

## TRR 12

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: Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol  
Response from: Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

Thank you for the invitation to submit evidence to the Committee's inquiry into Teacher Recruitment and Retention.

This paper responds to the consultation's specific questions, and representatives from the Coleg will be pleased to elaborate and answer questions during the oral evidence session on 16 July 2025.

The Coleg creates and promotes training and study opportunities in Welsh by working with further education colleges, schools, universities, apprenticeship providers and employers. We inspire and encourage everyone to use their Welsh skills, with the aim of creating a bilingual workforce, including the education workforce itself. The Welsh Government has designated the Coleg to advise Medr (the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research) on its statutory duties relating to the Welsh language.

1. Barriers to recruitment: Intake into ITE and factors impacting recruitment into post (including a focus on priority subjects, Welsh medium, secondary schools and the impact of Wales' educational reforms on teacher recruitment).

It is important to note the extent of the challenge in terms of the number of teachers needed to work through the medium of Welsh and to teach Welsh as a subject, as well as the challenge of attracting them to the profession.

The latest (November 2024) [Data Analysis](#) (p.20) which accompanies the Welsh Government's [Welsh in Education Workforce Plan](#) shows that 225 additional secondary teachers are needed each year above the numbers currently coming through Initial Teacher Education (ITE) or other ways in order to reach the Cymraeg 2050 targets; the corresponding figure for primary teachers is 153.

For both sectors, the numbers trained each year are very close to the numbers leaving the profession.

|           | Approximate total number of teachers trained or additional capacity | Numbers leaving |
|-----------|---|-----------------|
| Primary   | 240   | 235             |
| Secondary | 156   | 160             |

(Part of Table 1.18)

This clearly does not lead to any progress towards the targets and leaves the numbers in schools at a critically low level. This in turn poses a threat to the breadth of provision it's possible to provide for pupils.

There are a number of structural factors that affect recruitment to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses.

Approach to planning and establishing ITE courses: At present, an 'accreditation' approach is used for ITE courses, where Partnerships, effectively led by universities, apply to the Education Workforce Council for course accreditation on the basis of accreditation criteria set by the Welsh Government. If the courses meet the requirements of the accreditation criteria, and are therefore accredited by the Education Workforce Council, the courses are allowed to run for a specific period as outlined in the accreditation.

This model leads to a pattern of courses across Wales that can be arbitrary, unstrategic and inefficient from a funding and recruitment perspective. For example, since September 2024, there is no PGCE course (apart from Open University courses) being offered in the huge geographical area between Bangor (CaBan Bangor) in the north and Swansea (Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, and Swansea University Schools' Partnership) in the south. It is not possible for everyone to undertake a course that is far from home, especially people from disadvantaged backgrounds and older candidates who be career-changers. At the same time, PGCE courses in 11 secondary subjects are being run by two Partnerships within the same city, with small numbers on both sets of courses.

In this context, it is worth noting the financial crisis currently facing Welsh universities which means that the majority are re-examining their provision, and carrying out redundancy processes, voluntary processes in the first instance. Universities are unlikely to maintain provision that does not pay its way, even if it contributes to national priorities, and ITE courses may well fall into this category. If any university comes to the conclusion that its ITE provision is not sustainable, that could lead to a pattern of provision that is even more arbitrary and unstrategic from an all-Wales perspective. In addition, there could be serious implications for Welsh-medium provision where the numbers tend to be lower.

Funding ITE courses/students: At present, the vast majority of students on ITE courses, including PGCE courses, pay the same fees as students in the majority of other subjects and fields (£9,535 per year). For students graduating with very significant debts, paying more fees to do a PGCE course could be a significant disincentive; this is raised in the report '[A Future Teaching Profession for Wales: Recruitment, Retention and Professional Progression](#)' (Paragraph 3.15) (Cardiff Metropolitan University, December 2024).

To make the situation worse, the intensity of the PGCE course makes it is impossible to undertake part-time work alongside the course (see 'Structure and content of the PGCE course' below) – something that would be possible in the context of other postgraduate courses.

