

WGIR19 Unigolyn 01 | Individual 01

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

[Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol](#) | [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee](#)

[Strategaeth Ryngwladol Llywodraeth Cymru](#) | [Welsh Government's International Strategy](#)

Ymateb gan: Unigolyn | Evidence from: Individual

Headlines/Executive Summary

1. Cardiff University is the **largest provider of Modern Language degrees in Wales**, providing degrees, teaching and researching 8 languages (French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Italian, Catalan)
 2. Cardiff University's current provision of professional training and research specialism in **translation is the largest program in Wales**.
 3. Cardiff Modern Languages accounts **for over 60% of the undergraduate intake to degrees in Modern Languages, Translation and related joint honours programmes in Wales**. Cardiff graduates over 150 students with a Modern Languages and Translation Studies degree.
 4. If Cardiff University ceases all Modern Languages degree provision, **significant 'cold spots' for degree level language provision** will emerge in South and South East Wales discouraging learners from studying languages in Wales and narrowing provision for Welsh and UK students.
 5. Cardiff Modern Languages **makes sector-leading interventions to support the teaching of Modern Languages in schools in Wales**, having worked with over 80% of secondary schools in Wales through the MFL Mentoring project.
 6. Closing all Modern Language degree programs at Cardiff **would be at odds with the Welsh Government's Programme for Government's** commitment to Modern Foreign Languages (2021-26); its £7m investment in the **Global Futures strategy** for international languages (2015-26); and its **International Strategy** pledge to support the language skills of young people as part of its **global responsibility** (2021-26).
 7. In 2024-5, a mere **11 students are studying Modern Languages PGCE in the whole of Wales**, of whom 9 are studying for a PGCE in Modern Languages in the Cardiff region, indicative of a chronic shortage of modern language teachers essential to deliver the new Curriculum for Wales. The closure of
-

Modern Languages at Cardiff will **decimate an already fragile language ecosystem and the supply of language teachers in Wales.**

8. The cessation of Modern Languages at Cardiff would result in **no degree level provision in German in Higher Education in the Cardiff and South Wales area.** (Germany is Wales's second largest export market) **and no degree level provision for Japanese and Portuguese in Wales.**
 9. Modern Languages are pivotal to the delivery of **Cymraeg 2050** and the ambition of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2025. Learning multiple languages enables students to capitalise on early language development in Welsh and aids cognitive development and respect and recognition for **home, heritage and community languages.**
 10. Ceasing all Modern Languages degrees at Cardiff University undermines **Anti-Racism Wales commitments** at Wales's largest University. By signalling that 'English is enough', Cardiff University will be seen as reinforcing Anglo-normative linguistic and cultural hierarchies in a country committed to bilingual and multilingual communities.
 11. For **Future Generations** of young people in Wales to thrive, language skills **are key requirements for the success of the Welsh economy.** The UK market for language services is the largest outside the United States and China, with an estimated market size of £1.94-£2.20 billion in 2022. Young people in Wales will be disadvantaged in such a competitive market with the largest Higher Education provider unable to train and develop the translation, interpreting and global communications needs of an increasingly global Welsh workforce.
 12. The planned new **School of Global Humanities** has been met with interest both internally and externally. This will be perceived as an innovative and even sector-leading project and therefore enhances Cardiff's reputation. However, the reputational gains of the development of a Global Humanities approach will be lost without the presence of international languages at degree level. **This project will simply not be credible without languages.**
 13. Withdrawal of Modern Languages at Cardiff would **tarnish Wales's international reputation** as a globally connected and welcoming nation that is open for business with the rest of the world.
 14. Withdrawal of Modern Languages provision at Cardiff will embolden and enable leaders in Higher Education who are overly reliant on data analysis to determine educational futures, creating **a domino effect for provision in Wales.**
-

Cardiff University Modern Languages: a Pipeline of Language Graduates in Wales

Cardiff University is the largest provider of Modern Language degrees in Wales, providing degrees in 7 languages (French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Italian) and professional training and academic specialism in Translation studies. *Annually, over 150 students graduate with a degree from Cardiff Modern Languages.* In 2024, Cardiff Modern Languages accounted for over 60% of the undergraduate intake to degrees in Modern Languages, Translation and related joint honours programmes in Wales.

