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YEARS

Welsh language standards annual report 2017/18

The Open University (OU)

Section 1 - Introduction

Overview

In common with other higher education providers, The Open University (OU) was issued a [compliance notice](#) by the Welsh Language Commissioner on 29 September 2017. Although the OU operates on a semi-devolved basis (The OU in Wales), the compliance notice and subsequent standards apply to The OU as a single entity. The standards themselves however apply to staff, students and members of the public based in Wales.

Before operating under the standards, The OU produced a Welsh language scheme. Historical developments under this scheme have meant that much of The OU has been able to provide many services in Welsh, placing us in a good position to meet the requirements of many of the standards under the new system. Welsh Language Standards provide The OU with an opportunity to build on provision and clarify what staff and students can expect to receive in Welsh.

The OU celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2019. Since being established, it has offered an alternative route to higher education, using innovative teaching methods to make education available to more people. We want to do the right thing for our staff, students and our communities, and providing a quality service and ensuring that Welsh speakers' rights are fully met is of the utmost importance.

We are proud of our position in Welsh life and celebrate the fact that we are a large higher education provider in Wales. However, as a four nation University, focusing on distance learning, we are, in the main, an English medium provider. All except certain elements of one of the courses we offer is taught through the medium of English. This does not detract from our commitment to support and promote the Welsh language but does require us to take a more targeted and focussed approach to complying with the standards.

We are grateful to the Welsh Language Commissioner's office for their support during this transition, and for their willingness to discuss how the standards can be implemented by the relevant imposition dates.

Preparing for the standards

The OU has taken an organised approach to prepare for standard imposition dates. A project management approach was adopted, and Welsh language compliance consultants Ateb were appointed to support this and offer expertise in certain areas.

With Ateb's support, a gap-analysis was conducted to assess the OU's readiness to comply with specific standards, and an action plan was put in place to ensure compliance deadlines were met.

Standards were grouped into relevant workstreams, which were

- The OU in Wales
- Contacting the OU
- Students
- HR
- Non-HR policies
- Publicity
- Publications
- Forms
- Web
- Tendering
- IT

For each workstream, a lead officer was appointed to work on ensuring compliance with relevant standards. A steering group was created and chaired by Louise Casella, Director of The OU in Wales. In July 2018, a Communications Manager with specific responsibility for Welsh language compliance was appointed. Shortly afterwards, a reference group was created to support operational developments, chaired by the Communications Manager.

Early achievements have included:

- producing new and revised guidelines and documents covering a wide range of areas to help OU staff both in Cardiff and outside Wales to comply with the standards.

- publishing Welsh language versions of our undergraduate, post-graduate and access prospectuses, online and in print
- creating a specific [page](#) on The OU in Wales website, detailing The OUs compliance and the services the public can expect in Welsh, including details on our complaints procedure
- establishing a similar page with guidelines for staff in Wales and across the UK on The OU in Wales' intranet site
- matching Welsh-speaking students who have indicated that they wish to receive support in Welsh to Welsh-speaking advice staff.

Section 2 - compliance

A) Service Delivery standards

This report will focus on the standards below with an imposition date of 1 April 2018. Reporting on standards with an imposition date of 1 October 2018 will be included in the report for 2018-19.

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

We believe that we are successfully complying with the required standards in this area. No complaints relating to service delivery standards were received during the reporting period.

The following work has been done to prepare The OU for the imposition date:

- Registered students have been asked if they wish to receive correspondence from The OU in Welsh. This is then recorded, and Welsh language communications are sent to these students.
- A working group has been created to help ensure that automated communications being sent to students in Wales is available in Welsh.
- Guidelines for staff have been published on our intranet to assess Welsh language requirements for public meetings, public events and public lectures.
- Guidelines for staff have been published on our intranet on how to purchase translation services, and have effectively reduced translation turnaround on documents and materials which are required to be produced in Welsh.

- A template has been created for communications staff to ensure press releases are drafted bilingually
- Iaithe Gwaith lanyards and badges have been provided to all Welsh-speaking staff, as well as dysgwyr lanyards for learners.
- The OU does not teach through personal tutors but has created practice tutor roles to support The OU in Wales' new degree apprenticeship in software engineering. We have defined the requirements of this role to match the scope of the personal tutor's role as outlined in Regulations (No.6) and have allocated one practice tutor role to a Welsh-speaker. This tutor will be actively matched to Welsh-speaking apprentices.

