

# WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME



July 2019

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## Introduction

**Qualifications Wales is a bilingual organisation that communicates through both the Welsh and English languages.**

The 1993 Welsh Language Act established the requirement for public sector organisations to deliver Welsh-language services. This was followed in 2011 with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure making Welsh an official language in Wales and introducing a set of legally binding requirements, or Welsh Language Standards. The Measure introduced the principle that Welsh must be treated no less favourably than English.

Qualifications Wales was established in 2015 and no statutory requirements have been applied to us as yet, although we expect to be brought into the standards regime in time. However, as an organisation we embrace our responsibilities as a public body and are fully committed to developing a Welsh Language Scheme ('the Scheme') on a voluntary basis. This Scheme explains how Qualifications Wales will deliver Welsh-language services as part of our day to day business.

The Scheme is the result of full collaboration with all areas across the organisation. Since Qualifications Wales was established, we have built a strong commitment to the Welsh language and a determination to make the workplace a comfortable and supportive bilingual environment, without language barriers. This is a positive organisation where learning, thoughtfulness and collaboration are part of the culture and the Welsh language is part and parcel of the way we work.

As a regulator, most of the services we provide are to organisations, rather than to the general public. However, we have developed a Scheme that sets a standard we hope will influence those we work with on a regular basis.

The legislation that created Qualifications Wales requires us to have regard to eight matters in the considering how we deliver our functions. One of these matters is "the desirability of promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language". We are already delivering many of the commitments listed in our Scheme as a matter of course. Nevertheless, we recognise the need to maintain focus, and are committed to supporting our staff in delivering this Scheme.

**Philip Blaker, CEO**

## About Qualifications Wales

Qualifications Wales regulates awarding bodies offering qualifications in Wales. We are an independent body focused on publicly funded qualifications, including GCSEs, A levels and vocational qualifications.

Degrees are not part of our work, but we work with universities and colleges to make sure they understand qualifications, and so enable learners to progress into higher education. We make sure qualifications are the best they can be for learners, teachers and employers, and help people adapt in a rapidly changing world.

We also work with awarding bodies to extend the availability of qualifications through the Welsh language, including providing grant funding. In this respect, we recognise the wider role Qualifications Wales has in supporting the Welsh Government's long-term vision to see the Welsh language thriving, with a million people able to speak Welsh by 2050. The Government acknowledges that this is an ambitious target and calls for far-reaching changes to be implemented, including a significant increase in the numbers of Welsh learners and take-up of Welsh-medium education, which will increase the requirements for qualifications to be available in Welsh.

Under the Qualifications Wales Act (2015), we have two principal aims:

- 1. Ensuring that qualifications - and the Welsh qualification system - are effective for meeting the reasonable needs of learners in Wales;*
- 2. Promoting public confidence in qualifications and in the Welsh qualification system.*

Learners are at the heart of our activities, and we have a responsibility to look across the qualifications system to check that it is working in the interest of learners, and, where necessary, to act or advise others to do the same. Part of our work is to ensure that qualifications within the system are valued, secure and respected internationally. We have powers and duties to regulate awarding bodies and we can make positive interventions to secure improvements to qualifications or the qualifications system.

At Qualifications Wales, we protect the value of qualifications, making sure that standards are maintained, grades are awarded fairly and that qualifications continue to be developed as the needs of learners change.

As the trusted experts in qualifications, we consider the needs of employers, the higher education sector and professions, and provide Welsh Government Ministers with advice on relevant issues.

## **Our approach to our work**

We are outward-looking, so engage, communicate and collaborate to strengthen our ability to promote public confidence in the qualifications system, and to meet the needs of learners in Wales.

We describe our regulatory style in our Qualifications Wales Strategy as follows:

- We invite, listen and respond to the views of learners.
- We listen and respond appropriately to stakeholder feedback, views and concerns.
- The way in which we make regulatory decisions and engage with stakeholders is proportionate to the potential impact of the regulatory action.
- Consultations are transparent and meaningful.
- We take a collaborative approach and draw on the knowledge and expertise of stakeholders as appropriate.
- We seek to establish and maintain effective relationships with key stakeholders.
- We produce clear, informative, targeted and timely communications; we review the impact of our communications and seek to find ways to improve our approach.
- We work with other regulators wherever possible, being mindful of the impact on awarding bodies that are regulated by more than one regulator.
- We carry out regulatory impact assessments as appropriate to assess the costs, benefits and risks associated with a policy or course of action.

