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**Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response**

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| <b>Pwnc / Subject:</b>     | Cymraeg Strategy 2025–2030<br>Draft Summary                                  |

### **Background information about Estyn**

Estyn is the Office of His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, we are independent of the Welsh Government.

Our principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000<sup>1</sup> and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, we must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by those receiving education and training in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers, including whether the financial resources made available to those providing education and training are managed efficiently and used in a way which provides value for money;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Our remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary, secondary, special and all age schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and initial teacher training.

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<sup>1</sup> This act to be replaced by the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 when the quality provisions are commenced.

We may give advice to the Welsh Parliament on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, we have set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

## Response

### Introduction

Estyn welcomes Qualification Wales' draft 'Cymraeg Strategy 2025 – 2030'. It aligns with 'Cymraeg 2050', the 'Welsh Language and Education Bill (Wales)' and the expectations of the 'Welsh Language Standards'. The strategy is structured clearly and provides a practical but ambitious plan across key areas, including reviewing and reforming qualifications, regulating and monitoring, organisational culture and the role of technology and research.

In particular, we welcome the acknowledgement of the need to expand Welsh-medium and bilingual qualifications to support learners on the full continuum of Welsh language skills, including those in English-medium settings. This will likely help to ensure equal access to qualifications and better outcomes for learners.

We support the five key pillar framework to support this work, particularly the practical way of implementing and evaluating. However, it will be essential to ensure consistency and clarity in the way in which the strategy is embedded across the education system, particularly in the post-16 sector and among the awarding bodies.

### Main messages

- We support the general aim and structure of the strategy and the way in which it intertwines with national policies.
- We welcome the focus on reviewing and revising qualifications, particularly to respond proactively to the increasing demand for an appropriate range of Welsh qualifications to support learners as they progress along the continuum of Welsh language skills. Expanding the offer available through the medium of Welsh, particularly within the post-16 sector and vocational areas, is absolutely essential.

- We also welcome the fact that you ensure that the Welsh language is a prominent part of your work and that you promote the use of the Welsh language among staff to embed it within the organisation.
- Continuous co-operation with stakeholders, including schools and colleges, is key to realising the ambition, ensuring that Welsh-medium assessments are not only promoted effectively but are also encouraged.
- There will be a need to ensure that Qualifications Wales ensures that the framework is used to support organisations in a practical way.

### **Consultation questions**

#### **1. To what extent do you agree with the approach outlined in our proposed Cymraeg strategy?**

We agree with the outline. There is a definite structure in the five pillars within the framework. Through the expectations, engagement with stakeholders and embedding the Welsh language in your workplace – this will be a means to normalising the Welsh language across the education and qualifications sector.

#### **2. To what extent do you agree that the strategy is ambitious enough to support the aims of the Welsh Language and Education Bill and other policy drivers in terms of the Welsh language?**

The strategy is an ambitious one. It reflects the main aim of the Bill, which is to ensure that all learners use the Welsh language independently and that they develop oral skills that correspond to at least level B2 of the CEFR. The success of this depends on many factors, namely that all learners reach level B2 in the first instance and that there is a large increase in the offer of Welsh-medium qualifications to support learners, including bilingual post-16 vocational ones. There must be co-operation across the education sector.

#### **3. What additional trends affecting education and wider society should we consider?**

The most transformative development is artificial intelligence. It is an empowering tool and its use is increasing rapidly. Qualifications Wales needs to ensure that these new technologies are available through the medium of Welsh, as in English.

Recruitment – Qualifications Wales has already identified the importance of retaining staff members with Welsh language skills and increasing their number by 2030. However, a shortage of Welsh speakers is a problem across the education sector, including ensuring progression from Welsh-medium schools to post-16 provision to be able to teach the qualifications.

Numbers who choose the subjects to study through the medium of Welsh (particularly the vocational subjects). It may be an idea to refer to the thematic report on Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, which was published by Estyn at the end of March 2025. Briefly, the findings show that the initiatives (e-learning, Sgiliaith and Work Welsh) have succeeded in increasing the number of practitioners who speak Welsh and register their ability to work through the language. However, there is very little evidence to link the training directly to long-term improvements in teaching through the medium of Welsh. Although more learning activities now include 'a small amount of Welsh-medium learning', there has been little growth in higher-level bilingual and Welsh-only teaching. If there are small numbers, there is less demand for qualifications and the tendency to choose English-medium is more appealing, even for pupils who have come from Welsh-medium or bilingual schools and whose Welsh language skills are sound.

**4. With which aspect of our work can you help as partners/stakeholders to support us in completing the strategy's objectives?**

Estyn can support the strategy by:-

- \*delivering thematic reports on the availability and quality of Welsh-medium qualifications and assessments
- \*providing feedback from the inspections and engaging with stakeholders, particularly schools and post-16 providers
- \*collaborating to develop evaluation guidelines and processes to support language development and ensure access for all learners.

**5. We have suggested a 2025-2030 five-year strategy with annual reports – do you think this is sensible?**

Five years is a period that allows time to systems to change and bear fruit. The annual reports will be a means of evaluating the steps and adapting, as necessary, according to the findings.

## **6. How can we measure our impact?**

We recommend the following:

Scrutinise the numbers following the Welsh-medium and bilingual qualifications across all sectors.

Track learners' progress in terms of their development in their oral skills on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Scrutinise the number of awarding bodies that offer qualifications through the medium of Welsh, taking into account the contexts of those organisations.

Seek the views of the centres that offer and implement those qualifications.

Make use of the 'learner voice'.

Track the progress of the workforce within Qualifications Wales to evaluate the use and fluency of employees.

Identify case studies or thematic reports of good practice.

## **7. Any other comments?**

This is a timely strategy. We encourage Qualifications Wales to be flexible and inclusive during change, particularly in responding to the needs of learners. Close co-operation is needed across the education system to ensure success in this area.