

Language Competency Certificate for Teachers (Pilot 2015-16)

Chief Examiner Annual Report

Everyone involved with this certificate this year is indebted to Joanna Evans and Catrin Williams and the thoroughness of their organisation and work with the data at the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. They both took over following the departure of Rhian Davies. Thanks are also due to centre leaders, to schools for their hospitality and to the trainees observed for their positive responses to feedback. As chief examiner I have also depended heavily on the expertise and experience of Manon Wyn Siôn, the secondary moderator, and Marian Thomas, the primary moderator.

Considerable work has been undertaken during the year on the certificate's documentation, in the form of handbooks and packages for students and the centres. Several meetings were held to discuss procedures, with centre representatives, the primary and secondary moderators and the chief examiner being present.

In all, 145 trainees sat the certificate. Their attainment is detailed below according to sector. There were 7 other candidates who did not complete all parts of the certificate and only one of these presented valid evidence to be excused.

Secondary

In all, 56 secondary trainees sat the certificate, from the following centres:

- North and Mid Wales – 24
- The South-east – 15
- The South-west – 17

As part of the Welsh medium Improvement Scheme, each of the trainees received the following:

- Language Improvement sessions at their own institutions,
- two one-day courses (in Aberystwyth),
- training and reports on lesson observations from Language Mentors during their two periods of School Experience.

The following table shows the **final secondary results for the certificate as a whole**. The results are displayed both Nationally and individually by centre:

	South-east	%	South-west	%	North and Mid Wales	%	National	%
Unsatisfactory	1	7%	1	6%	0	0%	2	4%
Adequate	3	20%	2	12%	3	13%	8	14%
Good	8	53%	14	82%	12	50%	34	61%
Excellent	3	20%	0	0%	9	38%	12	21%
Total	15		17		24		56	

1. An assessment of the written Welsh language skills of secondary trainees

Two secondary written papers were prepared so that the trainees at each centre could sit the written exam at convenient times.

The following percentages show the attainment of secondary trainees nationally in the **written papers**:

Unsatisfactory:	4%
Adequate:	21%
Good:	48%
Excellent:	27%

The chief examiner saw every failing script, every borderline script (those between two standards) and a sample of scripts from each marker.

The trainees that reached the Excellent standard corrected the vast majority of the errors (Task 1), could produce a translanguaged text that flowed well in Welsh and included the expected points (Task 2), and also wrote a free piece of work that was largely correct and met the question's requirements in full (Task 3).

Recommendations in terms of marking the written papers

- There is a need to ensure that each marker has a uniform approach to the weighting of criteria (accuracy, language register etc). A discussion will be required to determine the weighting.
- Consideration should be given to the possibility of a pre-set formula for the weighting on the mark sheet so that marks can be used to note the standard for each criterion, rather than ticks as is currently the case.

2. An assessment of the practical ability of trainees to teach through the medium of Welsh

- **Personal standard of literacy**
- **The ability to apply and develop the literacy of learners**

Attainment of trainees:

- Of the 56 trainees in the cohort, it was considered that only three attained the *Excellent* standard in both parts of the assessment. Six others were on the border between *Excellent* and *Good*. This equates to 16% of the trainees, compared with 27% who achieved an *Excellent* standard in the written paper.
- About a third of the trainees attained a *Good* standard in both parts of the assessment, and another third attained the *Adequate*. A fifth of the trainees were on the border between *Adequate* and *Good*.

Arranging the moderation visits

Based on the detailed and regular lesson reports and the summary reports from the Language Mentors at the end of the second period of School Experience, and the observation reports of the Language Tutors at the centres, Manon Siôn (National Co-ordinator of the Welsh Medium Improvement Scheme), arranged a moderation tour that included 22 students from the cohort of 56. A sample of each grade within each centre was moderated, and it was also made possible for the moderators to moderate some lessons together. Before starting, a telephone meeting was held to confirm the arrangements and to ensure consistency in the process.

The moderators who observed trainee lessons were:

- Manon Siôn (chief moderator)
- Marged Cartwright and Kelly Morgan, who were also Language Mentors in their own schools
- Elin Meek (Chief Examiner, who moderated two trainees of each standard and from each centre)

The Chief Examiner received:

- Reports from lesson observations and the summary reports of the Language Mentors on the students she moderated before going out to observe, along with half a dozen other students not observed across Wales that represented a range of grades.
- The moderation reports of the other moderators.

Clear evidence was seen of very thorough reports by all Language Mentors, with constructive comments to improve the language standard of trainees and general suggestions to improve teaching. In that respect, the trainees receive very valuable guidance linguistically and in terms of teaching. The reports highlighted progress during the Teaching Experience as the trainees developed in confidence. In conversations with Language Mentors during moderation visits, their commitment to raising the language standard of trainees was clear, as was their eagerness to go the extra mile. Several mentors noted that it was regrettable that it was not possible to extend the scheme to cover the first year of newly qualified teachers.

