

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Welsh Studies

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Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in Wales
Response by: No response required
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This paper provides an update on actions taken to date on Welsh Studies, including a report on the event that took place on 29 November 2013, and next steps.

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Introduction

1. This paper provides an update on actions taken to date on Welsh Studies, including a report on the event that took place on 29 November 2013 and next steps.

Background

2. In order to meet the remit letter tasks set in 2012-13, HEFCW requested that all higher education institutions (HEI) and directly funded further education institutions (FEI) respond to a [HEFCW survey](#) of provision in Welsh Studies. There were two elements to the survey: identifying specific modules which have Welsh Studies content and commentary by institutions on the place which Welsh Studies has in the curriculum of various disciplines and subject areas.

Survey of Welsh Studies Provision

3. HEFCW received responses to the survey from all HEIs along with a response from one FEI with HE provision. The returns confirmed that at present there are 2183 modules that are recognised as having a Welsh Studies component within Welsh HEIs with a number of modules within HE provision in Welsh FEIs also. This is 7.5% of the overall number of modules provided within the HEI sector¹. This is the first time such analysis has been carried out and therefore there is potential that institutions have under-estimated the extent of provision in their data returns
4. A number of different caveats have impacted on the robustness of the data. The original circular asked for overall numbers, however in the returns some institutions differentiated between undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) study where as others did not and therefore the returns were an amalgamation of both UG and PG. The survey also asked that institutions "*indicate for each of the modules listed...the proportion of the module which you would consider is to be taken up by Welsh Studies*". It is therefore important to note that the proportions are based on institutional judgements.
5. The percentage of 'Welsh Studies' provision within each module varied from institution to institution. An analysis of the data was carried out, however, due to issues about the robustness of the data, it would not be appropriate to share this data at an institutional level. A summary table is below, which shows the sector picture as reported on the survey. In considering this table, the issues with the data noted in paragraphs 3 and 4 above should be taken into account.

¹ HESA Student Record 2011/12 - The figures represent the number of module identifiers returned on the module entity of the student record. Institutions can choose to return modules with no enrolments if they wish.

Modules with a Welsh Studies component at Welsh HEIs

		Proportion of modules with:						Total
		100% Welsh Studies	75% Welsh Studies	50% Welsh Studies	25% Welsh Studies	10% Welsh Studies	5% Welsh Studies	
Number of modules with a Welsh Studies component	2,183	31.6%	5.0%	11.8%	18.4%	22.4%	10.8%	100%
Number of modules total	29,150	2.4%	0.4%	0.9%	1.4%	1.7%	0.8%	7.5%

6. More broadly we are in a position to report that some institutions identified a much greater proportion of modules with elements of Welsh Studies than others. This could be due to different interpretations and understandings of the Welsh Studies concept or that different institutions' curriculum and expertise are more conducive to the inclusion of Welsh Studies.
7. The overall picture differed greatly, with one institution reporting that 18.5% of their module portfolio included a Welsh Studies component, where as another institution reported only 0.5% included this component. This makes the analysis of the data much more complex as the guidance given by HEFCW at this early stage was inevitably fairly open and it is therefore sometimes unclear on what rationale institutions based their return of data.
8. The narrow consideration was evidence that there was the need to raise awareness of Welsh Studies and what it means across the Welsh sector.

Welsh Studies Event

9. In light of the 2013-14 remit letter task, Welsh Studies was discussed at the Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee and it was resolved that there should be an event to advance the concept of 'Welsh Studies', help generate a shared understanding of what is meant by the concept, and consider how it could develop. Following the event it was also suggested that a report be submitted to the Minister highlighting the level of activity in this area, provide the high level outcomes of the survey, the outcomes of the event, and suggestions for development of the concept.
10. A seminar was held on 29 November 2013 at Cardiff University and was chaired by Professor Leni Oglesby. A keynote presentation was delivered by Professor Merfyn Jones. The event was attended by 40 delegates from, HEI's; FEI's; Colegau Cymru; Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol; the Quality Assurance Agency; the Higher Education Academy (HEA); University of

Wales Press and the Learned Society. A note of the seminar is available at **Annex A**. The presentation on the data is available at **Annex B**.

Next steps

Data

11. The seminar discussed the possibility of collecting data shortly following this event to gather a more robust baseline and collect data once again in the future to measure any increase in provision. However, upon discussion with the sector it is apparent that due to the broad nature of the concept and different interpretations it would be a highly bureaucratic, time consuming and complex task for institutions to complete.
12. Our intention is not to introduce a target therefore a further collection of data would only contribute to recognising provision, and not necessarily work towards encouraging and enhancing quality provision. To note, the data collection that took place in December 2012 has provided us with a great deal of information, in particular the enthusiasm of the sector to capture information on Welsh Studies and advance the concept. The data also demonstrated to HEFCW the broad scope of Welsh Studies and initiated the seminar. We do not therefore propose a further collection of data.

Supporting scholarly publications

13. Following discussion at a seminar with the sector on the promotion of Welsh Studies, we have extended for one year the ring-fence on the funding previously allocated to the University of Wales Press, which was transferred to QR in 2011/12. In 2014/15 this funding (£132k in total) will continue to be ring-fenced within QR for the purpose of supporting scholarly publications and related activities in the fields of Welsh culture, history and literature. The ring-fenced amounts for individual institutions remain at the levels which we notified in 2011.

Welsh Studies

14. The Learned Society of Wales will be taking forward the concept of Welsh studies, encompassing both teaching and research. It will do this in partnership with the sector and other interested parties, with a view to exploring how Welsh Studies might most appropriately be defined as a broad subject area and how it can best be safeguarded and developed within individual higher education institutions and on a sector-wide basis. This may inform the possible development in due course of a Welsh Studies Association.

Further information

15. For further information, contact Cliona O'Neill (tel 029 2068 2283; email cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk).