

Welsh language standards Annual report: 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

September 2020



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, policymaking 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 posts advertised as Welsh essential or Welsh desirable.

Overall, the process of implementing the standards has continued to have 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. All staff answer the phone bilingually and 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 continue to provide updates on the standards, and brief all new staff about them as part of their formal induction programme.

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

1. Compliance with our service delivery, policymaking and operational standards

Embedding the standards

Up to three times a year, we write to all staff to remind them:

- How to answer telephone calls with a **bilingual greeting**.
- To have bilingual **out of office message and autosignatures**.
- Of the need to ask a specific set of **questions** about Welsh language implications when issuing consultations.
- To check **bilingual signage** around the office, and when running or contributing to events.
- Of their right to receive certain **HR documents** in Welsh.
- 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.
- To include the statement **Cysylltwch â ni yn y Gymraeg neu yn Saesneg | Contact us in English or Welsh** in all autosignatures and out of office messages.
- That **if a document is available in Welsh**, the English equivalent of the document must state that it's also available in Welsh.
- That a spreadsheet is available for **collecting data about correspondence** in Welsh.
- To consider whether **UK-wide developments with other organisations have a Welsh language dimension**.
- To use **Welsh speaker/ learner lanyards**.
- To continue, during remote working, to **answer any calls** routed through HEFCW to personal mobile phones with a bilingual greeting.

We also offer refresher sessions for colleagues who would like a reminder of the duties, or who want to discuss the Welsh language standards in more detail.

Compliance

We met with the new Welsh Language Commissioner Aled Roberts in September 2019, where we discussed progress in the workplace and more widely; the challenges and rewards of the Welsh language standards for HEFCW; and how we could work together as public bodies to realise the Welsh Government's vision for Cymraeg 2050.

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.

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.

Presenting HEFCW publicly

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 – is 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 15 telephone calls from callers who wanted to continue their enquiry in Welsh. We received no **freedom of information** requests in Welsh and 25 emails in Welsh from new enquirers.

We have provided guidance to staff on 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 continued to work 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 and Discover Uni).

Publications, websites and social media

HEFCW **circulars** are technical documents, aimed at a very 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 would 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.

We also publish circulars and other documents that are relevant to the Welsh language, or for a public audience, in Welsh. The following publications were made available bilingually in 2018-19:

- Circular W19/24HE: Consultation on the Postgraduate Taught Masters Incentivisation Bursaries 2019/20
- Circular W19/27HE: Postgraduate Taught Master's Incentivisation Bursary Scheme 2019/20
- Circular W20/02HE: Consultation on HEFCW's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24
- Circular W20/07HE: Fee and access plan application guidance
- HEFCW's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24
- HEFCW's Equality Annual Report 2018-19
- HEFCW survey of stakeholders and partners (executive summary)
- Summary of national measures by which we monitor the performance of and delivery by higher education providers
- Annual Report and Accounts 2018-19
- Annual Regulatory Report 2018/19
- HEFCW's Well-being and Health in Higher Education Policy Statement

GO Wales materials, including student and employer leaflets, continued to be made available in Welsh and in English, and we created a new, bilingual 'our stories' section for the GO Wales website.

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 seven well-being goals and five ways of working 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.

During 2019-20 we provided a total of £1.7 million to support the three Reaching Wider partnerships to deliver an all-age collaborative widening access programme. As part of the requirements, the partnerships are required to work with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to contribute to increasing the number of learners in Welsh medium higher education, to ensure that the Welsh Government achieves its target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.

The impact assessment process highlighted that well-being and health funding could have the potential to impact negatively on the Welsh language. To mitigate this we ensured that institutions and organisations were made aware, and considered the Welsh language in their funding proposals to HEFCW. As a result, Bangor University is working on a Welsh medium well-being project that will be shared with the sector once it's completed; and the Open University in Wales is developing bilingual, online, open access resources for students and tutors supporting part-time, flexible and distance learners.

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

- *Higher Education for a Healthy Nation: Student Well-being and Health*
- *Towards Cymraeg 2050: HEFCW and the Welsh language in higher education*
- *Our Vision for Research and Innovation in Wales*
- *Quality Assessment Framework for Wales*
- The equalities analysis of students and staff in Welsh higher education providers, published on our website
- *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers*



"I just wanted to drop you a line to tell you how delighted we are...that a Welsh version of the Concordat has been made available at the same time as the English one.

"It is heartening to see our obligations and commitment to the Welsh language in Wales have been recognised by a UK level initiative – and is an excellent demonstration of our sector-wide commitment to equality diversity and inclusion."