Comments on the moderation:

- The moderators agreed with the Language Mentors regarding the general final grades of trainees, although it was noted sometimes that a Mentor could be either a little too generous or a little too strict. However, these were minor differences.
- The evidence provided to moderators for moderation of Part 2 of the summary report (**The ability to apply and develop the literacy of learners**) was

inconsistent. Some trainees had provided numerous examples of resources used during the Teaching Experience to develop the literacy of learners along with examples of assessed tasks. However, the files of other trainees were less comprehensive, with only the resources of the observed lesson available for moderators.

- In the files of some trainees there was evidence of reports from general mentors, as well as those of Language Mentors. There were some examples where it was clear that discussion and agreement was taking place, but also examples where there was a discrepancy between the assessment of the general mentors and the assessment of the Language Mentors of the trainee's personal literacy and ability to apply and develop the literacy of learners.
- It was felt that 'Excellent' covered a wide range of marks (30) and that the range could be narrower.
- It became apparent that the quality of the evidence for Part 2 of the summary report was highly dependent on the practice of the individual departments in which the trainees had their Teaching Experience. Some departments (mainly in the humanities, but not exclusively) were leading on literacy which meant trainees were benefiting from adopting excellent practices. On the other hand, where departments were not incorporating activities to develop the literacy of learners as an ordinary part of lessons, trainees tended to add literacy activities out of context.

Recommendations for the future

- Ensure consistency between each Training Centre in terms of the evidence of their ability to apply and develop learners' literacy that trainees are expected to provide for the purposes of moderation.
- Ensure consistency between the assessment of general mentors and language mentors in individual schools of the personal literacy standard of trainees and their ability to apply and develop the literacy of learners.
- Consider having a narrower range of marks for the 'excellent' rating.
- Consider how to ensure that trainees whose Welsh is obviously very strong, who are capable of reaching the Excellent standard in the written paper and in terms of the personal literacy element when teaching through the medium of Welsh, are also able to reach the same standard in terms of their ability to apply and develop the literacy of learners.
- Ideally, if additional funds are available, extend the scheme so that newly qualified teachers also have language support in their first year in post.

Primary

In all, 89 primary trainees sat the certificate, from the following centres:

North and Mid Wales – 43

The South-east – 20

The South-west – 26

Each of these trainees received:

- Language Improvement sessions in their own institutions.

The following table shows the **final secondary results for the certificate as a whole**. The results are displayed both Nationally and individually by centre:

	The South-east	%	The South-west	%	North and Mid Wales	%	National	%
Unsatisfactory	1	5%	1	4%	5	12%	7	8%
Adequate	7	35%	7	27%	11	26%	25	28%
Good	7	35%	11	42%	18	42%	36	40%
Excellent	5	25%	7	27%	9	21%	21	24%
Total	20		26		43		89	

1. An assessment of the written Welsh language skills of the primary trainees

Two primary written papers were prepared so that the trainees at each centre could sit the written exam at convenient times.

The following percentages show the attainment of trainees nationally in the **written papers**:

Excellent: 18%

Good: 43%

Adequate: 26%

Unsatisfactory: 13%

The chief examiner saw every failing script, every borderline script (those between two standards) and a sample of scripts from each marker.

The trainees that reached the Excellent standard corrected the vast majority of the errors, could produce a translanguaged text that flowed well in Welsh and included the expected points, and also wrote a free piece of work that was largely correct and met the question's requirements in full.

Recommendations in terms of marking the written papers

- There is a need to ensure that each marker has a uniform approach to the weighting of the criteria (accuracy, language style /register etc). A discussion will be required to determine the weighting.
- Consideration should be given to the possibility of a pre-set formula for the weighting on the mark sheet so that marks can be used to note the standard for each criterion, rather than ticks as is currently the case.

2. An assessment of the practical ability of trainees to teach through the medium of Welsh

- **Personal standard of literacy**
- **The ability to apply and develop the literacy of learners**

Attainment of trainees:

- It was considered that nearly a quarter of the trainees (22) in the cohort of 89 reached the Excellent standard in both parts of the assessment. Another half a dozen were on the border between Excellent and Good.
- Nearly a third of the trainees reached a Good standard in both parts of the assessment, and a little over a quarter reached the Adequate standard. Less than a tenth of the trainees were on the border between Adequate and Good.
- It was not considered that any trainees were at an Unsatisfactory level.

Arranging the moderation visits

Marian Thomas, the primary moderator, observed 10 lessons.

- 3 at the South-east Centre (1 with the chief examiner)
- 3 at the South-west Centre (1 with the chief examiner and the class mentor also being present)
- 4 at the North Wales Centre (1 with the chief examiner, 3 with the college tutor). There were 5 in the original sample but one trainee had a car accident on the morning of the visit.

Comments about the moderation

- To a great extent, the moderator and the chief examiner agreed with the award given to the trainees. However, there was the occasional instance where class mentors had set marks early on in the process, sometimes without discussion with the college tutor, where trainees had improved in the meantime.
- A discussion with the college tutor at the North Wales Centre whilst observing lessons was extremely useful. Usually there was an opportunity to consult with class mentors/senior mentors, and in the case of one centre, observation took place with the class mentor and a discussion held with each one.

