

Medr statistics

Quality and Methodology: Welsh Language in Higher Education, 2022/23

Reference: Sta/Medr/08/2025 - **Annex A**
Date: 26 March 2025
Designation: Official Statistics (see [change in accredited statistics status](#))
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Summary: **Quality and production information about the 'Welsh Language in Higher Education, 2022/23' publication**

Theme: Higher Education, Welsh language, Welsh medium

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student and Staff Records

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Context

General

This statistical release summarises data on:

- The number of students studying in Welsh.
- The Welsh speaking ability of Welsh domiciled students.
- The ability of staff to teach in Welsh and whether they are contracted to teach through Welsh.

Policy background

A key priority for Medr is to promote tertiary education through the medium of Welsh.

We have a significant role to play in fostering a vibrant culture where the Welsh language can thrive, and in contributing to the Welsh Government's ambition to achieve one million Welsh speakers by 2050.

We will encourage demand for and participation in learning through the medium of Welsh, and we will ensure there is sufficient provision to meet that demand. Our planning will encourage all learners to develop, maintain and use their Welsh language skills during their tertiary education journey, equipping them to use those skills in the workplace and in informal contexts.

Cymraeg 2050

The Welsh Government's long-term strategy for the promotion and facilitation of the use of the Welsh language, [Cymraeg 2050: a million Welsh speakers](#) was published in 2017 and [Cymraeg 2050: work programme 2021-2026](#) was published in 2021.

Along with targets for increasing the number of learners in Welsh-medium education and actions to enable them to progress through their compulsory and post-compulsory education through the medium of Welsh, Cymraeg 2050 also includes targets for increasing the number of teachers able to teach Welsh and through the medium of Welsh.

Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol works with providers to promote, develop and maintain Welsh medium opportunities in tertiary education. This includes increasing the capacity of providers to deliver Welsh medium and bilingual provision, and providing a range of scholarships to encourage learners to study through the medium of Welsh.

The Coleg has been [designated by Welsh Ministers](#) to provide advice to Medr to help us deliver on our duty to promote tertiary education through the medium of Welsh. Medr and the Coleg have jointly signed a [memorandum of understanding](#), formalising this relationship and setting out how we will work collaboratively to deliver our common aims.

Data sources

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student Record

The HESA Student record has been collected since 1994/95 from subscribing HE providers throughout the devolved administrations of the United Kingdom. The data collected as part of the Student record is used extensively by various stakeholders.

HESA provide a summary of the [data collection process](#) on the HESA website, including all the quality rules used.

Quality notes for the 2022/23 HESA Student Record

The 2022/23 HESA Student Record was collected using a new data collection system and data model delivered by the '[Data Futures](#)' transformation programme. The new system and model represented a considerable change to the collection process and there were an increased number of challenges and issues compared to previous years.

As a result, there were a greater number of quality issues with the student record data compared to previous years. Jisc, which HESA is a part of, published a [quality report](#) to provide an overview of the collection data quality and how this quality was assessed.

For this publication the most notable impacts on data quality were:

- A large increase in the number of students studying more than zero but less than one credit in Welsh. Following discussions with providers it was felt that this was related to issues with the data collection rather than a true reflection of increased provision in Welsh. This impacted the number of students that would have been classified as studying 'some credits in Welsh'. To provide a more comparable time series we have changed the studied some credits in Welsh to studied at least 1 credit in Welsh.
- A large increase in the number of students where their Welsh speaking ability is unknown. There were significant changes to how Welsh language ability was collected in 2022/23 compared to previous years and as a result the number of unknowns increased at some providers. Despite the increase of unknowns, we feel the data is still of value and use, so the data has been included. The number of unknowns are included and commented on so users can make use of the data appropriately. We would hope that the quality of this will improve as the new data collection becomes established and will continue to work with providers to understand any issues around this.
- The University of Wales Trinity Saint David submitted all non-Welsh speakers as Welsh speakers of unknown proficiency in error. Following discussions with the University all students in the Welsh speakers of unknown proficiency category have been reclassified as not being Welsh speakers by Medr for the purpose of this publication.

HESA Staff Record

The HESA Staff record has been collected since 1994/95 from subscribing higher education providers throughout the devolved administrations of the United Kingdom.

A summary of the [data collection process](#) can be found on the HESA website.

Quality Note for the 2022/23 HESA Staff Record

The data submitted by Cardiff University to the 2022/23 staff record contained no staff as being contracted to teach in Welsh. Following discussions with the University this was confirmed to be an error and the University provided Medr with the details of academic teaching staff who should have been returned as being contracted to teach through Welsh. This publication uses the corrected information for this variable instead of the data as it was submitted to the 2022/23 HESA record.

Coverage and definitions

Students

The statistics cover students who are part of HESA's higher education standard registration population. More information on the HESA standard registration population can be found in the [student definitions](#) on the HESA website.

All uses of 'students' in this publication refer to 'student enrolments'. This is a count of each enrolment for a course. If a student was enrolled in two different courses in the same year, that student would be counted twice.

