectiveness.
- f) The new qualification will enable learners to develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills and their digital competence. However, these skills will not be learning outcomes in their own right, and learners will not be directly assessed on them.
- g) Each component of the new qualification will assess all four of the Integral Skills. Each skill can be weighted differently at component level, but all four skills must contribute equally to the overall qualification.
- h) The new qualification will be graded A\*-E at qualification level.
- i) Learners will be able to achieve a grade at qualification level without having to pass every component. In the interests of fairness, learners will continue to be entitled to one re-sit per component and the highest grade achieved for that component should count towards the qualification grade.

In addition to the consultation questions, we asked respondents to share views to help us to decide on the title of the new qualification. The title of the new qualification will be **Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales (level 3)**.

## Background

We have been looking at ways to build on the strong foundations of the current Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate) qualification, including its success in helping learners to access higher education.

We want to build on these strengths but also: improve manageability for learners and centres; enhance learner engagement and wellbeing; avoid duplication of prior

learning; and provide a simpler model that helps to communicate the value, purpose and structure of the qualification more clearly.

To do this, we have focused on what makes this qualification a unique learning experience for learners. We want learners to have autonomy and choice in what they study and to develop their skills through real-life, authentic learning experiences.

We have built upon the findings of previous reviews<sup>1</sup> and the views expressed to us by a wide range of stakeholders who have contributed their time and shared their expertise and experiences.

From September to November 2020, we consulted on proposals to:

- discontinue the overarching Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate (Welsh Bacc) framework, allowing a focus on the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC) as a standalone qualification; and to
- develop a new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC) qualification, including key design features.

The consultation closed in November 2020, and we are now announcing our decisions and next steps. The consultation included a main version of the consultation survey and a summary version. In total, we received 428 responses and we considered all responses in reaching our decisions.

Alongside this document, we are also publishing a [report](#) outlining the findings to the consultation, together with a [summary](#) version of the report.

We are grateful to everyone who took the time to respond and to give us their views.

## **Our decisions and how we will implement them**

The proposals in our consultation relate to:

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<sup>1</sup> [review-of-scc-final-report-e.pdf \(qualificationswales.org\)](#); [Bacc to the Future: The status of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification \(senedd.wales\)](#)

- discontinuing the overarching Advanced Welsh Bacallaureate (Welsh Bacc) framework allowing a focus on the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC) as a standalone qualification.
- developing a new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC) qualification, including key design features.

We will take forward all of our proposals.

In the following sections, we explain our decisions and discuss the feedback that we had in relation to them.

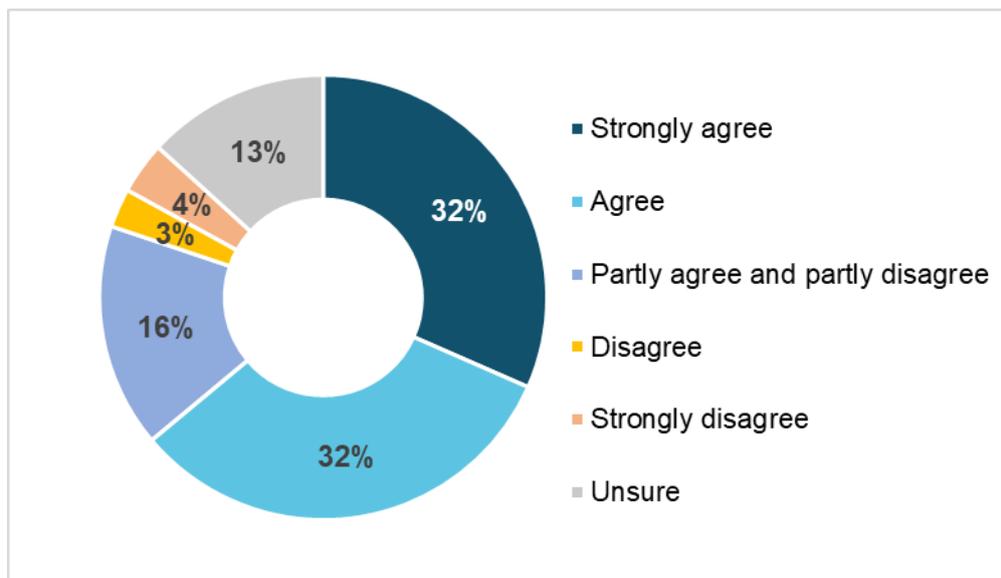
## The Advanced Welsh Bacallaureate Framework

### 1. We will discontinue the Advanced Welsh Bacallaureate framework allowing the focus to be on a new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate as a standalone qualification.

#### Consultation question 1

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

*To what extent do you agree with this proposal?*



There was general support for this proposal. Many themes emerged, including making the qualification easier to understand; improving manageability for learners and their teachers; enhancing fairness for learners and recognising the value of the Advanced SCC as a standalone skills-based qualification.

Discontinuing the Welsh Bacc framework will make the qualification clearer for learners, centres and stakeholders to understand. This is because there is currently some confusion regarding the distinction between the Advanced SCC qualification and the overarching Welsh Bacc framework. This is a particular concern when learners achieve a grade for the Advanced SCC, but fail to achieve the required combination of qualifications to pass the Welsh Bacc framework. This can lead to learners feeling a sense of failure, or misunderstanding implications for their progression pathways. A more straightforward structure focusing on a standalone skills-based qualification will make it easier to convey the purpose and value of the qualification to learners.

This view was shared by respondents. For example, it was suggested that a new structure could give greater credibility to the qualification due to perceived problems with the current Welsh Bacc framework. A move away from a framework approach also correlates with the fact that learners report that they value the Advanced SCC more than the Welsh Bacc, as it is the Advanced SCC that attracts UCAS tariff points and therefore is used to support university applications, not the Welsh Bacc framework.

Discontinuing the wider Welsh Bacc framework removes the requirement to pass separate literacy and numeracy qualifications; many respondents felt this would be fairer to learners. For learners to be entered for the Advanced SCC, they must also be entered for the Welsh Bacc. For some learners who are unable to achieve all of the requirements of the Welsh Bacc framework, this can be demotivating and potentially adversely affect their wellbeing. It was also suggested that by discontinuing the Welsh Bacc framework, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds might consequently engage better with the qualification.

