



Welsh Language Scheme

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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 Board (WLB) on 11 January 2008.

A draft of the Scheme was the subject of a consultation with higher education institutions in Wales, further education institutions in Wales, cognate bodies relating to these institutions, other organisations and members of the public in Wales. The Scheme has also been approved by the Board of QAA and carries its full authority.

By reviewing our Scheme in 2006-07 we are demonstrating our continuing commitment to the Welsh Language Scheme.

Introduction

1 The Welsh Language Scheme (the Scheme) of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) received the approval of the Welsh Language Board (WLB) under section 14 (i) of the *Welsh Language Act 1993* on 3 July 2003.

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 QAA intends to give effect to that principle when providing services to the general public and to its major clientele in Wales.

3 QAA is a private company, limited by guarantee, and is registered as a charity. The members of the company are the representative bodies of higher education institutions in the UK - Universities UK, GuildHE Limited, Universities Scotland and Higher Education Wales (HEW). Representatives of the higher education funding bodies in the UK sit on the Board of QAA (the Board); independent members are also appointed to the Board.

4 The higher education funding bodies in the UK contract with QAA on an annual basis in order to secure their statutory duties under the terms of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992*. The representative bodies of higher education institutions also commission services from QAA, funded through the subscription income from individual higher education institutions.

5 The mission of QAA is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. To achieve its mission, QAA works in partnership with the providers and funders of higher education, the staff and students in higher education, employers and other stakeholders, to:

- safeguard the student and wider public interest in the maintenance of standards of academic awards and the quality of higher education
- communicate information on academic standards and quality to inform student choice and employer understanding, and to underpin public policy making
- enhance the assurance and management of standards and quality in higher education and promote a wider understanding of the value of well-assured standards and quality
- promote a wider understanding of the nature of standards and quality in higher education, including maintenance of common reference points, drawing on UK, European and other international practice.

6 QAA will consult with the WLB in advance regarding proposals which will affect the Scheme, or will affect the schemes of other organisations.

7 Through the contract with the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and HEW, QAA 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.

8 The Scheme describes what QAA believes is a reasonable and practicable bilingual service to the public and its major clientele in Wales. The Scheme addresses how QAA will:

- communicate with individuals, organisations and the general public in Wales when their preferred language is Welsh
- make arrangements to conduct institutional reviews 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 for the purpose of the review
- make similar arrangements in pursuit of 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 conduct visits and meetings in Welsh associated with the purpose
- make arrangements for the processes associated with formal recognition and review of Authorised Validating Agencies (AVAs) in Wales to be conducted bilingually, if there is expressed preference by the AVAs in Wales to submit documentation and to conduct formal 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 its mission.

9 Reference throughout the Scheme to the higher education sector and higher education institutions should be taken to include all those further education establishments that work in partnership with higher education institutions in the provision of higher education programmes delivered in further education establishments in Wales. For convenience, it should also be taken to include those further education establishments that are funded directly by HEFCW for the provision of designated higher education programmes in those establishments.

Team Wales

10 QAA has an established group called Team Wales (TW), which coordinates and oversees its activities in Wales. The primary function of TW is to monitor, evaluate and report upon QAA activities in Wales. TW is chaired by the Officer for Wales, a senior member of staff, who has overall responsibility for the Scheme. TW also includes representatives from across QAA. All members of the group are fully aware of their obligations under the *Welsh Language Act 1993*.

11 Groups and individuals from QAA take responsibility for those areas of activity in Wales which fall within their normal portfolio of work. By mainstreaming, rather than relying on one dedicated individual, it provides the prospect of a more effective means of delivering QAA services in Wales. The ethos underpinning TW is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. QAA can provide a more coherent approach to its operations in Wales through the mechanism of TW rather than through the efforts of individuals working in isolation.

12 To deliver on its policy objectives TW will:

- oversee and coordinate the activities of individuals and groups within QAA
- facilitate cooperation between individuals and groups within QAA
- support and encourage clear, comprehensive and inclusive working practices both within QAA and with external stakeholders
- support individual QAA officers in their work in Wales
- report on the work of QAA in Wales both internally and through its regular meetings with HEFCW and HEW
- be sensitive and understanding of the particular context in which Welsh higher education operates
- monitor the implementation of the Scheme.

Service planning and delivery

New policies and initiatives

13 The responsibility for ensuring that consideration is given to the Welsh language in the formulation of new policies and initiatives falls to the members of TW.

