



**QAA**

# **Welsh Language Scheme**

**2012-15**

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## **Preface**

This is the Welsh Language Scheme (the Scheme) of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The Scheme has been prepared in accordance with section 14 (i) of the *Welsh Language Act 1993* and was revised and approved by the Welsh Language Commissioner on 9 October 2012.

The Scheme has also been approved by the Board of QAA and carries its full authority.

By reviewing our Scheme in 2011-12 we are demonstrating our continuing commitment to the Welsh Language Scheme.

# Introduction

1 This is the third edition of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA's) Welsh Language Scheme (Scheme), which builds on the two previously published in 2003 and 2008. The Scheme was approved by the Welsh Language Commissioner under section 14 (i) of the *Welsh Language Act 1993* on 9 October 2012.

2 QAA adopts the principle that in the conduct of its business in Wales, it will treat the English and Welsh languages on the basis of equality. The Scheme sets out how we intend to give effect to that principle when providing services to the general public and to our major clientele in Wales.

3 Our commitment is therefore to offer a bilingual service when working with universities, colleges, students and other parties in Wales, as far as is reasonable and practical, and this Scheme describes how we will do that. We report to the Welsh Language Commissioner annually on how we have fulfilled that commitment, and will continue to make those reports available on our website. We will also continue to work towards enhancing the Scheme.

4 We will consult with the Welsh Language Commissioner in advance about proposals which will affect the Scheme, or will affect the schemes of other organisations.

5 Through the contract with the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and Higher Education Wales, we will also meet the requirements of the HEFCW Welsh Language Scheme. Both schemes have been developed in parallel and appropriate liaison between the two organisations has taken place to ensure that the terms of the respective schemes are mutually supportive in pursuit of the principle of equality for Welsh and English.

6 The Scheme describes what we believe is a reasonable and practicable bilingual service to the public and our main stakeholders in Wales. It describes how we will:

- communicate with individuals, organisations and the general public in Wales when their preferred language is Welsh
- make arrangements to conduct reviews of institutions in whole or in part on a bilingual basis when there is an expressed preference from within an institution, or from an individual within that institution, to communicate in Welsh during the review
- make similar arrangements when providing advice to Government on the granting of degree awarding powers and university title, if there is an expressed preference by an institution to submit documentation and to hold visits and meetings in Welsh
- make arrangements for the processes associated with formal recognition and review of Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) in Wales to be conducted bilingually, if the AVAs in Wales prefer to submit documentation and to hold meetings in Welsh
- facilitate the bilingual conduct of formal meetings, seminars, consultation events and focus group meetings in pursuit of one or more of the aims of our mission.

7 We have divided this document into sections that we hope will make it easy for different readers to find out how the Scheme relates to their particular interaction with QAA.

8 To find out more about QAA, please see the [About us](#) pages on our website,<sup>1</sup> and in particular the publication *An introduction to QAA*, which is available in Welsh and English.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus)

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/documents/introQAA.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/documents/introQAA.pdf)

# Section 1: Bilingual services for the public

## Communicating with the public

### Written communication

9 We actively welcome correspondence - whether electronic or in hard copy - in Welsh, and will always reply to such correspondence in Welsh within the same time frame as correspondence received in English, including requests under the *Freedom of Information Act 2000*.

10 Correspondence that follows a verbal conversation in Welsh between a member of the public and QAA staff will be in Welsh (unless requested otherwise).

11 QAA has procedures in place for the translation of documents and other written materials into or from Welsh, through a contract with a translation services company. We aim to ensure all translators used by us are members of the Association of Welsh Translators and Interpreters. There is also some capacity within QAA to make short translations in-house.

### Telephone communication

12 We welcome telephone calls in Welsh and English. QAA has an enquiry line which is operated during office hours by Welsh-speaking staff. See the [Contact us](#) pages on our website for details.<sup>3</sup>

13 If enquiry line staff are not able to deal with the enquiry, a message will be left with QAA's Welsh Language Officer to contact the caller and deal with the enquiry.

14 If the Welsh Language Officer is not available, the caller will be offered a choice of a Welsh speaker returning the call on the same day or at the latest the next day, sending a letter in Welsh or continuing the call in English, with the commitment that any subsequent correspondence from us will be in Welsh.