Simplifying the structure could improve manageability. As the Welsh Bacc is comprised of a number of qualifications, awarding it involves gathering and aggregating data from many different awarding bodies. Discontinuing the framework will remove the costs and administrative requirements that this involves.

In making our decision, we recognise that some respondents think it is important to preserve the 'Welsh Baccalaureate' as a brand, even when they agree with the overall

proposal to discontinue the overarching framework. They feel the brand is well-established and familiar to a range of stakeholders, including universities. We agree that the changes to the qualification should not detract from how the qualification is recognised. In particular, this has informed our decision-making for the title of the new qualification [see page 27].

Some respondents referred to the perceived benefits of the Welsh Bacc framework for learners on vocational pathways. This is because the overarching framework helps to create parity between A levels and equivalent level 3 qualifications, which are given the same status within the framework. We have listened to this view and will ensure that the benefits of the newly structured qualification for all learners are carefully communicated. Our aim is to ensure that the new Advanced SCC complements the full range of qualifications taken by learners and that learners can select areas of study to support their particular progression pathways.

The intention behind the framework is to demonstrate the overall breadth of a learners' achievements. However, our engagement with employers and universities indicates that it is the Advanced SCC itself that they value, because of the opportunities it provides for skill development. We will continue to engage with employers and universities to ensure that the newly structured qualification is of benefit for learners.

As some responses noted, there will continue to be a need for appropriate training for practitioners before the new qualification is delivered.

In our consultation, we did not ask about the Welsh Government's policy to encourage all schools and colleges to offer the Welsh Bacc as part of their learning programmes, as this is beyond Qualifications Wales' remit. Some respondents offered views on this policy area, which we will share with Welsh Government.

## **The New Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate**

The second section of the consultation outlined our main proposals for a new Advanced SCC qualification. The proposals related to the following aspects of the qualification:

- Purpose
- Learning contexts

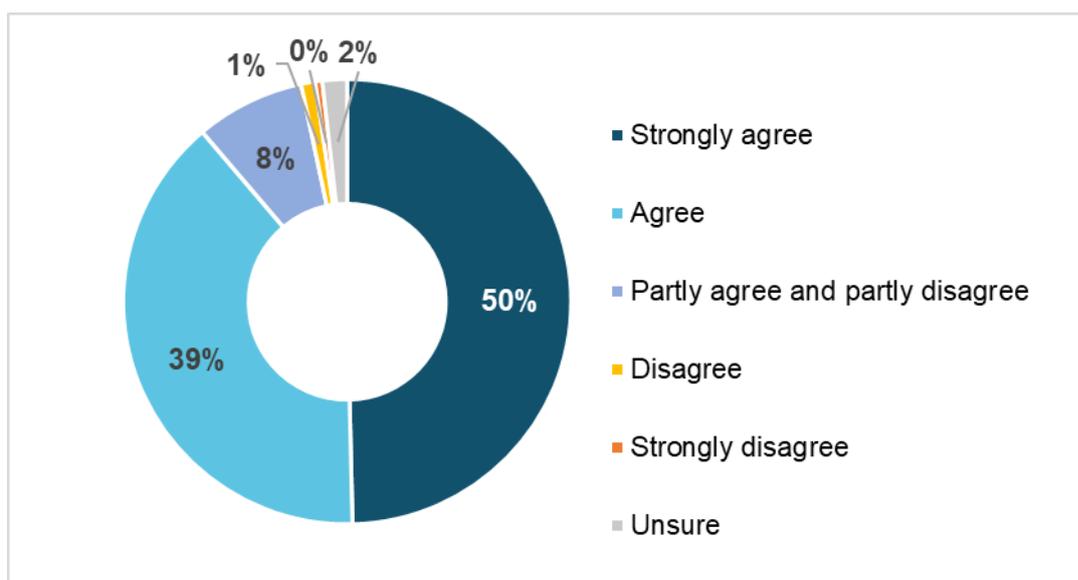
- Structure
- Assessment structure
- Grading system

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

*Consultation question 2*

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

*To what extent do you agree with this proposal?*



There was strong support for this proposal, with many respondents agreeing that the Advanced SCC should continue to be a skills-based qualification.

In particular, respondents referred to the importance of developing skills which are directly linked to pursuing future pathways. This means that the Advanced SCC provides something additional to what is offered in the other subjects that learners typically take.

The focus on employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship are considered to be highly relevant learning contexts, and this can make the qualification more appealing. Our decision is also based on the type of learning that supports the qualification's purpose, with an emphasis being placed on real-life, authentic experiences.

To prepare learners for employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship, the main focus on the new Advanced SCC will be on developing the skills of: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving; Creativity and Innovation; Planning and Organising and Personal Effectiveness. These are the skills referred to in the new Curriculum for Wales as the Integral Skills, and our decision illustrates our intention for the new Advanced SCC qualification to be consistent with, and allow progression from, the development of skills in the new curriculum. Employing the same terminology will help to make this alignment clear and support practitioners and learners with the transition to post-16 teaching and learning.

Some respondents referred to the fact that preparing learners for progression to employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship is also a feature of the current qualification. Our decision firmly acknowledges the strengths of the current qualification and aims for the newly structured Advanced SCC to build on these solid foundations. We also are committed to ensuring that the focus on active citizenship brings opportunities for the qualification to align with the four purposes of the new curriculum.

