

Welsh language standards annual report: 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

September 2019



Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
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Introduction

The Welsh Language (Wales) Act 2011 established the framework for developing new Welsh language standards, giving individuals in Wales the right to receive certain services in Welsh. Within that framework, the Welsh Language Commissioner prepared a series of standards, tailored to the activities of various categories of organisation.

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is covered by the Welsh Language Standards (No 6) Regulations 2017. The Commissioner provided us with a compliance notice in September 2017, setting out the specific standards from the Regulations that apply to HEFCW. The compliance notice was helpful when drafting an implementation plan to adhere to the Standards.

This report sets out:

1. How we have complied with our [service delivery, policy making and operational standards](#).
2. The number of complaints received.
3. The Welsh language skills profile of employees.
4. How many staff attended training courses we offered in Welsh, and the percentage of staff who attended a Welsh version of training we offered.
5. The number of staff who wear a badge to show that they speak Welsh.
6. The number of post advertised as Welsh essential or Welsh desirable.

Overall, the process of implementing the Standards has had a positive effect on the Welsh language in HEFCW. It has broadened its profile and created a more welcoming environment to engage in Welsh in the workplace. In 2017-18 previously only a fifth of the organisation answered the phone bilingually and now under the Standards this applies to all staff. Welsh speaking staff have been encouraged to wear 'Cymraeg' or 'Dysgwr' lanyards or badges, to advise that they can provide a service in Welsh and to promote speaking Welsh with external stakeholders, and internally. We ran a number of briefing sessions for staff concerning the implementation of the Standards and to help staff to understand them. We continue to provide updates on the Standards, and brief all new staff about them.

We have welcomed these changes and continue to work towards enhancing our practices in pursuit of the Welsh Government's initiative Cymraeg 2050.

1 Compliance with our service delivery, policy making and operational standards

Preparing for the standards

In November 2017, HEFCW's acting Welsh language officer led a session at the training and development day to prepare staff for the forthcoming Welsh language standards.

In March 2018, our chief executive wrote to all staff to remind them that the new Welsh language standards would come into effect for HEFCW on 1 April 2018. This included:

- A link to a new checklist for staff to help with compliance.
- A summary of the main changes affecting HEFCW.
- A requirement to attend one of the March drop-in sessions run by the Welsh language officer and a colleague.

Before 1 April 2018, we ensured that HEFCW staff:

- Knew how to provide answer telephone calls with a **bilingual greeting**.
- Had bilingual **out of office message and autosignatures**.
- Were aware of the need to ask a specific set of **questions** about Welsh language implications when issuing consultations; and were provided with an update to the wording on **forms** for the public.
- Checked for **bilingual signage** around the office, and when running or contributing to events.
- Were aware of their right to receive certain **HR documents** in Welsh.
- Knew about the requirement to provide a Welsh language service for meetings and documents about **handling complaints** or **awarding grants and providing financial assistance** to individual academics or students.

Compliance

Staff have engaged positively with the Welsh language standards, and all have been able to provide a **bilingual greeting** when answering calls. They have been reminded of this requirement over the course of the year, and this – and the Welsh language standards in general – are discussed at an induction session for all new members of staff. This includes ensuring that staff are aware of how to respond to receiving any **telephone calls** in Welsh. We received 20 telephone calls from callers who wanted to continue their enquiry in Welsh. We received one **freedom of information** request in Welsh.

We have provided guidance to staff in using a bilingual **autosignature** and **out of office message**, with reminders over the course of the year. The Welsh language

officer (whose main role in HEFCW is Senior Communications Manager) is on hand to assist with any queries.

The Senior Communications Manager has been working with policy teams to ensure that **bilingual branding and communications** are used as correctly and effectively as possible by third parties in organisations such as the Higher Education Statistics Agency (for the Graduate Outcomes survey) and the Office for Students (for the National Student Survey).

HEFCW **circulars** are technical documents, aimed at a limited audience in Wales's higher education providers, and are principally made available in their language of origin, English. Where a circular relates to one of the activities specifically covered by the service standards section of our Welsh language standards we publish it bilingually. Those activities are:

- Complaints.
- Awarding grants and providing financial assistance to individual academics or students. (But not the allocation of funding to support the running of universities.)
- A circular intended for students.
- A topic directly relevant to the Welsh language.