15 Outside office hours, callers are welcome to leave messages in Welsh or English on the enquiry line's bilingual voicemail service.

16 We will work with our partners in Wales to increase awareness and uptake of this service, for example by establishing reciprocal links on websites and providing information materials at events.

### Events for the Welsh sector

17 Delegates and speakers at our events which are for the sector in Wales only are welcome to speak and present in Welsh, English or bilingually. For all major conferences and sector-wide events that are held in Wales for the Welsh sector only, QAA will provide simultaneous translation services if there is a demand. This will be decided based on answers to a direct question in invitations to the event.

18 The Head of QAA Wales will advise on the need for simultaneous translation based on the numbers expected, the nature of the event, and the demand for Welsh language provision called for by delegates.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/contactus](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/contactus)

19 Where simultaneous translation is provided, notices, invitations and associated documentation for such meetings will make it clear that simultaneous translation services will be available and that participants are welcome to contribute in Welsh or English.

20 If translation services are not provided, delegates and speakers can still speak in Welsh or English. Those who wish to speak in Welsh will be asked to provide a synopsis in English, either themselves or through someone else, selected before the event.

21 At least one Welsh-speaking representative will be present at all major conferences and sector-wide events held in Wales. They will welcome delegates and deal with any general queries in Welsh and will be identifiable through a badge indicating that they can speak Welsh.

22 We will ask delegates to rate the Welsh language provision at the event as part of a general evaluation questionnaire at the end of the event, and will use that data to evaluate and improve the provision.

23 Subject to the requirements of the *Data Protection Act 1998*, we will record the names of individuals and organisations who wish to conduct their business with QAA in Welsh.

## **Our public face**

### **Corporate identity**

24 For the conduct of our business in Wales, we will adopt a bilingual image and corporate identity. This will be reflected in the corporate name, address and standard factual information on stationery, for example, letter heading and business cards.

25 For all correspondence in Wales, bilingual stationery will be employed. (See also paragraphs 9-11.)

### **Signs**

26 We do not have a separate office in Wales. Should we have one in the future, we are committed to providing bilingual information signs, both internally and externally, for that office.

27 Where bilingual or separate signs in Welsh and English are provided, they will be equal with regard to format, size, quality, legibility and prominence.

### **Website**

28 Our website includes a bilingual section about our work in Wales.<sup>4</sup> Any revisions or additions to this or other bilingual sections are made in both languages simultaneously. We have systems in place to monitor and approve new or revised material, prompting authors to update Welsh language pages. We will continue to enhance those systems.

29 News items, press releases and articles about our work in Wales are published in both Welsh and English, and both languages receive equal prominence in the news section.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Wales](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Wales)

## **Publications and publicity**

30 Any publications - including circular letters - and publicity materials, such as leaflets, banners and promotional postcards, that deal exclusively with our work in Wales will be published in Welsh and English. Both versions will be made available at the same time and have equal prominence. Publications will be published on our website, clearly indicating that versions in the other language are also available.

## **Recruitment advertising**

31 Any vacancy advertised in the Welsh media will be advertised bilingually, with matching Welsh and English versions shown together. Any vacancy where Welsh language skills are essential will be advertised in Welsh only, with a footnote in English explaining the purpose of the advertisement.

32 We will formalise the role of Welsh Language Officer, who has responsibility for coordinating translations and supports the Head of QAA Wales in implementing the Scheme.

## **Section 2: Reviewing universities and colleges**

33 Our main interaction with universities and colleges is through one of several types of review:

- Institutional Review (of universities)
- review of colleges providing higher education courses (HE in FE)
- applications for degree awarding powers and university title
- review and licensing of Access Validating Agencies (AVAs).

34 We acknowledge that some higher education institutions in Wales, more so than others, operate within a context and ethos in which both the Welsh and English languages have equal currency in their routine activities. We respect this and seek to appoint bilingual reviewers and review secretaries for the smooth operation of the review process in such institutions.

## **Institutional Review**

35 In planning, conducting and reporting on Institutional Reviews in Wales, we are committed to treating Welsh and English on the basis of equality.

