Welsh language standards annual report 2024-25

The Open University

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Contents

1. Introduction

This report for the 2024/25 financial year is the eighth to be produced by The Open University (OU) in accordance with standards 166, 172 and 178.

Our team of staff in Wales continue to take up the OU's offer to learn Welsh through Aberystwyth University, and in partnership with Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. Many have moved on to higher learning levels such as *canolradd* and *lefel uwch*, and two fluent members of staff are studying *Cymraeg proffesiynol*. In total, 30 staff are currently learning Welsh during their working week, including support staff and associate lecturers.

Our community of practice *Y Gorlan* is providing a regular forum for Welsh—speaking staff to exchange ideas, share best practice and learn from each other. The group has also invited external speakers to help develop practice. During 2024-25, the group heard from the Welsh Government communications team on how they are ensuring messaging is relevant to Welsh users; and a research team at Bangor University who have helped develop the confidence of Welsh speaking staff in their organisation.

The OU in Wales continues to offer a wealth of free online learning through the medium of Welsh. A highlight in this area in 2024-25 was working in partnership with the Future Generations Commissioner to develop *[You, Me and the Future of Wales](link)* (*[Cymraeg](link)*) - an online course to help learners understand the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and how it can be used to influence change. The course in available in Welsh, English and BSL.

In terms of teaching, our PGCE course, taught in Welsh or English, continues to provide graduates with an innovative route into teaching over two years, wherever they are in Wales. During 2024-25, 66% of learners on the programme were recorded as having proficient or intermediate skills in Welsh. The OU has developed a revised copy of its *assessment through the medium of Welsh policy*, which gives students assurance of their right to submit work through the medium of Welsh; and explains the OU's process for marking Welsh language assignments. Although the standards only

apply to students in Wales, the OU has made the offer to submit work in Welsh open to all students, regardless of their location.

In December 2024, the OU introduced a new online, bilingual e-learning module on Welsh language awareness. This is mandatory for all staff to in Wales to complete every two years. The current completion rate is at 63%. The OU has also introduced content on the Welsh language standards to our *Equality Essentials* online course. This course is mandatory for all staff, and will now help ensure a basic awareness of the language and relative legislation exists across the organisation.

The OU continues to develop its use of Welsh online. Following discussions with the Welsh language Commissioner, standard 55 on the OU's compliance notice has been revised to cover course content on the central OU website which refers to courses specific to Wales; and fees and funding information specific to Wales-based students. We believe this revised requirement will provide greater clarity to users of our website, and enhance the quality of information available to prospective students in Welsh.

2. Governance

The Director of the Open University in Wales continues to have a strategic role in promoting the use of the Welsh language across the university, and ensuring ongoing compliance with the Welsh language standards. The Director chairs the Welsh Language Oversight Group, which has membership from across the organisation.

The responsibilities of the oversight group include:

- monitoring the university's compliance with Welsh language standards
- monitoring strategic developments to increase the use of Welsh across the university
- ensuring that the university's governance structures give due regard to compliance with the standards
- considering external impacts on the university's provision on Welsh languages services, such as legislative changes
- cooperating with the university's Welsh language operational group
- considering proposals for new projects to develop the university's provision of Welsh language services.

A Welsh language operational group has also been established. This group brings together key staff across the university to systematically address challenges and compliance issues.

The responsibilities of the operational group include:

- monitoring key Welsh language workstreams
- providing a forum for communication and collaboration
- ensuring continuous improvement to delivery of Welsh language services
- escalating risks to the oversight group
- monitoring external policy changes
- facilitating our relationship with Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

This year marked an important strengthening of our relationship with Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. Historically, The Open University in Wales had not been part of the Coleg's programme of annual institutional visits, but following proactive engagement in November 2024 we expressed our interest in being included. The Coleg responded positively, and our first institutional visit took place in November 2024—reflecting a shared commitment to closer collaboration and greater alignment with national Welsh-medium priorities.

3. Compliance

A. Service delivery standards

The following standards have been fully adopted by The Open University:

Standards	Imposition date
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 24A, 26A, 27, 27A, 27D, 29, 29A, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 40A, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53A, 53B, 54, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65, 66, 67, 68, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 76A, 78, 79, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 90A, 93	1 April 2018
53, 55, 80, 81, 81A, 83, 84	1 October 2018

No complaints relating to service delivery standards were received during the reporting period.

Recent work to ensure best compliance with these standards includes:

- updating the *Assessment through the medium of Welsh* policy to provide greater clarity to students on how Welsh language submissions will be assessed
- supporting PhD candidates to prepare theses in Welsh, in the spirit of standards 90 and 90A.

B. Policy making standards

The following standards have been fully adopted by The Open University:

Standards	Imposition date
94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104	1 October 2018

No complaints relating to policy making standards were received during the reporting period.

The following are recent developments to support policy making standards:

- OU staff have been made aware of the need to review policy decisions as well as policy documents. A voluntary severance scheme for staff was reviewed during 2024-25 for its impact on the Welsh language.

C. Operational standards

The following standards have been fully adopted by The Open University.

Standards	Imposition date
106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 119, 119A, 121, 122, 123, 123A, 125, 126, 127, 132, 134, 135, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 144A, 145, 145A, 146, 146A, 146B, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153	1 April 2018
105, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118	1 October 2018
111	1 April 2019

No complaints relating to operational standards were received during the reporting period.