There will be a significant 'cold spot' for degree level provision in South Wales, should Cardiff University Modern Language degrees cease. *No Modern Languages degree provision is offered at the University of South Wales, whilst Cardiff Metropolitan offers only a language option (Mandarin Chinese, French and Spanish) within International Tourism Management.* The cessation of Modern Languages at Cardiff would result in no degree level provision in German in Higher Education in the Cardiff area. Germany is Wales's second largest export market. The loss of Cardiff University Modern Languages provision will impoverish the South Wales region economically, social and culturally.

In 2024-5, **11 students are studying for a Modern Languages PGCE in the whole of Wales**, of whom 9 are studying for a PGCE in Modern Languages at Cardiff Metropolitan. There is a chronic shortage of modern foreign language skills in Wales, especially in the **teacher pipeline** that is essential to deliver the new Curriculum for Wales. The closure of Modern Languages at Cardiff University will decimate an already fragile language ecosystem and the supply of International Language teachers into schools.

Why it Matters: The closure of Modern Languages at Cardiff will erode significantly Wales-wide provision in graduate language skills and attributes, with the possibility of total loss of Modern Language degree level provision in the next 5 years.

Cardiff University Modern Languages: Economic and Social Impacts

The UK market for language services is the largest outside the United States and China, with an estimated market size of between £1.94 and £2.20 billion in 2022. Removing degrees in Modern Languages and Translation at Cardiff will remove access to valuable degree level training and support for students from diverse backgrounds. It also means that language specialists will not remain in the city

and the region after their studies to contribute to the language industry and allied growth professions (marketing and sales, export and trade relations, global communications). Nor will they benefit from further professional development provided by colleagues in Translation at Cardiff, whose research and scholarship has positive impacts on the Interpreting and Translation industry.

Cardiff University Modern Languages provide core support through teaching, research and outreach to key strategies and policy innovation in Wales. Modern Languages are central to the ambitions of Wales **Future Generations Act and its 7 wellbeing objectives**, above all 'a Wales of Cohesive Communities' and a 'Globally Responsible Wales'. Language learning and support for multilingualism is key to ensuring we continue to respect and celebrate the rich cultural diversity of Wales - as evident in the fact that over 160 languages are spoken in Welsh schools.

Why it Matters: The current proposals to withdraw degrees in Modern Languages and Translation will have a direct economic impact on the Cardiff region and Wales more widely, specifically in terms of their detriment to the Interpreting and Translation Industry.

Cardiff University Modern Languages and Curriculum for Wales

The Curriculum for Wales 2022 puts language learning at its core. International Languages are central to the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience and the vision for 'ethical and informed citizens of Wales and the world', one of its key four purposes. The CfW requires schools to introduce International Languages from Year 5 in primary schools. **Cardiff University Modern Languages are instrumental in providing support for developing such primary language school provision**, building the training and resources for primary school teachers, with key resources, such as a primary languages toolkit.

Cardiff University Modern Languages hosts **MFL Mentoring, a flagship project promoting the uptake of modern languages in schools in Wales, the UK and globally**. It was the recipient of the Threlford Cup in 2017, awarded by the Chartered Institute of Linguists for most inspiring schools outreach project. It has worked with 182 secondary schools in Wales (over 80% of all Welsh schools), English-medium, bilingual and Welsh-medium, and approx. 30,000 13-14-year-old learners since 2015 to inspire a love of languages and cultures. Approximately 35-40% of mentored learners who are undecided before the mentoring intervention go on to indicate that they would indicate they will study a modern language at GCSE. The project triples on average the national average for modern languages

at GCSE (10.35% in 2024). This project provides vital support for the languages pipeline in schools in Wales.

Why it Matters: The loss of Cardiff Modern Languages teaching, research and outreach will jeopardise critical support for Curriculum for Wales development and design, professional teacher support and vital international experiences 'at home' for younger learners.

Cardiff University Modern Languages and Cymraeg 2050

Modern Languages are pivotal to the delivery of Cymraeg 2050 and the ambition of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050. Modern Languages enable students to capitalise on multiple language learning to improve understanding and skills in Welsh. Language learning has a pivotal role to play in Wales' anti-racism and diversity agenda. **At a time when we should focus on decolonizing our curriculum, Cardiff will be seen as reinforcing Anglo-normative linguistic and cultural hierarchies.**

Why it Matters: Without the ability to study a language to degree level, Cardiff University signals to the wider world that 'English only' is an adequate approach to engagement beyond the UK, undermining its commitment to an anti-racist Wales and its status as a University of Sanctuary.