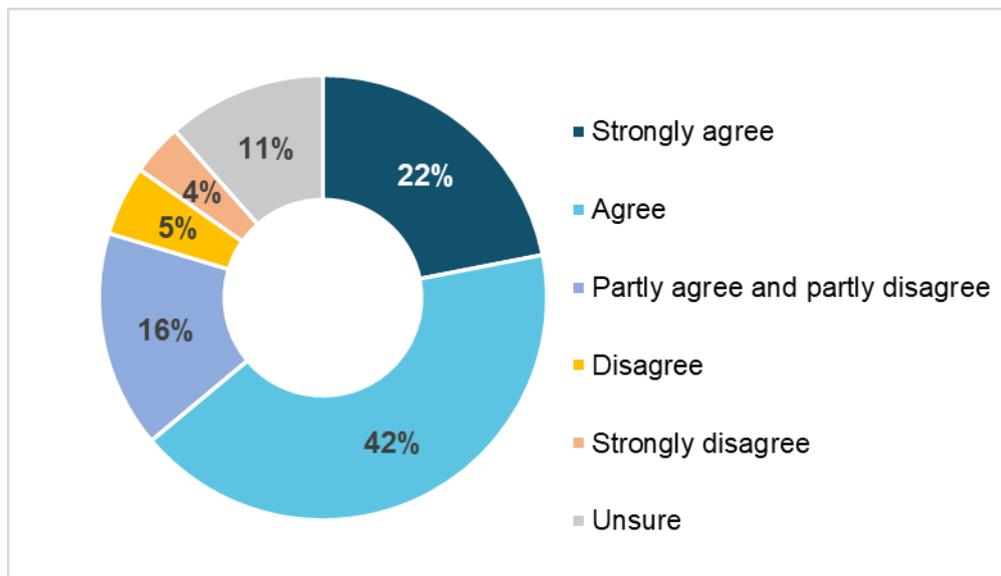
It is our view that teaching and learning aimed at skills development is most accessible for learners when activities are provided within relevant learning contexts. Reflecting on this, some respondents highlighted the need to allow learners to play a prominent role in shaping their own learning and to avoid content becoming too restrictive. Promoting learner choice is central to the purpose of the qualification and in moving forward with our work, this will be clearly communicated. We want learners to exercise a degree of autonomy and they should be supported in selecting areas of study that relate to their personal interests and future goals and aspirations. This issue is also discussed in relation to consultation question 3.

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

*Consultation question 3*

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

*To what extent do you agree with this proposal?*



There was general support for this proposal. Respondents also raised helpful points for us to take into consideration.

A strength of the current Advanced SCC is the opportunities it provides for civic and critical engagement due to the focus on active citizenship. In requiring learners to develop and apply their skills in contexts based on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Wales' well-being goals, we intend to build on this strength. The goals are also relevant as learners consider their own personal goals and aspirations, helping them to consider their own future wellbeing and the wellbeing of others, and enabling them to think about a sustainable Wales and world.

Our consultation outlined a number of advantages to specifying these learning contexts. This included the idea that providing learners with broad frameworks within which they can apply their skills can make skills-based learning more meaningful, accessible, and tangible.

In choosing the SDGs and Wales' well-being goals as a focus, we want to ensure that the qualification is current, up-to-date, and relevant; that it is firmly aligned to the four purposes of the new Curriculum for Wales and that there is a forward-looking Welsh dimension to the qualification. We also see this as an opportunity to differentiate between the qualifications at National/Foundation and Advanced level and to support appropriate progression.

Many respondents agreed that the SDGs and Wales' well-being goals are important and relevant for learners. They referred to the advantage of including a global and a national dimension, and felt that the contexts were appropriate for study at Advanced level. A few respondents also saw the inclusion of the goals as having wider benefits. For example, as well as supporting learners with active citizenship, raising awareness would make a positive difference in helping the goals to be achieved.

Some issues were also raised, which we will address when moving forward. The move to more focused learning contexts will need to be communicated carefully to make sure that teachers and learners understand what is expected of them.

One theme that emerged was a lack of certainty about the amount of specialist knowledge that would be required from teachers, especially as the goals might be considered complex and difficult to understand. Some respondents also said it was important to ensure that coverage of this content did not detract from the focus on skills. Despite the more specific focus, the emphasis will still be on promoting independence in learners. Rather than requiring teachers to provide in-depth content of these agendas, the intention is for learners to be able to use these goals as a platform for accessing sources of information more independently and as a foundation for applying their Integral Skills. As these frameworks are established, there are readily available sources of accessible and engaging information on them for learners. This includes bilingual sources in relation to the well-being goals.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment); [Well-being of Future Generations Act: The Essentials](#).

Respondents also raised concern about prescribing learning contexts which could limit learner choice or exclude other relevant frameworks. We have chosen the SDGs and Wales' well-being goals as we consider them to be highly relevant, non-restrictive frameworks. They provide a starting point, and will naturally help learners to draw links with other frameworks and sources of information, depending on the issues which are being considered. For example, a learner exploring Wales' well-being goal of a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language could choose to reference and draw evidence from Wales' Welsh Language Strategy, aimed at a million Welsh-speakers by 2050.

Another theme that emerged was the importance of teaching about rights and responsibilities as a fundamental aspect of citizenship, and in particular children's rights. We agree. The learning contexts we have chosen support the rights contained in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child by allowing young people to become more aware of the decision-making processes that affect them as informed, responsible and active citizens.

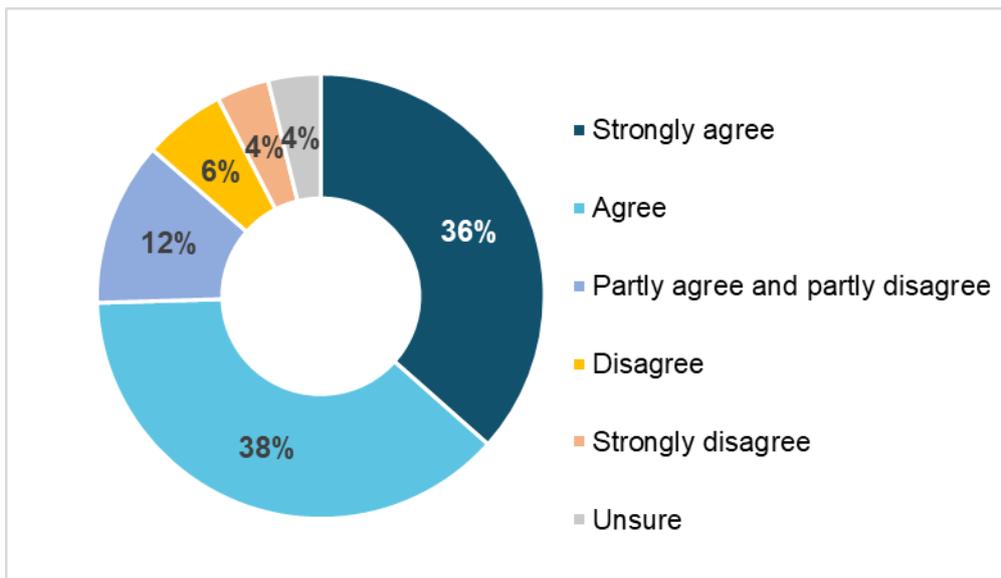
#### **4. The structure of the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate will be revised to include a reduction in components from four to three.**

*Consultation question 4*

*The structure of the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate should be revised to include a reduction in components from four to three.*

*The three components included in the new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate should be: Component 1 - Global Community Project; Component 2 - Future Destinations Project; Component 3 - Individual Project*

*To what extent do you agree with this proposal?*



There was general agreement for this proposal, with many respondents acknowledging the benefits of a reduction in the number of components.