Our work is underpinned by our values:

- Collaborative in the way that we work
- Thoughtful in the approaches we take
- Positive in our outlook
- Learning from experience and others

Our purpose is met when regulated qualifications taken in Wales are trusted and valued by learners, employers and education providers and are recognised throughout the UK and internationally. This is our overarching vision, which is achieved when our regulatory objectives are met:

- Regulated qualifications taken by learners in Wales are valid, reliable and awarded to an appropriate standard.

- Regulated qualifications in Wales are inclusive and promote equal opportunity for learners.
- Regulated qualifications and the qualifications system are responsive to changing needs and circumstances, particularly in regard to the long-term benefit of Wales and its learners.
- Regulation is proportionate, transparent, consistent and targeted, to support a qualifications system that is sustainable in the long term.
- Information reasonably required to deliver consistent and quality-assured regulated qualifications is available and accessible.
- Appropriate governance is in place to ensure accountability and regulatory compliance.

This Scheme explains how Qualification Wales will deliver its functions and responsibilities through the medium of Welsh as well as English.

#### **Statement of Commitment**

*In line with the Welsh Language Act 1993, Qualifications Wales has adopted the principle that in the conduct of its public business and communication in Wales, it will treat the English and Welsh languages on an equal basis.*

*Qualifications Wales will be required to comply with Welsh Language Standards (no.2) Regulations 2016 in due course. Until that time, the Board and Executive of Qualifications Wales have decided to indicate their commitment to the Welsh language by voluntarily producing and publishing a Scheme. This Scheme sets out how Qualifications Wales will give effect to the principle of equality when delivering our functions and communicating with the public in Wales.*

*In this Scheme, the term 'public' means our audiences and stakeholders. It includes the public as a whole, as well as individual members of the public. The term also includes awarding bodies, voluntary organisations, charities and our stakeholders in the education sector, in local and national government.*

*The Scheme carries the full authority, support and approval of the Board and Executive of Qualifications Wales.*

## Overview of the Scheme

The Scheme is intended to identify and measure actions over time. It identifies the steps the organisation has already taken to deliver on its Welsh language commitments, as well as those that will take a little longer to be achieved.

Specifically, it:

- articulates everything that we will do or make available in Welsh;
- sets out a monitoring framework for the scheme;
- provides guidance to staff about how we work with the Welsh language.

Recognising our role as a public regulator exercising statutory functions, our Scheme describes the steps we will take to encourage, enable, facilitate or support the use of Welsh in the delivery of our functions.

## The Scheme

The Scheme has four elements (or 'areas of focus'), as set out in the Welsh Language Commissioner's guidelines. These follow the key headings of the Welsh Language Standards (no.2) Regulations 2016, which we expect to be asked to comply with in due course. These include:

1. Service delivery
2. Policy-making
3. Internal operations
4. Administering and monitoring the Scheme

Some of the four areas cut across the organisation. Some are niche activities and the responsibility of specific teams within Qualifications Wales. When we look at the steps to be taken, we will identify which team will 'own' the areas of action and be responsible for delivering them. The overall Scheme is owned by the Board of Qualifications Wales, who, together with the Executive, will take responsibility for ensuring we deliver on our commitments, and seek to make improvements where possible and appropriate.

## Service delivery - the public interface

As a regulatory body, most of the services Qualifications Wales provides are to organisations, rather than directly to the public. Our external focus is to regulate, for the benefit of the public, services provided by other organisations. However, as a public sector organisation, effective communication is vital for our working relationships with colleagues in other organisations, with employees and in our limited

dealings with individual members of the public. This is the key focus of this element of our Scheme.

### **Written correspondence**

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English. In dealing with correspondence in Welsh (either letters or emails), we respond in Welsh where a reply is required. In future, we will record individuals' language preferences on our CRM database. We initiate correspondence bilingually where we are uncertain of people's language preferences. Our email signatures and out of office messages are also presented bilingually. Correspondence response targets will be the same, whether in Welsh or English.

### **Telephone callers**

We welcome telephone calls from Welsh-speakers. Telephone callers using our published numbers are greeted in Welsh and English and the out-of-hours service offers Welsh and English information options. If the caller wishes to continue the conversation in Welsh, they can expect to be transferred to a Welsh-speaking colleague if the original call handler is not Welsh-speaking.

### **Visitors to reception**

Visitors calling at our reception will see a sign inviting them to converse in Welsh, if that is their preferred language, and can expect a Welsh-speaking member of staff to be available to speak to them.

In order to achieve this, we will:

- fully brief staff about the requirements of this element of the Scheme which will be incorporated within the induction plan for new staff;
- train and instruct our reception staff to respond appropriately to both Welsh- and English-speaking visitors;
- keep our list of bilingual members of staff up-to-date.

