

Bosses say baccalaureate makes recruitment easier

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WELSH employers say they are reaping the benefits of a new qualification designed to give teenagers first-rate employment prospects.

They have praised the ground-breaking Welsh Baccalaureate qualification, which they say is equipping youngsters with the right skills and making their recruitment task much easier.

In addition to traditional academic achievements, the Welsh Baccalaureate, which is being rolled out in schools across Wales, now formally recognises activities such as job experience, voluntary work and the development of personal and social skills.

Heather Clwyd Roberts, who runs Ruthin accountancy firm Businesswork Solutions, is a regular visitor to the town's Ysgol Brynhyfryd, one of the first schools in Wales to pilot the innovative qualification.

Mrs Roberts mentors Young Enterprise teams at the school, advising them on how to set up and run a business, and coaches students on interview techniques.

She said: "In my experience, the Welsh Baccalaureate has given students a lot more confidence with their presentation and communication skills. I think it develops better-balanced students who have a good business perspective."

As part of their Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate, students at Ysgol y Preseli in Crymymch, helped Neyland companies, Firwood Homes and Manderwood Timber Engineering, in their search for new ways to make homes more energy efficient.

They were involved in carrying out a research project linked to the Stern Report on global warming and the challenge for making new homes carbon neutral by 2016.

Mike Edds, managing director of Firwood Homes, which manufactures and fixes timber frame panels for the building industry, said: "I think it's good that the Welsh Baccalaureate takes students out of the schools environment to give them an appreciation of engineering and technology."

From September 2008, the foundation, intermediate and advanced level Welsh Baccalaureate will be available from 106 centres across Wales and will be delivered to some 23,000 learners.

Jane Hutt, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, said large numbers of employers were giving positive feedback on the early impact of the new qualification.

She said: "One of the key aims of the qualification is to help make the Welsh economy more competitive by enabling young people to become more confident and effective in the workplace. It's very encouraging that employers recognise the value of this new approach to learning."