

## Welsh Baccaulaureate Experience at Aberystwyth (September 2016)



Established back in 2012, the Welsh Baccaulaureate Experience at Aberystwyth is now into its fourth year and has grown rapidly since those early days. It is an educational programme for sixth formers throughout Wales delivered by Aberystwyth University, the National Library of Wales and the National Assembly for Wales. The main focus is to assist pupils with their Individual Project, which is an important part of the Welsh Baccaulaureate Advanced Diploma Qualification, whilst also allowing them to experience a University campus and have a chance to visit one of only five copyright libraries in the UK.

As an introduction to the day, the Institute of Geography, History, Politics and Psychology based at Aberystwyth University offers a workshop which concentrates on helping pupils ask the right questions in their projects. The workshop encourages pupils to think about the challenges associated with choosing research questions and illustrates the advantages of different ways of doing research by drawing on examples from some of the Institute's world-leading academic researchers.

As part of the Welsh Baccaulaureate Experience, pupils also have a fantastic opportunity to visit the National Library of Wales where they are given an introduction to its various collections and the online resources that enable users to access the materials remotely. They learn how to join the Library and receive a Reader's Ticket which allows them to use all of the Library's services. The visit includes a tour of the Reading Rooms, exhibitions and restricted areas, giving pupils a chance to see how this national establishment protects and preserves some of Wales's most precious treasures. Pupils can also attend a workshop on Harvard referencing, a vital element of the Individual Project.

By using examples from the National Library of Wales collections, attendees learn how important it is to reference relevant details whilst researching, and how to produce correct citations. Each pupil visiting the Library as part of the Welsh Baccaulaureate Experience receives a handbook containing guidelines on how to incorporate the Harvard referencing system as a crucial component of the Individual Project.

The National Assembly for Wales offers a skills workshop during the day, focusing on the reliability of different sources of information - from Wikipedia to government statements - to help students develop critical thinking and research skills. It encourages young people to think about what information they would need for their individual projects before making a decision about where the best place would be to source that information. This workshop is also available as a stand-alone session in a school or college. For more information you can phone 0300 200 6565 or e mail [contact@assembly.wales](mailto:contact@assembly.wales).

The Schools Liaison Team at Aberystwyth University has been working closely with schools and colleges across Wales over the past few years in developing this unique programme for Baccalaureate students. Dewi Phillips, one of the University's Schools and Colleges Liaison Officers said: "We're really fortunate here in Aber to have access to inspiring academics, a world-renowned National Library and fantastic support from the National Assembly for Wales which allow us to offer this unique experience for sixth form students. It is important that Higher Education Institutes like Aberystwyth support schools and colleges by offering assistance with an important qualification like the Welsh Baccalaureate and share their knowledge through partnerships like this."

"What's really great is that more and more students have visited year on year, and more schools have had the opportunity to do so this year more than any other. It's been a busy summer for all the providers with more than 400 students from 11 schools visiting during June and July only. We're already starting to organise visits for next summer and are able to offer opportunities for schools and colleges throughout the year to come and visit us and use it as an opportunity to introduce the Individual Project for their students."

For further information you can contact the Schools Liaison Team directly at [schools-liaison@aber.ac.uk](mailto:schools-liaison@aber.ac.uk) or telephone: 01970 628786.