In planning for new policies and initiatives, TW will make an assessment of the linguistic implications and ensure that such policies and initiatives will align with the principles of the Scheme.

14 QAA will ensure that when new policies are introduced they enhance its capacity to provide a bilingual service in Wales and will empower further those individuals whose preferred language in dealing with QAA is Welsh.

15 QAA will issue guidance to its permanent staff and to its appointed reviewers on the need to assess whether there is a Welsh language dimension or implication to a specific innovation or change in policy or procedures associated with reviewing and review reporting.

16 QAA commits to consult with the WLB about any new initiatives proposed that are relevant to its clientele in Wales that may affect the Scheme.

Delivery of services

17 In order to facilitate its commitment to the principle of equality of status for Welsh and English in its activities in Wales, QAA will continue to monitor the language preferences of higher education institutions in Wales with respect to the conduct of institutional review. The need for the provision of Welsh language services will inform decisions by QAA about future recruitment of reviewers and will enable QAA, if necessary, to adapt its review procedures to effect for the better its commitment to equality of status for Welsh and English in its business in Wales.

18 QAA has strengthened the role of the Advisory Committee for Wales (the Committee), which is a sub-committee of the Board.

19 QAA has a senior member of staff who is the Officer for Wales and acts as Scheme Manager.

20 The Scheme has a referral system to ensure that members of the public who express a preference to communicate with QAA in Welsh are able to do so. QAA has a call centre in Wales, where Welsh-speaking members of the public have the option to communicate in the medium of Welsh if this is their preferred language. All enquires that cannot be dealt with by the call centre will be passed onto QAA's bilingual contact to process. QAA has arranged to publicise the existence of this service and its capacity to operate bilingually.

21 QAA will ensure it is able to provide continuity and sufficiency of bilingual staff for operating the Scheme, and that recognised protocols to guide other staff on dealing with the Welsh-speaking public are embedded adequately so that the Welsh-speaking public can be served in accordance with the Scheme in their chosen language.

22 QAA will ensure that documents and other materials published bilingually will be available at the same time, and where feasible, as a single bound document based on guidelines published by the WLB.

Standards of service in Wales

23 QAA, and its appointed reviewers, aim to provide an equally effective standard of service in Welsh and English when dealing with the general public in Wales and its major clientele in Wales. The principle of delivering an equally effective standard of service in both languages will be stated in QAA's Annual review and other core operational documents.

24 QAA is committed to the dissemination of information to the public in Wales about the performance of higher education institutions in Wales reviewed by QAA, on the basis of equality between the Welsh and English languages.

25 When reviewing higher education institutions in Wales, review teams will address how institutions are assuring the standards of their service that allow students to use their preferred language for the purposes of assessment and examination. QAA has published supplementary guidance to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 6: Assessment of students* for institutions in Wales, specifically to support this purpose.

26 QAA will provide/provides written guidance to its staff and contracted reviewers to ensure comparability of service standards in both languages.

Dealing with the Welsh-speaking public

Written communication

27 The public in Wales is welcome to deal with QAA through letters and other written correspondence, for example email, in Welsh and in English.

28 Correspondence received in Welsh will be dealt with within the same time frame as correspondence received in English.

29 For correspondence emanating from Wales in Welsh, English or bilingually, QAA will respond accordingly.

30 QAA has procedures in place for the translation of documents into Welsh. QAA aims to ensure all translators used by QAA are members of the Association of Welsh Translators and Interpreters.

Telephone communication

31 The public in Wales is welcome to speak in Welsh or English when dealing with QAA by telephone. QAA has a call centre located in Wales, where individuals who wish to communicate in the medium of Welsh are encouraged to call, in the first instance. This number is staffed during office hours by a team of Welsh-speaking staff.

32 If the team in the Welsh call centre are not able to deal with the enquiry, a message will be left with the Welsh-speaking QAA officer to contact them and deal with their enquiry. If a Welsh-speaking 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 QAA will be in Welsh.

33 All QAA staff in the Gloucester office are provided with a protocol on how to deal with telephone calls from Welsh speakers that is the same as above. The induction of new staff includes a formal introduction to this protocol.

34 QAA undertakes that where correspondence follows a conversation on the telephone (or in any other face-to-face situation) in Welsh between a member of the public in Wales and QAA officers, the response will be in Welsh (unless requested otherwise).

35 QAA's voicemail service and answering machine on the call centre number will contain a bilingual message and members of the public are welcome to leave messages in Welsh or English.

