

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

Universities Council for the Education of Teachers in Wales (UCET Cymru)

Submission to the NafW Education and Lifelong Learning Committee Policy Review of the Welsh Language in Education.

1. UCET Cymru represents Schools and Departments of Education in the higher education sector in Wales involved in:

- initial teacher education and training (ITET);
- continuing professional development work with teachers;
- educational research.

2. We endorse the approach and vision taken by The Welsh Language Board in its document 'The Welsh Language: A Vision and Mission For 2000-2005' as being a strong base from which to enhance the position of the Welsh Language in Education.

3. We believe that achieving the strategy set out in the WLB document is reliant upon a healthy supply of well-trained and educated teachers. Despite strong partnership working between the ITET sector, schools, the HEFCW and the NafW, we continue to face difficulties in recruiting and retaining sufficient teachers for:

- the teaching of Welsh – particularly as a second language;
- Welsh-medium teaching.

Work recently undertaken by the GTC for Wales has demonstrated the extent of these difficulties in the secondary sector. In our view the GTC should seek to improve the data collection it undertakes in relation to the Welsh-medium proficiency of the current teaching force, regularly monitor the outcomes of this and report on its findings to the NafW and other appropriate bodies.

4. Through the Cynllun Colegau Cymru/ Welsh Colleges Scheme, HEIs in Wales has worked closely and successfully with the HEFCW and the NafW in providing opportunities for primary ITET students to learn/ develop their proficiency in Welsh, so as to meet the needs of second language primary schools in Wales. We would welcome additional funding being made

available to enable similar partnership working to impact upon:

secondary ITET courses and students;
serving teachers through CPD activity.

5. Although UW Bangor, UW Aberystwyth and Trinity College Carmarthen have a special mission to provide Welsh medium courses, all ITET institutions attempt to make some provision. It is, however, variable in extent and is generally curtailed by considerations such as the viability of teaching groups and the availability of suitably qualified staff. Wherever possible students who wish to undertake their school experience in Welsh-medium schools are able to do so. There are funding concerns in relation to these matters, which the sector has long pursued with the HEFCW and the Assembly and which the Committee has recognised in its recent report on the future of HE in Wales.

6. We would wish to end our submission, however, on a positive note. In 2002/2003 the first full cohort of students will leave our schools having received an entitlement to study Welsh throughout their education. That this has been achieved to the high standard reflected in the reports of the inspectorate, is a tribute to everyone involved in the field of education in Wales. To ensure that the creation of an appropriate bilingual education system in Wales can continue to evolve, we believe that it is essential to:

- commission high quality educational research into models of good practice that have been developed;
- provide, as of right, similar opportunities in further and higher education.