



**COLEGAUCYMRU POLICY ASKS FOR  
THE NEXT WELSH GOVERNMENT**

**THE FUTURE OF FURTHER EDUCATION AND  
THE WELSH LANGUAGE CHALLENGE**

March 2021

This briefing expands on ColegauCymru's *Further Success: Policy Recommendations for the next Welsh Government in Post-16 Education and Lifelong Learning in Wales*. Together with our *Enabling Renewal: Further Education and Building Better Citizenship, Occupations and Business Communities in Wales* report, these documents present a vision and practical action for further education in Wales.<sup>1</sup>

## Summary

As a key part of Welsh life, considerations of the Welsh language run through all five of ColegauCymru's policy themes. Highlighted below is the Welsh language aspect from each theme, and how the next Welsh Government can support the further education sector to continue to deliver provision and support through the medium of Welsh.

## Background

For the year ending 30 September 2020, the Annual Population Survey reported that 28.8% of people aged three and over were able to speak Welsh. This figure equates to 872,200 people.<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the current Welsh Government's Welsh language strategy, *Cymraeg 2050*,<sup>2</sup> states that the target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050 was based on census data and that progress towards this target will be monitored using future census data. The strategy emphasises that Wales needs to reach a position where the Welsh language is an integral element of all aspects of everyday life. In order to realise the *Cymraeg 2050* vision, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol produced *Towards Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers Further Education and Apprenticeship Welsh-medium Action Plan*.<sup>3</sup> The plan sets out how post-compulsory education and training can help ensure the target of one million Welsh speakers is met. It not only supports the *Cymraeg 2050* policy, but also contributes to the aim of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015<sup>4</sup>: "a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language".

Colleges in Wales are supportive of the *Cymraeg 2050* strategy and the *Towards Cymraeg 2050* action plan. The specific Welsh language focussed areas below underpin how ColegauCymru would like to see the language supported by the next Welsh Government.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://gov.wales/welsh-language-data-annual-population-survey-october-2019-september-2020>

<sup>2</sup> <https://senedd.wales/Laid%20Documents/GEN-LD11108/GEN-LD11108-e.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [towardscymraeg2050.pdf \(colegcymraeg.ac.uk\)](https://www.colegcymraeg.ac.uk/towardscymraeg2050.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [150623-guide-to-the-fg-act-en.pdf \(futuregenerations.wales\)](https://www.futuregenerations.wales/150623-guide-to-the-fg-act-en.pdf)

## Expanding citizens' entitlement and engagement with education

In 2019/20 of 323,255 learning activities at colleges in Wales, 10,205 were delivered through either Welsh or bilingual learning and assessment.<sup>5</sup> If the next Welsh Government accepts Colegau Cymru's recommendation of changing the statutory basis of education to allow for funded entitlement to access a first Level 3 qualification up to and including all those to age 25, the medium of delivery must be taken into account. Learners should have the option to complete a Level 3 qualification and assessment in the subject of their choice through Welsh. This means having the practitioners in place with the language skills necessary to deliver effective teaching. The Cymraeg Gwaith scheme currently running in colleges, which sees practitioners gaining confidence in their use of the language, has proved successful. However, more specific training will be needed to ensure all practitioners are confident to deliver their entire curriculum through Welsh.

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that online learning has become the new normal for the majority of learners across the country. Welsh speaking or Welsh learners should be encouraged to consider using Welsh language settings when setting up devices where they are sufficiently competent in order to boost their linguistic skills. This would also extend to using Welsh language software to use functions such as spell check.

Additionally, all learning materials should be digitalised in Welsh. This improves accessibility and helps Further Education Institutions (FEIs) to meet Welsh Language Standards. Whilst resources are currently less frequently published in Welsh, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated expansion in online/blended learning should be seen as an opportunity to pool resources and deliver far more blended resources bilingually.

While online learning has become a necessity for the majority of learners, many areas which suffer from poor connectivity are situated in rural areas of Wales. These are often areas where there is a high concentration of Welsh speakers. Therefore, additional consideration needs to be taken for learners in these areas who risk digital and linguistic marginalisation.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Further-Education-and-Work-Based-Learning/Learners/Further-Education/learningactivitiesfurthereducationinstitutions-by-subject-mediumofdelivery>

## A coherent and connected system that includes flexible and valued qualifications

Colegau Cymru believes there is a need to develop a coherent and connected system of qualifications that are flexible and valued by learners and employers alike.