- The fact that all the assessments were online in two centres made it impossible for the moderator/chief examiner to see them before observing the trainees. This meant that only a single mark was available, unlike the procedure in secondary where not only were the marks of observed trainees seen, but a range of others too.
- Some mentors noted that they would appreciate more guidance on moderation. There was one example of a mentor that happened to be given the general opinion of college tutors about a specific trainee, which gave her the confidence to give the trainee a high mark.
- There were a few instances where there was a gap between the personal standard of a trainee's language skills and their ability to develop pupils' language skills – especially in the Foundation Phase. The ability of trainees to develop pupils' language skills was higher than their own personal language skills.
- Trainees did not make constructive use of the linguistic target booklets distributed in one centre.
- Some work marked by trainees was seen.
- Very little original work prepared by trainees was seen. Trainees used county resources or resources from Hwb, which is of course perfectly acceptable, but this meant it was not possible to assess the quality of the language of many resources. Unfortunately, one trainee who went to considerable efforts to create original materials succeeded only in highlighting how flawed his written Welsh was.
- Perhaps more use could be made of the wider range of marks within 'excellent'; there was a tendency to stay within the 70% – 80% range.
- It was reported that school mentors (North Wales Centre) had benefited greatly from the course for mentors/senior mentors and school mentors, but that many schools had not sent representatives. Where a mentor had not attended central training, it was arranged for a tutor to visit each school to give 1 to 1 training. College tutors had attended the initial training.
- Good practice was observed whereby the college tutor discussed with the class mentor before the college tutor completed the assessment grid, or where both completed the assessment grid together, with the class mentor then setting targets.
- The college tutor suggested that putting 2a/2b/2c in the columns would facilitate the process of awarding a mark.
- One centre gave instructions for students to teach a subject lesson – so they could be observed developing pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum – although this was not seen in two of the four sessions observed.

Recommendations:

- Through training, establish common practices across the three centres in terms of giving trainees marks for this element of the Teachers' Certificate of Language Competence.
- If possible, ensure that the moderator/chief examiner can have a chat with the class mentor/senior mentor (and the college tutor somewhere along the way) about how the marks were determined, and ensure that the online reports are available for viewing for the observed trainees and a range of others.
- Consider having a specific 'language mentor' at each primary school to focus on the criteria of this Certificate if possible, e.g. the literacy co-ordinator. This arrangement works well in the secondary schools, but this would of course require additional funding.
- In the case of trainees observed by the moderator/chief examiner, confirm the practice of ensuring that a lesson plan file, a resources file and examples of marking are available for viewing.
- Refine the grade given, e.g. put 2a/2b/2c in the columns in order to facilitate the process of awarding a final mark for the two elements.
- Revisit the range of marks within 'excellent' and consider whether this can be refined.
- The timing varied from centre to centre in terms of awarding marks. One centre was late in submitting them to the Coleg Cymraeg, although the marks were more accurate as a result.

We heard consistently when moderating in the secondary and primary sectors how this pilot program had increased awareness about the importance of personal standards of literacy and the ability to apply and develop learners' literacy. It is hoped that the Certificate will be established further, and continue to have a positive impact on standards.

Elin Meek
5 July 2016

Appendix:

Characteristics of 'excellent' primary trainees observed:

- presenting lesson aims very well
- confident, lively and meaningful presentation
- dramatic variation of the voice, e.g. to portray characters when reading a story
- emphasising key words and mutated words
- excellent articulation
- using a range of strategies to enrich vocabulary and syntax
- ensuring that vocabulary / patterns are audible and visible in various ways
- modelling sentence patterns robustly
- using the voice and gestures to convey the meaning of words, e.g. *sleifio* [sneaking]
- correct, efficient and purposeful questioning
- challenging pupils to give details in responses
- correcting errors – verbally by repeating the answer correctly
- correcting written errors, with a high standard of annotation and insightful comments to demonstrate the way forward
- written resources with good quality Welsh
- comprehensive files with rich and extended written language resources with a firm and correct grasp of vocabulary and terminology
- providing strong leadership and planning specific questions for classroom assistants to ask during the activities
- providing opportunities that ensure that the literacy and language skills of pupils are progressing in every lesson

Characteristics of 'adequate' primary trainees observed:

- lack of evidence of good, rich language in presentation and in resources
- basic mutation shortcomings, verbally and in the resources for pupils
- not always managing to negate sentences correctly
- not always managing to form questions correctly
- using English words here and there
- not giving leadership to class assistants for language prompting
- not explaining resources before presenting to pupils
- not checking the language of resources before presenting to pupils
- lack of language aspects in the success criteria
- very little consideration for the linguistic needs of pupils to enable them to complete tasks
- lack of repetition and of correcting verbal answers
- differentiated work not challenging the best pupils or unsuitable for them, i.e. way beyond their ability, e.g. use of the impersonal

- not using *Cysill* spellcheck consistently to prepare resources and the work in the file
- lack of evidence that the literacy and language skills of pupils were stretched