### **Public meetings and events**

Public meetings convened by us are always advertised and promoted bilingually, with invitations (whether electronic or hard copy) sent in both Welsh and English. We will proactively ask invitees/delegates if they wish to contribute in Welsh at the public meeting or event. Where we are advised that there are attendees who wish to contribute in Welsh, we will have simultaneous translation available wherever practical and appropriate.

Welsh-speaking staff are normally available at public events attended by us in order to speak to members of the public whose preference is to speak Welsh. If we publish reports or minutes of events we have run, these will be made available in Welsh as well as English.

To achieve a consistent service, we will:

- fully brief staff attending events;
- require Welsh-speaking members of staff to identify themselves at events;
- encourage participation in Welsh at events where translation is available by welcoming attendees in Welsh, and drawing their attention to the translator to encourage use.

### **Publicity, publications and public notices**

Members of the public or colleagues in external organisations will be able to read documents that relate to Wales and are published by Qualifications Wales in the language of their choice: Welsh or English.

Publicity material and publications will continue to be produced bilingually in Welsh and English. There may be exceptions to this where a report or section of a report is not intended for the general public or has very limited readership.

Documents produced separately will be available at the same time. Where documents have to be published separately, we will make it clear that the document is available in the other language, and each document will be afforded equality in terms of format, size, quality, legibility and prominence. Documents that are available on our website for display or downloading will be available in Welsh and English, and available simultaneously. Documents published by other bodies that are only available in English will continue to be available on our website if we consider them to be of interest or useful to our stakeholders.

Materials we make available at public events and press notices are published simultaneously in Welsh and English.

We will:

- continue with the policy that the publications we produce are published in Welsh and English, with a presumption in favour of producing bilingual documents;
- continue to incorporate these requirements into our way of working.

## **Social media**

Social media messages are published in Welsh and English, and any messages we receive in Welsh in response to our communication will continue to be responded to in Welsh.

## **Website**

The Qualifications Wales website will continue to be fully bilingual, having Welsh and English pages with clear and easy directions to enable viewers to switch from one language to the other. Documents published by third parties may appear on our Welsh and English pages because they are of use or interest to our audiences, but may not be available in both languages.

When we design new websites, microsites or develop our existing website, we will ensure that they are compliant with our Scheme and that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language.

We will create a new 'Commitment to the Welsh language' page in Welsh and English on our website, where a copy of our Welsh Language Scheme will be available to read and/or download.

We will:

- continue to use high quality translation services so that text and documents displayed on the website are accurate and reflect our style and tone of voice;
- continue to monitor our website and seek feedback and implement improvements where appropriate;
- keep up-to-date with technological improvements and maintain our commitment that Welsh will be treated no less favourably than English.

## **Forms**

Any forms and procedures on the website or downloadable from the website will be available in Welsh and English and, once received, will be handled in the language in which they were submitted. Any information provided on our website in Welsh and English will continue to be available simultaneously. Job and grant application forms are covered in separate sections of this Scheme.

## **Corporate identity**

Qualifications Wales' name, address and logo is bilingual and used in all our publications, forms, stationery, electronic communications, presentations, exhibition

materials, marketing and other materials in the public domain. Both languages are given equal prominence in terms of format, size, quality and legibility.

We will continue to:

- monitor our use of the corporate identity and ensure staff are aware of its guidelines and the requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme.

## **Policy-making - corporate and regulatory**

### **Corporate policies**

Our corporate policies have an internal focus and guide the way we operate as an organisation. When we approve a new corporate policy or review an existing policy, we will consider how the policy decision would affect the opportunities for people to use the Welsh language. Where possible, we will ensure that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language within the organisation.

In seeking to improve how we operate as an inclusive organisation, we will include reference to our Welsh Language Scheme within our Equality Objectives, and thereby monitor our compliance with the Scheme.

We will:

- consider any impact on the Welsh language when we review existing policies or create new ones;
- monitor our equal treatment of Welsh and English as part of our Equality objectives;
- communicate these requirements to staff as part of the induction process and regularly through the internal communications processes.

### **Regulatory policy**

Qualifications Wales regulates awarding bodies offering qualifications in Wales. It is responsible for ensuring that qualifications and the qualifications system meet the reasonable needs of learners and for promoting public confidence. The organisation reports on the delivery of its functions to the National Assembly for Wales. Our powers and duties as an independent regulator are defined in our legislation which confirms the matters that we should pay regard to and requires us to set out our regulatory policies. One of the eight matters that we pay due regard to is "the desirability of promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language".