In terms of funding, the existing post-16 allocation methodology promotes institutional competition. By altering the existing funding methodology and moving towards a methodology whereby individual learner needs are prioritised, there would also be further scope for participation in Welsh medium study. Fluent Welsh speakers that have attended English language schools could be exposed to post-16 courses taught through the medium of Welsh where beneficial and appropriate.

Colegau Cymru advocates for creating and developing progressive, fluid qualifications which are not limited to studying for set time periods or for a certain number of hours per week. It is imperative that such qualifications would be appropriately regulated and accredited to ensure that their reputability is maintained, and available in both Welsh and English. The next Welsh Government should outline standards and assessment methods required to award such qualifications. This would also mean having the workforce in place with sufficient Welsh language skills in order to assess these qualifications.

## Entitlement to wellbeing for learners and staff

Colegau Cymru believes that all learners and staff at FEIs in Wales should receive high quality mental health provision.

Regardless of which post-16 institution a learner chooses once they leave school, support must be readily available in their language of choice. If a learner has accessed their mental health services through the medium of Welsh while they attended school, for example, then this service should still be available to them as they transition to a post-16 institution. The further education sector should receive adequate support to be able to provide bilingual services to learners. The next Welsh Government should ensure that enough professionals receive training in the mental health field to be able to work confidently through the medium of Welsh. People who choose to access these services through the medium of Welsh should not have to wait any longer than those who chose to access through the medium of English. All relevant resources, reading materials and online services should be available bilingually.

## Better skills and business engagement

ColegauCymru believes there is a need to develop better skills and business engagement.

Looking at international best practice Wales could benefit from a focused national institution dedicated to vocational education and training, which also enables staff to maintain their real-world professional skills. In establishing such a Centre, Wales could build on examples from the Basque Country, most obviously *Tknika*. The Centre works and teaches through the medium of Basque as opposed to Spanish. Similar to Welsh, the Basque language is spoken by a small number of the population (751,500 in 2016<sup>6</sup>). However, as seen with TKNIKA, it is highly regarded, and the Basque further education sector is essential to the economic development of the country. ColegauCymru believes that in establishing a dedicated vocational education training sector in Wales, we can promote the Welsh language and ensure its importance to businesses in Wales.

Likewise, business and skills support need to be available in both English and Welsh. Welsh language provision and development needs to be central to skills planning and labour demand, and this includes discussions at Regional Skills Partnerships, the Wales Apprenticeship Advisory Board and the Wales Employment and Skills Board.

## Further education workforce fit for the future

ColegauCymru calls for the next Welsh Government to create a further education workforce that is fit for the future.

The further education sector would benefit from a new approach to the implementation of statutory professional standards to aid professional development, innovation, leadership, and collaboration. By adopting a mandated model, the further education sector will be better equipped to provide the highest standard of teaching to benefit learners. These standards would be used to inform curriculum development, design job and person specifications, act as a benchmarking tool, and to encourage innovation as well as helping to place the Welsh language at the heart of learner programmes.

When considering how best to attract the most qualified industry professionals into the college setting, it is important to consider the benefits of working in industry against working in the post-16 sector. Currently industry professionals are likely to achieve a higher salary working in industry rather than entering the further education sector to teach learners. This issue is further heightened when encouraging Welsh language industry professionals to enter the sector. Approximately 872,000 people speak Welsh in Wales. Inevitably, the number of industry professionals that also speak Welsh to a standard in which they are confident to teach is an additional challenge when attempting to attract them to the further education sector. Consideration should be given to the mandatory requirements of Welsh language ability in both professional standards and also in any

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.hellabasque.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Euskara-Infographic-2.png>

newly developed Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) programmes for both vocational and academic lecturers.

## Conclusion

The further education sector in Wales is supportive of the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 strategy and through these policy asks hope to embed the Welsh language at the core of its work. All colleges have a remit to work towards meeting the Welsh-medium targets set to develop Welsh language provision as well as the Welsh Language Standards.

However, this work will not be done without the aid of the next Welsh Government. Support for greater Welsh language provision will be needed by the sector, be that mental health provision or educational resources. Similarly, young people will also need encouragement to access their education through the medium of Welsh and adult learners will need support to develop and use their language skills, as we build a future workforce with strong Welsh language skills.



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