

Senedd Cymru

Pwyllgor yr Economi, Masnach a Materion Gwledig

Ymchwiliad: Llwybrau prentisiaeth

Cyf: AP24

Ymateb gan: Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

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Welsh Parliament

Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee

Inquiry: Apprenticeship pathways

Ref: AP24

Evidence from: Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol



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6 February 2025

Dear Committee,

Ref: Apprenticeship Pathways Consultation for the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present evidence to the Committee's consultation on apprenticeship pathways.

This letter summarises the main messages of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (the Coleg). We would be very happy to elaborate as we consider that the area of apprenticeships is of paramount importance in the context of expanding the use of Welsh. We recognise that this discussion is taking place when the sector has faced cuts and we see bilingual development as a core part of suitable and fair investment in the apprenticeship sector.

The Coleg creates and promotes training and study opportunities in Welsh by working with further education colleges, schools, universities, apprenticeship providers and employers. We inspire and encourage everyone to use their Welsh language skills, with the aim of creating a bilingual workforce, including the education workforce itself. The Welsh Government has designated the Coleg to advise Medr (the Tertiary

Education and Research Commission) in relation to its statutory duties relating to the Welsh language.

Main messages

We consider it necessary to:

- **Set requirements relating to the Welsh language in occupational frameworks and standards**
- **Enable Welsh-speaking apprentices to gain Welsh-medium experience**
- **Commission a full analysis of the Welsh-medium routes available to prospective apprentices, and the gaps that need to be filled**
- **Consider the linguistic dimension when planning access for underrepresented groups**

What follows focuses on those elements of the consultation questions that are relevant to the College's current activities in apprenticeships.

Background

The Coleg was given responsibility for the area of Welsh and bilingual apprenticeships in 2018, and in 2019 our [Welsh medium Further Education and Apprenticeship Action Plan](#) was launched by Kirsty Williams, then Minister for Education. The Action Plan targets *all* learners and apprentices, regardless of their Welsh language skills.

As a result of receiving funding through the Collaboration Agreement, the Coleg introduced a development grant model to the apprenticeship sector in 2022/23 to employ assessors in the areas of Health and Care and Childcare, as well as Welsh language coordinators. The scheme was extended in 2023/24 and 35 assessors are now funded in the apprenticeship sector through the grants. The Coleg has representation on the Colegau Cymru Work-Based Learning Group and engages regularly with NTfW.

The number of learners studying some of their course bilingually (B3) has increased very significantly in the work-based learning sector since the Coleg became involved in the sector. The number of learners studying their course in Welsh or very extensively in Welsh (C1/B1) has not changed

significantly over the period of the Action Plan and this will be a focus for the work in the next period.

Setting requirements relating to the Welsh language in occupational frameworks and standards

There is an urgent need to increase expectations for the Welsh language within apprenticeship frameworks and in the vocational standards (NOS) to fill skills gaps in Welsh. Although there are general occupational standards for developing language skills, there are no linguistic standards for specific fields or sectors.

For example, in an apprenticeship in a field such as health and care, apprentices should complete part of the apprenticeship through the medium of Welsh. For those with few or no skills in Welsh, they should be required to learn some Welsh through courses provided by the Canolfan Dysgu Cymraeg and should then be reinforced in the apprenticeship provision. Areas of demand for workers with skills in Welsh such as health and care, childcare, education and training, the public sector and agriculture could be prioritised in this regard consistent with the Coleg's Welsh Further Education and Apprenticeship Action Plan and Government priorities.

Enabling Welsh-speaking apprentices to gain Welsh-medium experience

Procedures need to be put in place to facilitate the experience of Welsh-speaking apprentices. For example, it should be ensured that employers plan to provide a Welsh-speaking mentor to support Welsh-speaking apprentices. The size of employers should be taken into account when imposing such a condition: it could be done expediently in large public institutions such as local authorities, health boards and police forces.

These developments will need to be monitored to ensure that there is an accessible pathway for any apprentice to complete the apprenticeship through the medium of Welsh. This is also compatible with a suggestion made by the Welsh Communities Commission to offer Welsh-medium apprenticeships in areas of higher density linguistic significance and we recommend acting on this suggestion.

In order to achieve the goal of increasing expectations relating to the Welsh language in frameworks, it is important to work with partners e.g. Colegau Cymru, the further education colleges, the apprenticeship providers (and universities where relevant) and of course with individual employers. Being able to develop workforce skills is key to economic prosperity and that includes developing language skills to enable service delivery through the medium of Welsh.

Commissioning a full analysis of the Welsh-medium routes available to prospective apprentices, and the gaps that need to be filled.

One key piece of work that needs to be done to ensure that good practice can be shared is a full analysis of which pathways are already available for apprentices wishing to complete an apprenticeship in Welsh.

A requirement should be placed on RSPs to collect and share information about apprenticeships available through the medium of Welsh at various levels, and to take steps to fill gaps as a result.

There are effective examples of sharing knowledge with potential apprentices in some areas. The North Wales Regional Skills Partnership has created a [handbook mapping apprenticeship pathways](#) and Welsh/bilingual medium provision. This is good practice and offers a potential pattern for the other partnerships. All partnerships should be encouraged to develop something similar for their areas.

Some of the Regional Skills Partnerships also have schemes that target young people and give them careers advice: the Cynllun Profi in the South West, and the toolkit that has been developed in the North. These developments refer to apprenticeships in general and it would be advantageous to see specific references to Welsh as a workplace skill to raise awareness of prospective apprentices. Nothing similar has been developed by the Regional Skills Partnerships for the Mid or South East.

Consider the linguistic dimension when planning access to underrepresented groups

As mentioned above, a detailed analysis of apprenticeship pathways is required, as well as the diverse linguistic skills that prospective apprentices have. There is a suggestion from the data on apprenticeships that fluent Welsh speakers are less likely to take an apprenticeship; that emphasises the need to support Welsh medium and bilingual apprenticeships. The

Welsh Government and Medr's work in the equality field should fully consider the linguistic dimension.

In conclusion

We trust that the contents of this letter will benefit the Committee. For further information please do not hesitate to contact Dr Dafydd Trystan, Registrar and Director of Further Education and Apprenticeships, on d.trystan@colegcymraeg.ac.uk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ioan Matthews". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'I'.

Dr Ioan Matthews
Chief Executive