Public meetings

36 QAA rarely holds public meetings in Wales, rather, it organises meetings, seminars, workshops, focus groups and informal liaison with its major clientele in Wales. This includes individuals from the higher education sector in Wales, higher education institutions, key personnel and academics from higher education institutions in various groupings, departmental staff within higher education institutions and other associated bodies and organisations.

37 QAA's major clientele and other organisations in Wales are welcome to conduct proceedings in Welsh, English or bilingually when dealing with QAA. For all major conferences and higher education sector wide events in Wales, QAA will provide simultaneous translation services. Where 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.

- For smaller events and meetings organised formally by QAA in Wales, QAA officers will determine in advance the language preference of those attending, if not known. Team Wales will advise on the need for simultaneous translation based upon the numbers present and nature of discussion/event.
- If translation services are not available at meetings, it will be made clear to participants that they may speak in Welsh or English. Participants that wish to speak in Welsh will be invited to indicate whether they prefer another person or persons, selected before the meeting, to provide a synopsis in English or whether they wish to provide a synopsis themselves.

38 QAA will ensure that a Welsh-speaking representative will be present at all major conferences and higher education sector-wide events held in Wales to welcome delegates and deal with any general queries in Welsh. Representatives will be identifiable through a badge indicating that they can speak Welsh.

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

Institutional review

40 In planning, conducting and reporting on institutional reviews in Wales, QAA is committed to treating Welsh and English on the basis of equality. QAA is also committed to meeting the expectations placed upon it with regard to equal status for both languages. In any review in higher education institutions in Wales, QAA acknowledges the right of any person, including students, to speak to the review team in Welsh. QAA also acknowledges the right of any bilingual member of a review team in Wales to speak in Welsh during a review. For such situations QAA will provide simultaneous translation facilities. If it is impractical to do so, the member of staff or the reviewer will provide a synopsis or translation of what he or she said in English or in Welsh.

41 QAA ensures that in the initial review planning meetings with higher education institutions, the designated Assistant Director identifies the language preferences expressed by the institution for the conduct of the review. The Assistant Director will then negotiate with the institution as to what element of the review process is to be conducted in Welsh. For the purposes of the initial visit by the Assistant Director, QAA will elicit, through bilingual correspondence with the institution, the extent to which that initial visit will be conducted bilingually and the requirement for simultaneous translation services.

42 QAA will seek to recruit reviewers and review secretaries that are bilingual for institutional reviews undertaken in Wales. Its arrangements for advertising and recruiting will be amended to support their objective for the purposes of review in Wales.

43 Following agreement with QAA about which elements of the review will be conducted bilingually, institutions will be invited to submit, according to the normal schedule, bilingual versions of the key documents underpinning the review process.

44 QAA will make arrangements for, and meet the costs of, providing simultaneous translation of those review proceedings that QAA and the higher education institution have agreed to conduct bilingually. Normally, these arrangements are when reviewers meet with groups of staff of the higher education institution, of whom one or more prefer to participate in Welsh.

45 QAA acknowledges that some higher education institutions in Wales, more so than others, operate within a context and ethos in which both Welsh and English have equal currency in their routine activities. QAA respects this and seeks to appoint bilingual reviewers and review secretaries to facilitate the smooth operation of the review process in such institutions.

Degree awarding powers and university title

46 QAA provides advice to the Privy Council on applications received from higher education institutions for the granting of degree awarding powers and university title. The basis upon which that advice is formulated is a well-developed process, normally over a complete annual cycle of academic activity, and against rigorous criteria published by Government. It involves receipt of an application, the presentation of papers, formal and informal discussions and meetings with QAA officers and, if necessary, visits by external panels.

47 In planning and conducting its arrangements in Wales for receiving such applications and their processing, QAA is committed to treating Welsh and English on an equal basis. In any such connection in higher education institutions in Wales, QAA acknowledges the right of any person to speak in Welsh. QAA also acknowledges the right of any bilingual member of a scrutiny panel visiting an institution in Wales to speak in Welsh. For such situations, QAA makes arrangements for, and meets the cost of, providing simultaneous translation facilities. If it is impractical to do so, the member of staff or the panel member will provide a synopsis or translation of what he or she said in English.

48 As part of its initial response to an application, the designated Assistant Director identifies whether the higher education institution has a preference for the arrangements for processing the application to be bilingual. QAA agrees, if there is such a preference, that all or some of the relevant documentation can be submitted in both Welsh and English and that formal meetings involving QAA and the institutions are conducted bilingually through the use of simultaneous translation facilities wherever practicable.

