



Welsh language  
standards annual report  
2022–23

The Open University

January 2024

# Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Governance	5
3. Compliance	6
4. Focus on the coming year	14

# 1. Introduction

This report for the 2022/23 financial year is the sixth to be produced by The Open University (OU) in accordance with standard 166, 172 and 178.

In common with other higher education providers in Wales, the 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.

Staff in Wales continue to work on a hybrid basis, spending part of their week working from home and part in the main OU in Wales office in Cardiff. Despite this, the OU in Wales office remains a busy hub of activity in the city centre, and a place where we continue to offer a range of services through the medium of Welsh. It is a site that is used by our teaching staff and support staff, and Welsh is used as a working language by a growing number. Many other staff including associate lecturers and staff tutors are designated home workers, meaning that the OU truly is a Wales wide university.

During the year, the OU revised its Welsh language teaching provision to OU staff who wish to learn Welsh or develop Welsh language skills. Working in partnership with Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and universities across Wales, they are now able to access online Welsh language lessons. This approach fits in with the OU's hybrid working model, allowing staff to learn from their desks, regardless of their place of work. It has also allowed the OU to extend the offer to associate lecturers and staff outside of Wales.

The OU has also developed an inclusive curriculum toolkit, aimed to be used by all staff involved in developing curriculum, teaching and/or learning. We have worked with colleagues to ensure Welsh language is included in the toolkit, with up to date guidance and clarity of key considerations and the importance of designing curriculum that actively provides Welsh language opportunities for students.

During the academic year, the OU was subject to an investigation by the Welsh Language Commissioner into our provision of Welsh language awareness training. The Commissioner is of the view that training should be mandatory to all staff. The OU is in a unique position as the only four-nation university to come under the Welsh language standards framework. As a result, there are several teams who may never meet staff, students or members of the public who wish to use Welsh. Many other staff, especially those based in Wales, will, on the other hand, require a detailed understanding of the OU's obligations to Welsh speakers. As a result, the OU has since produced a draft action plan for delivering a two-tier level of awareness training to staff. This will include basic awareness which will be incorporated into our mandatory equality training for everyone; and detailed training which will be made essential to specific staff. The action plan has recently been approved by the Commissioner.

The OU's academic offer in Welsh continues to develop. To date, 373 free courses and resources have been published in Welsh on our OpenLearn Cymru/Wales free learning platform, with even more planned for the coming academic year. In the autumn of 2022, the OU celebrated with the first graduates from our two-year PGCE programme, which is delivered in Welsh as well as English.

## **2. Governance**

The Open University's Welsh Language Oversight Group has strategic oversight of Welsh language issues across the university, including compliance with the standards.

The group was 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

Louise Casella retired in June 2023, and her successor, Ben Lewis, took up the post in December. The oversight group will meet twice during 2024 with Ben Lewis as chair.

The OU in Wales has also set up a Welsh language task and finish group jointly chaired by the Assistant Director for Learning and Curriculum and the Senior Manager (Funding and Fees). The group is made up of support and academic staff from across the OU, and is focussed on identifying opportunities to improve Welsh language in the teaching, learning and assessment space.

### 3. Compliance

#### A. Service delivery standards

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

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Imposition date</b>
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

<b>Complaints received</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Solution</b>
2 October 2022	A member of the public submitted a complaint to the OU about its submission of responses to consultations held by the Welsh Parliament. As the Parliament publishes these documents on its website, the complainant felt that they should be sent in Welsh as well as English.	The OU assured the complainant that there is no statutory requirement for the university to send consultation responses bilingually. The OU will continue to send responses in the preferred language of the staff member responsible for producing the consultation response.

Recent work to ensure best compliance with these standards includes:

- recruiting more Welsh-speaking staff to our student recruitment and support team
- standardising videos on social media to include simultaneous subtitles in both English and Welsh regardless of the language of the subject or the social media post
- advertising Welsh-language opportunities eg PGCE, roles with the OU via Welsh language media outlets and websites
- including the experiences of Welsh-speaking students as part of our online marketing strategy
- leading on the production of a bilingual podcast series *Barod ar gyfer y Brifysgol / University Ready*, which was produced alongside students and universities across Wales.

## B. Policy making standards

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

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Imposition date</b>
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.

