

Guidelines for Mentees (learners)

Aberystwyth University Mentoring Welsh Learners Scheme Centre for Welsh Language Services

Introduction

The University is committed to providing practical support to staff who are learning Welsh according to the terms of the Welsh Language Scheme 2003 (clause 6.7) and the Revised Language Scheme refers to mentoring as an important part of implementing the Bilingual Skills Strategy.

The development of this scheme to mentor Welsh learners aims to achieve the following objectives:

- i. improve the oral skills of Welsh learners and increase their confidence
- ii. encourage the use of Welsh in the workplace
- iii. demonstrate to Welsh learners that the University acknowledges the effort they are making to learn Welsh
- iv. create opportunities for fluent speakers to practice their communication skills and to create a feeling of satisfaction by helping a colleague to achieve their goal
- v. demonstrate to Welsh speakers that the University acknowledges the fact that they possess a valuable skill.
- vi. promote the feeling of being part of the University community (by meeting people from other departments)
- vii. promote the Welsh language in the University in a non-threatening manner.

What is the mentoring scheme for Welsh learners?

The purpose of the mentoring scheme is to provide Welsh learners with the opportunity to practice what they have learnt with a sympathetic and patient person who is willing to give of their time about once a week/fortnight to chat in an informal, unthreatening atmosphere. For more advanced learners it is the opportunity to hear different accents and hear Welsh being spoken 'naturally'. Research has shown that learners who take advantage of a mentoring scheme are 45% more likely to become fluent, and 87% more likely to use Welsh in the workplace at some level.¹

Other workplaces in Wales also run mentoring schemes for Welsh learners, e.g. Cymal, the National Assembly, Bangor University Library.

Who are the mentors?

Members of staff who are fluent Welsh speakers. Welsh may be their first language or they may be very experienced learners.

How will I benefit from the scheme?

This is the chance for you to have one to one support from a Welsh speaker who will listen to you and encourage you. The more you practice what you have learned, the more confident you will become in using Welsh at work.

¹ Cf Acen : 'Mentora – Yr Her a'r Hwyl!'

How will you find a mentor for me?

Perhaps you already know someone who you think could be your mentor. In this case we will contact them directly if they have not already joined the mentoring scheme. Otherwise we will try to pair people who are working on the same campus, and we will avoid pairing line managers with members of their staff. We will also ask whether or not people prefer someone of their own sex. If you find that the mentoring relationship isn't working, please contact us and we will try to find another mentor for you.

What will I be expected to do?

We suggest that you spend the first session with your mentor discussing your needs and what you expect from them. Do you want to go over the previous Welsh lesson that you've attended or have an informal chat? Perhaps you would like to discuss your homework with them. If you read a dialogue in your Welsh lesson perhaps you would like to practice it with your mentor. We suggest that you don't ask complicated grammatical questions as the role of the mentor is to help you speak Welsh naturally – your Welsh tutor is the expert on Welsh grammar! We advise the mentors not to correct your grammar and language unless you specifically ask them to do so. We feel that if they have understood what you have said then the conversation should continue – leave the correction of mutations etc to the classroom. The point is to get you talking!

Don't be alarmed if the Welsh spoken by your mentor seems very different to what you have learnt. The mentor may have a strong accent, or speak a different dialect of Welsh – but this is your chance to hear conversational Welsh spoken outside of the classroom and the mentor will be able to understand your 'classroom Welsh' perfectly well.

Am I able to speak Welsh well enough to join the scheme?

If you are a complete beginner you will have to put more effort into your time with your mentor. Intermediate and advanced learners may be happy to chat away about anything with their mentor, but if you are a complete beginner it will be easier to refer to your lessons as a starting point. The mentor will be following your lead so it's up to you to tell them your requirements.

Who may I contact if I have any questions?

You are welcome to contact the Centre for Welsh Language Services (canolfangymraeg@aber.ac.uk; ext. 2045) if you have any questions about this scheme.