

Welsh Language Certificate 2016 Report

Once again this year, I would like to thank the following for their support during the year; Joanna Evans (Data and Information Development Officer), Eiry Miles (Language Skills Lead Tutor) as well as the tutors for the Certificate and Central Office staff at Coleg Cymraeg.

1. Scope

Here is the number of people who took the examination at different centres.

Additional applicants enrolled at the beginning of the year but a number decided that they did not wish to continue attending the sessions and take the examination.

A questionnaire was distributed to try to ascertain the reasons for this decrease.

Responses were not received by all, so it's difficult to pinpoint the exact reasons but it seems that workload was a key factor.

Responses to the other questionnaire for students that had completed the Certificate were very positive all in all. I would like to refer in particular to the applicants' response to the training sessions. Half the applicants noted that the sessions were very useful/excellent and around 33% noted that they had had some benefit from attending the sessions.

TABLE

University	Number of applicants
Trinity Saint David	34
Swansea	17
Aberystwyth	35
Bangor	58
Cardiff	48
South Wales	15
Cardiff Met	24
University of Wales	1
Welsh for Adults	7
Total	239

Three applicants from the above completed the oral assessment only and are making an application to bank the mark for next year. One other applicant hopes to bank the written mark. Two applicants from the 239 were absent from the written examination without giving a valid reason. 35 applicants this year (i.e. 15%) had studied a degree (joint/single honours) in Welsh.

2. Developments

2.1 EXAMINATIONS

Two examination papers were formulated and the examinations took place during the morning and afternoon of 27 April. I would like to refer to two particular issues relating to this year's examination. 11 applicants at Cardiff University received the afternoon paper during the morning in error. Having looked at statistical evidence from that university in detail, it was decided that this had not influenced the results of the other students who had taken the examination at that centre.

There was a typing error in the first question in the afternoon paper meaning that there were 23 errors – rather than 22 – in the set piece. It was not possible to advise the Bangor students in time to ignore the additional error, and so I recommended that we would need to take this into consideration when marking papers from that university.

1.2 MARKETING

Cris Dafis and Eiry Miles created a video to market the Certificate with the aim of attracting more applicants. Cris also created another video outlining how to go about creating a polished oral presentation.

These presentations are available online in the resource library at Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

2.3 TRAINING

Training sessions were held for applicants at the various centres and students were encouraged to attend. During the training sessions there was a lot of discussion surrounding the oral test and the written examination. The suitability of the second task (i.e. the translanguaging) in the written paper was discussed in detail. During these sessions tutors were given the opportunity to collaboratively mark papers that were not part of the sample sent to the lead examiner last year. This was a very beneficial exercise.

3 Approximate results

Here is a list of the numbers placed in the different categories this year:

Award	Number (and percentage)
Distinction	68 (29%)
Merit	81 (34%)
Pass	68 (29%)

Fail

18 (8%)

235 applicants completed both elements.

3.1 THE ORAL PRESENTATION TASK

The usual task was set – a presentation (7 minutes long) regarding an interesting aspect of their subject/academic area to be presented before a lay audience. The applicants were asked questions during the second half of the task (8 minutes). Applicants were required to create a written resource or Powerpoint to facilitate the presentation task.

A sample of 30 tasks were seen which included examples from each category. The final marks of the oral assessment varied from 49% to 96%. The average was 69.4 and the standard deviation was 9.3.

Altogether, the standard was higher this year, and a variety of subjects were presented such as Football Hooliganism, Literary Tourism, What is Mental Health? The Young Farmers Movement and Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru.

General comments:

It was a pleasure to watch/listen to a number of presentations this year.

The best were not restricted to their notes and were speaking from the heart, occasionally referring to their slides on screen or bullet points in their notes.

The tutors' questioning was appropriate and a number of good discussions took place following the presentations.

3.2 THE WRITTEN TASK

Unlike the usual routine, the examination was not conducted through the Portal. The papers were given on a memory stick, and were loaded onto the computers by Coleg Branch Officers. Paper copies were also given to the applicants. The paper included three tasks:

- Editing a piece (which included some errors that Cysill would recognise) – 20%
- Conveying summary information in a different language (conveying summary information in Welsh from an English language source document) – 40%
- Free writing (a piece giving information to future employers about their studies/formulating a piece for a stand at a jobs fair – 40%

A detailed marking scheme was provided for both papers.

A sample of 50 papers were seen, including work by applicants in each category (Fail, Pass, Merit, Distinction)

The final marks for the final examination paper varied from 16% to 91%. The average was 65.4% and the standard deviation was 11.6.

TASK 1 - Editing

The marks varied from 10% to 97.5%. The average was 59.5 and the standard deviation was 21.4.

Altogether, this task was not answered well. Apart from some applicants that were obviously accustomed to reading written works in Welsh, a number of applicants were unsure regarding the grammar and orthography of the language and were correcting unnecessary parts of the set piece.

TASK 2 - Conveying a summary in Welsh from an English source document

The marks varied from 10% to 90%. The average was 63.5 and the standard deviation was 12.

Some applicants lost marks for translating the whole piece or parts of it.

Conveying a summary is a difficult task for experienced writers and it is essential that applicants attend training sessions in order to make the most of their ability.

Once again this year I would like to recommend that applicants read the piece carefully, noting the key points *before* starting the write. Then they should formulate a transcript based on their notes, rather than the original English piece, in order to avoid being influenced by English syntax and concentrate on the key points.

TASK 3 - Free Writing

The marks for this task varied from 15% to 95%. The average was 67.3% and the standard deviation was 11.8. The applicants were far more confident in dealing with this task as they were writing about their own subjects and were familiar with the terminology within that subject.

However, a number did not pay attention to two basic elements when answering this question. It is important in the first instance that they keep to the suitable register and that they answer *every* part of the question.

Therefore in the first paper after noting their qualifications, they should have noted a suitable post/suitable posts and noted their suitability for them – three elements in all. There were also three elements in the afternoon's question paper, which outline the

courses studied by them; the way they have been prepared for the world of work, along with other specific skills.

Once again this year the usual weaknesses in terms of grammar, mutations and syntax were seen in the work of the weakest applicants.

Although reading through the medium of Welsh is not an element that is included in the examination paper, a number of applicants would benefit from reading reports/publications/books in Welsh when preparing for the Certificate, in order to familiarise themselves with the elements mentioned.

4.0 Other considerations

4.1

Ensure that last year's recommendation regarding adopting a system that details the linguistic abilities of the applicants is now in force. For example: Language Skills Certificate (oral and written/oral only/written only)

4.2

Consider whether the Certificate should be limited to the students that studied Welsh medium modules only. The students who have studied Welsh as a subject at university have a clear advantage.

4.3

Reconsider the suitability of the examination paper in its current form for an audience that had studied Welsh medium modules. Are both tasks as relevant now as they were when the Certificate was first introduced? An increasing number of workplaces now appoint translators/language officers – and they are responsible for correcting/editing written Welsh, for example. The demand for workers who are able to work through the medium of Welsh in all areas continues to be as important as ever.