

This document provides a translation of correspondence received from Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Llwybrau at addysg a hyfforddiant ôl-16](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Routes into post-16 education and training](#)

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Ymateb gan: Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAU)

Response from: Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)

PATHWAYS TO POST-16 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

UCAC WRITTEN EVIDENCE TO THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE (in preparation for the presentation of oral evidence on 29 January 2025)

1. The quality of information given to learners about the full range of post-16 options (post-16 vocational and academic pathways; that is, further education, sixth form, apprenticeships and training, and on to higher education)

1.1 Schools are committed to presenting detailed information to learners about the various options offered post-16. On the whole, learners have information in the form of a prospectus, presentations at school (eg in assemblies), open evenings/careers evenings. Pupils can get more information about the options available to them at college open evenings, chats with Careers Wales advisers, various sessions in school assemblies or PSHE lessons. Some schools' practice is to ensure that open evenings include representatives from various relevant organisations. One of the challenges, however, is the fact that institutions are 'competing' for learners and the future of some courses is at stake due to a lack of learners. As such, institutions are very keen to attract learners to their institutions. Getting learners to study courses is vital in order to retain staff and the courses themselves. Considering this, it is only natural that schools tend to focus on the courses that they have to offer, and that colleges act in the same way. Despite this, it must be recognised that teachers and schools see the importance of pupils' well-being when advising them about options.

1.2 It must also be noted that the relationship between colleges and schools varies. One obstacle to greater collaboration between colleges and schools is the lack of courses through the medium of Welsh in colleges. In addition, some learners are keen to go to further education colleges, because they have the perception that there is more 'freedom' in colleges, but on the other hand some learners want to stay in school, because they

know their teachers and because they feel safe at school. It must be emphasised how important sixth forms are to schools and the valuable experiences that pupils gain within them. It must also be remembered that schools now rely heavily on partnerships in the sixth form. In rural areas, learners' options are very limited – there are no further education colleges within reasonable travelling distance.

1.3 It is important that parents and stakeholders get the information about options and they are usually invited to options evening and careers evenings in schools and colleges. Local employers can contact schools and colleges to share information about any vacancies and they can also have a stand at careers evenings. There is an effort to include all stakeholders in relevant events and to share information with those who will help the learners to make choices. It is important to ensure that parents and employers and all those who are not involved in the field of education are fully aware of any developments in the that field, especially in terms of qualifications and opportunities. Perhaps more needs to be done to share this information and ensure there is a secure understanding of traditional courses, vocational opportunities and less traditional courses.

2. How effective is the careers support given to young people of compulsory school age?

2.1 There are examples of effective careers support, but cuts are affecting services. It is important that learners are aware of career paths from a very young age. In order to reduce numbers not in education, employment or training, individual learners must be targeted. In order to be able to do so, schools must have the appropriate capacity and resources. Ideally, careers advisers and teachers should be discussing pupils and have the opportunity to consider the pathways that would be most appropriate for them.

2.2 It is also important to ensure that some pathways are not considered as having higher status than others and it must be ensured that individuals' ambition is compatible with their ability and interests.

2.3 In some areas there is good collaboration between further education colleges and schools, but in others there is quite a bit of competition between them. For some pupils, the courses that they would like to follow are in further education colleges which are far from their homes and they give up courses because of the burden of daily travel. There are certainly no equal opportunities for learners in terms of post-16 education.

2.4 Having a period of work experience can be very valuable for pupils, but the opportunities have decreased recently. Some challenges have arisen in terms of insurance, health and safety and the level of accountability placed on schools. This is a great shame and has been a great loss for young people.

2.5 Opportunities need to be expanded and it must be ensured that genuine and valuable work experience is available to all, which matches the learner's aspirations and interests. It is important that careful consideration is given to the work experience. Schools should not have to bear the burden of arranging insurance etc for these experiences for learners. Schools do not have the capacity to do this.

3. Changes to post-18 pathways

3.1 Some young people are worried about debts as a result of higher education. It must be ensured that learners are aware of apprenticeships and courses where they can study hand in hand with earning a salary.

4. Welsh-medium provision

4.1 Post-16 Welsh-medium provision can be limited, for a variety of reasons:

- In rural areas and in small schools, the numbers who want to study individual subjects can be very small and as a result subjects are removed from the timetable
- In small dual stream schools (a Welsh stream and an English stream), there aren't enough learners that want to study the subject to be able to have a Welsh class and an English class. The result of this is that the classes are combined. Because English is the *lingua franca* of the group, linguistic progression slips and eventually everyone is studying the subject through the medium of English.
- There is little Welsh-medium provision in many further education colleges
- Sometimes it is a challenge to get staff to deliver courses through the medium of Welsh. This situation is a vicious circle – without staff to deliver courses through the medium of Welsh, there is less training through the medium of Welsh, which leads to a lack of specialist staff in a number of areas.

4.2 One of Medr's priorities is to 'encourage the provision of tertiary education through the medium of Welsh' and we hope to see progress in the Welsh medium courses provided. All pathways should be available through the medium of Welsh to all learners in Wales.

4.3 It is also important that free transport is available for learners who want to continue their post-16 education through the medium of Welsh.

4.4 It is interesting to note the finding of the Welsh Language Commissioner in the survey 'Compulsory education and the Welsh language'¹ – 'Opportunities

¹ Post-compulsory education and the Welsh language – the learners' voice, 17 November 2023 (Welsh Language Commissioner)

to study through the medium of Welsh are important for Welsh speakers when choosing a place of study, as well as opportunities to use Welsh as part of everyday life at school or college.' It is also clear that there is a lack of consistency in terms of Welsh-medium provision. The percentage of those who responded positively to the statement that there are enough opportunities to study through the medium of Welsh in their area varied quite a bit, with the results being summarised in the document, as follows, 'There is a clear lack of post-16 provision in several areas.'

5. Fair access

5.1 There needs to be a focus on transport for learners that want to continue their education through the medium of Welsh. Learners shouldn't have to pay for transport in order to secure Welsh-medium provision.

5.2 The same opportunities should be available for all and they should not have to pay for a service in one area that is available for free in another.

5.3 The Welsh Language Commissioner's document on post-16 education² comes to the conclusion 'The lack of Welsh-medium provision, particularly in more vocational areas, is a difficulty that the post-16 sector needs to address.'

5.4 There must also be a focus on pupils whose parents have not followed a further education pathway. We need to nurture talents at a young age and create ambition and opportunities for all learners, whatever their ability.

5.5 Certainly, there are challenges for learners in rural areas – they have fewer choices, they face long journeys in order to access suitable courses and there aren't the same opportunities in terms of work experience either. Often, they have to travel a distance to go to school and the only further education colleges available for them are a long way from their homes. Some start studying courses and then give up because they can't cope with the daily travel.

5.6 It is also important to take into account learners with additional learning needs, and ensure that they have fair opportunities to continue with their education.

6. Post-16 destination data

6.1 It is important to gather data in order to further improve the provision. Post-school learner pathways must be tracked and follow them into the world of work. It is also must be known how many start various courses but give up before completing them. In addition to quantitative data, conversations with learners are needed in order to collect qualitative data – which courses some would have

² Post-compulsory education and the Welsh language – the learners' voice, 17 November 2023 (Welsh Language Commissioner)

liked to have studied but couldn't, what are the reasons for not being able to study them etc.