36 We conduct Institutional Reviews to see how effectively higher education institutions in Wales manage the quality and standards of their academic provision. Reviews are carried out on a rolling programme and involve meetings, site visits, the submission of documents by institutions, and a published report by QAA in Welsh and English at the end of the process.

37 Review teams will look at how institutions ensure that students can use their preferred language in assessment and examination. QAA has published supplementary guidance<sup>5</sup> to the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning*<sup>6</sup> for institutions in Wales specifically to support this.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/guidelines-assessing-Welsh.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/guidelines-assessing-Welsh.aspx)

<sup>6</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/quality-code-B6.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/quality-code-B6.aspx)

## **Review of colleges providing higher education courses**

38 In planning, conducting and reporting on reviews of colleges in Wales, we are committed to treating Welsh and English on the basis of equality.

39 QAA reviews directly-funded higher education delivered in further education colleges. The main purpose of the reviews is to ensure that colleges with higher education provision manage the student learning experience and meet their responsibilities for the academic standards and quality of their higher education provision within the context of their agreements with awarding bodies.

40 As with Institutional Review, the review teams will meet students and staff, who will be able to communicate in the language of their choice. Review teams will look at how colleges support students in using the language of their choice in assessment and examination.

## **Degree awarding powers and university title**

41 In planning and conducting arrangements in Wales for receiving applications for degree awarding powers and university title, and in their processing, we are committed to treating Welsh and English on the basis of equality.

42 QAA advises the Privy Council<sup>7</sup> on applications by institutions for degree awarding powers and university title. This well established process is based on rigorous criteria published by the UK Government and normally takes a year, involving both face-to-face meetings and submission of papers.

## **Review and licensing of AVAs**

43 In planning and conducting arrangements for reviewing and/or licensing AVAs in Wales, we are committed to treating Welsh and English on the basis of equality.

44 QAA regulates the national recognition of Access to Higher Education (Access to HE) courses in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.<sup>8</sup> We review and license AVAs to recognise Access to HE programmes and to award the Access to HE Diploma to students.

## **Conducting reviews**

45 In conducting all of the reviews described above, we are committed to recruiting reviewers (including student reviewers) and review secretaries who are bilingual, and we already have a number of Welsh speakers to call on.

46 When recruiting reviewers for reviews in Wales, we welcome applications from Welsh speakers by including Welsh language skills as a desirable skill in the person specification, depending on the existing number of and need for Welsh-speaking reviewers at the time.

47 The designated QAA Assistant Director identifies at the initial planning meeting with a university or college whether the review is conducted in full or in part in Welsh. Bilingual members of review teams in Wales also have the right to speak in Welsh during a review.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://privycouncil.independent.gov.uk>

<sup>8</sup> [www.accesstohe.ac.uk](http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk)



QAA will provide simultaneous translation facilities in such situations. If it is impractical to do so, we ask that the member of staff or the reviewer provide a synopsis or translation of what he or she said in Welsh or in English.

48 QAA will ask the institution, through bilingual correspondence, if the initial planning meeting will be conducted bilingually and will determine the need for simultaneous translation services.

49 Institutions are welcome to submit bilingual versions of the key documents we ask them to provide at the beginning of the review process.

50 We provide written guidance to staff and contracted reviewers to ensure comparability of service standards in both languages. Recruitment information and contracts for reviewers working in Wales will include details of what is expected under the Scheme when reviews are carried out, and we will continue to monitor compliance with the Scheme.

51 We collect feedback at the end of each review and will use this feedback to evaluate and improve the provision of Welsh language services offered during reviews.

52 In developing new review methods for Wales in the future, we will apply the same principles as described in paragraphs 45-51 of offering institutions a choice of languages during the reviews.

## **Section 3: Implementing and monitoring the Scheme**

### **The role of Team Wales**

53 The Scheme is monitored internally by the Head of QAA Wales and his/her staff, who are also members of Team Wales.

54 Team Wales is an internal group which coordinates, oversees and reports on our activities in Wales. It is chaired by the Head of QAA Wales and its members are drawn from across the organisation. Through Team Wales we are able to ensure adherence to the Scheme's principles by all QAA staff, both in day-to-day work and when new policies and initiatives are made.