Number of credits studied through Welsh

The number of credits studied in Welsh for each student is calculated on a module-by-module basis. For example, if a student studied half of a 20 credit module in Welsh, that would be counted as studying 10 credits in Welsh. The number of credits studied in Welsh across all modules is summed to give the total number of credits studied in Welsh.

Full-person equivalent (FPE)

All student enrolments are full-person equivalents. Full-person equivalents divide students up across the subjects they study, regardless of the total time a student studies. A part-time joint honours student, studying half Maths and half Computing, is counted as 0.5 FPE in Maths and 0.5 FPE in Computing, the same as a full-time joint honours student would be.

Staff

The statistics cover academic teaching staff who are not on atypical contracts.

Atypical staff

Atypical staff are those whose working arrangements are not permanent, involve complex employment relationships and/or involve work away from the supervision of the normal work provider.

Full-person equivalent (FPE)

Staff can have more than one contract and each contract may involve more than one different activity. Staff counts have been divided amongst their activities in proportion to the declared FTE for each activity. This results in counts of full-person equivalents (FPE). Staff FPE counts are calculated on the basis of contract activities that were active on 1 December of the reporting period.

Full-time equivalent (FTE)

Full-time equivalent (FTE) is that recorded in the contract and measures the equivalence to full-time over the course of the reporting period 1 August to 31 July.

Staff teaching in Welsh

The number of staff teaching in Welsh is a count of academic teaching staff with at least one academic contract involving some teaching in Welsh.

Rounding

Figures are rounded to the nearest 5. Totals are calculated on unrounded figures and then rounded to the nearest 5 so may not equal the sum of the constituent parts.

Percentages are calculated using the unrounded figures and then rounded to the nearest whole percent. Again this may mean the percentages in this release may not match what you would get from the rounded figures. If a percentage is calculated where the denominator is less than 22.5 then the percentage is suppressed.

Key Quality Information

Relevance

The statistics are used both within Medr, the Welsh Government and by others to monitor educational trends and as a baseline for further analysis of the underlying data. Some of the key users are:

- Officials and Board members in Medr
- Ministers and the Members Research Service in the Senedd
- Officials in the Welsh Government
- Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
- Other government departments
- Higher Education Institutions and representative bodies
- Students, researchers, and academics
- Individual citizens, private companies, and the media

Accuracy

Some of the key data fields used in this publication rely on the assessment of individuals or providers which will affect the accuracy of the data.

The data collected on the Welsh speaking ability of students relies on self-assessment by the student. This means that there will be some inconsistency between students in how they would assess their ability to speak Welsh.

The calculation of the number of credits a student studies in Welsh for each module relies on the LANGPCNT and PGRLANGPCNT variables in the HESA student record. These variables collect the proportion of the module studied in Welsh. This is based on the providers assessment of what proportion is being studied in Welsh. However, how this is done may vary between providers and result in some inconsistencies.

Timeliness and punctuality

There is usually a lag in when data can be published as historically the collection of the student data is completed around 6 months after the end of the academic year.

Due to the complications arising from the introduction of the new data collection system and model, the 2022/23 student data was published later than normal by HESA in August 2024.

This release was then published later than usual as the publication moved from the Welsh Government to Medr, when it became operational in August 2024. It has taken additional time for Medr to establish the processes required to produce Official Statistics such as this release.

Accessibility and clarity

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the [Medr.cymru](https://www.medr.cymru) website.

An accompanying spreadsheet adhering to accessibility guidelines provides additional data.

The data for staff has also been provided on StatsWales. We intend to make the student data available on StatsWales in future releases as well, however this was not possible due to resource availability for this release.

Comparability and coherence

The subject matter of this bulletin means that there are no comparable statistics produced for other countries within the UK. Definitions are consistent with other higher education releases, except for the subject breakdowns which are calculated on a module-by-module basis here to incorporate the Welsh-medium information.

Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

All of our statistics are produced and published in accordance with a number of statements and protocols to enhance trustworthiness, quality and value. These are set out in Medr's [Statement of Compliance](#) with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

These official statistics demonstrate the standards expected around trustworthiness, quality and value in the following ways.

Trustworthiness

These statistics have been published according to Medr's [Statement of Compliance](#) and [pre-release access to official statistics policy](#).

Quality

The data is sourced from the HESA Student and Staff records which collects data from the higher education providers. When the data is submitted it must meet certain validation rules. When the statistics are being produced quality checks are undertaken by the statisticians.

Value

These statistics are produced to provide an insight in the level of Welsh medium provision in the higher education sector in Wales, and the Welsh language ability of students.

Change in accredited statistics status

These statistics were previously published by the Welsh Government as National Statistics (now known as Accredited Official Statistics). As the statistics are now published by a new organisation, the Accredited Official Statistics status has been temporarily removed.

Medr has continued the systems and processes for producing the statistics from Welsh Government, and the statisticians producing the statistics include statisticians who produced further education, work-based learning and community learning statistics at Welsh Government.

The OSR will assess the processes in place at Medr as an official statistics producer. The OSR will assess whether the statistics meet the requirements for Accredited Official Statistics.

Medr

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