The OU ITE Partnership
Welsh Language Strategy

Context

In September 2020, the first cohort of students began to study the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) delivered by The Open University Partnership with Regional Consortia and schools across Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government. In accordance with the Accreditation Criteria for Initial Teacher Education in Wales, the Welsh language is central to The Open University Partnership PGCE Programme and this document sets out the PGCE Programme's vision, priorities and actions.

Vision

The Open University Partnership PGCE Programme in Wales will develop a supportive and positive environment for students and staff to improve their Welsh language skills, whatever their first language, and to develop creative and meaningful approaches to developing their pupils' Welsh language skills and love for language.
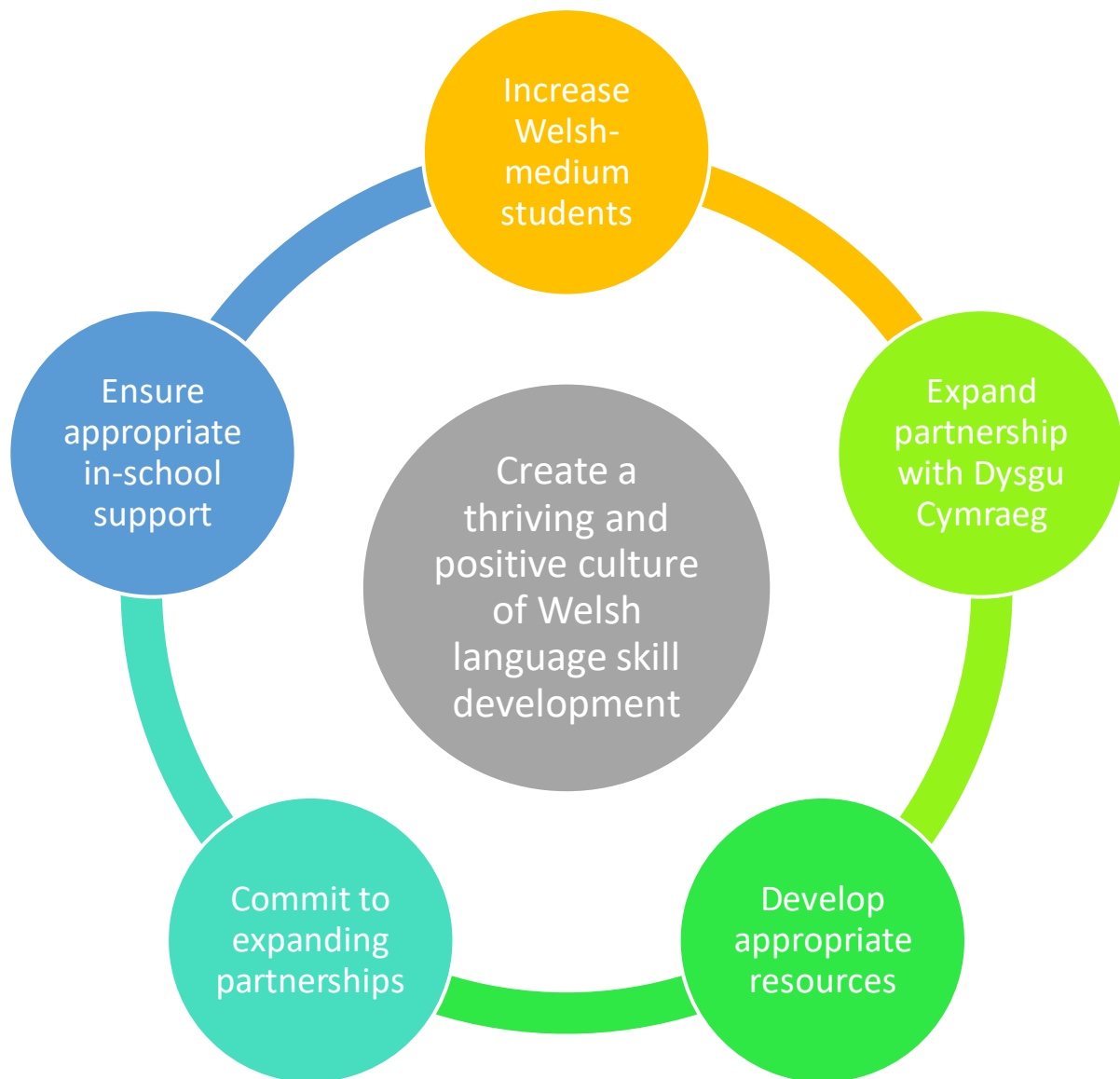
Overview

The OU in Wales' aims with regard to academic excellence includes promoting opportunities to study at higher education level through the medium of Welsh. This also mirrors the wider national strategic policy of increasing the number of Welsh speakers through Cymraeg 2050 to create 'a workforce with robust linguistic skills, able to inspire and motivate learners,' (Welsh Government, 2018) and to build the [1] pedagogic skills of student teachers to work through the medium of Welsh, particularly in shortage subjects in the secondary sector, and to develop the Welsh language skills of future practitioners during their ITE programme.[2] Language awareness is also embedded in students' module study, which they will carry through with them into their future teaching career.