B) Policy Making standards

Due to the imposition timing of standard 172, there is no requirement to report for period 17/18. However, below is a list of the standards in this area as well as an outline of the work that has been done to prepare The OU for the imposition date:

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

The following work has been done to prepare The OU for the imposition date:

- Policies under the scope of the standards have been identified through the non-HR policies workstream.
- A process for screening new policies has a been identified.
- A methodology for implementing this work has been added to our Student Policy and Procedures framework.

C) Operational standards

This report will focus on the standards below with an imposition date of 1 April 2018. Reporting on standards with an imposition date of 1 October 2018 will be included in the report for 2018-19.

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

We believe that we are successfully complying with the required standards in this area. No complaints relating to operational standards were received during the reporting period.

The following work has been done to prepare The OU for the imposition date

- A process for ensuring employment contracts are available in Welsh on request has been established
- Personal development forms have been translated into Welsh and are available to staff
- Relevant HR policies have been translated into Welsh
- Level 1 Welsh is currently being offered and provided to a number of staff based in Wales.

Welsh language skills – In accordance with standards 134 and 158

The OU has surveyed the Welsh language skills of its employees. The results of the survey, based on a 81% completion rate, are shown in this table:

Welsh language listening skills	No.	%
No skills	30	34.89
Currently in the process of developing skills	19	22.09
Able to understand basic enquiries in Welsh	11	12.79
Able to understand a basic social conversation in Welsh	4	4.65
Able to follow routine conversations involving work	4	4.65
Able to follow the majority of conversations involving work	4	4.65
Able to understand all conversations involving work	14	16.28
Welsh language reading skills	No.	%
No skills	28	32.56
Currently in the process of developing skills	16	18.60
Able to read basic words and phrases	18	20.93
Able to read basic material involving work (slowly)	4	4.65
Able to read routine material with a dictionary	2	2.33
Able to read the majority of material in own work area	4	4.65
Able to understand all material involving work	14	16.28
Welsh language speaking skills	No.	%
No skills	30	34.89

Currently in the process of developing skills	20	23.26
Able to answer simple enquiries	13	15.11
Able to answer simple enquiries involving work	2	2.33
Able to converse with someone else, with some hesitancy about work issues	4	4.65
Able to speak the language in the majority of situations	4	4.65
Fluent – able to conduct a conversation and answer questions	13	15.11
Welsh language writing skills	No.	%
No skills	33	38.37
Currently in the process of developing skills	20	23.26
Able to write basic messages	9	10.46
Able to answer simple correspondence with assistance	6	6.98
Able to draft routine text, with editing assistance	3	3.49
Able to prepare the majority of written material, with some revision	2	2.33
Skilled – able to complete complex written work without the need for revision	13	15.11

Training – In accordance with standards 135 and 159

In accordance with standard 135, we have made provisions to offer our staff the ability to undertake relevant training in Welsh, when the training in those areas are provided in English. During the reporting period, no staff member chose the Welsh option.

Recruiting – In accordance with standard 145 and 162

From 1 April 2018 to 31 July 2018, The OU recruited the following number of posts with specific language requirements:

(i) Welsh language skills were essential

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| (ii) Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed to the post | 0 |
| (iii) Welsh language skills were desirable | 7 |
| (iv) Welsh language skills were not necessary | 0 |

Section 3 – Focus on the coming year

2018-19 presents several opportunities for The OU in Wales to interact with our students and the Welsh public as a whole. As we celebrate our 50th year, we anticipate increased contact with communities across Wales during a programme of engagement events and positive PR.

Part-time and distance learning has become a more affordable option for studying in Wales, and has led to continued growth in our numbers. We are proactively asking new students for their language preference and hope to provide Welsh language services to a larger number of learners.

We have successfully increased staff awareness of the language, Welsh history and compliance through internal communications and face-to-face briefings in across a number of UK sites. In the coming year, we will repeat this as well as offer online sessions to homeworker staff.

We have established an IT Welsh Language Standards Project in order to work to overcome tackle some IT related barriers to compliance, and to future-proof any developments which may have a Welsh language requirement.

We hope to see more learning opportunities available in Welsh, including a new essential skills course in Maths which will soon be launched on our OpenLearn Cymru platform.