55 The Scheme is a standing item on the agenda of Team Wales meetings, which take place three times a year. Any issues or concerns about the Scheme that arise are discussed by members. Through Team Wales, the Head of QAA Wales and Team members carry out annual reviews of the Scheme, looking at its effectiveness and performance, and monitor compliance against the terms of the Scheme.

56 Team Wales will also be used to consult the Welsh Language Commissioner about any new policies or initiatives that are relevant to partners and the public in Wales that may affect the Scheme.

57 Team Wales will continue to evaluate its work on an ongoing basis.

### **The Advisory Committee for Wales**

58 The Advisory Committee for Wales is a subcommittee of the QAA Board. Its role is to provide the QAA Board with advice on the development and provision of our services in Wales in line with the joint Service Level Agreement with the Higher Education Funding

Council for Wales and Higher Education Wales, including advice on the implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme. The Advisory Committee is also a means for liaising with Welsh Government departments and other bodies with an interest in quality and standards in higher education in Wales.

## **Staffing**

59 The Head of QAA Wales will complete annual reviews on whether the number and capacity of bilingual staff, and other arrangements under the Scheme, are sufficient to meet the commitments of the Scheme. Our aim is to have at least two members of staff based in our Gloucester office who are bilingual. We will also include Welsh language skills as a desirable criterion of the person specification when recruiting to certain areas within the organisation. Where Welsh language skills are essential for a post, we will seek to appoint a Welsh speaker.

60 It may on occasion be necessary, where difficulty has been experienced in recruiting staff with the necessary skills, to appoint a non-Welsh speaker to a post where the ability to speak Welsh is essential. However, such posts will be advertised and offered on the understanding that non-Welsh speakers will need, as condition of employment, to learn Welsh and attain a satisfactory level of fluency within a specified reasonable timescale. The level of fluency specified will be that which is required to fulfil the responsibilities of the post, and this will be made clear to applicants in the job details, as will QAA's support for learning the language.

61 We will encourage and support staff who want to learn Welsh or improve their Welsh-language skills, particularly those staff who work closely with the sector in Wales. This will primarily be done through the training and development element in the annual performance review cycle.

62 All new staff and contracted reviewers receive an introduction to the Scheme as part of their induction. They are also given desk instructions with details of their responsibilities under the Scheme and pointers to more information.

63 In addition, we plan to hold briefing events and produce publicity materials during the first year of the revised Scheme to promote it to existing staff and reviewers. Desk instructions will also be updated and disseminated.

64 A short information card with a summary of our obligations under the Scheme and details of who to go to for more help will be distributed to all staff.

## **Administrative arrangements**

65 The Scheme has been endorsed by the QAA Board and meets the requirements of HEFCW's Welsh Language Scheme. HEFCW contracts QAA to provide services in Wales.

66 QAA's commitment to the Scheme is reflected in the fact that the Chief Executive has strategic management responsibility for the Scheme, with the Head of QAA Wales as Scheme Manager.

67 We will use our normal purchasing procedures and monitoring arrangements to ensure that translators used are members of the Association of Welsh Translators and Interpreters and as such suitably qualified to provide an appropriate service.

68 We will ensure that, in contracting with its reviewers and others, they will implement all relevant elements of the Scheme on behalf of QAA when dealing with higher education institutions in Wales. Recruitment information and contract documents for reviewers working in Wales will be explicit about reviewers delivering an equally effective standard of service in both languages in pursuit of the overall purposes of review. Service expectations will be specified and compliance will be monitored.

## Monitoring

69 The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Head of QAA Wales and Team Wales meet our obligations to monitor the effectiveness of the Scheme.

70 The Head of QAA Wales will:

- continue to monitor the effectiveness of the arrangements for providing services in Wales on the basis of equality for Welsh and English
- ensure that new policies, procedures and publications are compatible with the terms of the Scheme
- monitor, with individual staff and teams within QAA, response times for correspondence received in Welsh and evaluate arrangements for meetings that include the Welsh-speaking public
- monitor the development and implementation of QAA's corporate image in relation to our work and activities in Wales
- monitor the arrangements for reviews of universities and colleges in Wales that are carried out bilingually
- monitor the incidence and nature of any complaints relating to the Scheme
- monitor adherence to the expectations in relation to provision of bilingual services as described in HEFCW's Welsh Language Scheme.