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[1] Welsh Government (2018) Welsh 2050: A million Welsh speakers (gov.wales), p.10.

[2] Welsh Government (2021) welsh-in-education-workforce-plan.pdf (gov.wales). p.9.
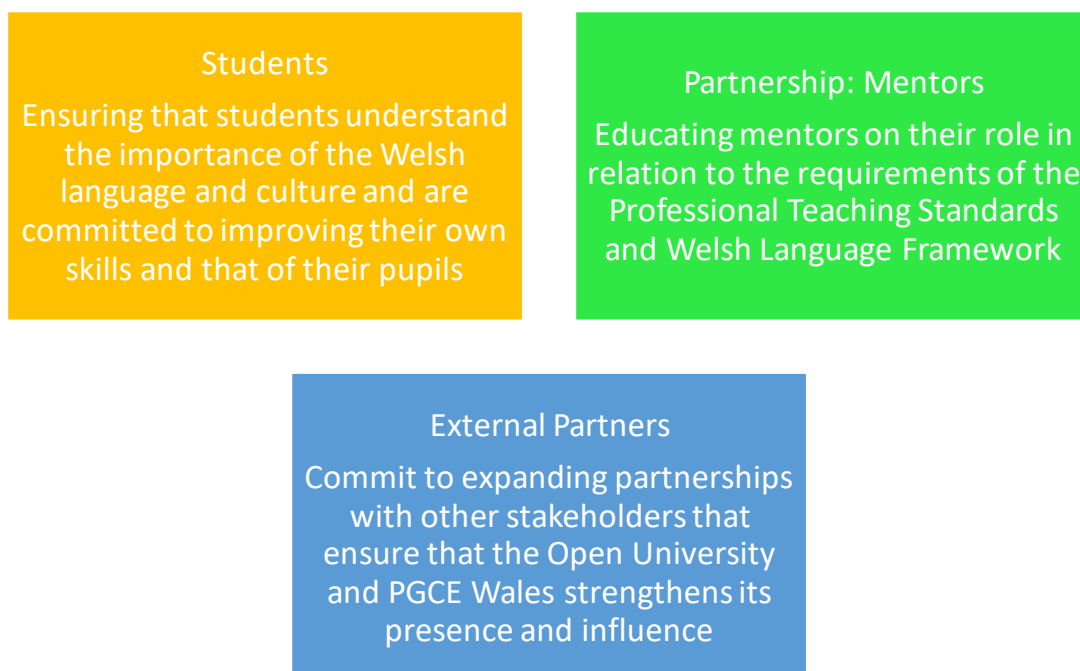
Create a thriving and positive culture of Welsh language skill development

- 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 partnership with Learn Welsh to maximise the benefit to our students' language learning
- Ensure that students are provided with appropriate in-school support 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 skills.

- Ensure that the programme continues to develop students to meet requirements of the Welsh Language Competency Framework for teachers.
- Provide support to Welsh-speaking students to improve confidence and Welsh skills. Commit to expanding partnerships with other stakeholders to expand PGCE Wales influence and create more opportunities for students.

Welsh language themes

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

Students

Ensuring that students understand the importance of the Welsh language and culture and are committed to improving their own skills and that of their pupils

Partnership: Mentors

Educating mentors on their role in relation to the requirements of the Professional Teaching Standards and Welsh Language Framework

External Partners

Commit to expanding partnerships with other stakeholders that ensure that the Open University and PGCE Wales strengthens its presence and influence

Aims

Achieving our aims

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

To do this we will:
- Continue to ensure that all material is available bilingually
- Group students according to language pathway
- Provide students with Welsh-speaking pastoral tutor

- Continue to provide language awareness as a part of the programme
- Create informal spaces to enable students to share experiences and support language learning e.g. fora and online 'coffee a clone'.
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2. Increase numbers of Welsh-medium students

To do this we will:

- 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 note that they attended a Welsh-medium school on an application form will be interviewed through the Welsh language and signposted to the Welsh language 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

To do this we will:
- Continue to develop appropriate materials and resources on the VLE 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 further the skills of Welsh speakers
- Signpost students to Welsh medium short courses available via Open Learn
- Ensure that the OU wrap-around package of support is available bilingually e.g. study skills, student support.
- Develop resources that will 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