Cardiff University Modern Languages and the Programme for Government

Modern Foreign Languages are a priority area for the current Welsh Government administration and the only subject directly referenced in the current programme for government. Since 2015, the Welsh Government has invested **over £7m in support for Modern Languages in Wales through its Global Futures programme.** Cardiff University Modern Languages has been a critical partner in such endeavours through the leadership of the Cardiff Confucius Institute, the hosting of the pan-Wales Routes into Languages Cymru network (school outreach in primary and secondary schools) and the sector-leading MFL Mentoring providing support to over 30,000 younger learners in secondary schools in Wales to take up a language at GCSE.

Why it Matters: Disinvesting in Cardiff University Modern Languages will devastate the support for Welsh national priority areas and undermine the excellent work of Modern Languages teachers on the ground in Wales.

Cardiff University Modern Languages and Wales' Internationalisation strategy

Wales is a progressive out-ward facing nation with ambitions to leverage its unique economic, social and cultural assets to support its people and communities and its global responsibility. The Welsh Government has made an explicit commitment to Modern Languages in its current 5 year International Strategy with the aim of, 'demonstrating global responsibility by using Curriculum for Wales 2022 so students [...] are equipped with the skills to compete in the global economy, including modern languages' (p. 12)

Cardiff University Modern Languages has been a key supporter of Wales international strategy, hosting key delegations to the capital city as part of cultural exchange and partnership building, for example recently for the year of 'Wales in Japan', and as a hub for cultural activities for the Goethe Institute and the Cultural Office of the Spanish Embassy. Cardiff University Modern Languages supports students through over 80 partnerships across the globe – from Peru to Japan – offering sector-leading student mobility.

Why it Matters: Without Cardiff Modern Languages, Cardiff as a city and Wales lose critical connections to international partners and University students would lose international experiences that change lives and its soft power potential.

Cardiff University Modern Languages and International Partnerships

Withdrawal of Modern Languages at Cardiff University would tarnish Wales's international reputation as a globally connected and welcoming nation that is open for business with the rest of the world.

In 2025, the year that the Welsh Government has designated the **Year of Wales in Japan**, it is particularly ironic that the only degree-level Japanese programme in Wales is threatened with closure. **The Japanese Embassy has expressed deep concern at this development** and has requested (so far without success) a meeting with the Vice Chancellor. The School of Modern Languages has on several occasions been one of the destinations during visits by the Japanese Ambassador to Wales, and the German Ambassador has also visited in recent years. Germany is Wales's second largest export market, with numerous German businesses based in the country.

The School of Modern Languages also maintains close relationships with key partner organizations such as Goethe Institut (Germany), Cervantes Institute

(Spain), Camoes Institute (Portugal) and Japan Foundation, not least by working in partnership with these organizations to give people in the Cardiff and Wales more widely access to official language examinations. These examinations help people in Wales to evidence their language skills and promote their international employability, but also make Cardiff a very visible point of contact for the overseas partner institutions. The withdrawal of Modern Languages at Cardiff University therefore has the potential to signal to the wider world that Wales is not living up to its commitments to internationalization.

Why it Matters: Cardiff University is a high-profile provider of Modern Foreign Languages qualifications and is a key point of contact for other nations and their representative organizations who wish to engage with Wales. Withdrawal of Modern Languages at Cardiff has the potential to damage perceptions of Wales's international agenda.

Cardiff University Modern Languages: a 'Death Spiral' for Languages:

Withdrawal of Modern Languages provision at Cardiff will embolden and enable other Welsh Higher Education leaders who are overly reliant on standardised data analysis to determine academic futures, creating a domino effect for provision in Wales. We know that leaders across the sector are taking similar data-driven approaches to decisions on withdrawal from disciplines, which are often to the detriment of Modern Languages and other smaller humanities disciplines. This will not only lead to a **narrowing of provision in the UK more widely, but may have specific effects on the people of Wales in terms of their ability to access study of Modern Languages in Higher Education.** We are already aware of at least one other Welsh institution where languages are under threat and others have experienced significant cutbacks in recent years that leave them vulnerable. The closure of Cardiff will affect perceptions of Modern Languages in Wales and make it less likely that these other units will survive.

Why it Matters: If the closure of Cardiff University Modern Languages goes ahead, this is unlikely to remain the only closure of such a unit in Wales, amplifying the negative consequences for Wales's internationalization agenda set out above.