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Imposition date</b>
------------------	------------------------

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 77% completion rate are as follows:

<b>Welsh language listening skills</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
No skills	54	33
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	15	9
Able to understand basic enquiries in Welsh (Ble mae....? / Ga i siarad â....?)	31	19
Able to understand a basic social conversation in Welsh	19	12
Able to follow routine conversations involving work between fluent Welsh speakers	9	6
Able to follow the majority of conversations involving work including group discussions	5	3



Able to understand all conversations involving work	30	18
<b>Welsh language reading skills</b>		
No skills	54	33
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	17	10
Able to read basic words and phrases (e.g signs or short and simple notes)	38	23
Able to read basic material involving work (slowly)	11	7
Able to read routine material with a dictionary	6	4
Able to read the majority of material in own work area	7	4
Able to understand all material involving work	30	18
<b>Welsh language speaking skills</b>		
No skills	56	34
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	19	12
Able to answer simple enquiries (e.g greetings, (Ble mae....? / Ga i siarad â....?))	35	21
Able to answer simple enquiries involving work	9	6
Able to converse with someone else, with some hesitancy, regarding routine work issues	12	7
Able to speak the language in the majority of situations using some English words	3	2

Fluent – able to conduct a conversation and answer questions, for an extended period of time where necessary	28	17
<b>Welsh language writing skills</b>		
No skills	70	43
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	17	10
Able to write basic messages (Diolch am y llythyr, Dyma gopi o.....)	27	17
Able to answer simple correspondence with assistance	10	6
Able to draft routine text, with editing assistance	8	5
Able to prepare the majority of written material, with some revision assistance	14	9
Skilled – able to complete complex written work without the need for revision	17	10

The OU has also surveyed the Welsh language skills of associate lecturers identified as working in Wales, with a completion rate of 26%. This survey was optional.

<b>Welsh language listening skills</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
No skills	68	50
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	9	7

Able to understand basic enquiries in Welsh (Ble mae....? / Ga i siarad â....?)	21	15
Able to understand a basic social conversation in Welsh	9	7
Able to follow routine conversations involving work between fluent Welsh speakers	9	7
Able to follow the majority of conversations involving work including group discussions	4	3
Able to understand all conversations involving work	16	12
<b>Welsh language reading skills</b>		
No skills	65	47
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	8	6
Able to read basic words and phrases (e.g signs or short and simple notes)	27	20
Able to read basic material involving work (slowly)	6	4
Able to read routine material with a dictionary	10	7
Able to read the majority of material in own work area	5	4
Able to understand all material involving work	15	11
<b>Welsh language speaking skills</b>		
No skills	70	51
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	8	6

Able to answer simple enquiries (e.g greetings, (Ble mae....? / Ga i siarad â....?))	25	18
Able to answer simple enquiries involving work	3	2
Able to converse with someone else, with some hesitancy, regarding routine work issues	11	8
Able to speak the language in the majority of situations using some English words	1	1
Fluent – able to conduct a conversation and answer questions, for an extended period of time where necessary	18	13
<b>Welsh language writing skills</b>		
No skills	83	61
Currently in the process of developing skills (e.g. attending Welsh course)	7	5
Able to write basic messages (Diolch am y llythyr, Dyma gopi o.....)	17	12
Able to answer simple correspondence with assistance	3	2
Able to draft routine text, with editing assistance	7	5
Able to prepare the majority of written material, with some revision assistance	11	8
Skilled – able to complete complex written work without the need for revision	8	6

## 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 take part in 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. We have recently reminded staff of their right to access relevant training in Welsh.

## Recruiting – in accordance with standard 145 and 162

From 1 August 2022 to 1 August 2023, 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 – 26
- (iv) Welsh language skills were not necessary – 0

## **4. Focus on the coming year**

A priority for the 2023–24 academic year will be to revamp our Welsh language awareness training to staff. This will allow the OU to ensure that all staff have a basic awareness of the Welsh language, its role in contemporary Welsh life, as well as its legal status. It will also help us increase in-depth knowledge with key departments and staff, so that they can continue to offer an excellent service to colleagues, students and members of the public.

At the heart of the OU's mission is to help people across Wales achieve their goals through learning. We are speaking to more further education (FE) colleges, more community groups, and more professionals than ever before to show what the OU can offer. The Welsh language will be central to this: during 2023–24, our bilingual NEPE programme will be delivered to FE students in Wales; Welsh speakers will be invited to take part in our Wales REACH programme to help them connect with their heritage in five communities across Wales; and we will deliver a fully bilingual e-learning platform alongside Wales TUC.

Beyond our compliance with the standards, the OU's focus will be on developing learning, teaching and curriculum practices to enhance opportunities for students and staff to use Welsh – both in an academic and community sense. This will include developing a community of practice among our Welsh-speaking staff to enhance ways of working and peer support. This will be led by our Welsh language task and finish group.