Bilingual consultation responses included:

- Our response to Senedd Cymru's Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee consultation on Degree Apprenticeships.

We received a request for the following circulars in Welsh:

- Procedures for assessing the quality of education.
- National measures for higher education performance from 2018/19.
- National measures for higher education performance annex.

We explained that while they weren't available as a matter of course, we offered to make Welsh versions available. The enquirer was satisfied with our explanation and proceeded to use the English language versions.

There were 1,075,115 HEFCW website page hits from 211,256 visitors during 2019. In the relevant areas of the site (that is, excluding bilingual PDFs and the splash page, and including directly comparable pages in Welsh and in English), 54,966 or 12.9% (previous year 18.5%) visitor hits were on Welsh pages, and 371,652 on English pages. We will monitor this further after the launch of our new website in September 2020.

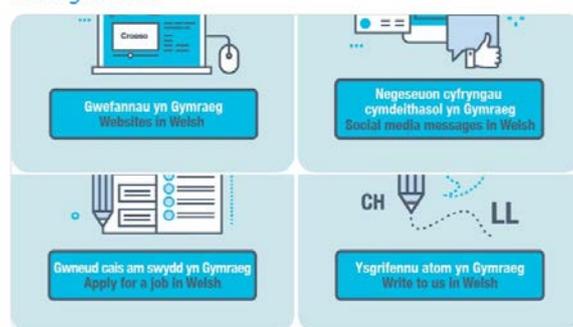
We have found the set of standards for higher education institutions, although different to HEFCW, to be useful when focusing on the bigger picture of Cymraeg 2050. As a public organisation working to facilitate the use of the Welsh language we have acknowledged the requirements on higher education institutions. 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 news items, blog posts, press releases, social media posts, website pages, and conference materials are available bilingually, and promoted stakeholders' Welsh language posts on social media.

We took part in Welsh language rights day on Twitter, showing just some of the ways people from outside the office can communicate with us in Welsh.

Here are just some of the ways we can help you outside our office to use some Welsh!

#maegenihawl



Responses received in Welsh

We received one response to our website survey in Welsh. The survey asked users about their experience of our current website, and sought information about how a redeveloped site could work better for them in the future.

Working with partners

We built specific Welsh language considerations into procurement exercises for:

- New HEFCW website
- Welsh language training
- New English to Welsh translation contract
- Review of part time provision
- Review of student partnerships

and into our partnership with the Quality Assurance Agency for higher education. This included ensuring that invitations to our joint Academic Integrity event were bilingual, and

that Quality Assurance Statements for Governing Bodies of Regulated Institutions are bilingual. 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 fund Advance HE, who established new website pages in Welsh. We also fund Jisc, who have ensured that their Jisc Wales website has a bilingual entry page.

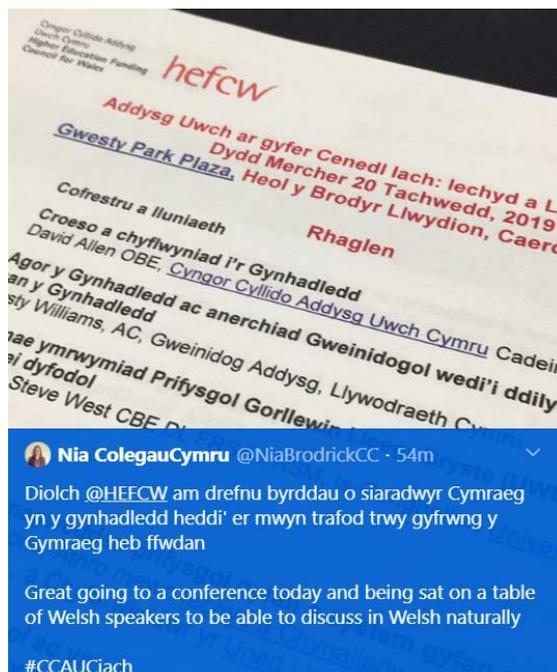
We worked with the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to ensure that their Graduate Outcomes Survey was available in Welsh. We worked with the Office for Students (OfS) to deliver a new, bilingual website for prospective students, Discover Uni / Darganfod Prifysgol.

Strategic Research and Insight carried out our survey of stakeholders and partners, which stakeholders were able to respond to in Welsh. The follow-up interviews were also available in Welsh.

Events

We made simultaneous interpretation into English, and Welsh language materials available for the:

- Launch of *Higher Education for a Healthy Nation: Student Well-being and Health*
- Launch of the *Vision for Research and Innovation*
- GO Wales sharing good practice event
- HEFCW Student Well-being and Health conference. This was a large event, and we were able to create a discussion table for delegates who preferred to discuss the break-out group issues in Welsh, based on an invitation to note their language preference on registering for the event.



Around the office

Our facilities team ensure that the office has bilingual signage. HEFCW is located on one floor in a Welsh Government office, and raises any concerns with Welsh Government in the event that there are any issues in the communal areas.

Internal policies and human resources

HR policies relating to staff employment are now available in Welsh, and staff can request formal correspondence that relates to their employment and addressed to them personally, including their contract of employment, in Welsh. The HR department has continued to make additional internal policies, and aspects of MySite, our internal HR portal, available in Welsh as well as in English.

Welsh language standards are now embedded in HEFCW's internal audit programme:

Ref	Expected Control	Actual Control	Satisfactory Y/N	Test Programme	System Notes / WP Ref.	Audit Opinion
A1.4.1	<p>Welsh Language Standards Has the IA identified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any effects of the policy on opportunities to use welsh Language and treating welsh language no less favourable than the English Language Whether the policy could be formulated or changed to achieve or increase positive effects or remove or decreased adverse effects on the above. (as per welsh language standards implementation plan.) 	Included in IA				

2. Complaints

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

We failed to respond in a timely way to a query in Welsh that had been sent to a mailbox that was not monitored at the time. We have put arrangements in place to ensure that the mailbox is monitored so that this does not happen again. The query was resolved, albeit later than appropriate.

3. Welsh language skills profile

Staff Level of Welsh	2017 Number and %	2018 Number and %	2019 Number and %	2020 Number and %
0. None (Apart from answering phone with 'bore da' or 'prynhawn da'.)	9 (21%)	8 (17%)	13 (30%)	16 (36%)
1. Can identify and use common words and phrases (eg 'diolch', 'hwyl fawr', 'sut ydych chi', 'Caerdydd').	15 (36%)	17 (37%)	13 (30%)	9 (20%)
2. Can use or advise colleagues on basic vocabulary such as months of the year, and hold a very basic conversation in Welsh.	7 (17%)	5 (11%)	5 (12%)	8 (18%)
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.	8 (19%)	11 (24%)	5 (12%)	9 (20%)
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%)	6 (14%)	2 (4%)
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%	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	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.

More than a quarter of staff are at a level of Welsh where they can use Welsh effectively in the workplace, with a further 18% able to contribute to some extent. It is notable that a small but significant number of staff change the categories they identify with year on year, which can impact on the results as presented in the table. Staff turnover may also impact on the data.

As the profile above relies on self-analysis, we would like to look into more accurate testing of levels in the future.

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. Staff have not made use of the online beginners training provided by the Centre during the year, and no one requested funding support.

As 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, we looked carefully at the tailored support staff would want in 2019-20. We carried out a procurement activity to source weekly on-site Welsh language training lessons for staff. Unfortunately, we only received two bids out of six potential suppliers under the collaborative training framework set up by the National Centre for Learning Welsh, and neither was suitable. Furthermore, with staff at different levels of ability from a total staff of approximately 45, it can be challenging to organise a sufficient number of attendees for a class.

We underlined to staff that we would continue to support them to undertake Welsh language training, from online to face-to-face part time courses to residential sessions. We have also promoted the [Work Welsh website](#), which lists all the online Work Welsh short courses currently available. Staff can access any of these courses, as well as access the Welsh learning resources available on the 'Learn' section of the site.

We have continued, while working remotely, weekly 'coffi | Cymraeg' sessions where Welsh speakers of all abilities can chat 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 run through the medium of Welsh, and we did not deliver any Welsh medium 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 Welsh language standards to Council members at their May 2019 workshop.

5. Badges

Nearly 20% of staff wear a lanyard or badge showing that they are a Welsh speaker or learner, which we would like to increase when we return to the office.

6. Posts advertised

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

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.

We advertised 17 vacancies during the reporting year. All jobs in HEFCW are classed as Welsh desirable, and this was included in all of the adverts and job descriptions. One available post was classed as Welsh essential, out of two posts in the organisation that hold this classification.

We received four Welsh language job applications during the year. We also believe that applicants are becoming increasingly aware of the need to reference their Welsh language skills in applications.

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

We also advertised committee vacancies bilingually, including for our Student Opportunity and Achievement Committee and our Research Wales Committee, although the ability to work through Welsh was not a requirement for these vacancies. The Research Wales Committee vacancy stated that we welcome applications and correspondence in both Welsh and English, and we must ensure that we include this in all committee vacancy advertisements in the future.