

The OU ITE Partnership

Welsh Language Strategy

Context

In September 2020, the first cohort of students began the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). The programme was delivered by the Open University's ITE Partnership in collaboration with schools across Wales and educational stakeholders on behalf of the Welsh Government. In line with the Accreditation Criteria for Initial Teacher Education in Wales, the Welsh language is central to the Open University Partnership's PGCE Programme. This document outlines the programme's vision, priorities, and actions.

Vision

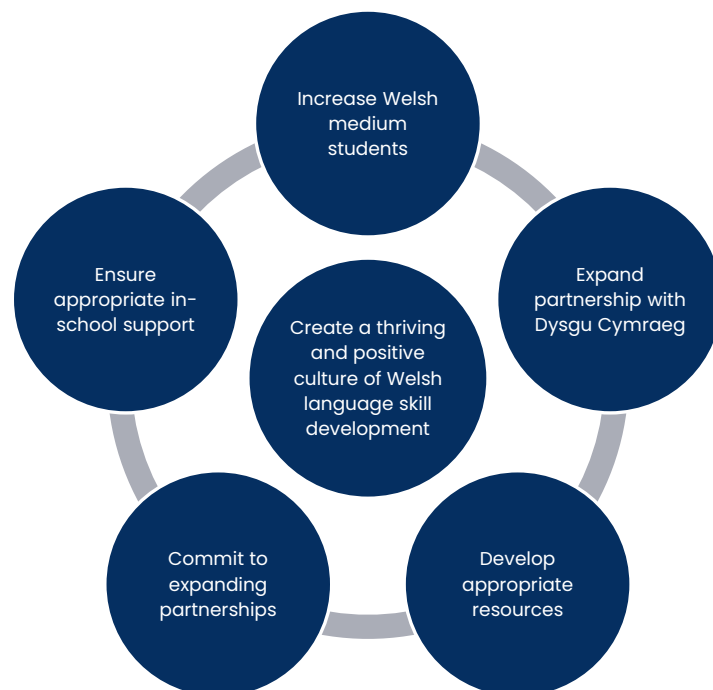
The Open University Partnership's PGCE Programme in Wales will foster a supportive and positive environment for students and staff to improve their Welsh language skills, regardless of their first language, and will encourage creative and meaningful approaches to developing pupils' language skills and love for the language.

Overview

The Open University in Wales's goals for academic excellence include promoting opportunities to study through the medium of Welsh at higher education level. This reflects the broader national strategic policy, *Cymraeg 2050*, which aims to increase the number of Welsh speakers and to create

“a workforce with robust linguistic skills, able to inspire and motivate learners” (Welsh Government, 2018). In line with this, the University is committed to developing the pedagogical skills of trainee teachers to work through the medium of Welsh, particularly in shortage subjects in the secondary sector, and to enhancing the Welsh language skills of future practitioners during their ITE programme². Language awareness is also embedded in students’ modular studies, preparing them to carry this knowledge and these skills into their future teaching careers.

Priorities



¹ Welsh Government (2018) [Welsh 2050: A million Welsh speakers \(gov.wales\)](#), p10.

² Welsh Government (2021) [Welsh in education workforce plan \(gov.wales\)](#) p.9

Create a thriving and positive culture of Welsh language skill development

- Increase the number of Welsh-medium students.
- Develop appropriate resources to support students' language learning.
- Develop appropriate resources to support good practice in using Welsh in the classroom.
- Develop appropriate resources to support language teaching methodology.
- Continue and expand the partnership with *Learn Welsh* to ensure maximum benefit for students learning the language.
- Ensure that students receive appropriate support in schools to develop their Welsh language skills.
- Ensure that academic and partnership staff understand the importance of the Welsh language and use it to the best of their ability.
- Ensure that staff have access to free *Learn Welsh* courses to develop their Welsh language skills.
- Ensure the programme continues to develop students to meet the requirements of the Welsh Language Competency Framework for Education Practitioners.
- Provide support to help students improve their confidence and Welsh language skills.

- Commit to expanding partnerships with other stakeholders to broaden the influence of Welsh-medium ITE and create more opportunities for students.

Welsh language themes

The following represent an overview of the key themes and focus for the Open University Partnership PGCE's development of the Welsh Language.



Achieving our aims

1. Create a thriving and positive culture of Welsh language skill development

- Continue to ensure that all materials are available bilingually.
- Group students according to their language pathway.
- Provide a Welsh pastoral tutor for students.
- Continue to provide language awareness as part of the programme.

- Create informal spaces to enable students to share experiences and support language learning, e.g., for ‘coffee and chat’ sessions and online.