This means that, at present, undertaking the majority of PGCE courses means a requirement to pay fees and to be without a salary for a year. On that basis, it is an unrealistic option for some groups of potential candidates.

The courses offered through the Open University are different because they are part-time courses over two years. In addition, for the salaried route (through the Open University), the Welsh Government pays the fees, and the candidates earn a salary while qualifying.

As the shortage of teachers has reached a crisis point, especially for the Welsh in education workforce, a different funding system could be considered that would remove or reduce this barrier and make PGCE courses a more attractive and realistic option (see recommendations in the 'Addressing recruitment and retention' section below).

Structure and content of the PGCE course: It is known that the PGCE course is a challenging year for candidates – there is a full curriculum, time is short, and the academic, practical and administrative requirements are substantial.

Although in such professional courses there is an expectation that the bar will be high in terms of challenge and achievement, in the context of PGCE courses and the recruitment crisis for the profession, this may be problematic in a number of ways:

- (i) the perception of the intensity and challenge of the course could be enough in itself to disincentivise some and prevent them from applying for a PGCE course
- (ii) for others, the nature of the course is too much of a challenge and they do not manage to complete it; according to Education Workforce Council statistics, in 2023/24, 17.5% of students on Secondary PGCE courses failed (c.1%), dropped out (6.5%) or deferred completion (10%)<sup>1</sup>
- (iii) this extremely challenging year, coupled with the perception of the profession as more challenging in many ways than other professions, means that a proportion of the candidates, at the end of the ITE course, decide to abandon teaching as a career and apply for jobs in other fields; according to figures from the Education Workforce Council in 2022/23, there was a difference of 15.5% between the number who were awarded Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), and the number who registered with the Council following the award (see also Cardiff Metropolitan University's report, paragraph 4.17-18).

In short, it seems that between a quarter and a third of those who start an Initial Teacher Education course can be expected not to complete the course, or not to go on to a career as a teacher.

Promoting the profession and opportunities to train: A great deal of work is being done to promote teaching as a profession and the opportunities to train to be a teacher, by the Welsh Government itself (under the name Teaching Wales), by the Education Workforce Council (under the name Educators Wales) on behalf of the Welsh Government, and by others, including the Coleg Cymraeg.

The Coleg promotes recruitment to ITE courses through its Dysgu'r Dyfodol scheme, which offers work experience and mentoring sessions with early career teachers for undergraduate and postgraduate university students who speak Welsh and are interested in a career in education. In addition, the Coleg's Cadw Cyswllt ('Keeping in Touch') scheme targets Welsh-speaking students who are studying outside Wales with the aim of encouraging them to return to Wales, including to do PGCE courses. We create and distribute materials promoting teaching as a career, targeting Welsh-speaking students.

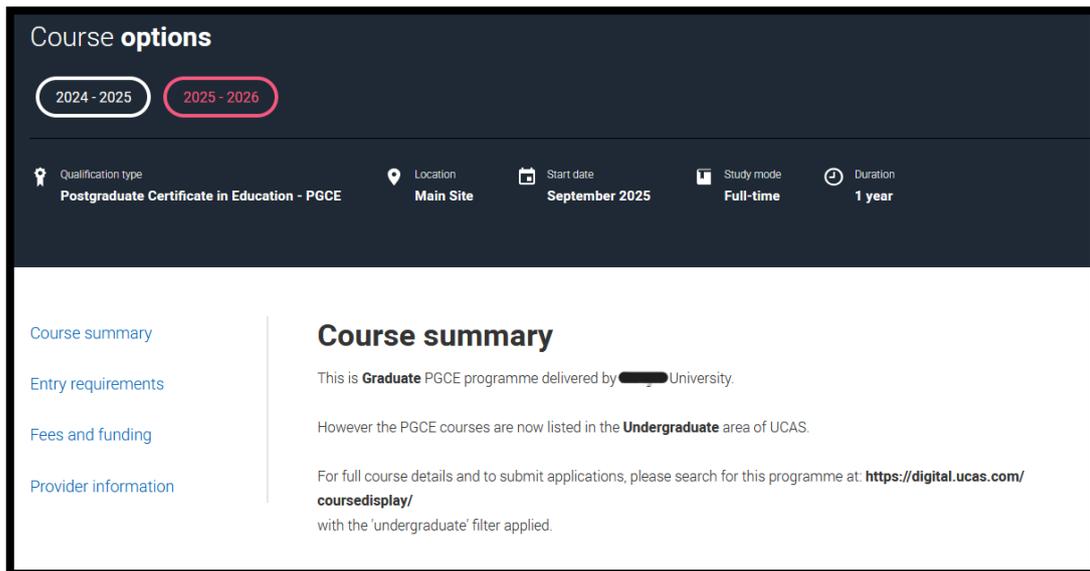
The Coleg is of the view that more could be done to ensure that complete and reliable information is easily available to people who are seeking it. If finding information is difficult, we risk losing potential candidates at the first stage, which we cannot afford to do.

