

Report in Response to the Bangor University Business Cases

UMCB Executive
February 2019

UMCB


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Introduction

This report has been prepared by *Undeb Myfyrwyr Cymraeg Bangor*, Bangor Welsh Students' Union (UMCB) in response to Bangor University's submission of the business cases to achieve financial sustainability. UMCB has made every effort by various methods to ensure that the student voice is given expression during this exercise.

The purpose of the UMCB exercise was to listen to students and measure the assumed impact of the business cases on the university's Welsh-medium education provision.

UMCB's Opening Statement

We recognise, as Bangor Welsh Students' Union, the need to achieve financial savings and we understand that it will be impossible to completely safeguard the Welsh-medium provision. However, we urge the University to fulfil its strategic priority in relation to the Welsh language to the best of its ability. It is inevitable that cuts will be made over the coming months and we request that the university refrains from using the current situation as a means of damaging the Welsh-medium provision. UMCB also recognises that the University has made miscalculations over the years with over-confident projections of recruitment numbers and recognises the University's failure to provide a long-term vision and strategy. Nonetheless, UMCB wishes to emphasise that we remain committed to working in collaboration with the University for its own sake. Bangor University contributes so much to contemporary Wales, whether directly or indirectly. In light of this, if the university treats the Welsh language fairly, UMCB will be sincere in its support. We wish to see the Welsh language receive the respect and the investment it deserves in its own country. The Welsh language should not be a burden or a constraint on our university, it should be both an inspiration and a duty.

Before any decisions are made, in accordance with *Undeb Bangor's* report, UMCB agrees that the following points should be seriously considered:

- To review the highest salaries in the institution, especially those over £100,000 per annum
- To review the expenses system in order to ensure it is used responsibly by staff
- To consider the future of the Vice Chancellor's house
- To review the university's marketing strategy.

In addition, UMCB believes that the marketing strategy should emphasise the importance of the local market. Despite the reduction in the university's student numbers, the number of Welsh-medium students has increased. This provides evidence of the value of safeguarding the Welsh-medium provision.

Above all else, however, the university should bear the following in mind:

- The promise made by the university to Council regarding maintaining the Welsh-medium provision
- The University Language Policy, for information,
 - 3. *Our students will be given opportunities to study their subject areas through the medium of Welsh and will be supported to do so.*

- 6. *Our staff recruitment policies and systems will ensure that the university's bilingual capacity is maintained across the range and scales of jobs.*
- 8. *Our policies, plans and projects will fully consider how to give the Welsh language a central and natural position without undermining the status or use of the Welsh language.*⁷
- The paper presented by Council's bilingualism committee
- The Welsh Language Standards
- The university's Strategic Priority No. 4 - Welsh Language, Culture and Civic Engagement

Following from the above, the university has a duty not to break its promises and policies and to ensure that Welsh-speaking students have the best possible experience.

Looking at the matter from a 'business' perspective, in consultation with students, UMCB has concluded that there are financial benefits to the retention of bilingual staff:

- Welsh speakers can work flexibly with Welsh and English medium students, and are able to provide services and support through the medium of Welsh.
- University staff not only teach but also offer pastoral care, visit schools, attend open days and co-ordinate various social media. Any loss must therefore be considered in a manner that reflects more than just teaching; the loss of Welsh speaking lecturers could have a negative effect on these areas as well.
- Bilingual staff promote a positive image of the university on Welsh media (the external media which, undoubtedly, give most attention to the university).
- The impact that this could have on student recruitment could be severe. The Welsh language is a USP for the university and the statistics show that numbers are increasing. It is sad to note that throughout all the business cases attention is completely focussed on other markets. There is no informed attempt to offer ideas about local recruitment. In order to develop an area of growth for the university, it is essential that the university retains its bilingual staff to further expand on this success.
- Having a Welsh atmosphere adds so much to the student experience (even for those who do not study through the medium of Welsh).

These are just some of the 'business' reasons that were raised by students who wished to emphasise that looking at the intake figures alone does not always give the full picture, as the language is used more expansively on a day to day basis. It is vitally important that the Welsh-medium provision and experience is equal in all respects to that of non-Welsh students.

The success of the Welsh language at Bangor University must also be considered. In recent years the university has developed and strengthened its position as the leading university provider in terms of the Welsh language and Welsh-medium higher education. One aspect of this is the fact that the number of Welsh-speaking students has continued to grow steadily from 2,153 in 2014/15 to 2,538 in 2017/18, despite the general difficulties that the university has experienced in recruiting home students. Even more significantly, the numbers choosing to study 40 or more credits of their course through the medium of Welsh (the Funding Council and the *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's* main benchmark) have increased from 821 in 2014/15 to 980 in 2017/18 - around half the national total. This strength is also an area of excellence for the University, as emphasised by the QAA's praise in its recent quality review for the "bilingualism which is deeply embedded in all aspects of the University's life and which positively impacts on the experience of its students". Bilingualism and the strength of

the Welsh-medium provision were also critical to the gold award that Bangor achieved in the Teaching Excellence Framework.

The following are the core aspirations of UMCB students:

1. It is essential that the provision (academic and pastoral) is equal in terms of quality to the provision offered to non-Welsh-speaking students. For example, lower grade staff should not be exploited to maintain the provision.
2. Every possible effort should be made to safeguard the special provision that is available.
3. The University's Language Policy should be followed without diluting any Welsh-medium modules.
4. Every possible effort should be made to safeguard the existing credits that are eligible for *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol* scholarships or bursaries.
5. The *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol* should be considered as a main stakeholder and no decisions should be made that endanger the CCC's investment and the relevant subject grants.
6. The local market should become a priority for the marketing strategy.

UMCB will continue to communicate with the students beyond the consultation period and will continue to report back to the university. We would like to take advantage of this opportunity to thank those amongst the institution's officers who have been prepared to discuss these issues seriously. We also welcome the manner in which the university has been open and transparent over the last few months.

The Welsh language is not a minor issue for Bangor University and we request that the University seriously considers this statement and the comments made in the report. We are grateful that the University wishes to work in collaboration with us and our door will always be open for any discussions.

Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

It is important that we highlight the input of *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol*. UMCB greatly appreciates the contribution of *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol* to the university and it is felt that every effort should be made to maintain the strong relationship that exists between the university and CCC. UMCB has seen correspondence from *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol* which clearly states its conditions. UMCB strongly believes that everything possible should be done to ensure that the university secures the subject grants allocated by CCC for Bangor in 2019/20. UMCB is keen to see effective co-operation with *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol* in order to ensure a good future relationship, as Bangor University is the leading provider of Welsh-medium higher education in Wales and accounts for 46% of the national total studying 80 credits or more through the medium of Welsh.

College of Arts, Humanities and Business

Traditionally, Bangor University has led Wales in terms of the provision of Welsh-medium education in the arts and humanities. UMCB would like to emphasise the importance of maintaining this provision as a central part of studies. In addition, we wish to see the university make every possible effort to ensure that its Welsh context is embedded as a natural part of the curriculum.

There are no major concerns amongst students regarding the Welsh-medium provision in the School of Law, the School of Business and the School of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics. Students at all these schools stated that every effort should be made to ensure the continuation of the few Welsh-medium modules that are available. We assume that there will be no impact on the provision as it has not been noted in the business cases. Students also stated that it was important for these schools to recognise the market in Wales, as an emphasis on marketing beyond Wales was central to some of the discussions.

School of Music and Media

When the business cases were submitted, the School of Music and Media was an area of great concern to UMCB and we feared that the school would not be able to comply with the university's Language Policy. Consequently, students met in a focus group to raise concerns and a statement and series of questions were sent to the Dean of College and the Head of School (see Appendix 1). The appendix clearly expresses UMCB's concerns and notes our expectations regarding the provision. The UMCB President has discussed these issues with the Dean of College and the Head of School and had fruitful discussions. It became apparent following the discussions that the proposal did not have an excessive impact on the Welsh-medium provision and that there was a clear impetus to safeguard Welsh Music History. In addition, the Head of School stated that the Welsh-medium provision would not be disproportionate to non-Welsh provision.

Even so, it is important to note that we remain concerned as this was proposed in the business case. However, we hope that there will be no impairment to the provision.

These are the core principles that were determined by students:

1. A core of Welsh-medium modules should be safeguarded
2. Modules containing Welsh Music History should be safeguarded as this is the only centre in the world to offer this provision.

It is important to read Appendix 1 for a full picture of our concerns and comments.

School of History, Philosophy and Social Sciences

UMCB welcomes several elements of the business case, in particular the introduction of new programmes. We hope that Welsh Politics will be given due regard in drawing up the curriculum. In the field of Sociology, it is imperative that the Welsh-medium provision continues.

College of Environmental Sciences and Engineering

Chemistry

Clearly, the closure of a department will have a negative impact on Bangor University. UMCB is unanimously in support of *Undeb Bangor's* report which highlights students' opinion that other options should be considered. Since Bangor University is the only provider of Chemistry through the medium of Welsh (which goes beyond statutory requirements) UMCB is concerned about the closure of the department and the impact it would have on the student experience.

UMCB does not wish to expand on this as we have shared our concerns in the *Undeb Bangor* report. However, our opinion is clear: other options should be considered before proceeding and the Welsh provision should be factored in as one of the reasons for maintaining the department.

College of Human Sciences

School of Medical Sciences

No concerns were raised regarding the Welsh-medium provision in the business case. Having said that, we would like to remind the university that it is essential that the Welsh-medium provision be maintained as the ability to train through the medium of Welsh is one of the main reasons for developing medical training at Bangor.

School of Healthcare Sciences

The business case for the School of Healthcare Sciences proposes the elimination of 0.5 FTE of Learning Disability Nursing. UMCB is concerned about the long-term strategy regarding Welsh-medium education. We request that the university clearly explains how the provision will be staffed and structured were this cut to be implemented. We also request assurance that this would not lead to a reduction in the Welsh-medium provision. The students are concerned about future provision in an area that is of such significance at present. We therefore expect to receive a detailed plan showing how the provision will be safeguarded.

School of Sport, Health and Exercise Sciences

UMCB students are very concerned about this area (see Appendix 2). UMCB has already sent its concerns and comments to the school. We completely oppose the business case as there is a risk of losing a subject grant of £30k per annum from *Coleg Cymraeg Cebedlaethol* which would mean the loss of a Welsh-speaking member of staff. We believe that this shows a clear lack of awareness and understanding of the importance of the grant from CCC; the students feel strongly that there is no sense in putting the school in a position where it might lose substantial grant funding during an unstable financial period. The provision in the school is limited as it stands, but students have stated that they would not have come to Bangor were it not for the offer of Welsh-medium modules. In the current climate in Wales it is essential that students are able to practice sport through the medium of Welsh.

See Appendix 2 for a more detailed response to the business case. The Head of School has responded and the UMCB President will hold discussions with the School in the near future.

School of Education

No major issues were raised by Welsh-medium students due to the university's commitment to the CaBan project that demands Welsh-medium provision. Regardless of that, a number of members of staff and lecturers are under threat in the proposed business case and we would like to emphasise the importance of maintaining bilingual capacity. The university has a responsibility to train the education workforce that is essential to fulfil the Welsh Government's strategy of a million Welsh speakers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, UMCB believes strongly that the university should do everything within its power to ensure that the Welsh-medium provision continues to be worthy of acclaim at the university. The university's commitment to the Welsh language over the years has been pioneering. The service that the university offers to Wales is invaluable. This is also the opinion of the Students' Union.

Despite the cuts, UMCB believes that the Welsh-medium provision should be safeguarded as Welsh is an area of growth. UMCB's door is open for further discussion if the executive committee is willing to show the respect that is due to the Welsh language.

Appendix 1

UMCB response to the Business Case for Change: Sustainability Strategy for the School of Music and Media

(For the attention of the Dean of College, Professor Andrew Edwards and Head of School, Professor Chris Collins)

On the 9th of January, 2019, a focus group of Welsh speaking students studying a Music degree or a joint honours course with Music was held in response to the business case 'Sustainability strategy for the School of Music and Media'. The focus group was organised by UMCB and *Undeb Bangor*. It was held in response to concerns raised by students. Two core principles were established that the University should safeguard to the utmost of its ability

1. A core of Welsh-medium modules should be safeguarded
2. Modules containing Welsh Music History should be safeguarded as this is the only centre in the world to offer this provision.

The students clearly desired these principles to be protected and the use of the ambiguous term, 'Creative Activity', raises questions regarding those principles. In addition, the use of the term 'bilingual' raises further questions about Welsh language provision.

Bangor University is the leading provider of Music through the medium of Welsh; has the university considered that the School could lose a USP?

Here are some questions raised and we hope to receive a response as soon as possible under the following headings -

1. General
2. Welsh Music History
3. Expertise
4. *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol*

1. General

Question/Comment	University's Response
1. What is meant by the term 'bilingual' in reference to changing modules from being Welsh only to bilingual? (Note - the University Language Policy states clearly that nothing should be done to 'dilute' Welsh-medium modules)	
2. What is meant by the term 'Creative Activity'?	
3. Has the University considered the damage that this will have on recruiting Welsh speaking students? Taking into account that it is by far the leading provider in Wales.	

2. Welsh Music History

Question/Comment	University's Response
1. Is there any threat to the current provision of Welsh Music History?	

2. 2. Is the University committed to being a unique university that upholds the principle of safeguarding its expertise in Welsh Music?	
3. Following on from the above question, if that is not an option, will the University commit to providing research expertise (dissertation, MA or PhD) in the field?	