We have a separate Welsh Language Policy that explains and guides our regulatory approach. This applies to our regulatory function, decision on what research to carry out and the regulatory policies that we put in place. The Scheme does not, however, extend to these aspects of our work.

Qualifications Wales adopts the principle that, in the conduct of its business in Wales, it will treat the English and Welsh languages on a basis of equality. This Scheme sets out how it will give effect to that principle when dealing with the public in Wales.

With regard to how we engage on regulatory policy, therefore, we will:

- seek to engage Welsh speakers and encourage them to contribute when we carry out consultations in relation to our regulatory functions. When we respond as a consultee to external organisations, we will continue to do so in a way which is consistent with the aims of the scheme, highlighting any concerns with the equal treatment of Welsh and English;
- make regulatory policy documents available in Welsh and English;
- build consideration of the implications for the Welsh language when we create new or review existing regulatory policies;
- monitor engagement with Welsh-speakers in any consultation processes to ensure representation and engagement where appropriate.

## **Research**

When we commission research, our research ethics process actively considers and manages any potential impact on the Welsh language. Documents used to recruit research respondents are available in Welsh and English so that informed consent can be provided in either language, and Welsh and English-speakers are able to fully contribute.

Any research reports that we publish, or that are produced on our behalf, are published in both Welsh and English. There may be exceptions to this, where a report or section of a report is not intended for the general public or has very limited readership.

Going forward, we will explain the requirements of this Scheme in each brief provided to contractors appointed to undertake research on behalf of Qualifications Wales.

We will:

- build the requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme into research briefs and contracts as appropriate.

## Internal operations

### Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, we will continue to follow the commitments we have made to:

- assess the Welsh-language requirements (essential, desirable, needs to be learnt or not required) of any post becoming vacant before advertising, and will keep a record of the numbers of each category for our own monitoring purposes;
- advertise vacant posts in Welsh and English where Welsh language skills are required for the post. When advertised across the UK or in professional journals, we will not publish the advert in Welsh, although recruitment documents will be available in Welsh and English on our website at the vacancies page;
- welcome applications submitted in Welsh;
- offer shortlisted Welsh-speaking candidates the option of an interview conducted in Welsh, with simultaneous translation if required;
- provide the successful candidate with his/her contract of employment in Welsh, if requested.

To achieve this level of service in our recruitment processes we will continue to:

- widely publicise that applications submitted in Welsh are welcome;
- monitor the numbers of posts requiring Welsh-language skills.

### HR appointment and employment practices

We will make members of staff aware that there are several employment processes that may be conducted in Welsh if requested, and that if a member of staff does request this, they will be treated no less favourably than someone opting to use English. The processes are:

- the disciplinary or grievance processes;
- a complaint by or about a member of staff;
- a whistleblowing investigation.

Where appropriate, it may be necessary to involve an external arbitrator where there is no appropriately qualified or sufficiently independent Welsh-speaker available. However, a member of staff opting to use the Welsh language in one of the above procedures will be treated no less favourably than someone opting for English, and we will apply the same timeframes to the processes and decision-making, whether the process is in Welsh or English. Unless the line manager is Welsh-speaking, we will conduct performance management meetings in English, although follow up reports of the meeting may be in Welsh if requested by the Welsh-speaking member of staff. We

will make sure staff and their managers are aware of the options available to run processes in Welsh or English.

### **Training and skills**

We will continue to provide opportunities for staff to undertake both basic and further Welsh-language courses free of charge. We will review the opportunities available for senior managers to receive training about using the Welsh language in their role as managers. This will include training on using Welsh in meetings, interviews and formal procedures.

We will also provide regular opportunities for staff, to raise awareness about the Welsh language, its history and its role in Welsh culture. We will procure other training in Welsh and English if it is available, providing it meets our quality standards.

We will continue to keep a record of the numbers of Welsh-speakers in the organisation, based on an annual self-assessment. We will report numbers of Welsh-speakers, numbers of those learning Welsh and opportunities available for staff to learn more about the Welsh language and culture to the Board annually and in our Annual Report.

During 2019, we plan to add the Welsh Language Scheme to our induction plan to raise awareness of new employees about its requirements and the opportunities available to them to learn Welsh and more about Welsh history and culture.

More generally, we will:

- continue to make Welsh part of our everyday way of working;
- source training opportunities that will help us deliver this element of the Scheme;
- continue to encourage staff to take advantage of the opportunities for learning Welsh and support informal language interaction during the working day.

### **Facilities**

Our commitment to having a bilingual corporate identity extends to all signage displayed at our office premises. External signs within our ownership will continue to be bilingual, displaying our Welsh and English identity. Signs within the building will also be bilingual. Bilingual signs will give equal prominence to both languages in terms of format, size, quality and legibility.

