

Coleg Board, 26 March 2025 (9:30 – 1:45), Aberystwyth University

Present

Board Members:

Dr Aled Eirug (Chair)
Ann Beynon
Nia Elias
Rhys Evans
John Hayes
Professor Anwen Jones
Llinos Roberts

Observer:

Alan Jones (Welsh Government)

Officers:

Dr Ioan Matthews (Chief Executive)
Gwenllïan Griffiths (Director of Policy, Communications and Engagement)
Dr Dylan Phillips (Director of Higher Education and Coleg Secretary)
Dr Dafydd Trystan (Director of Strategic Development, Further Education and Registrar)
Nia Brown (Governance Officer)
Mari Fflur (Senior Manager for Strategic Developments)
Suzanne Lewis (Senior Manager for Corporate Services)
Gwenllïan Owen (Senior Manager for Higher Education)
Rebecca Williams (Senior Manager for Language Skills and Workforce Planning)

Apologies:

Meri Huws, Professor Pedr ap Llwyd, Angharad Roberts, Professor Enlli Thomas, Deio Owen

Minutes of the 26 March 2025 meeting

1. Item 1 – Welcome, apologies and introductory matters

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
1.1	All those present were welcomed to the meeting.		
1.2	Apologies were noted as above.		

2. Item 2 – Declarations of interest

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
2.1	Members were reminded of the procedure in which they are asked to note any declarations of interest additional to those already noted in the Register of Interests.		

3. Item 3 – Chief Executive's Report

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
	<i>At this point, Nia Elias joined the meeting</i>		

3.1	The Chief Executive's written report on recent activities was received.		
3.2	<p>Annual Congregation, 25 March 2025</p> <p>A report was given on the Congregation held the previous night, including the presentation of a fellowship in honour of the late Professor Geraint H. Jenkins to members of his family.</p>		
3.3	<p>Welsh Government Grant Letter</p> <p>A report was given on a meeting held on 25 March 2025 with Bethan Webb, Deputy Director at the Welsh Government Welsh Language Division. A report was given on the increase of £494,400 to the Coleg's budget in 2025/26 which was confirmed in the Welsh Government Grant Letter received on 25 March 2025.</p> <p>The opportunities to attract new audiences were discussed in the context of the budget increase.</p>		
3.4	<p>Meeting with Welsh Government officials</p> <p>A report was given on the Chair and the Chief Executive's meeting on 12 March 2025 with Mark Drakeford MS, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language, Vikki Howells MS, Minister for</p>		

	Further and Higher Education and Government officials.		
3.5	<p>Welsh Language and Education Bill</p> <p>It was reported that a number of the amendments submitted by the Coleg to the Welsh Language and Education Bill had been accepted. The Bill will complete its journey through the Senedd in May.</p>		
3.6	<p>Medr</p> <p>It was reported that the Medr Board had accepted the Coleg's initial advice and had made a commitment to develop a National Plan for Welsh-medium and bilingual provision across the entire tertiary sector. Medr's Strategic Plan was published on 12 March 2025.</p> <p>A meeting of the chairs and chief executives of Medr and the Coleg was held on 28 January 2025, and a pattern of regular meetings will be established.</p> <p>Bimonthly meetings have been arranged with Kieron Rees, Director of Learner Experience at</p>		

	<p>Medr, who is responsible for Welsh-medium provision, and other senior officials from Medr.</p> <p>Vikki Howells MS, Minister for Further and Higher Education, has requested a study of subjects and areas across the tertiary sector that are 'at risk' due to low numbers, and Medr has invited the Coleg to contribute to this work.</p>		
3.7	<p>The National Centre for Learning Welsh</p> <p>A report was given on the ongoing collaboration between the Coleg and the Centre. There is no confirmation yet of the Cymraeg Gwaith budget (which comes from the Welsh Government via the Centre) for 2025/26.</p>		
3.8	<p>Universities Wales</p> <p>It was reported that the Chief Executive had given the university chairs a presentation on 14 March 2025.</p>		
3.9	<p>Higher Education</p> <p>A report was given on a pilot project to apply CEFR to the development of ways of identifying student attainment at the end of a degree course.</p>		

	<p>A report was given on the behaviour change technique pack which aims to influence student language choices. The pack in its final form can be shared in April 2025. A report was given on the publication of Medr's bulletin on HE student data for 2022/23 and it was noted that the Coleg had asked Medr for an early discussion on the timeline for publishing the 2026 bulletin.</p>	<p>Share behaviour change pack with the Board, with a presentation to be given at the next meeting.</p> <p>It was agreed to share the Coleg's analysis of the data with the Board.</p>	<p>April 2025</p> <p>To be confirmed</p>
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4. Item 4 – Higher Education Update

