
Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar gyfer yr [ymchwiliad i recriwtio a chadw athrawon](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Inquiry into Teacher recruitment and retention](#)

Ymateb gan: Y Brifysgol Agored yng Nghymru
Response from: The Open University in Wales

Teacher recruitment and retention

The Open University (OU) in Wales is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the Children, Young People and Education Committee's inquiry into teacher recruitment and retention.

The Committee will be aware that the OU in Wales is one of Wales' main providers of initial teacher education (ITE) through our innovative part-time and salaried routes, funded by the Welsh Government.

This response reflects the challenges and opportunities that we have encountered in offering these routes. We would be very pleased to have the opportunity to provide further written or oral evidence to the Committee, if that were useful.

Background to the OU's PGCE programme

The OU in Wales' Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme was introduced as a solution to a recruitment challenge in the teaching sector. The programme is a first-of-its-kind model which offers two routes into the teaching profession for people who might not otherwise be able to consider becoming teachers.

The part-time route offers students the chance to study the programme on a part-time basis, combining it with existing jobs and other commitments.

Alongside their academic studies, they are paired with one of our partner schools for their practical training. On successful completion, they are awarded a PGCE with qualified teacher status. This route is available on the primary pathway and the secondary pathway in Science, Maths, Welsh, English, English with Drama, English with Media, Design and Technology, Computing/ICT, or Modern Foreign Languages (MFL).

The salaried route is aimed particularly at those already working in the education sector in roles such as teaching assistants, higher-level teaching assistants, and technicians. They are able to combine their studies with practical training in their own schools alongside their current work. On successful completion, they are also awarded a PGCE with qualified teacher status. This route is available on the primary pathway and the secondary pathway in Science, Mathematics, Welsh, English, English with Drama, English with Media, Design and Technology, Computing/ICT, or MFL.

More information about the OU ITE Partnership can be found on [our website](#).

Recruitment barriers

Our provision was introduced in response to the challenges of teacher recruitment. The flexible nature of the model makes a teaching qualification more accessible to a wider pool of people, and is particularly effective in enabling people to study to become teachers in their own communities.

One of the main resulting challenges of this model is that some of our prospective students might not have the necessary qualifications, e.g. GCSEs, to join our programme. Increasingly we see people who have been teaching assistants for a very long time expressing an interest in the programme, but unable to join because they don't have a degree already. Many of these are looking for a route into teaching that doesn't mean having to go to university before being able to take up a PGCE course.

In the secondary sector specifically, career changers coming to us might have a degree, but not one that's relevant to a subject we offer which they want to teach. Although the accreditation criteria have been revised to include 50% degree relevance, this remains a challenge. We recommend applying flexibility, with an element of professional judgement to help determine the relevance of prospective students' existing degrees.

Further, the current criteria do not consider prospective students' experiential learning, or new and 'alternative' learning such as degree apprenticeships and other qualifications. While not an immediate issue, it would be prudent to think

now about how to determine eligibility for the future when people will likely have a different range of qualifications.

The Committee may want to consider how other countries support people with a wider range of qualifications, experience and knowledge to enter the teaching profession. This includes England, where subject knowledge enhancement courses are available as a pre-ITE course, funded by the Department for Education in priority sectors. This kind of intervention has thus far not been used in Wales.

More broadly, the Committee may want to give some consideration to the perception of the teaching profession at the moment. We have some concerns about the challenges facing the profession, together with false narratives about it, which may lead to some students choosing other careers.

There are also some real challenges in modern workforce practices in the teaching sector. We see from our students, for example, that more and more people want flexible, agile work; those on our part-time route report challenges in finding part-time work after they have graduated because current practices do not generally support this kind of work.

In addition, there are significant challenges with school finances, with which the Committee will be very familiar. In many parts of Wales, we are finding that schools, particularly in the primary sector, simply do not have sufficient funds or capacity available to invest in supporting their people onto our salaried route. While this is an immediate challenge, it poses a risk of creating or exacerbating recruitment challenges further down the line.

Welsh-medium recruitment

Our programme has had success in recruiting a high proportion of Welsh speakers and prospective Welsh teachers. However, there are similar issues in the Welsh-medium sector to the sector at large.

One of the challenges in recruiting Welsh-medium teachers is that there are simply fewer Welsh-medium degrees available to study. There is also the potential for upstream issues to be exacerbated with the most recent census data showing a decline in 5-15-year-olds speaking Welsh. There is high

competition for Welsh speakers from other public service sectors, such as the health and social care sector, policing, and so on, meaning more attention needs to be given to converting more adults into Welsh speakers.

Broader issues

We consider that recruitment and retention are different sides of the same coin. There is currently increasing attention being given to recruitment in part because of challenges in retention. It is important that these two things are considered together, and we commend the Committee for doing so in this inquiry.

It is also important to consider that ITE recruitment is not necessarily the same as teacher recruitment. Not all PGCE students want to become teachers in maintained schools; they may be looking for careers in any number of education-adjacent roles. This is a demonstration of the importance of thinking about recruitment and retention together.

We also draw the Committee's attention to potential viability issues that are emerging. Traditionally, providers have used primary pathway recruitment as an effective subsidy for under-recruited secondary pathways. However, following what appears to be a global trend, primary recruitment is now also slowing, and this poses a financial risk to ITE provision across the board. This should be considered in the wider context of universities' financial challenges. ITE is expensive to deliver – e.g. because of various accreditation requirements such as the 1:15 tutor-student ratio and the requirement for all academic staff to have doctorates or pay for them to undertake one – and under the circumstances, there is increased internal scrutiny of ITE provision. We are concerned about what this could mean for the future of ITE provision across Wales.

Another significant challenge appears in terms of data. Currently, we simply do not know where our students go after they have graduated because this data is not systematically collected. We are able to draw some inferences from other data sets and from ad hoc communications with alumni, but this is by no means authoritative in providing a full picture of how ITE provision is leading to more teachers. We recommend a national approach, perhaps supported by Medr, to this.