**Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol Post-16 Strategic Board**

**Wednesday, 19 February 2025, via Zoom at 10:30**

**Present:**

Members (Further Education): Angharad Roberts, Grŵp Llandrillo Menai; Eva Rees, Pembrokeshire College; Helen Griffith, Coleg Sir Gâr and Coleg Ceredigion; Helen Humphreys, Gower College Swansea; Karen Lamprey, Nicola Buttle, Cardiff and Vale College; Leanne Jones, The College Merthyr Tydfil; Llinos Roberts, Coleg Cambria; Rachel Edmonds-Naish, Coleg y Cymoedd; Robin Gwyn, NPTC Group of Colleges; Arwel Rees-Taylor, Coleg Gwent.

Members (Apprenticeship Providers): Angharad Roberts, ITEC; Emma McCutcheon, Educ-8; Manon Rosser, Cambrian Training.

Members (Coleg): Meri Huws (chair); Aled Eirug, Chair of the Coleg Cymraeg; Kelly Edwards, ColegauCymru; Lisa Mytton, NTfW; Matthew McAvoy, CYDAG; Deio Owen, UCMC/NUS Wales.

Coleg officers: Ioan Matthews, Dafydd Trystan, Gwenllïan Griffiths, Elin Williams, Lisa O’Connor, Haf Everiss, Helen Davies, Lowri Pugh-Rees, Mabon Dafydd, Nia Phillips, Alaw Dafydd.

Observers: Ann Beynon, Coleg Board; Nia Griffith, Education Workforce Council.

Apologies: Nikki Neale, Gower College Swansea, Helen Humphreys as substitute; Geraint Jones, NPTC Group of Colleges, Robin Gwyn as substitute; Gwennan Schiavone, CYDAG, Matthew McAvoy as substitute; Marion Evans, Bridgend College; Jane Lewis, South West Wales Regional Skills Partnership; Yusuf Ibrahim, Cardiff and Vale College; Elen Rees, Cambrian Training, Manon Rosser as substitute; Alex Lovell, Qualifications Wales; Lora Jên, National Ambassador; Llŷr ap Gareth, Federation of Small Businesses; Michelle Kerswell, Adult Learning Wales; Richard Tobutt, South East Wales Regional Skills Partnership, Lucy Evans, Welsh Government.

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| Item  | Discussion and Action | Responsibility  | By / Date |
| 1. Welcome and apologies
 | * 1. Everyone was welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted as stated above.
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| 1. To receive and approve the minutes of the previous meeting
 | * 1. The minutes of the last meeting were received as an accurate record.
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| 1. General Update: Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
 | * 1. It was noted that the Coleg is preparing manifesto proposals for the 2026 Senedd election. The proposals will be shared with this board. The Coleg would like to focus particularly on apprenticeships as well as further education.
	2. [It was noted that Medr's response to the Coleg Cymraeg's initial advice had been published](https://colegcymraeg.ac.uk/en/news/news/coleg-cymraeg-advice-for-medr-affirms-that-all-learners-in-the-tertiary-sector-should-use-and-develop-their-welsh/). The Coleg has met with the chair of Medr and will present to the Medr board in May. Medr is committed to creating a national plan for the Welsh language across the tertiary sector during its first two years. It is hoped that the work will begin in the coming months. We will need to consider how the Coleg will feed into the process of creating the plan.
	3. A meeting has been arranged with Mark Drakeford and Vicki Howells. It was noted that the current crisis in Higher Education is causing some challenges.
	4. A number of amendments to the Welsh Language and Education Bill had been presented, which responded to a number of the concerns conveyed in the oral and written evidence given by the Coleg, and others, to the children, young people and education committee. It is now clearer what the implications will be for the tertiary sector, and the bill specifies various duties for the new Athrofa, the Coleg and Medr. The Coleg is still of the view that there should be more of a focus on the education workforce and on Welsh as a subject.
	5. A quick update was given on the latest meeting of the learner voice forum; please see the minutes of the meeting which are attached.
	6. An update was given on the work of the further education and apprenticeships team; see the attached update. A request was made for assistance in finding employers and apprentices to be part of a resource to support employers to enable their apprentices to use their Welsh.
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| 1. Draft budget for 2025/26
 | * 1. It was noted that the Coleg anticipates that the budget will be similar to last year’s with a slight increase. Any increase will be used to continue developing the current strands of the strategy, building on the findings of the review.
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| 1. Findings of a review of the further education and apprenticeship strategy 'Towards Cymraeg 2050'
 | * 1. It was noted that the strategy review is drawing to a close. The report has been completed and the Coleg is in the process of creating a new action plan.
	2. The review found that significant progress had taken place at B3 level across all curriculum areas. There has not been as much progress at B1 and C1 levels, and this will be the next focus. Progress has been made in relation to the number of staff who can and do teach through the medium of Welsh in the sector. An abundance of educational resources has been developed which are widely used. A strategic partnership has been established with Qualifications Wales.
	3. Everyone was thanked for their input into the review.
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| 1. Challenges and Opportunities relating to staffing
 | * 1. A presentation was given by Nia Griffith, Education Workforce Council (EWC); see attached. It was noted that the majority of Welsh-speaking registrants are young, that Welsh-speaking registrants are more likely to have a qualification at a higher level and that Welsh-speaking teachers are more likely to stay in the sector. There have been increases in all groups of staff who can speak and work through the medium of Welsh, except for further education learning support workers. It was noted that there had been a slight increase in the number of Welsh-speaking lecturers who work through the medium of Welsh between 2020 and 2024. There was also a higher increase in the number of work-based learning practitioners working through the medium of Welsh.
	2. A question was asked about whether any research had been done on the true language levels of individuals who self-declare their Welsh language skills, and whether some identify their language skills as being lower than they are. The EWC is trying to improve the quality of its data every year. The short-term intention is to provide a better explanation for the definition of the three categories of Welsh language skills. A question was asked about the possibility of holding focus groups to enable further discussion. It was agreed that this could be considered. A question was asked about whether there is data on where teaching assistants who leave the profession go. The EWC noted that it is currently collecting more of this type of data and that this could be explored. A question was asked about whether there is collaboration between the EWC and the regional skills partnerships. It was noted that there was occasional collaboration to work on various projects. It is intended to look at the data regionally, and the work that has already been done shows that there is a big difference between the average age across the regions of Wales.
	3. Nia was thanked for communicating the data with such enthusiasm.
	4. Members were divided into groups to discuss the following points:
		1. Have you faced challenges in recruiting and retaining staff who can deliver in Welsh? Are there specific roles or areas that have been challenging?
			1. There was consensus that recruitment challenges continue, with institutions stating that roles were being advertised several times. Various subject areas were named that were challenging to recruit for, but there was agreement among the apprenticeship sector that recruiting health and care assessors was a particular challenge.
		2. How have you overcome the challenges? What new or innovative practice has been used to solve the challenge?
			1. Several examples of good practice were identified in response, including extensive collaboration with the relevant industries to make the most of their expertise. Examples were given of institutions’ models for growing their own talent, ensuring effective staff development plans and making effective use of the Cymraeg Gwaith scheme. One college noted that they are piloting an allowance scheme for teaching bilingually with an additional allowance given for achieving learning activity at level B1 or C1. Another college noted that they have an intensive Welsh language learning course.
		3. What would you like to see in order to improve the recruitment situation and retain staff who can deliver in Welsh?
			1. Several examples were noted such as ensuring a core element of Welsh in the PGCE PcET course, increasing the confidence of Welsh speakers and having a more co-ordinated way of ensuring a sufficient supply of internal and external assessors.
	5. The chair thanked members for their contribution to the discussion, and asked what the next steps would be. The discussion will feed into the development of the new further education and apprenticeship action plan as well as other plans by Medr or the Welsh Government. It is hoped that the good practice guide will also be revisited using some of the examples discussed.
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| 1. Learner Voice, update from UCMC/NUS Wales
 | * 1. An update was given by Deio Owen, UCMC President; see attached.
	2. UCMC is preparing manifesto proposals for 2026 and preparing students, especially the 16-18 cohort. Good practice is being shared between European student unions, including in the area of bilingualism and multilingualism. In a recent Welsh Government survey of students between 16 and 21 years of age, 41% indicated that transport was their biggest barrier to education, training and work.
	3. A question was asked about how students’ lack of confidence to study through the medium of Welsh can be resolved. It was felt that it was necessary to raise awareness of the provision and support available, identifying the 'opt out' model as an example of good practice. It was noted that this ensures that students are aware of the opportunities, and that when they receive opportunities, their confidence increases. It was noted that there is a need for better collaboration between schools and colleges.
	4. Deio was thanked for his contribution to the post-16 strategic board.
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| 1. Any other business
 | * 1. The next meeting will be held face to face in Wrexham on 20 May. Coleg Cambria was thanked for offering to provide a room. Further information will be shared in due course.
	2. It was noted that it would be useful to look at the attendance levels of the post-16 strategic board.
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