2. Increase numbers of Welsh-medium students

- Specifically tailor marketing to Welsh-medium students.
- Ensure that open evenings are bilingual and include Welsh-speaking student representation.
- Strengthen links with organisations that reach prospective students.
- Create a proactive offer where applicants who indicate they attended a Welsh-medium school on their application form will be interviewed in Welsh and directed to the Welsh-medium route.
- Continue to promote opportunities to study and submit work through the medium of Welsh throughout the course.

3. Develop resources to support students’ language learning

- Continue to develop appropriate materials and resources on the PGCE to support language learning.
- Continue to develop our partnership with *Learn Welsh* to facilitate language learning.
- Continue to develop our partnership with the *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol* to support the development of Welsh speakers’ skills.
- Signpost students to short Welsh-medium courses available through *OpenLearn*.
- Ensure that the Open University’s support package is available bilingually, e.g., study skills, student support.

- Develop resources that promote language teaching methodology, including good practice materials.
- Provide tailored support to develop academic writing skills through the medium of Welsh.

4. Ensure that students are provided with appropriate in-school support to develop their Welsh language skills

- Promote and strengthen the role of the **Annogwr y Gymraeg** (*Welsh Language Champion*) in schools as a positive leader who inspires the daily use of Welsh, fosters an inclusive linguistic culture, and supports the development of language skills across the whole school community, including Open University trainee teachers.
- Ensure that mentors receive appropriate training on Welsh language requirements and good practice.
- Ensure that the development of Welsh is a focus of weekly mentor-student sessions.
- Consider the development of Welsh as an element in working towards the Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership in both interim and final judgments.
- Monitor progress through regular file checks at intervals throughout the two-year programme and through interim reports.

5. Provide students with the means to meet the Welsh Language Framework requirements

- Provide training on the requirements of each module.

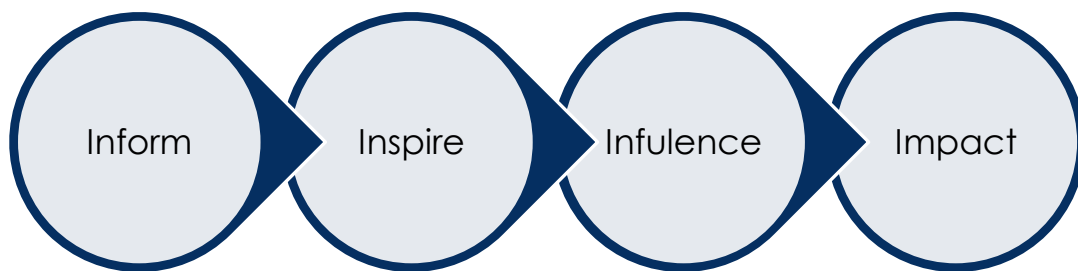
- Measure language development through an assessment at the start of each module, as well as mid-way and at the end of PGCE 3.
- Provide example materials at every language level.
- Continue to liaise with the *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol* to ensure best practice.
- Strengthen the monitoring of Welsh language development as an element of working towards the Professional Standards in both interim and final judgments.
- Develop systematic processes to track Welsh language framework data.

6. Commit to expanding partnerships with other stakeholders to expand PGCE Wales influence and create more opportunities for students

- Continue to expand our partnership with *Learn Welsh* to enable students to improve their Welsh language skills.
- Continue to develop our partnership with the *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol* to ensure that our Welsh-speaking students can further develop their Welsh skills and be part of the Welsh-medium higher education community.
- Ensure that the Welsh-medium PGCE experience of bilingualism is utilised at a strategic level within the Open University.
- Continue with external representation on committees such as the *Education Workforce Council Implementation Committee*, the Welsh Government's Welsh-medium ALN Taskforce, the *Collaborative Research Network for Welsh and Bilingualism*, and internally on the *Faculty of*

Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies Academic Committee and the Cross-Faculty Welsh Community of Practice.

The Open University's PGCE Programme Welsh Language Strategy will:



- Inform students and partnership schools about their role in the Curriculum for Wales in developing pupils' Welsh language skills while simultaneously upskilling their own Welsh.
- Inspire students and partnership schools to value the role of the Welsh language in the culture and heritage of Wales.
- Influence by strengthening the reputation of Welsh-medium ITE with the partnership, practitioners, external partners, and policymakers as a programme that can offer a fully bilingual experience to our students, delivered by specialist teacher educators.

- Make an impact on school communities and wider society by preparing educators to use, promote, and develop the Welsh language in every context.