Recent work to ensure best compliance with these standards includes:

- publishing a new bilingual online module for OU staff on Welsh language awareness
- adding Welsh language awareness content to our *Equality Essentials* online course of all staff.

Welsh language skills – in accordance with standards 134 and 158

The OU in Wales has surveyed the Welsh language skills of employees working in Wales. The results of the survey, based on a 79% completion rate are as follows:

Welsh language listening skills	No.	%
No skills	52	35%
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	16	11%
Able to understand basic enquiries in Welsh (Ble mae….? / Ga i siarad â….?)	28	19%
Able to understand a basic social conversation in Welsh	19	13%
Able to follow routine conversations involving work between fluent Welsh speakers	7	5%
Able to follow the majority of conversations involving work including group discussions	5	3%
Able to understand all conversations involving work	23	15%
Welsh language reading skills		
No skills	49	33%
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	13	9%

Able to read basic words and phrases (e.g signs or short and simple notes)	47	31%
Able to read basic material involving work (slowly)	6	4%
Able to read routine material with a dictionary	7	5%
Able to read the majority of material in own work area	5	3%
Able to understand all material involving work	23	15%
Welsh language speaking skills		
No skills	57	38%
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	19	13%
Able to answer simple enquiries (e.g greetings, (Ble mae....? / Ga i siarad â....?)	33	22%
Able to answer simple enquiries involving work	7	5%
Able to converse with someone else, with some hesitancy, regarding routine work issues	6	4%
Able to speak the language in the majority of situations using some English words	7	5%
Fluent – able to conduct a conversation and answer questions, for an extended period of time where necessary	21	14%
Welsh language writing skills		
No skills	68	45%
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	19	13%

Able to write basic messages (Diolch am y llythyr, Dyma gopi o.....)	25	17%
Able to answer simple correspondence with assistance	7	5%
Able to draft routine text, with editing assistance	6	4%
Able to prepare the majority of written material, with some revision assistance	9	6%
Skilled – able to complete complex written work without the need for revision	16	11%

The OU has also surveyed the Welsh language skills of associate lecturers identified as working in Wales, with a completion rate of 32%. This survey was optional.

Welsh language listening skills	No.	%
No skills	31	15%
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	7	3%
Able to understand basic enquiries in Welsh (Ble mae....? / Ga i siarad â....?)	11	5%
Able to understand a basic social conversation in Welsh	5	2%
Able to follow routine conversations involving work between fluent Welsh speakers	1	0%

Able to follow the majority of conversations involving work including group discussions	1	0%
Able to understand all conversations involving work	12	6%
Welsh language reading skills		
No skills	31	15%
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	4	2%
Able to read basic words and phrases (e.g signs or short and simple notes)	14	7%
Able to read basic material involving work (slowly)	2	1%
Able to read routine material with a dictionary	4	2%
Able to read the majority of material in own work area	3	1%
Able to understand all material involving work	10	5%
Welsh language speaking skills		
No skills	33	16%
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	7	3%
Able to answer simple enquiries (e.g greetings, (Ble mae....? / Ga i siarad â....?)	11	5%
Able to answer simple enquiries involving work	3	1%
Able to converse with someone else, with some hesitancy, regarding routine work issues	1	0%

Able to speak the language in the majority of situations using some English words	1	0%
Fluent – able to conduct a conversation and answer questions, for an extended period of time where necessary	12	6%
Welsh language writing skills		
No skills	36	17%
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	6	3%
Able to write basic messages (Diolch am y llythyr, Dyma gopi o…..)	10	5%
Able to answer simple correspondence with assistance	2	1%
Able to draft routine text, with editing assistance	2	1%
Able to prepare the majority of written material, with some revision assistance	4	2%
Skilled – able to complete complex written work without the need for revision	8	4%

Recruiting – in accordance with standard 145 and 162

From 1 August 2024 to 1 August 2025, The OU recruited the following number of posts with specific language requirements to the OU in Wales:

(i)   Welsh language skills were essential – 1

(ii)   Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed to the post – 0

(iii)   Welsh language skills were desirable – 23

(iv)   Welsh language skills were not necessary – 0

4. Focus on the coming year

Over the coming 12 months, the OU will continue to develop our central website so that it provides the best possible service to students, prospective students and stakeholders. The OU is continually reviewing its enquirer journey on our site, in order to keep up with changing technology and public expectations. Revisions to standard 55 will ensure that the Welsh language will be considered alongside these developments, so that future content on the site provides up-to-date information for Welsh language users.

We will also be prioritising, enhancing our relationship with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. Initially, we expressed an interest in setting up a Coleg branch. While branch grant funding isn't possible, we have been given the opportunity to bid for funding to establish a dedicated Academic Welsh Language Lead. Our Welsh language Task and Finish Group (that met during 2023/24) identified a critical gap in academic Welsh language expertise across teaching, learning and assessment at both an operational and strategic level. To address these challenges and drive the development of Welsh language provision, the group recommended appointing a dedicated Academic Lead for Welsh language strategy and delivery. If approved, this will be a three-year post to develop our understanding of curriculum opportunities and help increase student uptake of Welsh language modules.

We look forward to seeing the implementation of Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025 during the next Senedd term, and using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). We hope that this new framework will support the OU to recruit more Welsh language users, as well as develop staff skills and confidence in using the language.