Applying via UCAS: In order to apply for a PGCE course at a university in Wales, candidates must apply via the UCAS website. The UCAS website is designed for applications to undergraduate courses, not to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/documents-eng/about/workforce-statistics/ite/1267-ite-student-results-2023-24>

postgraduate courses such as PGCE courses. As a result, the website's structure does not provide a user-friendly experience, and this may also be a barrier.



We cannot afford to lose potential candidates because of difficulties with the interface.

A related issue is that deadlines for courses vary from one university to another, which can again create a confusing landscape for potential candidates.

Another factor affecting recruitment to Welsh-medium ITE courses and to jobs that require Welsh-medium teaching, is the number of students who pursue their education through the medium of Welsh or bilingually after leaving statutory education. According to the latest published data, around 7,000 students were studying part of their degree course in Welsh. The Coleg Cymraeg works with further education colleges, universities, organisations offering apprenticeships, and employers to create opportunities to train and study in Welsh, and to encourage and inspire learners to continue using and developing their Welsh language skills throughout their educational career.

In addition, Medr has a strategic duty to promote tertiary education through the medium of Welsh, including to 'encourage the demand for, and participation in ... tertiary education provided through the medium of Welsh' and to 'take all reasonable steps to ensure that there is sufficient Welsh tertiary education provided through the medium of Welsh to meet demand'. This will apply to undergraduate degrees in a range of subjects which are priority areas for the statutory sector, and to PGCE courses.

Continued work is needed to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of learners coming from the statutory sector through the tertiary sector continuing with their studies through the medium of Welsh in order to reach the ITE sector ready to undertake their courses confidently in Welsh, and going from there to jobs where they will be able to teach through the medium of Welsh. At present, too many learners are missing opportunities to continue studying through the medium of Welsh at different stages throughout the journey (for various reasons relating to lack of opportunities or lack of encouragement and support), and as a result are losing confidence in their ability to use the language for study or in professional contexts.

There is a category of factors that are recognised as barriers to entry into the profession relating to terms and conditions of work, including a lack of flexibility compared to other professions, and a heavy workload. The report [A Future Teaching Profession for Wales](#) provides more details on this.

2. Factors affecting retention (including a focus on priority subjects, Welsh medium, secondary schools and the effectiveness of early career support)

An analysis of these issues is available in the [Data Analysis](#) (pp. 14-19) that accompanies the Welsh in Education Workforce Plan as well as the report [A Future Teaching Profession for Wales](#) (pp. 13-19).

3. School Leaders: specific factors affecting recruitment and retention of school leaders

See [Data Analysis](#) (pp. 31-35) in the Welsh in Education Workforce Plan.

4. Diversity of the workforce: whether the current and future workforce reflects the diversity of the Welsh population including gender, race and ethnicity and disability

The [Education Workforce Council's statistics](#) (pp. 13-14) show a severe lack of diversity within the education workforce, particularly in terms of race and ethnicity, and disability. This lack of a workforce that reflects the diversity of the Welsh population is a matter of great concern and drives a vicious cycle where pupils do not see role models to inspire them to join the profession.