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
4.1	<p>An update on Higher Education was presented by the Director of Higher Education and the Senior Manager for Higher Education.</p>		
4.2	<p>A report was given on the Coleg's current support for universities and measures to maintain Welsh-medium provision. A report was given on the recent meetings with Vice-Chancellors to discuss the funding challenges facing the higher education institutions which could lead to decisions that could negatively</p>		

	affect staffing capacity and Welsh-medium provision.		
4.3	Following a request from the Audit and Risk Committee for the Coleg to gather specific information about the impact on the Welsh language of job losses across higher education, the Coleg has been in touch with all HE institutions. A paper summarising universities' responses was presented to members for information on the situation across Wales.		
4.4	During the discussion, it was noted that the Coleg's staff are under significant time and capacity pressures, and that it has become necessary to reassess priorities in terms of where to use our staffing resources. In order to ensure that we continue to deliver effectively, it was agreed that officers should prioritise national strategic planning work. As a result, some elements of the work will be put on hold to allow a more strategic approach moving forward.		
4.5	Alan Jones from the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Division gave an update on the Seren		

	<p>scheme and how the scheme relates to universities in Wales and universities outside Wales.</p> <p>*Later in the meeting, Alan Jones reported that the Seren scheme does not gather data on Welsh speakers but does gather data about pupils' school.</p>		
4.6	<p>During the discussion, reference was made to the achievements of the Research Scholarship holders who had been recognised at the Congregation for successfully completing their doctorates with the Coleg's support.</p>		
4.7	<p>At the end of the discussion, it was agreed to include the Coleg's comments on the Seren scheme within a wider brief for Vikki Howells MS, Minister for Further and Higher Education, on the current position of the Welsh language within higher education, and the work of the Coleg specifically.</p>	<p>Officers to respond to the Minister regarding the Seren scheme</p>	<p>Spring 2025</p>
4.8	<p>At the end of the discussion on higher education, Board members expressed their unanimous support for the steps taken by officers in writing to universities regarding the</p>		

	<p>current situation in higher education. This was supported by Professor Anwen Jones, who emphasised that her comments on the importance of the Coleg's current actions were conveyed in her role as a Board member and not as a member of her university's management team.</p>		
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5. Item 5 – Tertiary sector planning

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
5.1	<p>A paper on holistic planning across the tertiary sector was presented by the Director of Strategic Development and Further Education.</p>		
5.2	<p>The framework was discussed in terms of funding, planning, staffing and follow-up and how it would affect policy, engagement, manifesto preparation and advice for Medr.</p>		
5.3	<p>The framework was approved as a basis for planning the Coleg's work in the coming years, reflecting Medr's desire to develop common processes across the sector where appropriate.</p>		

6. Item 6 – Manifesto – CLOSED MEETING

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
	<i>At this point Alan Jones, Welsh Government, left the meeting.</i>		
6.1	The Coleg's Manifesto for the 2026 Senedd Election was presented by the Director of Policy, Communications and Engagement, the Senior Manager for Policy and the Senior Manager for Language Skills and Workforce Planning.		
6.2	It was reported that officers would draw up documentation for the purpose of undertaking an engagement programme with a view to influencing the political parties and the next government's programme for government.		
6.3	The outputs that the next Government could support were discussed, as well as the nature of the engagement discussions with stakeholders and political parties from now until the summer.		
6.4	The document was approved.		
	<i>At this point, Alan Jones rejoined the meeting.</i>		

7. Item 7 – Minutes of the 20 November 2024 meeting and matters arising

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
7.1	The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting held on 20 November 2024.		
7.2	Item 3.7 – It was reported that a Higher Education update had been arranged for members on 21 January 2025		
7.3	Item 6.2 – It was reported that there was an agreement to transfer the assets of Ymddiriedolaeth Salesbury to the Coleg.	The Chair to write formally to the Trust to acknowledge their work over the years and to thank them for entrusting the care of the assets to the Coleg.	Spring 2025

8. Item 9 – Chair's Matters

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
8.1	The Chair gave a further report on the 12 March 2025 meeting with the Chief Executive and Vikki Howells MS, Minister for Further and Higher		

	Education and Mark Drakeford, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language.		
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9. Item 10 – Appointments and Governance Standards Committee

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
9.1	<p>Minutes (Item 10i)</p> <p>The minutes of the Appointments and Governance Standards Committee meeting held on 22 January 2024 were noted.</p> <p>The Secretary reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> on the Internal Auditors' report on governance that had given substantial assurance, and the actions to respond to the recommendations. 		
9.2	<p>Governance Document (Item 10ii)</p> <p>The governance document, which had been amended by the Committee following some recommendations from the Internal Auditors, was approved and ratified.</p>		

9.3	<p>Appointment procedures (Item 10iii)</p> <p>The appointment procedures, which had been amended by the Committee following some recommendations from the Internal Auditors, were approved and ratified.</p>		
9.4	<p>Governance experience scheme for prospective Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic leaders (Item 10iv)</p> <p>The Senior Manager for Corporate Services introduced the governance experience scheme for prospective Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic leaders.</p>		
9.5	<p>Committee membership</p> <p>It was reported that John Hayes had become a member of the Finance and General Purposes Committee following the appointment of Rhys Evans as chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.</p> <p>It was reported that the Coleg had advertised for external members for the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee, and that applications had been considered by a panel of the Appointments and</p>		

