

What is the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and what is its future?

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With the publication of its new Academic Plan in January 2017 and a Welsh Government Task and Finish group due to publish its report shortly, what is the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol? The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol is an initiative established to increase Welsh medium provision in Higher Education. It has an important role in terms of linguistic progression for those who attend Higher Education institutions, particularly in the context of the Welsh Government's target of [one million Welsh speakers by 2050](#).

Development

The origins of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol can be found in the [One Wales agreement](#) of the coalition Welsh Assembly Government between 2007 and 2011. One Wales included a commitment to establish:

a Welsh-medium Higher Education Network – the Federal College – in order to ensure Welsh-medium provision in our universities.

This was largely in response to increasing demand for such a body from those studying in Universities, pressure groups, and following initial work conducted by the [Higher Education Funding Council for Wales](#)

(HEFCW) (PDF 154KB) into Welsh-medium

provision in Higher Education, from 2001 onwards. Professor Robin Williams produced a [report in 2009 for the Welsh Government](#) on how the 'Coleg Ffederal' concept should be taken forward, which stated that the Coleg:



will not be a single, geographical entity and it will not be a degree awarding body in its own right, but will work with and through the existing higher education institutions (HEIs) in Wales (the Federal concept).

The Coleg was set up with a mission to ‘maintain, develop and oversee Welsh medium higher education provision in Wales’.

Policy context

The second strategic aim of the [Welsh-medium Education Strategy](#), published in 2010, was:

To improve the planning of Welsh-medium provision in the post-14 phases of education and training, to take account of linguistic progression and continued development of skills.

Two of the subsequent strategic objectives referred to the Coleg and its work:

S02.6: ‘To encourage partnership working between the higher education sector (including the planned Coleg Ffederal) and the post-16 sector on effective progression pathways for learners from post-16 provision into Welsh-medium higher education.

S02.7: ‘To improve the planning of pathways for Welsh-medium progression into and within Higher education, both in academic subject areas and in priority vocational areas.

The Coleg was also part of the [Welsh Government Policy Statement on Higher Education](#), 2013:

Through the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, the Welsh Government will continue to support the development of Welsh-medium higher education and a confident bilingual Wales.

In [Welsh-medium Education Strategy: next steps](#), published March 2016, the Welsh Government expressed the intention to:

Continue our discussions with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, Welsh Universities and Higher Education Funding Council for Wales to secure sustainable Welsh-medium



higher education provision, and consult on the vision for the Coleg in order to build on the initial success.

Structure

The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol was established as a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity in March 2011. All universities in Wales are members and the Coleg works through branches located across eight universities. The aim of the branches is to promote and oversee the activities of the Coleg within individual institutions and to act as a local point of contact for students.

Funding

Until April 2017, the Coleg was principally funded by HEFCW through annual grants. Funding for the Coleg is now the responsibility of the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Division, and [£5.4 million has been allocated](#) for the financial year 2017–18, in addition to £330,000 from HEFCW to support its scholarship scheme. During [budget scrutiny in November 2016](#) (PDF 565KB), the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams, said the change in the way the Coleg is funded would *'provide greater opportunity to align the activities of the Coleg with other Welsh Government priorities and initiatives and ensure best value for money'*.

Strategic priorities

The Coleg's first Academic Plan, published soon after its foundation in April 2011, outlined the Coleg's aims. The first aim was an overarching statement of its purpose:

To advance learning and knowledge by promoting, maintaining, developing and overseeing Welsh medium provision in higher education in Wales, working with and through higher education institutions in Wales.

The other aims expanded upon this statement:

- To oversee Welsh medium provision and to provide unity of purpose, cohesion and leadership through a national strategy;
- To create a permanent and robust structure, on a national basis, to secure full status for the Welsh language as a medium of teaching and research within universities;



- To enrich, deepen and broaden provision for students, stimulating and responding to demand, and increasing the number of students studying through the medium of Welsh.

New Academic Plan

The Coleg launched its new [Academic Plan: Towards 2020 and beyond](#), in January 2017. The introduction of the plan summarizes the Coleg's achievements thus far:

- **Provision:** The number of Welsh medium courses has increased, and there are currently over 900 degree courses where students can study part of their course through Welsh. 115 lecturers have been appointed at universities across Wales.
- **Scholarships:** The Coleg has awarded over 600 undergraduate and 50 masters scholarships to students studying all or part of their courses through the medium of Welsh, and has funded over 50 PhDs.
- **Training programs:** The Coleg has provided training for over 1,000 members of staff at 100 Staff Development workshops.
- **Technical infrastructure:** 700 Welsh language and bilingual digital resources are now available in 24 different subjects on the Coleg's e-learning platform, [Y Porth](#).

The new Academic Plan marks a new direction for the Coleg. As opposed to responding to bids submitted from individual universities, the Coleg will now aim to provide stronger strategic leadership. This will involve reducing the number of funded lecturing posts and moving towards subject grants. These funding agreements are due to come into force in 2017/18.

Evaluation of the Coleg and its future

In 2014, OldBell3 was commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales to conduct [An evaluation of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's progress to date](#) (PDF 1.83MB). The report made 17 recommendations for improvements, whilst concluding:

the Coleg has achieved a great deal in a short time and has been highly successful in gaining the trust and respect of a range of stakeholders across government and the higher education sector in Wales.



On [1 August 2016](#), the Cabinet Secretary for Education announced that '*following five years of operation, it is now an appropriate time to consider the role of the Coleg for the future.*' She announced the establishment of a Welsh Government task and finish group which aims to review the activities of the Coleg. This will include examining:

- How appropriate is the current model and structure of the Coleg and is it fit for the purpose of promoting and developing Welsh-medium higher education provision from 2017 onwards;
- Future funding options for the Coleg;
- The sustainability of the relationship between the Coleg and Welsh Higher Education institutions;
- The possibility of extending the remit of the Coleg to the post-16 sector;
- The role of the Coleg in response to the recommendations of the Diamond review and other recent policy developments.

On [2 November 2016](#), Kirsty Williams announced the group's membership, including the appointment of former Assembly Member, Delyth Evans, as chair. She also said that the 2017-18 budget allocation would provide the Coleg with stability until the group reports its findings. The Cabinet Secretary has informed the Children, Young People and Education Committee that the work of the group is nearing completion and that she will be seeing the report soon.

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