5. Impact on learners: of the current position on and the delivery of education and on wider support for learners

Across the education system, the shortage of teachers in priority areas means that there is a growing tendency for teachers to be teaching beyond their specialist subject or subjects. This puts unreasonable pressure on the staff and is likely to lead to a less specialist teaching experience, possibly with less passion for the subject.

In addition, the shortage of teachers in specific subject areas can lead to a limitation on the range of subjects available to pupils. We see increasing cases of schools not being able to offer subjects which, traditionally, have been an integral part of the curriculum, such as Music, Drama, Modern Foreign Languages and individual Science subjects. There are also examples where it is not possible to offer A Level Welsh for these reasons.

As the situation for recruitment in the Welsh-medium sector is even more precarious than in the English-medium sector, these issues may have a worse effect on that sector. According to [Estyn's Annual Report](#) 'In a minority of local authorities, recruiting staff, including teachers who teach through the medium of Welsh, was identified as one of the main challenges in terms of their provision for Welsh-medium education.'

6. Impact on delivering educational reforms: including the Curriculum for Wales. Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill.

We look forward to seeing the Welsh Language and Education Bill coming into force soon, as the Coleg very much welcomes the ambition for the education system in the context of the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 strategy. But we must also acknowledge that it will bring challenges in terms of the education workforce. The number of teachers is insufficient for the system's requirements at present; in order to move the whole system forward and ensure that all learners have the opportunity to become

independent Welsh speakers, we will need many more teachers who can teach Welsh as a subject and teach through the medium of Welsh at all types of schools, right across Wales.

In order to do that, a combination of methods will be needed, including systematic Welsh language upskilling for current members of the education workforce, and a fundamental change in the expectations in relation to the Welsh language in the context of ITE and early-career professional development.

It is also important to draw attention to the vicious cycle that results from the crisis in terms of the numbers studying Welsh (First Language and Second Language) at A Level, which in turn leads to a very small pool of potential candidates to qualify as Welsh language teachers, including in English-medium schools. Steps need to be taken to ensure that any pupil who wants to take A Level Welsh is able to do so.

7. Addressing recruitment and retention: What actions should be taken, and by whom, to ensure the sustainability of the education workforce and how such actions should be prioritised
  - Strategic planning and allocation of numbers: A much more detailed and strategic approach should be adopted to identify the needs of the workforce over time, with planning in advance for those numbers, rather than using the current crude Teacher Planning and Supply Model ('TPSM'). The TPSM produces one figure for the primary sector and one for the secondary sector nationally; on the basis of these figures, the Education Workforce Council allocates numbers to individual ITE programmes.

The TPSM does not take into account local and regional differences, needs in relation to specific subjects, or linguistic needs in relation to the ability to teach in Welsh.

In this context, we note Recommendation 49 of the report of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities, '[Empowering communities, strengthening the Welsh language](#)', which says: 'Within areas of higher density linguistic significance, the Welsh Government should plan to meet the needs of the education workforce...'. It is a cause for concern that the system for planning ITE is currently much too high-level to be able to deal with such a recommendation.

Such an approach would also fit in with the requirement in the Welsh Language and Education Bill that the National Framework should 'include an assessment of the number of education practitioners needed in each local authority in order to meet any target set...' and should 'set out the steps the Welsh Ministers will take, based on that assessment, for the purposes of ensuring that the number of education practitioners working in Wales meets the need'.

At present, it is not clear where the responsibility for formulating and implementing such a strategy would sit. In order to establish such a system that is truly strategic, and to ensure this is followed up by efficient action, the Coleg is of the view that a Strategic Unit should be established within the Welsh Government. Such a Unit would plan bilingual workforces across priority sectors, with the education workforce being a top priority. It would establish collaboration arrangements between relevant stakeholders and ensure that there are robust performance indicators and accountability arrangements in place.

