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Introduction

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

In 2011, the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure was introduced, making Welsh an official language in Wales, introducing a set of legally binding requirements known as the Welsh Language Standards. The Measure introduced the principle that Welsh must be treated no less favourably than English.

No statutory requirements have yet been applied to Qualifications Wales, although we expect to be included in the Welsh Language Standards in time.

Qualifications Wales embraces its responsibilities as a public sector body. Although not yet expected to meet the Welsh Language Standards, we have confirmed our commitment to developing and implementing a Welsh Language Scheme (the Scheme) on a voluntary basis.

The current Scheme was put in place operationally from April 2019. The Scheme sets out how Qualifications Wales will deliver Welsh language services as part of its day-to-day operations.

The legislation that created Qualifications Wales requires us to have regard to ‘eight matters’ in considering how the organisation delivers its functions. One of these ‘matters’ states ‘the desirability of promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language’.

We were already delivering many of the commitments included in the Scheme prior to April 2019. However, the Scheme aims to create on-going focus to achieve further improvements in the delivery of a bilingual workplace and Welsh language provision throughout our work.

This progress report aims to provide information on what has already been achieved and is now embedded into working practices within the organisation, along with providing information on what the organisation aims to achieve in the forthcoming reporting period.

Discussions had been held with the Welsh Language Commissioner’s office prior to publishing the Scheme, and a copy was provided to them. Although the Commissioner was anticipating that the Standards may be applied to Qualifications Wales in 2020, they welcomed publication of the Scheme as an interim measure.
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 sets out how the organisation conducts its business. This includes existing operational approaches, as well as areas that the organisation wishes to improve and develop over time. It identifies the steps the organisation has already taken to deliver on its Welsh language commitments.

Specifically, it:

- articulates everything that we will do or make available in the Welsh and English languages;
- 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:

- Service delivery
- Policy-making
- Internal operations
- Administering and monitoring the Scheme

Some of the four areas cut across the organisation. Some are the responsibility of specific teams within Qualifications Wales. The overall Scheme is owned by the Board of Qualifications Wales, who, together with the Executive, take responsibility for ensuring we deliver on our commitments, and seek to make improvements where possible and appropriate.
Service delivery – the public interface

Corporate identity

Qualifications Wales’ name, address and logo are all bilingual. They form the core of our corporate identity and are used in all our publications, electronic communications, forms, presentations, exhibition materials, marketing and any other materials in the public domain.

We recognise that it is important that our corporate identity is accessible to all. We continue to protect, promote and monitor the use of our corporate identity in both languages, and ensure that staff are aware of guidelines and the requirements within the Scheme.

Written correspondence

In dealing with correspondence in Welsh, whether by letter or email, we respond in Welsh. All formal corporate correspondence issued by our Communications or Corporate Governance Teams is issued in both Welsh and English.

Work has begun to record individuals’ language preferences on our customer relationship management (CRM) database, which is used to record our stakeholder details and interactions, including targeted mailings.

We are proposing to record preferences for written and spoken communication in Welsh, English or either language, and will be discussing this approach with the Welsh Language commissioner before implementing it. Further work to the CRM database during 2020-21 will allow us to record and therefore generate individual preferences as and when required.

During the reporting period, we received a complaint concerning our compliance with our Welsh Language Scheme. This complaint concerned a response issued in English by mistake. We upheld the complaint, and to address the error, we took steps to raise awareness of the Scheme with employees, in particular early on in the induction of new starters and temporary workers.

Telephone Calls

Telephone callers using our published numbers are greeted in Welsh and English, and our out-of-hours service offers Welsh and English information options.

Visitors to our Reception

Visitors will see a sign inviting them to converse in Welsh, if that is their preferred language choice. Visitors can expect a Welsh-speaking member of staff to be available to assist them.

In order to achieve our service delivery targets for both telephone calls and visitors, colleagues who undertake reception duties receive induction in this area of work and are
fully briefed on all processes. The Facilities/Reception Desk Instruction manual is reviewed regularly and is kept at hand for colleagues covering the reception function.

A list of all bilingual members of staff is located on reception to facilitate dealing with phone calls and visitors wishing to use the Welsh language.

**Public Meetings and Events**

Public meetings convened by the organisation are always advertised and promoted bilingually, with invitations sent in both Welsh and English. We encourage participation in Welsh at events.

We ensure that staff who are attending events are fully briefed and that Welsh speakers make themselves easily identifiable.

When we publish reports or minutes of events we have run, we make these available in Welsh and English.

As part of the work undertaken on our project for the development of new qualifications for 14 to 16-year-olds to support the new curriculum, our ‘Qualified for the Future’ consultation included 13 stakeholder events all delivered bilingually, including a number that were targeted at learner engagement. At these events, we responded to audience language preference; event materials were provided bilingually, and Welsh-speaking staff were available to encourage the use of the Welsh language.

When we launched our first ‘Qualified for the Future’ consultation in November 2019, we used a number of communication formats, including a youth-friendly version of the consultation. These were all produced bilingually online. We received 667 responses in total, of which 50 were in the Welsh language.

**Publicity, publications and public notices**

All Qualifications Wales publicity, publications and public notices are provided simultaneously in Welsh and English. Resource materials to support our work are also produced bilingually.

Exceptions to this would only be where a report is not intended for the general public or has very limited readership. On occasion, documents published by other organisations that are only available in English, will be available on our website if we consider these to be of interest or useful to our stakeholders.