Reducing the number of components from four to three is intended to address manageability concerns for learners and their teachers. Fewer components will reduce the demands that are placed on the qualification in terms of delivery, assessment and moderation, without undermining the validity of the qualification or the value of the learning experience. This change will also limit repetition and duplication in learning and assessment, both across components at Advanced level and between the qualifications at Advanced and National/Foundation level. Our aim is to reduce over-assessment of skills, whilst also allowing those skills to be applied in effective and valuable ways.

This decision means combining the current Global Citizenship Challenge and the Community Challenge into a new Global Community Project. This will help learners to draw links between global, national and local issues more effectively, and will allow learners to approach their study in a more holistic way.

The new Future Destinations Project will replace the current Enterprise and Employability Challenge. This means that the Enterprise activity will no longer be included at Advanced level, removing some of the repetition of learning which also takes place within the National/Foundation qualification. The focus on employability will be enhanced to encompass a broader understanding of the range of

considerations that influence choices and aspirations. Learners will 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 and how these can influence a sustainable world and Wales.

Many respondents agreed with the proposal and suggested a number of advantages. For example, it was felt that fewer components would reduce workload for teachers and learners. This could potentially have a positive impact on wellbeing, help to enhance learner engagement, and better enable teachers to deliver the qualification within the allocated timeframes. Another view was that this could potentially improve outcomes, as learners would have more time to produce work of good quality.

Respondents also referred to specific elements of the new qualification that they saw as beneficial. For example, it was felt that the strengthened focus on future destinations would help to convey the purpose and relevance of the qualification for learners. As the Individual Project is considered a strong feature, respondents were pleased to see it retained.

Despite agreeing in principle, some respondents highlighted the need for clear guidance on what was required for each component to ensure successful implementation of the revised structure. Some also referred to the loss of certain elements from the qualification, or the risk that fewer components could be perceived as a reduction in the overall size of the qualification, impacting on how the qualification was valued in comparison to A levels.

We intend to work with the awarding body to ensure clear guidance on what is required in each component is provided. We acknowledge that careful communication is required as we move forward with our decision. The reduction in components does not amount to a reduction in skills development or qualification size, rigour or demand. Rather it is to make the qualification more manageable and deliverable in the time that is allocated. Despite fewer components, the Guided Learning Hours (GLH) for delivering the qualification will not be reduced, and the Advanced SCC will continue to be equivalent in size to an A level. As the size and grading structure of the overall qualification will remain the same, there will be no impact on how UCAS points are attributed to the qualification, and therefore on how

the qualification can be used to support university applications. We intend to continue to engage with employers and universities as the qualification is developed.

Although some elements of the current Advanced SCC will not be included in the newly structured qualification, it is important that the learning provided builds on the experiences at National/Foundation level, whilst avoiding duplication and allowing effective progression.

**5. The three components of the new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate will contribute to the overall qualification as follows:**

**Global Community Project – 25%; Future Destinations Project – 25%; Individual Project – 50%**

*Consultation question 5*

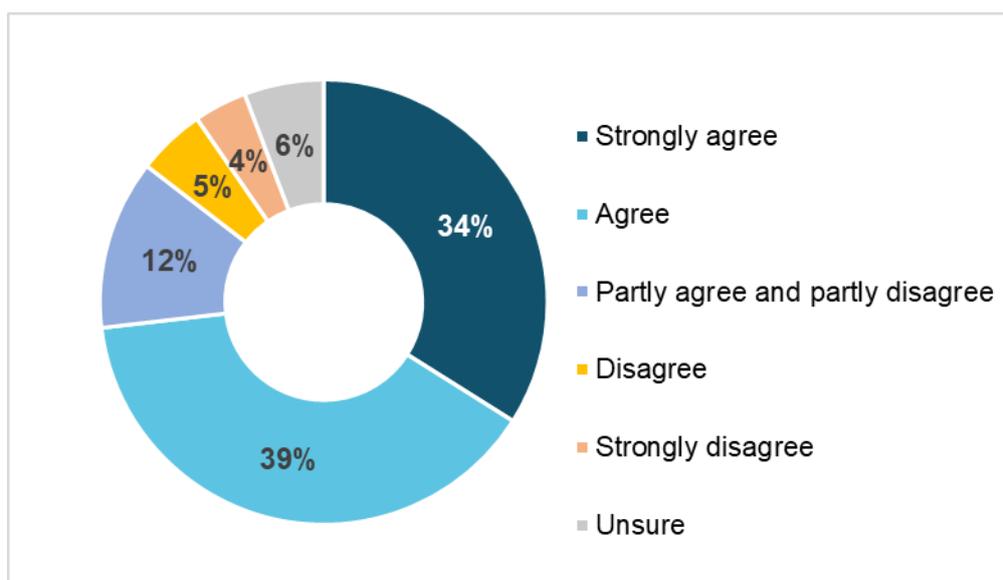
*The three components of the new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate should contribute to the overall qualification as follows:*

*Global Community Project – 25%*

*Future Destinations Project – 25%*

*Individual Project – 50%*

*To what extent do you agree with this proposal?*



There was general support for this proposal, and many respondents shared the views outlined in the consultation document. Respondents also raised important points to consider.

We intend to simplify the qualification's structure, to make it easier to understand and support more manageable delivery models over a two-year period. In allocating the weightings in this way, there is an expectation that components 1 and 2 can be delivered in the first year of study, leading to component 3 in the second year of study. This reflects the progression needed for learners to study more independently when completing the Individual Project.