	<p>Governance Standards Committee on 19 March. Recommendations will be circulated to be confirmed by the Board in due course.</p>		
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10. Item 11 – Audit and Risk Committee

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
10.1	<p>Minutes (Item 11i)</p> <p>The minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 29 January 2025 were noted.</p> <p>Rhys Evans, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that the Appointments and Governance Standards Committee would discuss the Chair's honorarium following a recommendation from the Internal Auditors • on the progress in IT relating to cyber security • the cyber incident on 14 January 2025 • on a Board-level discussion on the opportunities of AI 		

10.2	<p>The Risk Register (Item 11ii)</p> <p>The Strategic Risk Register was noted, for information.</p>		
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11. Item 12 – Finance and General Purposes Committee

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
11.1	<p>5 March 2025 meeting</p> <p>It was reported that a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee had not been held on 5 March 2025 because a quorum had not been reached. As a result, all the Committee's papers were shared with the Board and it was noted that it had not been possible for the Committee to recommend the budget to the Board as it had not met.</p> <p>The Chief Executive noted his concern that the Committee had not considered the matters delegated to it by the Board and that, as a result, a number of matters were outstanding and there was no recommendation for the Board to consider in relation to the Coleg's budget for 2025/26.</p>		

11.2	<p>Minutes and reports</p> <p>The minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 25 September 2024 were noted and received.</p> <p>The updates prepared by officers in relation to Marketing, Information Technology, Health and Safety, Human Resources, and Diversity and Equality were noted. There was no discussion on the reports.</p>		
11.3	<p>Coleg budget 2025/26</p> <p>In the absence of the Committee Chair, the Secretary presented the Coleg's draft budget for 2025/26.</p> <p>It was reported that a 5% increase to the Coleg's budget had been confirmed in the Welsh Government Grant Letter received on 25 March 2025.</p> <p>Following a short discussion, the draft budget was approved.</p>		

12. Item 13 – Academic Board

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
12.1	Minutes (Item 13) In the Chair's absence, the minutes of the Academic Board meeting held on 12 February 2025 were noted.		

13. Item 14 – Post-16 Strategic Board

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
13.1	Minutes (Items 14i and 14ii) In the Chair's absence, the minutes of the Post-16 Strategic Board meetings held on 3 December 2024 and 19 February 2025 were noted.		

14. Item 15 – Welsh Government Grant Letter

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
14.1	It was reported that the Welsh Government Grant Letter for 2025/26 had been received on 25 March.		

	It was confirmed that the Coleg accepts the conditions of the Grant Letter, and the suggestion that officers should return a signed copy to the Welsh Government was approved.		
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15. Item 16 – Coleg Budget for 2025/26

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
15.1	<p>Draft budget for 2025/26 (Item 12)</p> <p>Discussed under Item 12.</p>		
15.2	<p>List of Higher Education Academic Planning Grants 2025/26 (Item 16ii)</p> <p>The Secretary presented a list of higher education academic planning grants for 2025/26.</p> <p>A report was given on the monitoring process established for the grants, and the type of action taken if an institution does not fulfil the agreed conditions was described.</p>		
15.3	The higher education academic planning grants for 2025/26 were approved.		

15.4	<p>List of Further Education Development Grants for 2025/26 (Item 16ii)</p> <p>The Senior Manager for Strategic Development, FE and Registrar presented a list of further education development grants for 2025/26.</p> <p>The pattern of awarding grants to each college across priority areas was reported. It was explained that the grant is smaller in the award's second and third year.</p>		
15.5	The further education development grants for 2025/26 were approved.		

16. Item 17 – Constitutional matters

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
16.1	<p>The Annual General Meeting (the Coleg Court)</p> <p>The Secretary gave a verbal report on the Coleg's annual meeting held on 24 March 2025.</p>		
16.2	It was reported that the Court had received the Annual Report for 2023/24 and the Coleg's annual accounts up to 31 March 2024.		

17. Item 18 – Any other business

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
17.1	<p>Board Questionnaire</p> <p>Members were reminded that the Board's questionnaire would be circulated at the end of the week to be completed by 7 April 2025.</p>		
17.2	<p>Letter from Cytûn</p> <p>It was noted that a letter had been received from Cytûn expressing concern about the position of Theology and other subjects in the Humanities due to the current context in higher education. It was reported that officers had offered Cytûn a meeting to discuss their concerns.</p>		
17.3	<p>Establishment of the Anne Brooke Scholarship</p> <p>The Chief Executive reported that the Coleg had received a financial contribution from a member of the family of the late Anne Brooke. It is intended to establish a scholarship, and the details will be announced at an event to be held in Cardiff on 14 July 2025.</p>		

18. Item 19 – Next meetings

Number	Main points of discussion	Action	Timescale
18.1	<p>The dates of the next meetings were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 25 June 2025, Sport Wales National Centre, Cardiff• 19 November 2025, Bangor• 25 March 2026, Carmarthen (the Annual Congregation will be held on 24 March)• 24 June 2026, Cardiff		