3. Expertise

Question/Comment	University's Response
1. 1. To what extent will losing expertise in different areas impact upon Welsh-medium provision e.g. Music Therapy. Music Therapy.	

4. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

Question/Comment	University's Response
1. Will the University continue to ensure that students qualify for the <i>Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's</i> Lead Scholarship? (Note - CCC will not certify bilingual modules as full modules)	
2. Have you measured the impact of the reduction in Welsh language modules and the effect it will have on students who receive funding for their studies from CCC?	

Bearing in mind that the Welsh language is one of the University's strategic priorities, we hope that you will give the above matters and questions serious consideration. The University has promised to safeguard the 'student experience' and we hope that Welsh speaking students will be treated fairly in this respect.

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UMCB response to the Business Case for Change: Transforming Academic Frameworks - School of Sports, Health and Exercise Sciences

(For the attention of the Dean of the College, Professor Nichola Callow and the Head of School, Dr Jamie MacDonald)

On January 15th, 2019, a focus group was held with Welsh students studying a degree course at the School of Sports, Health and Exercise Sciences in response to the business case 'Transforming Academic Frameworks - School of Sport, Health and Exercise Sciences.' The focus group was organised by UMCB and Undeb Bangor. It was held in response to concerns raised by students.

Two core principles were established that the University should safeguard to the utmost of its ability,

1. The current core of Welsh medium credits within the field should be safeguarded and maintained.
2. Modules containing Welsh across the two main areas, Physiology and Psychology should be protected.

It became clear in the focus group that there was concern about the future of Welsh language provision in this School. The students emphasized the importance of the course in the current Welsh climate with considerable emphasis on physiotherapy, mental health, disabilities and aspects of assisting the armed forces. In today's age, it is vitally important that Welsh medium expertise is available in these areas. Is there not a duty at Bangor University, in contemporary Wales, to achieve this?

Welsh provision is probably not as strong as the students wish in its current condition. And cutting on this would be nothing but an insult and an assault on the provision. It is totally unacceptable, in a linguistic sense, but also, in a business case, that the School has successfully outlined the risk of losing the block grant from the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, has outlined the risk of losses on local recruitment, without any suggestion as to how this can be managed and mitigated. For the language, and in a business world, how does this make sense? What we are asking is not much considering that the cost of continuing the provision would be very small.

In this School, the developments in Welsh-medium provision have been the subject of praise over the years, and the fact the School has maintained the greatest growth in students studying 40 credit modules across the University is incredible.

The drive to protect the core principles is evident amongst students, and fair and reasonable questions were raised in the face of the business case. And UMCB shares the concern with the students and want to oppose the cuts to Welsh language provision.

Bangor University is the leading provider of Sports, Health and Exercise through the medium of Welsh in north Wales; has the university considered that the School could lose a USP? We are aware that the provision at Cardiff Met University is high, but this should not be used as an excuse for reducing Welsh in Bangor. In addition, the students in focus group said they had come to Bangor because of the Welsh language provision. If the provision was not available they would have gone to Cardiff Met University.

Here are some questions raised and we hope to receive a response as soon as possible under the following headings -

1. General

Question/Comment	University's Response
1. Do you understand that you will lose a number of Welsh students if you do not	

continue with the current provision? The students expressed that they would not have come to Bangor to study this subject unless it was available through the medium of Welsh.	
2. Leading on this, have you considered the impact on open days if there was no Welsh speaker present?	
3. Has the University considered the damage that this will have on recruiting Welsh speaking students?	
4. How does the School intend to fulfil its statutory duties under the Welsh language measure?	
5. Why do you feel that it is appropriate to make cuts in a strategic priority area with so little provision already available?	

2. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

Question/Comment	University's Response
1. Do you see sense in placing the School in a position to lose a substantial grant block? In an unstable financial period, should not earning money be the goal?	
2. Will the University continue to ensure that students qualify for the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's Scholarships?	
3. The School has succeeded in securing four PhD scholarships in recent years. What plans does the School have to ensure qualified bilingual supervisors in the two main areas for the future?	

3. National and Social Duty

Question/Comment	University's Response
1. In the current climate, the Government sees Sport, Mental Health and Health as a priority. In Wales, this will need to be provided through the medium of Welsh. Taking this into account, have you assessed this impact nationally and socially?	
2. Do you feel we have a duty to promote Welsh in sport? Especially amongst young people with organizations like 5x60 and the Urdd emphasizing the importance of this.	

Bearing in mind that the Welsh language is one of the University's strategic priorities, we hope that you will give the above matters and questions serious consideration. The University

is committed to safeguarding the 'student experience' and this clearly encompasses the experience of Welsh speaking students.