Ensuring that components 1 and 2 are both weighted equally also illustrates that they are of equal importance to each other and that learners should broadly spend a similar amount of time completing them. The Individual Project will continue to account for 50% of the overall qualification. This reflects its importance in preparing learners for higher education and developing their independence.

Other positive views were shared by respondents. For example, it was suggested that learner engagement could be enhanced if components are delivered according to their more appropriate weightings.

There were also some useful points raised for consideration, including whether the new structure ought to be supported by certification at the end of the first year of study, similar to the structure used for A level qualifications.

We have reflected on this view and we also considered it pre-consultation as an option. It was discounted for a number of reasons, mainly that it would go against the holistic nature of the qualification, where the development and assessment of skills takes place in multiple learning contexts. Limiting learning to two components means learners would not be able to demonstrate all of the integral skills (and sets of sub-skills) sufficiently. Breaking down the qualification in this way would also detract from the point of the qualification. We want learners to have the grounding of all the main concepts so that they can consolidate and synthesise these. The assessments will seek to assess how learners bring these concepts together collectively, rather than on an individual level.

Some respondents offered alternative suggestions for how weightings could be allocated to the individual components. For example, one view was that the weighting allocated to the Individual Project should be reduced, as the proposed

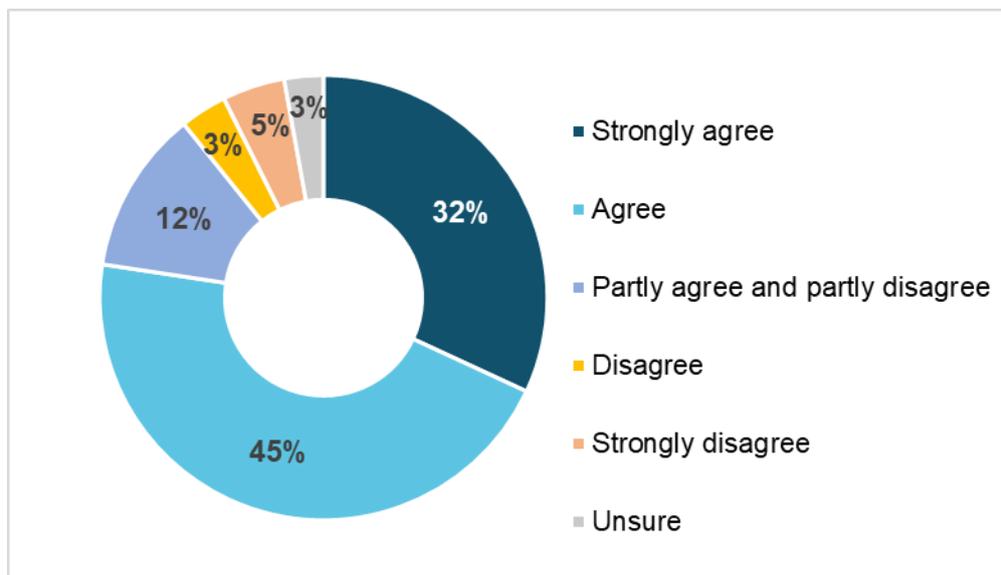
weighting could negatively impact on learners for whom independent study is not a strength. Despite acknowledging this concern, the Individual Project will allow learners on a wide range of learning pathways to choose areas of study which suit their own learning needs, including a choice between an extended written project and an artefact project. We will also require the assessment criteria for the Individual Project to be enhanced when the new qualification is developed, with careful consideration of the evidence that is needed, depending on which option learners select. Our decision for the Individual Project to continue to contribute to the overall qualification in this way reflects the importance and value that is placed on this component by universities.

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

*Consultation question*

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

*To what extent do you agree with this proposal?*



There was general support for this proposal, with many respondents agreeing with the reasons set out in the consultation document.

Focusing on the assessment of the Integral Skills will simplify the assessment structure.

The current Advanced SCC seeks to assess seven essential and employability skills: the four Integral Skills listed above, as well as literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills. These skills are all important, but assessing this many different skills in a single qualification is challenging. Focusing assessment on the Integral Skills will make the assessment more efficient and manageable for learners and practitioners. This will allow more time for teaching and developing the Integral Skills and for exploring the contexts of employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship, which are central to the qualification's purpose. It also limits repetition of the assessment of literacy and numeracy, as there are many opportunities to assess these skills in the other qualifications that many learners take.

The Integral Skills are also the skills at the centre of the new Curriculum for Wales. In choosing this assessment focus, we aim to create alignment with the new curriculum, offering continuity for learners and a chance to build on the skills developed in pre-16 settings. A number of respondents also pointed to the advantages of this reinforcement.

Support was also shown for the assessment focus on the Integral Skills, as respondents perceived these skills to be highly valued by employers and universities.

For some respondents, the focus on the Integral Skills presents practical challenges at an assessment level. We recognise that the revised assessment structure will require clear guidance to support successful implementation.

Some respondents also suggested additional skills which could be included in the new assessment structure. Examples include teamwork, communication skills and financial management skills. One view also suggested that the new Advanced SCC could be a useful vehicle for developing Welsh-language skills as part of the Welsh language strategy for the post-16 sector.

Although we recognise the relevance of a wide range of skills, we also know that trying to assess too many different skills in a single qualification is not easy, and can lead to complicated and burdensome assessment models. We are also developing the National/ Foundation qualification and opportunities that may be presented at this level. For example, some financial and business skills are most likely to map with the entrepreneurial cross-cutting theme in the new curriculum. The new Advanced SCC qualification will enable learners to develop their skills independently and in

collaboration with others. Through the focus on Wales' well-being goals, learners are given opportunities to choose to learn about the Welsh language and to access a range of Welsh-medium resources. However, we feel that assessing Welsh-language skills is beyond the remit of this qualification. It could potentially impact learner choice, add to the demands of the assessment structure, and raise manageability concerns, which we are trying to address.