To do this we will:
- Ensure that mentors receive appropriate training on Welsh language requirements and good practice
- Ensure that Welsh-language development is a focus of weekly student-mentor sessions
- Consider Welsh language development as an element of working towards the QTS standards in interim and final judgements.
- Monitor progression through regular file checks at periodic point throughout the 2 year programme and interim reports

5. Provide students with the means to meet the Welsh Language Framework Requirements
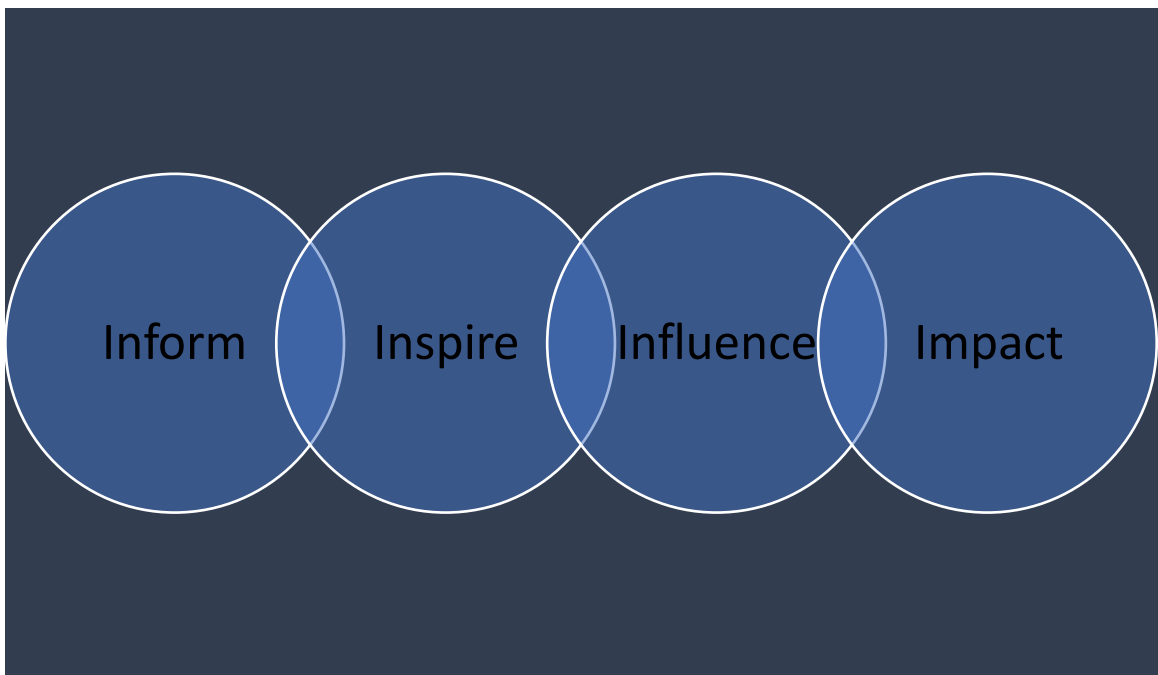
To do this we will:
- Provide training on the requirements for each module
- Measure language development through audit at the beginning of each module, in addition to midway and at the end of PGCE 3.
- Provide exemplar material at all linguistic levels
- Continue liaise with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to ensure best practice.
- Strengthen monitoring of Welsh language development as an element of working towards the QTS standards in interim and final judgements.
- 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

To do this we will:
- Continue to expand our partnership with Learn Welsh to enable students to improve their Welsh language skills.
- Continue to develop our partnership with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to ensure that our Welsh-speaking students are able to develop their Welsh language skills further and be a part of the Welsh-medium HE community.
- Ensure that PGCE Wales' experience of bilingualism is utilised at a strategic level within the OU.
- Continue with external representation on fora such as Welsh Workforce Implementation committee, Welsh Government Welsh-medium ALN taskforce, Collaborative Research Network for Welsh and Bilingualism, and internally on Faculty of Wellbeing, Education, and Language Studies Academic Committee, Wales Cross-Faculty Community of Practice.

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

Inform   Inspire   Influence   Impact

- Inform students and partnership schools of their role in the Welsh Curriculum of developing pupils' Welsh language skills whilst simultaneously upskilling their own Welsh language skills.
- Inspire students and partnership schools to value the role of the Welsh language in Welsh culture and heritage.
- Influence by enhancing the reputation of PGCE Wales with the partnership, practitioners, external partners and policy makers as a programme that is able to offer a fully bilingual programme for our students delivered by expert teachers educators.
- Impact on school communities and the wider society by preparing educators to use, promote and develop the Welsh language in all contexts.