- Consideration should be given as to whether the current system of accrediting ITE courses, and PGCE courses in particular, leads to an appropriate and strategic distribution of courses that facilitates the recruitment of suitable candidates across Wales. Consideration should be given as to whether there are advantages to the commissioning model used by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) for many courses in health. Such a model would have the potential for the strategic planning

of ITE provision at a national level, taking local variations and needs into account. It could mean more security and stability for the universities offering the provision. Currently, Welsh Government determines the criteria and places a statutory duty on the Education Workforce Council to administer the accreditation process; it is not clear to us whether it would be Welsh Government or Medr who would have responsibility for considering a change to this system.

- Alongside considering the model for establishing ITE courses, a cost/benefit exercise should be carried out to consider whether reducing or removing fees for PGCE courses across the board, or in priority areas in particular (including in Welsh as a subject), and/or for courses that prepare teachers to teach through the medium of Welsh, would be advantageous from a recruitment perspective, as well as sustainable from a funding perspective.

In revisiting funding models, it would be necessary to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of the existing incentive system compared to potential alternative arrangements. The [Incentives to recruit and retain teachers in Wales](#) report (Education Policy Institute, on behalf of the Welsh Government – November 2024) discusses the evidence base for different models, and concludes that the evidence on the impact of incentives is stronger in relation to teacher retention than it is in relation to teacher recruitment.

As part of these considerations, some thought could be given to existing models for certain pathways in health, where the funding of fees comes with a condition to work in Wales for a certain period.

- There is now significant evidence, including in the Cardiff Metropolitan University report, suggesting that it is time to look at the content, focus and structure of the PGCE course, and ensure that it lays solid foundations that include the main priority areas. Rather than overloading the qualification year, further development requirements (including in relation to developing Welsh language skills) could be set over the early career years, ensuring sufficient non-contact time for the structured professional development, and the professional support (e.g. mentoring) that would be needed during that period.

As part of the process of revisiting the content and structure of the PGCE course and the early career years, requirements should be embedded based on the Code to Describe Welsh Language Ability which will be created as a result of the Welsh Language and Education Bill, to ensure that all candidates make progress during this formative period, whatever their starting point in relation to the Welsh language.

It is also possible that consideration needs to be given to extending the options currently available (through the Open University) for flexible routes into the profession, rather than trying to channel the vast majority through full-time one-year PGCE courses. This model (as well as the fee structure) is particularly difficult for candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds, and older candidates, including career changers – both important target audiences.

It would be worth comparing the different routes (BA Education/Full-time PGCE/Part-Time PGCE/Employed PGCE) to see if there are significant differences in terms of completion rates and post-qualification job application rates that would suggest specific policy developments.

Consideration should also be given to whether there are models of courses that do not currently exist that could help alleviate some aspects of the recruitment crisis. For example, would establishing BA Secondary Education courses in priority subject areas (in collaboration with relevant academic

departments) facilitate access to the profession for those who already know, at the age of 18, that they want to be a teacher of a specific subject? It could be worth considering ITE courses in Areas of Learning and Experience to match the Curriculum for Wales, training teachers who would be confident to teach across a range of related subject areas, rather than teachers having to teach in areas for which they have not been prepared after joining the workforce.

- It might be useful to revisit the central source of information which promotes teaching as a career and provides information on initial training options to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- The way of applying via the UCAS website should be revisited, and either work done with UCAS to improve the interface and experience for potential candidates, or consideration given to a different system. We imagine Medr would have the responsibility for taking action in this regard, perhaps jointly with the Education Workforce Council.
- We need to aim for a system where all learners use, maintain and develop their Welsh language skills throughout their educational journey, and from there to jobs where they use their Welsh, including in the education workforce. A significant increase is needed in the numbers who continue to study through the medium of Welsh, especially for A Level and then at degree level, in order to increase the pool of learners who would be able to train as teachers and join the Welsh in education workforce. The 'National Framework for Welsh Language Education and Learning Welsh' which will be drawn up as a result of the Welsh Language and Education Bill will offer an opportunity to create the coordinated, whole-system effort that is needed to meet this urgent need.