71 We will continue to monitor the Scheme in a structured way. The Head of QAA Wales will produce an annual report detailing any areas of improvement or weaknesses. If there are weaknesses, he/she will produce an action plan to remedy them. The report will also contain any proposed changes to the Scheme and outline our priorities for the next year. In addition, it will analyse the number and nature of requests for bilingual services and any complaints received. We will provide the Welsh Language Commissioner with an electronic copy of this report as part of the requirements of the Board's monitoring framework. (See also paragraph 55.)

72 We will produce a comprehensive report to the Welsh Language Commissioner every three years with a summary of the Scheme's performance during the previous three years and including any revisions/enhancements we propose to make to the Scheme.

73 The annual *Directors' report and financial statements* and *Annual review* will have a standard section on the Scheme and an update of activities undertaken in Wales during the reporting year.

## Publishing the Scheme

74 We will ensure that the general public and our main stakeholders in Wales are kept aware of the existence of the Scheme and its contents. The Scheme will be published on our website, together with annual monitoring reports, and will be referred to in our other publications aimed at the sector in Wales. We will publicise it at events by distributing an information leaflet and a mini-guide for students informing the public about the level of

bilingual services available. We will record a bilingual podcast and make it available on our website.

75 Other ways of publicising the Scheme will include:

- text in our standard documentation will refer to our bilingual policy
- guidance will be given to all staff and contracted reviewers about the Scheme
- information about the Scheme will be available on the QAA website
- bilingual stationery will be used when writing to individuals or institutions in Wales
- the principle of delivering an equally effective standard of service in both languages will be included in our annual review and other core operational documents.

## Comments on the Scheme

76 We welcome suggestions for improvements to the Scheme. All comments or suggestions should be addressed to the Head of QAA Wales in the first instance, and will be considered as part of the monitoring process. All complaints about the implementation of the Scheme will be investigated and the action taken will be highlighted in the reports to the Welsh Language Commissioner. We will continue to respect the confidentiality of complaints.

## Targets

77 We will measure the performance of the Scheme against specific targets and will review these targets annually as part of ongoing monitoring activities. The monitoring report to the Welsh Language Commissioner will detail performance against these targets. If, for whatever reason, the targets are not met, the report will explain why and identify the action to be taken to address the matter.

78 Specific targets to be monitored and evaluated on an annual basis (2012-15):

Activity	2012	2013	2014	2015
1) Facilitate and support staff to use the Welsh Language Scheme as part of their daily work, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• podcast on use of the Scheme</li> <li>• mini staff introduction pamphlet to be produced to supplement the existing desk guidance</li> <li>• review and update the existing desk guidance</li> </ul>	During 2012 During 2012  During 2012 and ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
2) Conduct a survey on QAA's bilingual services	During 2012		During 2014	

<b>Activity</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
3) Encourage the use of Welsh language services through marketing and promotional methods, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintaining and enhancing the Welsh language part of QAA's website</li> <li>• producing reader-friendly student mini-guide on the Scheme</li> <li>• developing reciprocal arrangements with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and other relevant bodies to promote QAA's services</li> </ul>	Ongoing  During 2012  During 2012 and ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
4) Develop QAA's role within the agenda of Welsh medium and bilingual provision by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meeting on a regular basis with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol</li> <li>• considering relevant issues through its review processes</li> </ul>	Annually  Ongoing	Annually  Ongoing	Annually  Ongoing	Annually  Ongoing

## **Aims met or ongoing from 2008 Scheme**

<b>Activity</b>
'Introduction to QAA' leaflet informing the public about the level of bilingual service available to be produced
Evaluation of the call centre provision for Welsh language services for the general public
Evaluation of the provision of bilingual services at major QAA events
Evaluation of the effectiveness of Team Wales
Evaluation of the provision of Welsh language services offered during reviews of institutions
Review of the extent to which the current bilingual capacity available to QAA is sufficient to provide a comparable standard of service in Welsh
Knowledge of the Scheme within QAA

**QAA 463 10/12**

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