The following publications were made available bilingually in 2018-19, given their sphere of interest (as with W18/25HE) and public audience (as with W19/01HE):

- Circular W18/25HE: Wales Studies
- Circular W19/01HE: Fee and Access Plan Guidance 2020/21
- External Quality Assurance review – April 2018
- Triennial assurance visits document – October 2018
- HEFCW Equality Annual Report – March 2019
- HEFCW equality data.
- Higher education sector level equality and diversity statistics
- Annual Report and Accounts 2016-17 – September 2018

GO Wales materials continued to be made available in Welsh and in English, and we worked with the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to ensure that their Graduate Outcomes Survey was available in Welsh.

We have updated our Council paper template, impact assessment process and circular template to make it more intuitive for staff to take account of the **Welsh language in policymaking**. We considered how our Specific Designation procedures for new applicants and monitoring; and the Fee and access plan guidance could be amended to have a more positive impact on the Welsh language. Our consideration of HE-FE collaboration and civic mission and community engagement policies highlighted the potential for positive impact on Welsh language.

When we consult on funding issues or schemes, we ensure that we have considered the impact of policies on the Welsh language, and Welsh language provision within the HE sector in Wales, and potential impacts towards the goals set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, including our Well-Being Objectives. We also ask respondents for information about the impact of their own proposals on the Welsh language.

Our circulars on HE-FE collaboration in Innovation and Engagement Civic Mission and Community Engagement, while not published bilingually, made reference, following impact assessment, to the need for compliance with Welsh Language Standards within proposals submitted in response to the circular.

A number of **other significant documents and consultation responses** were produced bilingually during the reporting period, including:

- Innovation Nation: On Common Ground
- Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee: Consultation on Regional Skills Partnerships
- Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee: Inquiry into Research and Innovation in Wales
- Supporting and Promoting the Welsh Language: An inquiry into the legislative, policy and wider context
- Inquiry on the Impact of Brexit on Higher and Further Education.

We have found that the set of Standards for higher education institutions, although different to HEFCW, to be useful when focusing on the bigger picture of Cymraeg 2050. As a public organisation working to facilitate the use of the Welsh language we have acknowledged the requirements on higher education institutions. We have been able to assist with providing bilingual guidance and have made Welsh language Fee and Access plan templates available, helping with the promotion of the Welsh language in the sector. A proactive approach will enable all institutions to respond to the Fee and Access plan process in either Welsh or English, using resources made available to them, without the requirement of translation.

We continued to ensure that press releases, social media posts, website pages, and conference materials are available bilingually.

We made simultaneous interpretation into English available at the following:

- Annual Public Meeting
- HEFCW Quality Assessment Framework event
- Conference on the future of post-compulsory education and training in Wales.
- Fee and access plan seminar.
- Specific designation events.

We have offered presentations bilingually, including our presentation at the HEFCW/NUS Wales joint conference and at the GO Wales Sharing Good Practice meeting.

Our facilities team ensure that the office had bilingual signage. HEFCW is located on one floor in a Welsh Government office, and raises any concerns with Welsh Government in the event that non-compliance is spotted in a communal area. We resolved an ongoing issue that ensured that our visitors' passes were fully compliant with the Welsh language standards.

We built specific Welsh language considerations into procurement exercises for:

- The survey of stakeholders and partners
- HE and FE student partnership work
- Welsh language training

and into our partnership with the Quality Assurance Agency. We also work with the Office for Students throughout the year to ensure that the National Student Survey and associated materials are in Welsh.

We were unable to provide a bilingual version of our procurement documents for a new English to Welsh translation contract as we did not want to give one translation company an advantage over others by seeing the requirements in advance.

We did not hold any meetings, or initiate correspondence or phone calls about complaints or awarding grants and providing financial assistance to individual academics or students, where we would have been able to offer Welsh as the language of communication.

The **intranet menus** were made available in Welsh and English.

HR policies relating to staff employment are now available in Welsh, and staff can request any paper correspondence that relates to their employment and addressed to them personally, including their contract of employment, in Welsh.

We remind staff to keep a record of interactions in Welsh, and ask them to report on this through the Welsh language skills and services survey over the summer.

2 Complaints

We did not receive any complaints about the Welsh language or our compliance with the standards during the reporting period.

