

WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

The Open University (OU)

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
2. Governance	5
3. Compliance	6
4. Focus on the coming year	12

1. INTRODUCTION

This report for the 2020/21 financial year is the fourth to be produced by the OU in accordance with standard 166, 172 and 178.

In common with other higher education providers in Wales, 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 Open University 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.

As mentioned in the previous year's report, public life in Wales has been dominated by the coronavirus pandemic. Like all universities in Wales, our priorities have remained teaching and supporting our students, and ensuring the wellbeing and development of our staff. Towards the end of the financial year, as restrictions began to ease, we were pleased to welcome some of our staff back to the OU in Wales office in Cardiff as part of our new hybrid model of working, though the office continues to remain closed to visitors.

Public events such as open days, public lectures and community outreach continue to take place over video, as do formal meetings and interviews. In certain areas of the university's work, we have received a healthy demand from Welsh language users to be able to use Welsh. We have brought in simultaneous translators where needed, and have used various IT solutions (eg Zoom) to allow people to contribute in the language of their choice.

Through our online teaching, our ability to reach students across the country has not been significantly affected by the pandemic, and our student numbers for Wales are now over 14,500. Our PGCE programme, delivered in both English and Welsh, is the only one of its kind which allows future teachers to study part-time and online, and has now reached its second year of delivery.

Alongside our formal courses, our mission to provide free learning to people in Wales continues. Our Wales-specific hubs on OpenLearn ([OpenLearn Cymru](#) and [OpenLearn Wales](#)) have more free courses and resources than ever. During 2020-21, 24,168 visitors went to Welsh language resources, up from 19,837 in the

previous year. We published nine new Welsh-language courses during this time, on subjects such as mental health, devolution in Wales and teaching. The most popular course was [Academi Arian](#), a free online personal finance course developed in partnership with Money Saving Expert, attracting 3,185 visitors.

2. GOVERNANCE

The 2020/21 academic year was the first full year that The Open University's oversight group had strategic oversight of Welsh language issues across the university, including compliance with the standards.

The group is chaired by OU in Wales director Louise Casella. Staff members from across the university have been appointed to the group to focus on the following areas:

- People Services
- Academic Services
- Governance
- Forms
- OU in Wales
- Students
- IT

The group met and continues to meet every six months.

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:

- continuing to inform students of their right to receive written communication in Welsh via our StudentHome platform
- increasing capacity to offer simultaneous translation over video by introducing *Zoom* to events and meetings
- increasing the amount of public learning opportunities available in Welsh via 138 new free Welsh language resources on OpenLearn, which included nine new Welsh language courses
- a staff-wide Welsh language awareness session with external speakers

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 work has continued since the imposition date

- The screening tool for assessing policies continues to be used, which helps consider any potential negative impacts on the Welsh language, and increased opportunities to use Welsh.
- Policies have been archived by staff, and the tool has been re-used as policies have been amended.

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.

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 65% completion rate, are shown in this table:

Welsh language listening skills		
	No.	%
No skills	35	31%
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	17	15%
Able to understand basic enquiries in Welsh (Ble mae....? / Ga i siarad â....?)	25	22%
Able to understand a basic social conversation in Welsh	7	6%
Able to follow routine conversations involving work between fluent Welsh speakers	6	5%
Able to follow the majority of conversations involving work including group discussions	5	4%
Able to understand all conversations involving work	19	17%
Welsh language reading skills		
No skills	28	25%
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	15	13%
Able to read basic words and phrases (e.g signs or short and simple notes)	35	31%
Able to read basic material involving work (slowly)	7	6%
Able to read routine material with a dictionary	5	4%
Able to read the majority of material in own work area	7	6%
Able to understand all material involving work	16	14%
Welsh language speaking skills		

No skills	36	32%
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	18	16%
Able to answer simple enquiries (e.g greetings, (Ble mae....? / Ga i siarad â....?))	29	25%
Able to answer simple enquiries involving work	1	1%
Able to converse with someone else, with some hesitancy, regarding routine work issues	5	4%
Able to speak the language in the majority of situations using some English words	7	6%
Fluent – able to conduct a conversation and answer questions, for an extended period of time where necessary	17	15%
Welsh language writing skills		
No skills	45	39%
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	20	18%
Able to write basic messages (Diolch am y llythyr, Dyma gopi o.....)	20	18%
Able to answer simple correspondence with assistance	2	2%
Able to draft routine text, with editing assistance	8	7%
Able to prepare the majority of written material, with some revision assistance	8	7%
Skilled – able to complete complex written work without the need for revision	11	10%

TRAINING – IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDARDS 135 AND 159

- In accordance with standard 135, we have made provisions to offer our staff in Wales 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 August 2018 to 1 August 2019, The OU recruited the following number of posts with specific language requirements to the OU in Wales:

- (i) Welsh language skills were essential – 0
- (ii) Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed to the post – 0
- (iii) Welsh language skills were desirable – 28
- (iv) Welsh language skills were not necessary – 0

4. FOCUS ON THE COMING YEAR

During 2021-22, we hope to see increased opportunities for the OU to engage face-to-face with staff, students and members of the public. It is uncertain to what level this will be and will depend on the course of the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on public life. We hope to hold more in-person events, the most significant being our annual graduation ceremony which is scheduled for May 2022. This and other activities are central to how the OU interacts with the public and provide several opportunities for stakeholders to use Welsh with our organisation and each other.

The OU in Wales continues to assert itself as a key institution in Wales' HE landscape. Alongside our strong relationship with other universities, colleges, local authorities and the Welsh Government is our important link with *Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol*. We look forward to working with *Y Coleg* over the next 12 months, specifically on its *Bwrdd Academaidd* and specifically in developing Welsh language resources for social work students.

Beyond compliance with the Welsh language standards, we will use the coming year to scope and measure our current academic output through the medium of Welsh, and look to develop resources and skills to offer more course content in Welsh, as well as encourage students to use Welsh in their studies. We will create a new Welsh Language Academic Development Group to lead on this work.

Our vocational study (social work, PGCE and nursing) continues to prove popular with learners from across Wales, and have staff in each of these courses able to offer teaching through the medium of Welsh. In the case of nursing and social work, we have many learners choosing to use Welsh as part of their study. In the case of the PGCE programme, in its second year, we are seeing a steady flow of applicants preparing to enter the teaching profession to the Welsh-language course, and enjoy a strong relationship with Welsh-medium partner schools across Wales.