Recognition and review of AVAs

49 QAA maintains a Recognition Scheme for Access to Higher Education which includes its specification for the Access to Higher Education diploma.

50 In planning and conducting its arrangements for review and/or licensing AVAs in Wales, QAA is committed to treating Welsh and English on an equal basis. For such situations, QAA makes arrangements for, and meets the costs of, simultaneous translation facilities. If it is impractical to do this, the persons concerned will provide a synopsis or translation of what he or she has said in Welsh or English. In so much as the review and licensing process is centred around the scrutiny of documentation submitted to QAA by an AVA, and formal meetings between QAA and AVA staff, QAA will respect the language preferences of the AVA for these arrangements. When there is a preference for part or whole of the arrangements to be conducted bilingually, the designated QAA officer agrees to receive documentation in Welsh and English and to conduct meetings with simultaneous translation facilities being available.

QAA's public face

Corporate image and identity

51 For the conduct of its business in Wales, QAA 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.

52 For all correspondence in Wales, bilingual stationery will be employed.

Signs

53 QAA does not have a separate office in Wales. Should it have so in the future, QAA is committed to providing bilingual information signs, both internally and externally, for that office.

54 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

55 QAA has a Welsh language section to its website where all its materials that have been produced in Welsh are situated. See www.qaa.ac.uk/cymraeg/ for further information.

56 Visitors to QAA's website are welcome to email requests for further information in Welsh.

Publishing and printing material

57 QAA is committed to providing printed material aimed at its specific clientele in Wales and for the general public in both Welsh and English. Where possible, QAA will publish a single bilingual document, acknowledging the guidance produced by the WLB on style and layout.

58 If it is more appropriate, due to the size and length of the material, QAA will publish separate Welsh and English versions and issue them simultaneously with a note in each indicating that a separate Welsh/English version is available.

59 The key publications that QAA issues bilingually are:

- a review handbook and any associated supplementary guidance that describes the review methodology, processes and protocols for review in Wales
- review reports on higher education institutions in Wales.

60 QAA also aims to produce its leaflet 'An introduction to QAA' in Welsh for use by the general public, students and parents in Wales. This leaflet will be distributed during all Welsh events where QAA staff are in attendance.

61 QAA will not normally publish bilingually materials or reports intended for a UK-wide audience. However, all forms, questionnaires and similar materials associated with QAA's core activities in Wales will be bilingual whether they are printed or available electronically.

62 In determining which other documents might be published bilingually, QAA will take into consideration factors such as the size and nature of the document and the target audience, how widely it will be distributed, the cost of translation, and the likely demand.

63 When QAA publishes a bilingual document that is priced, its cost to the purchaser shall be no greater than the price of a single language version would be. Where separate English and Welsh versions of a document are published, the price will be the same for both.

Consultation and research

64 From time to time QAA conducts consultation exercises with its main clientele in Wales. Occasionally, QAA will require specific information on data from higher education institutions on an all-Wales basis. The consultation documents and the questionnaire associated with these activities will be produced bilingually and respondents are welcome to answer in either Welsh or English.

Circular letters and press releases

65 QAA issues all circular letters and press releases relating specifically to higher education matters in Wales, simultaneously and bilingually.

Recruitment advertising

66 If QAA advertises for staff vacancies in the local or national press in Wales it will do so bilingually, with the Welsh and English versions shown together and equal in terms of size, format, legibility and prominence.

67 If QAA advertises for staff vacancies for which the ability to speak Welsh is deemed essential, it will do so in Welsh only, with a footnote in English explaining the purpose of the advertisement.

Monitoring the Scheme

Staff

68 The Chief Executive's Group will establish criteria by which the language requirements of the Scheme will be met. This will include determining what bilingual capacity QAA will need in the workplace to deliver its services in Wales through the medium of Welsh.

69 QAA has a designated Officer for Wales and will seek to ensure that among its staff there will be at least one officer who is bilingual. QAA will also identify other posts where fluency in Welsh would be desirable. Appropriate changes will be made to the job descriptions to reflect these commitments. Where Welsh language skills are deemed essential for a post, QAA will seek a Welsh speaker on the occurrence of the vacancy.

70 In monitoring its capacity to meet the terms of its Scheme, QAA will complete an annual review specifically to determine the extent to which the current bilingual capacity of the staff and its other arrangements are sufficient to provide a comparable standard of service in Welsh, when that is the preferred language of the public with which it deals. Staff wishing to learn Welsh or improve their ability to communicate in Welsh will be given encouragement and support from QAA.