3 Welsh language skills profile

Staff Level of Welsh	2016 Number and %	2017 Number and %	2018 Number and %	2019 Number and %
0. None (Apart from answering phone with 'bore da' or 'prynhawn da'.)	11 (24%)	9 (21%)	8 (17%)	13 (30%)
1. Can identify and use common words and phrases (ee eg 'diolch', 'hwyl fawr', 'sut ydych chi', 'Caerdydd').	16 (36%)	15 (36%)	17 (37%)	13 (30%)
2. Can use or advise colleagues on basic vocabulary such as months of the year, and hold a very basic conversation in Welsh.	6 (13%)	7 (17%)	5 (11%)	5 (12%)
3. Can hold a simple conversation about work when engaged with a Welsh speaker in person or on the phone. Will draft sentences or update text with some help required. Can follow most discussions in Welsh without using translation headset.	9 (20%)	8 (19%)	11 (24%)	5 (12%)
4. Can discuss work confidently in Welsh. Can write correspondence, with some checking required. Can proof-read Welsh documents against the English. Helps colleagues with queries about and in Welsh. Can follow all discussions in Welsh.	3 (7%)	3 (7%)	3 (7%)	6 (14%)
5. Can use Welsh confidently and accurately in every aspect of work, and is consistently accurate when advising others on issues relating to written Welsh.	0 0%	0 0%	2 (4%)	1 (2%)

The standards have helped to normalise using the language in the workplace, increasing the culture of bilingualism. We have seen an increase in the use of Welsh in our office, and the standards have made us focus more on our own staff. We are particularly pleased to report an increase in the percentage of our staff who can use Welsh confidently at work, at 18%. However, the picture is slightly more polarised than before, with an increase in the percentage of staff with no Welsh language skills.

4 Staff training

All new employees have an induction session on the Welsh language, and we underline that training options are open to them during their time in HEFCW. Staff are aware they may ask HEFCW to fund their Welsh training and development, particularly when opportunities don't exist internally. We encouraged staff to consult the National Centre for Welsh Language Training and other sources for classes during the year. Staff can take the online beginners training hosted by the National Centre for Learning Welsh during work time. We also offer staff the opportunity to undertake higher level training funded by HEFCW in their own time. There were no HEFCW registrations on the online beginners training during the reporting year, and no one requested funding support.

In terms of internal on-site lessons, we were between Welsh language training providers during the course of the reporting year. We were unable to align our arrangements with those of the Welsh Government as originally planned, which would have afforded us better economies of scale in providing staff training. However, we did use the period to look carefully at the tailored support staff would want, and intend to introduce lessons in 2019-20.

We have initiated weekly 'Coffee and Welsh' sessions where Welsh speakers of all abilities can talk and listen in an informal setting. In fact, all staff are welcome: we have also invited attendance by those who have very little ability in the language for them to become used to hearing Welsh before embarking on their own learning. Feedback from staff shows this informal session improves confidence, helps with speaking and listening skills, and is enjoyable.

We did not have any requests for internal training to be offered through the medium of Welsh, and neither did we deliver any internal training on recruitment and interviewing, performance management, complaints and disciplinary procedures, dealing with the public, or health and safety for staff during the course of the year.

We provided a session about implementing the standards to Council members at their May 2019 workshop.

5 Badges

We have seen an increase in the number of members of staff wearing a lanyard or badge to 8 showing that they are a Welsh speaker or learner.

Line managers – and Management Team, who can provide a whole-organisation perspective - are asked to consider whether Welsh is an essential requirement for new vacancies.

6 Posts advertised

Our recruitment cycle is bilingual. This means that all adverts, applicant correspondence, interview invitations and offer letters are issued bilingually.

We advertised **11 vacancies** during the reporting year. All jobs in HEFCW are classed as Welsh desirable, and this was included in all of the 11 adverts and job descriptions. None of the posts advertised were classed as Welsh essential, but there are currently two posts in the organisation that hold this classification. We believe that applicants are becoming increasingly aware of the need to reference their Welsh language skills in applications.

We received one Welsh language job application during the year.

During interview, we are interested in applicants' perspectives and experiences of operating in a bilingual working environment.

We also advertised a number of committee vacancies bilingually, although the ability to work through Welsh was not a requirement for these vacancies.