We will achieve this by:

- making sure that new and replacement signs meet the requirements of the scheme going forward.

## **Information technology**

We welcome and encourage the use of Welsh and English in electronic communications. Email signatures, job titles and our corporate identity are provided in Welsh and English as standard on our computers. We provide bilingual out of office messages to all staff to add to their email system.

We recognise the need to develop information and communication technology over time to enable staff to work bilingually. For any staff who regularly write in Welsh, we will continue to provide software for checking spelling and grammar and Welsh interfaces where available, appropriate and required.

## **Procurement and contracts**

When we publish contract notices (via Sell2Wales) and invitations to tender (apart from the terms and conditions of contract), we do so in Welsh as well as English if a significant part of the contract requires Welsh-language skills to deliver the service, unless the notice is required to be published in the Official Journal of the European Union.

Tender responses received in Welsh are treated no less favourably than tenders in English and the time frame for tenders (including shortlisting and decision to appoint) is the same for Welsh responses as those in English.

We use effective and high-quality translation services to enable us to meet the requirements of the Scheme and ensure translated documents and text is accurate.

We will achieve this by:

- appointing translators and interpreters who are members of the Association of Welsh Translators and Interpreters or have satisfied our quality assurance criteria during a formal procurement exercise;
- providing instructions for staff handling contracts and procurement so that they meet the requirements of the Scheme;
- making sure contractors are aware of our Welsh Language Scheme and our commitment to the Welsh language.

## **Grants**

Qualifications Wales administers grants as part of its role as the regulator for qualifications in Wales. Most of the grants are awarded to awarding bodies to provide qualifications in Welsh that would otherwise only be available in English. Other grants are awarded to ensure equality in Welsh and English provision and to fund the

translation of information provided to schools, colleges and work-based learning providers about newly reformed qualifications.

Where we run competitive grant schemes, we make grant application packs available in Welsh and English. We make sure applicants are aware they may submit their applications in Welsh or English.

If we receive a grant application in Welsh, we respond to the applicant in Welsh and inform the applicant of our decision in Welsh. We treat applications for grants in Welsh no less favourably than we do applications in English, and apply the same timescales in our administration of grants in whichever language they are submitted.

We will maintain consistency across the grant-making process by building the requirements of the scheme into the grant making process.

## **Administering and monitoring the Scheme**

### **Monitoring**

Qualifications Wales' first Welsh Language Scheme was approved by its Board on 28 March 2019. The Board retains strategic ownership of the Scheme and will review it annually or until we are required by the Welsh Language Commissioner to comply with Welsh Standards. Responsibility for implementing and updating the Scheme in the intervening period is delegated to the Management Board, with the Executive Director for Finance and Corporate Services retaining oversight and reporting progress to the Management Board.

Actions identified are being incorporated into team plans, which in turn are incorporated into the organisation's Operational Plan, with delivery monitored by the Management Board. The Head of Corporate Governance is the monitoring officer, supporting the individual team managers, ensuring actions remain on target and handling any complaints received about the Scheme or its implementation. We will include reference to the Scheme in our Annual Report.

### **Internal arrangements**

The Scheme is publicised to our staff using a range of internal communications mechanisms. We hold briefing and training sessions, where appropriate, to raise awareness of the requirements of the Scheme and explain how it will affect their day-to-day work. We produce guidance where necessary to ensure staff know how to implement the measures contained in the Scheme and to prepare for the transition to Standards in due course. The requirements of the Scheme are incorporated into our way of working.

## **Reviewing the Scheme**

Qualifications Wales will review and update this Scheme annually. We will produce a Scheme until it has been replaced by Welsh Standards. The revised document will include a review of aims and actions for the following year.

Should there be a change in our functions or areas of responsibility, we will review the Scheme to ensure it is up to date and relevant.

## **Complaints**

We publicise information on our website about how to make a complaint to Qualifications Wales about any failure to comply with our Scheme or other complaints relating to the Welsh language. We welcome complaints as an opportunity to improve our services and performance. When we receive complaints, they are handled according to our existing complaints system. Any written complaints we receive in Welsh will be dealt with in Welsh. We keep a record of any complaints received and report them to the Board when they monitor the Scheme. Should we receive any complaints, we will briefly explain how we handled each complaint received, any actions we have taken to rectify the matter, if justified, and what we have learnt from any mistakes made.

Complaints received are handled by:

Head of Corporate Governance  
Qualifications Wales  
Q2 Building, Pencarn Lane  
Imperial Park, Coedkernew  
Newport NP10 8AR