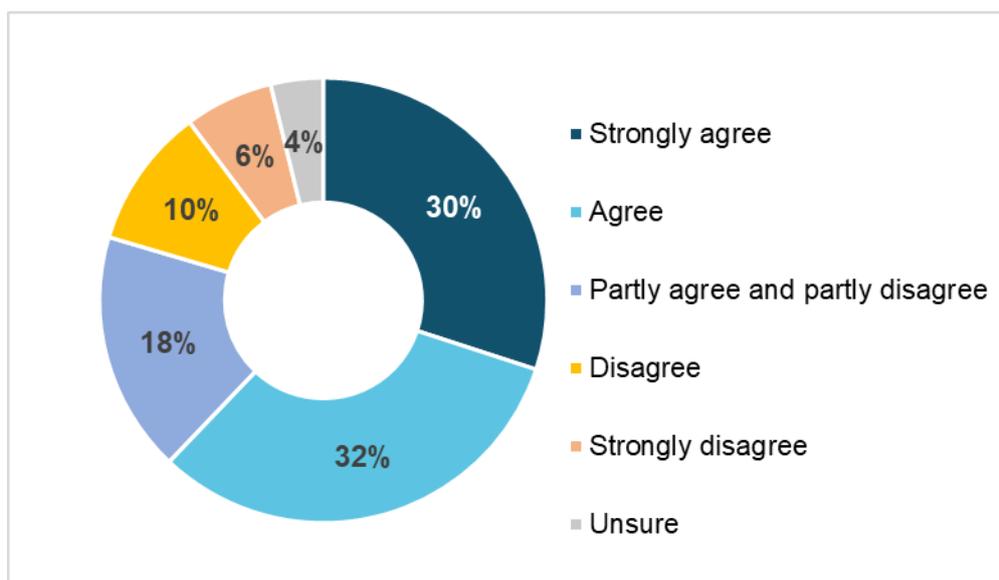
We have carefully considered the skills to be included for assessment by engaging with stakeholders including universities and employers. There was very strong agreement that a standalone skills-based qualification focused on the Integral Skills is of value, complementing the range of other qualifications that learners take and supporting progression pathways.

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

*Consultation question*

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

*To what extent do you agree with this proposal?*



There was general agreement with this proposal. Respondents also raised important points to be considered.

In the section above, we explained our reasons for focusing the assessment of the new Advanced SCC on the Integral Skills, emphasising the importance of these skills for supporting learners with their progression pathways.

We also know that literacy and numeracy skills and digital competence are important for preparing learners for employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship, and that demonstrating the four Integral Skills effectively will require learners to develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills, and digital competence, in relevant ways. We have decided that the new qualification should acknowledge this and be designed to give learners opportunities to develop and apply these skills. However, these skills will be embedded and will not be distinctive learning outcomes. Assessing these skills directly can distract from the main purpose of the assessment, potentially encouraging formulaic approaches to task completion.

Many respondents supported this decision. For example, it was agreed that assessing these skills adds complexity to the assessment model and results in unnecessary repetition as these skills are already assessed through other qualifications. A further view was that removing these as distinct learning outcomes could reduce stress on learners who already experience significant assessment.

Respondents also raised issues that need to be considered. Some voiced concerns about the status of these skills if they are not assessed, highlighting potential problems at an implementation level. It was felt that embedding these skills without including them as learning outcomes could be confusing for learners and their teachers when making judgements about improvements in skills development. Without the assessment requirement, it was felt that these skills will not receive adequate attention in teaching and learning. One view also stated that removing the assessment requirement could disadvantage learners.

We acknowledge these concerns and recognise the need for clear explanations to guide learners and their teachers with what is expected of them. We want learners to develop sophisticated understandings of how literacy and numeracy skills, and digital competence, can help demonstrate the Integral Skills. For example, the development

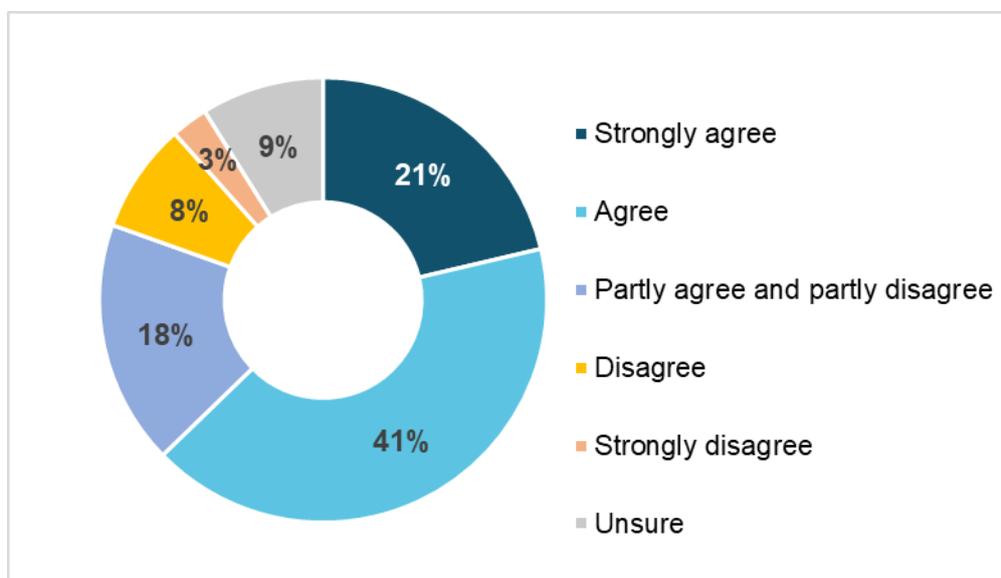
of the embedded skills could be indirectly considered by learners themselves as part of personal effectiveness, supporting learners to develop their understanding of skills independently. Taking feedback on board is also an important personal effectiveness skill. In line with this, teachers will still be able to carry out their own local and formative assessment of these embedded skills as part of teaching and learning. This is separate to, but exists alongside, externally assessed qualifications.

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

*Consultation question*

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

*To what extent do you agree with this proposal?*



There was general support for this proposal. Respondents also made useful suggestions for us to consider.

Our decision for all four of the Integral Skills to contribute equally to the overall qualification reflects the equal status of each of the skills in preparing learners for employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship. Each of the Integral Skills will

contribute 25% to the overall qualification outcome. This will also simplify the assessment structure as in the current model different weightings are attributed to assessed skills, which can be difficult to understand.

Although the skills will have to be weighted equally at qualification level, there will be no requirement for them to contribute equally to the outcomes at component level. Our decision here reflects the varying degrees of importance that each skill may have in relation to the tasks being completed. Our aim is to support authentic learning experiences and to avoid formulaic approaches to assessment. Some respondents expressed agreement with this, suggesting that varying the weightings attributed to skills at component level is sensible because some skills are more applicable to the different projects. It was also suggested that differentiating the weighting of skills across the components could help to avoid repetition of tasks and assessment.

One alternative suggestion was that different Integral Skills should be attributed to different components. Our view is that this will not support the purpose of the qualification. We want to ensure that learners are given the opportunity to develop and apply each of the assessed skills in a range of contexts. We want learners to develop a sophisticated and broad understanding of the Integral Skills, learning that skills can, and ought to, be adapted depending on the context in which they are applied. Additionally, we want to ensure that there are no missed opportunities for learners to be assessed on the Integral Skills they will be required to demonstrate.

Alternatively, it was suggested that the Integral Skills could be weighted equally at component level. It was suggested that this would be easier to understand and could avoid learners feeling disadvantaged in components where skills they felt less confident in were weighted higher. However, as the Integral Skills will be broken down into their component parts, there will be opportunities for learners to develop, apply and demonstrate each skill in broadly defined ways.

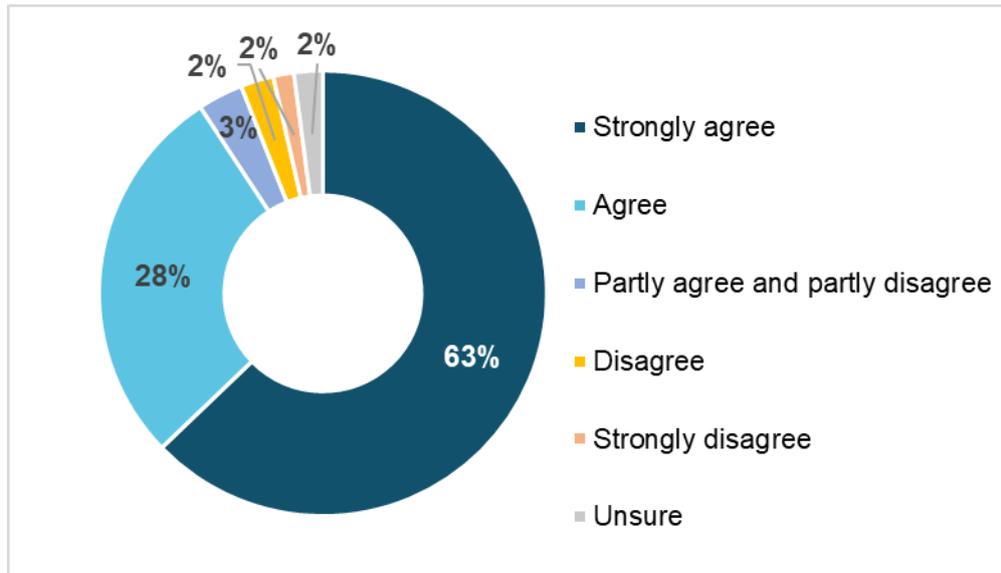
We recognise that clear guidance will be required to help explain the assessment structure. This is particularly the case due to issues raised about the further potential for repetition and duplication of the assessment of the Integral Skills across each component. To mitigate this, each Integral skill will need to be clearly defined and broken down into their constituent elements and sets of sub-skills will need to be identified. Putting this decision into practice will mean defining these sets of sub-skills and then mapping these to each component of the qualification to avoid assessment being duplicated.

## 9. The new Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate will continue to be graded A\*-E at qualification level.

*Consultation question*

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

*To what extent do you agree with this proposal?*



There was general agreement with this proposal and respondents offered a number of reasons for supporting the continued use of the A\* - E grading system.

Our decision is based on the fact that this grading system is familiar and well understood by employers and universities, supporting progression pathways. It also reflects evidence from our engagement with a wide range of stakeholders which suggests that this grading system is preferred to alternative grading options.

An emerging theme in the consultation was fairness, as it was felt that the grades achieved using this grading scale reflect the work and effort that the qualification requires, which in turn can positively impact engagement. This grading system also mirrors how A level qualifications are graded, and therefore it can help to convey the rigour and value of the qualification.

Where respondents disagreed, it was because they argued that this qualification was different to A levels. It was therefore suggested that an alternative option, such as a pass/fail structure, would be more appropriate. One view also referred to the issue of wellbeing and the potential for some learners' achievements to go unrecognised as

grades below a 'C' are often associated with perceptions of failing, which can be damaging for learners.

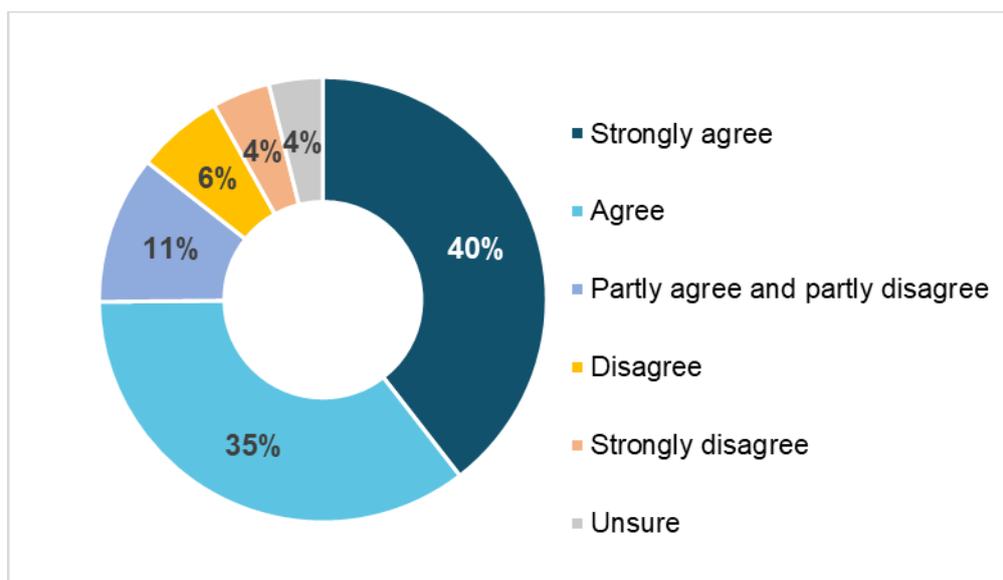
We have considered these views, but we also know that changing the grading system could impact the perceived value of the qualification. The choice of grading systems is one of the factors taken into consideration when UCAS tariff points are allocated to qualifications. Therefore, a change to this would require careful messaging, adding an additional layer of complexity as the value and purpose of the qualification is communicated.

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

*Consultation question*

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

*To what extent do you agree with this proposal?*



There was general support for this proposal. Respondents also raised important issues to be considered.

Our decision means that the new qualification will move from a competency approach, as used currently, to a compensatory approach. A competency approach is where a learner must pass each component (at a minimum specified level of attainment) to pass the overall qualification. A compensatory approach is where a learner does not have to pass every component, as higher achievement in one component can compensate for lower achievement in another component when grades are awarded at qualification level. This model is commonly used with GCSEs and A levels.

Each of the components in the new qualification will be mandatory, as is the case with the current qualification. However, as each of the Integral Skills will be assessed in each component, and therefore there will be an opportunity for learners to demonstrate the application of all four skills more than once, it will not be necessary for learners to have to pass every component to be able to secure a grade for the Advanced SCC overall.

Given that the compensatory approach is used for GCSEs and A levels, this is a familiar model for many learners. Some respondents referred to how this change could help to ensure parity with other qualifications. Removing the requirement to pass every component can also reduce the pressure that some learners may feel without preventing them from developing and demonstrating skills in more than one learning context. Allowing learners to compensate in one component for weaker performance in another can potentially help to maintain learner engagement over the duration of the course.

Our decision also means that learners will continue to be entitled to one re-sit per component, and that the highest grade achieved for that component will count towards the qualification grade.

Where consultation responses agreed with our proposal, they pointed to learner wellbeing. For example, one view was that these decisions provide second chances for learners facing extenuating circumstances. Further, this approach acknowledges that for some learners, skills development happens over time.

Some respondents raised concerns about how removing the requirement to pass every component could impact upon the perceived rigour of the qualification. As this

model is also used for A levels, and as each of the skills will be assessed across the components, we do not see this potential risk as outweighing the identified benefits. Another concern was the potential for practical issues associated with re-sit arrangements. As this approach is currently used in many qualifications, centres are likely to have processes in place to mitigate against these concerns.

## Title of the qualification

In addition to our consultation proposals, we invited respondents to share views to help us to decide on the title of the new qualification. The title of the new qualification will be **Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales (level 3)**.

In reaching this decision, we considered the wide range of views that were shared with us, as well as the regulatory requirements that we need to meet.

Opinion was divided about what the title of the newly structured qualification should be, and it was clear that several factors would need to be considered.

One theme that emerged was the importance of the brand 'Baccalaureate' as a well-known and familiar entity. Despite the wider framework being discontinued, it is clear that the terms 'Welsh Baccalaureate' and 'Skills Challenge Certificate' are often used interchangeably when describing the standalone skills-based qualification. Including the term Baccalaureate in the title will help to retain a degree of continuity with the previous qualification and acknowledge the status that the qualification has gained, especially as a gateway for learners accessing higher education. Some respondents also preferred 'Baccalaureate' to the term 'Certificate', as this is often conflated with other types of qualifications and does not necessarily indicate what this qualification is.

The term 'Baccalaureate' also helps to show the holistic nature of the qualification, with the learning experiences provided across each of the components collectively contributing to the overall outcome of a learner's skills development.

Another theme that emerged was the importance of the term 'Skills.' This is because skills development is clearly linked to the qualification's purpose. The focus on skills helps to illustrate the uniqueness of the qualification and shows how it complements the combination of other qualifications that learners choose as part of their individual learning pathways.

There was general support for the term 'Advanced' being included. This clearly shows it to be a post-16 qualification and helps to show parity with A level qualifications.

In including the word 'Wales', there is continued recognition of the unique learning that this qualification offers for learners in Wales, including a forward-looking Welsh dimension and links between the skills being developed and the four purposes at the centre of the new Curriculum for Wales.

We have ensured that the new title is compliant with the requirements set out in our Standard Conditions of Recognition.

## Next steps

In addition to this decisions document, we have published a [main report](#) and a [summary report](#) detailing the consultation findings. Having made our decisions, our next step is to use our statutory powers to secure the qualification we propose.

To do this, we will secure an awarding body to develop the qualification through a commissioning process. Our intention is to restrict this qualification to one form, and to that end we will publish an Intention to Restrict notice to invite representations from all stakeholders likely to be affected by this proposal. More information can be found [here](#).

We anticipate that the new qualification will be available for first teaching in September 2023. We will continue to engage with a broad range of stakeholders to inform our decisions and actions as we move forward, including universities.

We recognise the need for clear and consistent messaging about the new qualification. We will continue to work closely with stakeholders, including the awarding body and Welsh Government, to ensure effective communication throughout the process.

Alongside our work on the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (Welsh Baccalaureate), we have been considering the current National/ Foundation version of the qualification as part of our work looking at future qualifications for learners in Wales aged 14 to 16.

In early 2021, we launched our second Qualified for the Future consultation. It included a proposal for renewing the National/Foundation Skills Challenge Certificate qualification (the form taken by learners aged 14-16 years), with a focus on the Integral Skills of: Planning and Organising; Creativity and Innovation; Critical Thinking and Problem Solving; and Personal Effectiveness. No proposals have been made in relation to the National/Foundation Welsh Baccalaureate framework as of yet.

Depending on the outcome of our consultation on this, we will continue to work with a range of stakeholders to develop detailed proposals for a consultation in the autumn/winter.

You can read more about our work to reform qualifications for 14 - 16-year-olds on our Qualified for the Future web pages [here](#).