We published 74 publications/reports during 2019, all of which were bilingual. These included regulation and research reports, and also statistical information.
Materials we make available at public events and press notices are published simultaneously in Welsh and English.

**Social media**

Social media messages are published and responded to in Welsh and English. Over the reporting period, all 359 messages were published bilingually.

**Website**

The Qualifications Wales website is fully bilingual, with Welsh and English pages and including clear directions to enable viewers to switch from one language to the other.

We monitor our website and seek feedback – implementing improvements and changes where appropriate.

**Translation services**

We use high-quality translation services to ensure that text and documents are accurate and reflect our style and the Qualifications Wales ‘tone of voice’.
Policy-making – Corporate and Regulatory

Corporate policies

When approving a new policy or reviewing existing policies, we consider how a policy decision would affect the opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.

Our Equality Objectives include reference to our Welsh Language Scheme, ensuring that we continually improve how we operate as an inclusive organisation. As part of our Equality Objectives, we monitor the equal treatment of Welsh and English.

Our policy aims and objectives are communicated to our staff through our induction process and regular internal communication mechanisms.

Regulatory policy

Qualifications Wales’s 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 regard to is ‘the desirability of promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language’.

During 2019-20, we have reviewed our Welsh Medium Strategy, which sets out our regulatory approach. Our new strategy will be published during 2020-21.

We continue to seek to engage Welsh-speakers and encourage contributions in the Welsh language when we undertake consultations in relation to our regulatory functions. Our regulatory documents are available in Welsh and English.

We continue to monitor engagement with Welsh-speakers in any consultation processes to ensure representation and engagement.

Research

When commissioning research, we ensure that our research ethics actively consider any potential impact on the Welsh language.

We have ensured that we have built the requirements of the Scheme into research briefs and contracts, as appropriate.
**Internal operations**

**Staff recruitment**

We continue to ensure that commitments made in our Scheme relating to the recruitment of staff are upheld. These include considering the Welsh-language requirements of a post, advertising posts bilingually and offering to conduct job interviews in Welsh.

We make it clear that applications submitted in Welsh are welcome, and monitor the number of posts requiring Welsh-language skills. During the reporting year, we ran 20 recruitment campaigns. All campaigns were promoted bilingually on our website, with additional Welsh language portals utilised, such as Golwg 360, Lleol and Safle Swyddi.

**HR appointment and employee practices**

We have commenced the process of making a number of employment practices available in Welsh if requested. We aim to ensure that this is communicated fully to all staff during 2020/21. Examples of employee practices that will be made available are the disciplinary or grievance processes, and whistleblowing investigations.

**Training and skills**

We have continued to support Welsh language learning opportunities through funding staff members in personal study, as well as the promotion of the online learning modules developed by the National Centre for Learning Welsh.

We plan to further enhance and offer opportunities for senior managers and Board members to receive training to use the Welsh language in their roles.

We have considered how we can better include the Scheme into our new staff induction and continue to communicate on the Scheme (and its progress) to staff. We will be including the Scheme fully to our induction process during 2020-21.

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*Over the reporting period, 29 employees have undertaken online Welsh language skills training, while another staff member is being supported through taking evening classes.*

*Three employees attended residential sessions delivered by the National Centre for Learning Welsh, which immerses learners in the language to either build on existing language skills or start individuals on their Welsh-language journey.*

*In September, we delivered ‘Welsh Language in Context’ training in partnership with Ateb to raise awareness of the history of the Welsh language and build and develop employee understanding of our Welsh Language Scheme and the Welsh Language Standards. 35 staff members attended these sessions.*
**Information technology**

As detailed in the Scheme, our corporate identity within electronic communication is provided in both Welsh and English as standard.

Compliance with this approach will be included in the sample monitoring process we intend to put in place for 2020-21, to ensure the Scheme requirements are upheld moving forward.

We are also investigating whether it is possible to effectively use on-line translation tools to enable quicker translation of non-technical communications.

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We have recently introduced on-line Invigilator Training for examination officers in centres. This training was previously provided as part of a presentation and was not delivered in the Welsh language. The training is now provided via a fully bilingual on-line tool which includes module video clips covering key topics, and all supporting documents. The training continues to support centres by meeting needs in both the Welsh and English language.

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**Procurement and contracts**

We continue to ensure that all procurement and contract processes comply with our commitment in the Scheme.

We have appointed translators who are members of the Association of Welsh Translators and Interpreters.

We also continue to ensure that contractors are aware of our Scheme and our on-going commitment to the Welsh language.

**Grants**

We have continued to ensure that we are consistent in our approach to awarding grants and that the requirements of the Scheme are included in the process.
Forward Look

During 2020-21, we intend to further progress the following areas:

- Complete development of the customer relationship management (CRM) database to record our stakeholders’ individual language preference for both written and spoken communications.

- Further embed the expectations within the Scheme and commitment to the Welsh language within our induction process.

- Enhance staff awareness of employment practices available through the Welsh language.

- Review opportunities available for senior managers and Board members to receive training about using the Welsh language in their role.

- Create a monitoring process to monitor our compliance with our commitments in the Scheme across the operations of the organisation.

- Investigate whether it is possible to effectively use on-line translation tools to enable quicker translation of non-technical communications.

We will monitor delivery of these through our internal Operational Plan for 2020-21.

May 2020