

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Aled Roberts AM
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

22 October 2014

Dear Aled,

I am writing in response to the question you addressed to the First Minister at the Oral Assembly Questions session on 7 October about what steps the Welsh Government can take to tackle a lack of understanding of politics and the fact that pupils do not study the subject in our schools.

At present, learners in Wales are free to study AS and A level specifications in Government and Politics provided by any of the awarding organisations offering general qualifications in Wales. These specifications offer a variety of units on British and American politics as well as broader more thematic and theoretical approaches. However, as you rightly pointed out to the First Minister, the number of young people in Wales who follow an AS or A level in Government and Politics is low and this is disappointing.

Learners also have opportunities to study aspects of politics through GCSEs such as Geography, History and Economics, and over the coming years, we will also be encouraging universal take-up of the Welsh Baccalaureate by pupils at age 14 to 19. This will provide opportunities for more learners in Wales to engage with political issues. The Core of the revised Welsh Baccalaureate will be made up of the Individual Project and three Challenges: Community, Global Citizenship and Enterprise & Employability. Within both Community and Global Citizenship learners will have the opportunity to learn about political issues at grass roots level as well as from a wider global perspective and to develop into engaged, active citizens.

Furthermore, the current 'Personal and Social Education Framework (PSE) for 7 to 19 year olds in Wales' makes reference to various aspects of politics in order to encourage learners to develop as active citizens. These aspects include the study of local, national and international political systems, the opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making and the importance of elections. This framework ensures that all learners develop some understanding of politics, democracy and their role as citizens. The PSE framework is now being considered as part of Professor Donaldson's review of the curriculum.

Like you, I was very encouraged by the way in which young people in Scotland engaged with the independence referendum. Whilst it may not be possible to ensure that more learners in Wales take the Government and Politics AS and A levels, I am confident that the revised Welsh Baccaulaureate as well as the revised PSE framework will offer our young people significant opportunities to understand how Governments work and to engage with politics and issues that are of relevance to them.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Huw Lewis', written in black ink.

Huw Lewis AC / AM
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Minister for Education and Skills