Administrative arrangements

71 The Scheme has been endorsed by the QAA Board and meets the requirements of the HEFCW Welsh Language Scheme. HEFCW contracts with QAA for the provision of services in Wales.

72 Guidance will be issued to all QAA staff and its contracted reviewers to identify how the Scheme works and to specify responsibilities of the relevant staff in that process.

73 Commitment is reflected in the fact that the Chief Executive has strategic management responsibility for the Scheme and the Scheme Manager is the Officer for Wales.

74 QAA will use its 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.

75 QAA 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

76 The Chief Executive will have overall responsibility for ensuring that the Officer for Wales and TW meets its obligations to monitor the effectiveness of the Scheme.

77 The Officer for 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, in association with functional groups and administrative centres within QAA, response times for correspondence received in Welsh and evaluate arrangements for meetings that involve the Welsh-speaking public
- monitor the development and implementation of QAA's corporate image in relation to activities undertaken in Wales
- monitor the arrangements, when appropriate, for institutional review to be conducted bilingually
- monitor the incidence and nature of any complaints relating to aspects of the Scheme
- monitor adherence to the expectations in relation to provision of bilingual services as described in the HEFCW Welsh Language Scheme.

78 TW will discuss the performance of the Scheme at its regular meetings, which take place three times a year. The Scheme will remain as a standing item on the agenda to discuss any issues or concerns that have arisen since the last meeting. From these ongoing discussions the Officer for Wales, and colleagues from TW, will undertake an annual review to monitor the effectiveness and performance of the Scheme. This will include monitoring compliance against the terms of the Scheme.

79 Monitoring of the Scheme will be a structured and continuing activity, if the comprehensive report finds any areas of weakness, QAA will prepare an action plan that will remedy the situation at the earliest possible time.

80 The Officer for Wales will produce a brief report annually detailing any areas for improvement and prepare an action plan that will remedy any weaknesses identified. The report will also give details of any proposed amendments required to the Scheme and outline the priorities for the next year. In addition, it will analyse the number and nature of requests for bilingual services and any complaints received. QAA will provide the WLB with an electronic copy of this report as part of the requirements of the WLB's monitoring framework.

81 QAA's 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 year.

82 A comprehensive report will be sent to the WLB every three years, detailing a summary of performance of the Scheme during the previous three years and outlining any proposed revisions/enhancements to the Scheme.

Publishing the Scheme

83 QAA will ensure that the general public and its major clientele in Wales are kept aware of the existence of the Scheme and its contents. A separate leaflet will be produced, introducing QAA, and providing information on what level of bilingual service is available from QAA.

84 The following methods of publicising the Scheme will be adopted:

- the leaflet informing the public about the level of bilingual service available will be distributed at public events attended by QAA officers in Wales and distributed to all major clientele in Wales on an annual basis
- text in QAA standard documentation will refer to QAA's bilingual policy
- guidance will be given to all its staff and contracted reviewers about the Scheme
- text will be prepared and located on QAA's website
- bilingual stationery used in Wales will indicate that QAA has a bilingual policy (as described in the Scheme).

Improving the Scheme

85 QAA welcomes improvements to the Scheme. All comments or suggestions should be addressed to the Officer for Wales, in the first instance, and will be considered as part of the monitoring process. All complaints regarding the implementation of the Scheme will be investigated and the action taken will be highlighted in the reports to the WLB. The confidentiality of complaints will be respected.

Targets

86 The targets for the Scheme have been agreed by the Chief Executive, the Officer for Wales and members of TW. QAA will measure the performance of the Scheme against specific targets and will review these targets annually as part of its ongoing monitoring activities detailed above. The annual report to the WLB will detail performance against these targets. If, for whatever reasons, the targets are not met, the report will explain why and identify the action to be taken to address the matter.

87 Specific targets to be monitoring on an annual basis include:

Activity	2007	2008	2009	2010
'Introduction to QAA' leaflet informing the public about the level of bilingual service available to be produced	Dec 07	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Evaluation of the call centre provision for Welsh language services for the general public	Dec 07	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Evaluation of the provision of bilingual services at major QAA events	Dec 07	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Evaluation of the effectiveness of TW	Dec 07	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Evaluation of the provision of Welsh language services offered during institutional reviews	Dec 07	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Review of the extent to which the current bilingual capacity available to QAA is sufficient to provide a comparable standard of service in Welsh	Dec 07	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Knowledge of the Scheme within QAA	Dec 07	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing