

Medr

Y Comisiwn Addysg Drydyddol ac Ymchwil
Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

Strategic Plan

September 2024



Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Sponsored by
Welsh Government

Foreword

We are delighted to present the Strategic Plan (“the Plan”) for the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research – **Medr** – for 2025-2030.

The Plan sets out our proposed response to the Welsh Government’s [statement of strategic priorities for tertiary education and research and innovation](#). It also takes account of the legislative requirements placed on us in the [Tertiary Education and Research \(Wales\) Act 2022](#). It outlines proposed strategic aims and commitments and describes the way in which we want to work to achieve them.

It has been shaped by the sector we fund and regulate. We have worked with partners across Wales to listen to their views and reflect them in our Plan whenever we can. It has also been shaped by the expertise we have across our organisation.

It marks the beginning of a new approach in Wales; not disconnected from the past, but seeking to build and improve on it.

Creating a new arm’s-length body to fund and regulate the tertiary education and research sector has not happened overnight. This Plan is the culmination of years of work and a long process of change. Ensuring that change happens smoothly remains a priority for us and the Plan reflects that.

Yet we also need to embrace the opportunities that this change can bring:

A more joined-up and inclusive sector, with clearer and more flexible pathways for learners to learn at the level and in the place that is best for them.

A collaborative sector that strives for excellence, with providers encouraged to focus on their strengths and the highest-quality learning and outcomes.

And a sector that meets the needs of Welsh society and its economy, creating a skilled workforce and playing its part in reducing the number of people who are not in education, employment or training.

This Plan is the first step to realising that ambitious long-term vision. We have worked with partners to shape this Plan. We are now consulting to ensure the Plan reflects what you believe will have a positive impact on the tertiary education and research sector in Wales.

We are seeking views on this Plan from everyone with an interest in our

proposals. These views and perspectives will be considered before we submit the Plan to Welsh Ministers and, with their approval, the Plan will be published in the New Year. We will then work with you to implement the Plan and together, we will create a lasting and positive change for Wales.



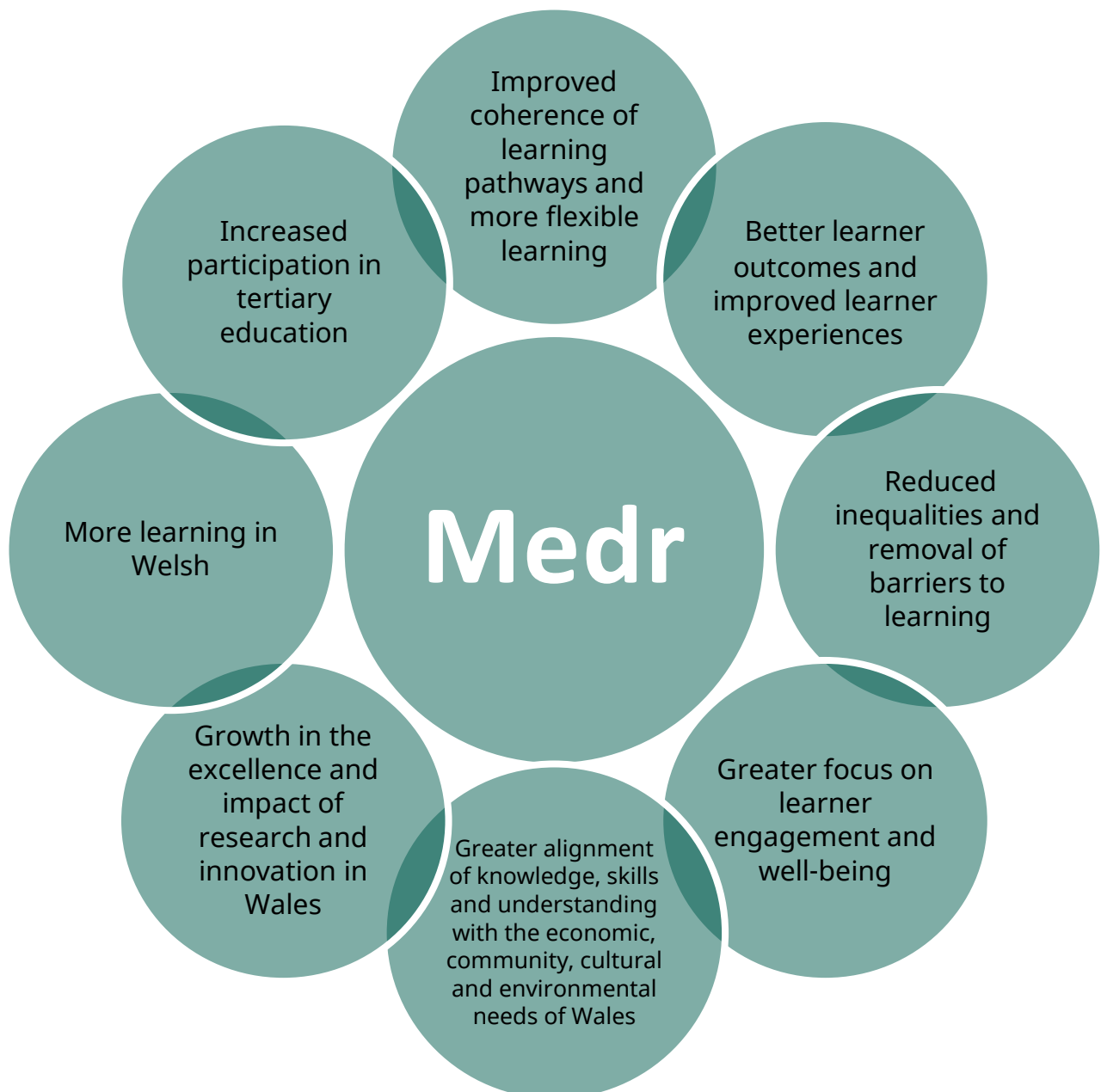
Simon Pirotte OBE and Professor Dame Julie Lydon

Our Vision

We will work in close collaboration with our partners to enable a tertiary education and research system which is centred around the needs of learners, society and economy with excellence, equality and engagement at its heart.

Our long-term ambitions

Our aspirations are ambitious – and rightly so. We intend to make a difference and we are clear about the opportunities that exist. It is our expectation that we will make significant progress on our trajectory towards our ambitions for success over the course of this Plan, which include:







Medr Strategic Plan Summary

Our Vision

We will work in close collaboration with our partners to enable a tertiary education and research system which is centred around the needs of learners, society and economy with excellence, equality and engagement at its heart.

Our Values

-  Dysgu: to learn; to teach
-  Cydweithio: to collaborate
-  Cynnwys pawb: to include everyone
-  Rhagori: to excel

Strategic Aim 1: To focus the tertiary education sector around the needs of the learner - their experience, achievement and well-being, ensuring they are involved in decision-making and encouraging participation in learning at all stages in life

Strategic Aim 5: To encourage greater use of the Welsh language and increase demand for and participation in, learning and assessment through the medium of Welsh

Strategic Aim 2: To create a coherent education and training system where all can acquire the skills and knowledge they need to make a real impact on a changing economy and society

Foundation Aim:
To establish Medr as a highly effective, respected organisation and trusted regulator, shaping future ambitions for the tertiary education sector in Wales through collaborative working

Strategic Aim 4: To grow internationally-acclaimed research and inspire innovation throughout the tertiary education sector.

Strategic Aim 3: To ensure tertiary education aims for excellent standards, quality of provision and raises educational expectations in order for learners to achieve their ambitions

Foundation Aim

Establishing Medr as a trusted regulator; working collaboratively to shape the future of tertiary education

Founding commitments:

- Develop a risk-based regulatory system to deliver our strategic aims, respecting providers' distinctive missions.
- Define our position in Wales and work with partners across the sector to identify opportunities and challenges.

Growth commitments:

- Consult upon a system of funding that enables clear pathways, ease of transition, flexibility and high standards.
- Monitor compliance with the regulatory system.
- Improve data collection systems and consider how these can align provision with economic and social need.

Strategic Aim 1

Focusing the sector around learner needs and encouraging participation at every life stage**Founding commitments:**

- Establish a learner engagement code and a learner voice forum.
- Develop a framework for mental health and well-being and guidance around learner protection plans.
- Set out regulatory conditions that promote equality of opportunity and reduce gaps in attainment.

Growth commitments:

- Create an environment that increases participation, particularly from traditionally under-represented groups.
- Provide for a safe and inclusive learning environment.
- Promote opportunities for learning, from pre-16 transition to all-age learning.

Strategic Aim 2

Creating a coherent system that develops skills that benefit a changing economy and society**Founding commitments:**

- Build links with industry, ascertain skills gaps, influence the skills system and deploy funding to meet need
- Develop Welsh apprenticeship provision, ensuring rigorous standards of occupational competence
- Promote civic mission, encouraging learners and providers to be engaged members of their communities.

Growth commitments:

- Foster collaboration to create coherent learning pathways that contribute to a sustainable economy.
- Encourage flexibility to allow learners to adapt their skills to a changing environment throughout their lives.
- Review basic skills provision.

Strategic Aim 3

Ensuring excellent standards and high aspirations that allow learners to achieve their ambitions**Founding commitments:**

- Determine a quality assessment arrangements recognising diversity and prioritising excellent standards.
- Consult upon ambitious performance indicators to drive continuous improvement.

Growth commitments:

- Provide clarity around excellent standards, recognising that measurements of success vary in each part of the sector.
- Develop funding methods which can influence continuous improvement.
- Analyse outcomes to ensure learning has a positive effect on learners, the economy and society.

Strategic Aim 4

Growing internationally acclaimed research and inspiring innovation throughout the sector**Founding commitments:**

- Attract and retain the best researchers from across the world; support a more diverse and inclusive environment.
- Work with relevant bodies to grow Wales' research base by supporting providers to secure available funding.
- Identify ways in which the impact of research can be measured.

Growth commitments:

- Encourage research and innovation activity that benefits Wales and work with providers to disseminate results.
- Promote a culture of innovation and knowledge exchange; encourage collaboration with industry & government.
- Promote opportunities for new Welsh businesses that are established as a result of knowledge generated in Wales.

Strategic Aim 5

Encouraging greater use of the Welsh language**Founding commitments:**

- Develop a Welsh Language Strategy to ensure Medr is a bilingual workplace.
- Develop a national plan that increases opportunities for Welsh language learning and assessment.

Growth commitments:

- Work collaboratively to support progress of our national strategy for the provision of the Welsh language.
- Promote the benefits of learning the Welsh language to encourage people to develop their skills.
- Work with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to design policies that enhance Welsh-medium provision.

How we have developed our Strategic Plan: our approach

Wales has made a public commitment to the well-being of future generations. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 puts in place a 'sustainable development principle' which means we must act in a manner that seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. We have aligned the development of our Strategic Plan and how we can achieve its aims, with the five ways of working expressed in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, to ensure that our Plan allows us to:

- ensure that we make decisions that consider consequences for learners, either **preventing** adverse impacts on learners or mitigating those impacts
- identify actions, signalling options for the future that are informed by data and evidence, so we are better placed to make **long-term** decisions
- **integrate** the collective thinking of the whole Welsh education, training, research and innovation system to develop future solutions
- **collaborate** with our partners. We do not deliver education and training, we provide oversight of those that deliver. Only by listening to and working with partners with shared objectives can we achieve the desired outcomes
- **involve** a wide range people and organisations in the development and implementation of our Strategic Plan

We developed our values in advance of developing our Strategic Plan so that we could demonstrate how we will work from our first engagements with the tertiary education sector.



Dysgu: *To learn; to teach; to educate*

We believe that learning is at the heart of everything we do. We believe curiosity fuels innovation and helps expand our horizons.



Cydweithio: *To work together; to collaborate; to co-operate*

We can achieve far more together than we ever could alone.



Cynnwys pawb: *To include everyone; to involve everyone*

We are passionate about inclusion, seeking to create the right conditions for everyone to achieve their full potential.



Rhagori: *To exceed; to excel*

We have high aspirations for tertiary education and research in Wales and always set high standards for ourselves to be the best we can be.

Our values, informed by the five ways of working, are the guiding principles for us as an organisation. We have benefitted from a wealth of intelligence through engagement prior to moving to a formal consultation period and we have agreed that our strategic aims will form our well-being objectives.

Our strategic aims have been developed to ensure that they are focused on contributing to the achievement of the well-being goals. We have considered these goals alongside the strategic duties in the Tertiary Education and Research Wales Act 2022, the Welsh Government's statement of strategic priorities and the public duties in the Equalities Act 2010; the Environment Act 2016; and the Social Partnership and Procurement Act 2023. Over time, based on robust data sources and a broad evidence base, we will set out how we are contributing to wider public outcomes and the national well-being indicators.

Recognising the importance of the diverse learner voice, we have developed a specific strand of engagement to ensure we take their views into account during the consultation process for the Plan. This was complemented by the discussions held with workforce unions and employer representatives. During consultation on this Plan, we have specifically targeted groups that represent the interests of people in Wales with protected characteristics.

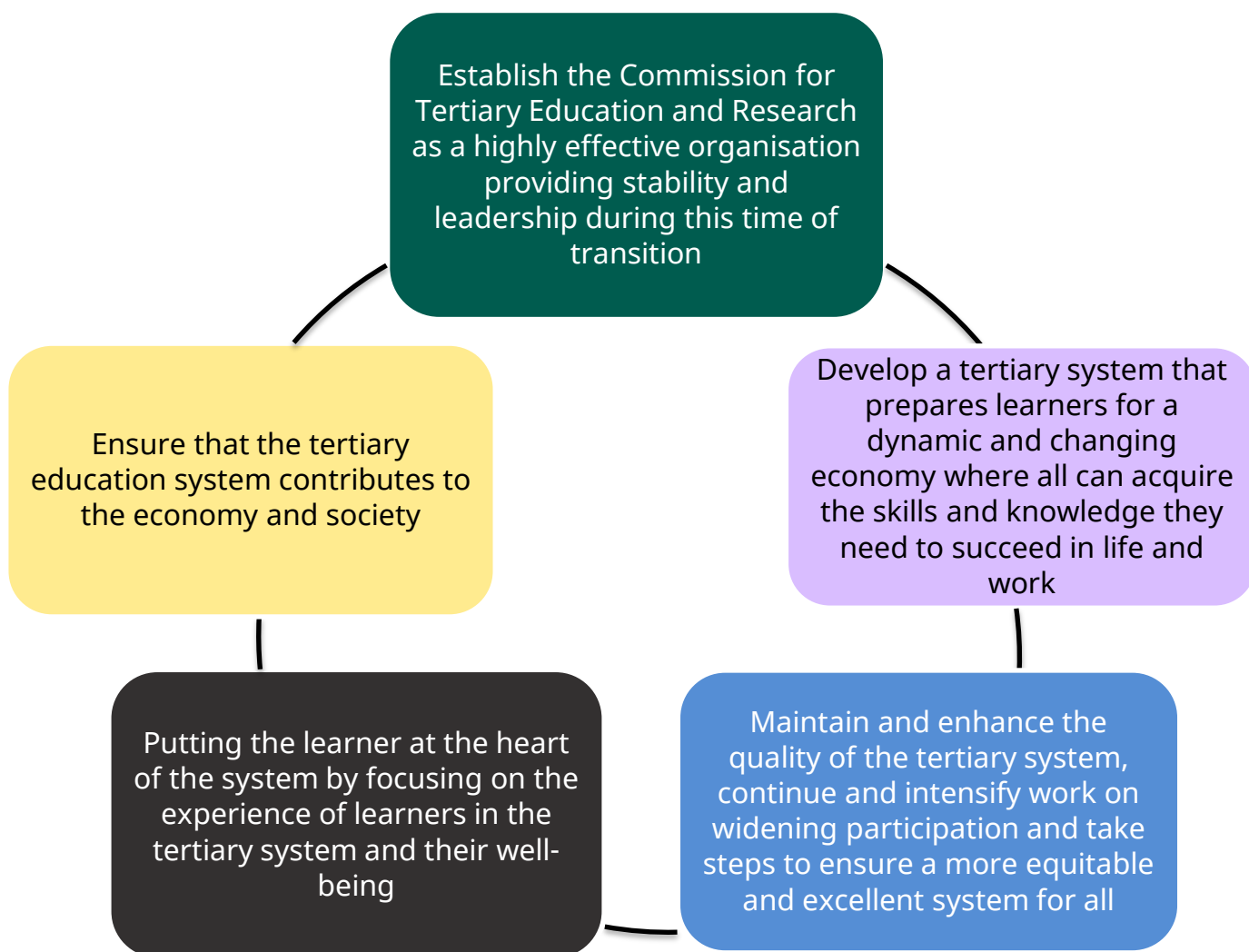
How we have developed our Plan: the context

Medr and its functions were originally conceived in 2016: *'Towards 2030 – a framework for building a world class post compulsory education system for Wales'*. Between 2016 and our establishment in 2024, the world has moved on. Exiting the European Union, the Covid-19 pandemic, implications of climate change and hostilities in other nations have made a significant impact on our lives and for this purpose, on education, training, research and innovation in Wales.

The Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 ("the Act") which established Medr requires the preparation of a Strategic Plan that sets out how Medr intends to discharge eleven strategic duties. These duties reflect the long-term strategic purposes for the tertiary education sector in Wales:



The Act also requires Medr to address the Statement of Strategic Priorities set for us by the Welsh Ministers in February 2024:



This Plan responds to both our strategic duties and the Statement of Priorities, articulating a foundation aim and five strategic aims.

How we have developed our Plan: the opportunities

Medr has been established as a single entity with oversight for the tertiary education sector. The benefits of a single organisation with responsibility for planning, funding and regulation of the tertiary education sector, revolve around an ability to create coherent learning pathways across the entire sector, improve learner outcomes and experiences, stimulate demand for the Welsh language, optimise the efficiency of resources within increased budgetary constraints and ensure the alignment of tertiary education with the future economic, social, environmental and cultural needs of Wales.

Improved coherence will lead to learning and career pathways that are easy to navigate and which encourage and facilitate greater mobility within the sector. Improved flexibility and more innovative use of resources will support increased participation and employers and communities will benefit from greater access to opportunities for learning throughout life. Partners have emphatically endorsed this in our early engagement events and told us that increased collaboration and the removal of unnecessary competition will improve both opportunities for learners and the learner experience.

Whilst rightly proud of the quality of education and training they offer, providers recognise the imperative for further improvement in academic and vocational outcomes and high-quality provision at both individual provider and system level. Medr will establish a performance framework that recognises the full breadth of the tertiary education sector's contribution and establishes the means for benchmarking performance to enhance outcomes for individuals and society.

Our early engagement events have demonstrated that we can do more to combat inequalities and ensure that learners can access education and training regardless of social, cultural, economic, or organisational factors. Sustainability was highlighted as critical and providers recognise the increasing financial pressures on the sector. Partners believe that more can be done to encourage learners to learn Welsh and learn in the Welsh language, also recognising the need to increase the number of people who can teach through the medium of Welsh. The Welsh Government has set an ambition to achieve one million Welsh speakers by 2050 and has recently published the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill which aims to give every child in Wales the opportunity to become a Welsh speaker and to support people of all ages to learn Welsh or to develop the Welsh skills they already have. Collaboration within the sector is regarded as a key approach to realising these opportunities.

We will improve data collection and analysis across the entire tertiary sector to allow scrutiny, underpin decision making and improve accountability. This will provide evidence-based information required for strategic decisions and policymaking and will be used to provide analysis and advice to the Welsh Government and other partners. We recognise the need to maximise income and financial effectiveness in the face of increasing fiscal pressures and will consider how accountability can be strengthened by linking funding to performance and learning outcomes.

We are clear that improved strategic planning across the entire tertiary education sector can better align both provision and outcomes with the future economic, social, environmental and cultural needs of Wales. We will expand the scale and excellence of our research, encouraging collaborative innovation. We will work with partners to ensure that the provision of skills meets economic and social needs. All providers will be expected to contribute to their community and society through civic engagement, improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

We have a strong research base and a vision for our research to boost productivity in Welsh business and be global in perspective. With loss of access to European Regional Development Funds, researchers and innovators need to seek alternative sources of funding and to collaborate both across the UK and internationally. Research activity will need to respond to challenges specific to the local region, engaging local communities to create new solutions and their work will be understood and appreciated by the local community with relevance across Wales, the UK and the world.

How we have developed our Plan: the challenges

Our remit is ambitious – and we are confident that we can achieve our vision. But we are also conscious of the scale of the economic, social, environmental and cultural challenges facing us.

Demographics: Whilst the population in Wales is growing, our population is aging. The latest estimates show that there are 893,383 people aged 60 and above living in Wales and that this number is projected to rise to 1,004,861 (31% of the population) by 2031 – just after the end of the life of this Plan. In addition, the economic inactivity rate in Wales is high, at 20.3% (excluding students) for the year ending March 2024. Both factors have consequential and urgent implications for skills acquisition and development.

Equity: We know that we face the challenges of an unequal society, recognising

that there are barriers to accessing education and that experience and attainment can vary dependent upon social, cultural, economic or organisational factors. Our Strategic Equality Plan underpins our strategic aims and considers implications of inequalities, access and equality of outcome. We are conscious of inequalities arising from Wales' rurality and with 80% of Wales classified as rural, a third of the entire population lives in rural areas. This brings with it challenges in providing equity of educational provision geographically.

Qualifications: The proportion of working age adults in Wales without any qualifications is too high, estimated at 7.9% in 2023 against a Welsh Government target of 5% or below in every local authority by 2050. This figure varies by local authority area in Wales, revealing regional disparity. In addition, the proportion of working age adults qualified to level 3 or higher is too low, estimated at 67.4% in 2023 against a Welsh Government target of 75% by 2050. The proportion of working age adults with qualifications at level 4 and above is lower in Wales than the UK as a whole. The proportion of young people who are not in employment, education and training remains high at 14.2% and above the target of 10% set by Welsh Government for 2050.

Participation and Success Rates: There is some evidence that learner outcomes or success rates are improving following the Covid-19 pandemic, but the latest available data shows that success rates for most parts of the tertiary education sector remain below 2019 levels. Participation rates in adult education (measured by those who have engaged in learning over the last three years) in Wales are the lowest of all UK nations and similarly we have the lowest participation in higher education of all UK nations.

Skills: Employers in Wales frequently refer to skills deficits as being one of the key issues inhibiting progress. The proportion of employers reporting vacancies in 2022 was 22%, with 14% reporting skills gaps in their existing workforce. Employers describe needs for a mix of technical, practical and soft skills and tell us that we need to respond more quickly to the pace of digital advancement, artificial intelligence, automation and the emergent skills that will support our critical journey to net zero. Productivity, partly shaped by education and skills, is the lowest in Wales of all UK countries or regions. Competing in a global economy where nations are increasingly interconnected requires increasing innovation and an ability to learn and adapt skills throughout our lives.

Journey to Net Zero: The Welsh Government declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and its Net Zero Skills Action Plan sets out changes needed in our skills system and key actions required to support businesses and learners to achieve

a just transition to net zero. This is a challenge for Medr and for the providers we fund, but we need to ensure that we make the greatest possible difference in the interests of learner generations both now and in the future.

Fiscal Constraints: Finally, we know that we need to operate within a fiscal context where there is a strain on the public purse, where tertiary education providers are facing financial challenges and where there is competition both in Wales and the UK for public funding and for attracting learners. Government budgets are under pressure due to increased demands on public services such as health and social care, alongside the need for economic recovery measures following the pandemic. The budgets of tertiary providers are consequently also under pressure.

We are accountable for significant government investment in supporting the tertiary education sector. We will need to make considered decisions on spending to achieve best value for money, monitor the financial sustainability of the providers we fund and be realistic in aligning the scale and pace of our ambitions with the resources available. We will not be able to do everything we would wish to do, or that our partners and providers would wish us to do, all at once. We will need to prioritise carefully, within the resources available to us, what steps we can take that will have greatest impact in moving towards our goal.

Our Plan has been developed in the context of these opportunities and challenges. It responds to both our strategic duties and the Statement of Priorities, articulating a foundation aim and five strategic aims. Our foundation aim describes the key infrastructure commitments required to be in place to support the achievement of all strategic aims. Each of our aims expresses founding commitments, which we need to achieve within the first two years and growth commitments, which we will work towards during the life of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan.

The Foundation Aim

To establish Medr as a highly effective, respected organisation and trusted regulator, shaping future ambitions for the tertiary education sector in Wales through collaborative working.

Medr was formed on 1 August 2024, uniting teams from legacy organisations, all of whom bring with them expertise and experience in their own field. Building capacity, developing a cohesive and effective team and creating a culture that fosters our values and inspires positive behaviours are fundamental to establishing our operating principles and demonstrating the way in which we will work.

Championing diversity and inclusion, we will become an employer of choice, supporting the development and well-being of our people, encouraging creativity and innovation within a dynamic and sustainable working environment. We will establish relationships with providers and other partners built upon mutual trust and transparency and, within the spirit of social partnership, collaborate with partners to achieve results.

We know that strong institutions have strong governance arrangements and understand our responsibilities as a regulator to ensure this is the case. We will establish a registration system for higher education by 1 August 2026. For other providers within the tertiary education sector, terms and conditions of funding will become the vehicle through which we exercise our regulatory powers. Our regulatory system, which will underpin all of our strategic aims, will include conditions surrounding governance and management; quality and performance; learner engagement and protection; staff and student welfare; equality of opportunity; the Welsh language; and financial sustainability.

We recognise the opportunities that Medr provides, through oversight of the tertiary education sector and our work has already started. We are committed to spearheading impactful change and from the outset will seek to improve learner outcomes and experiences. We will not shy away from open and honest discussion, knowing that change is required to realise benefits for individuals, our communities, our economy and society.

Founding commitments

We will develop a proportionate, risk-based regulatory system to deliver our strategic aims by 1 August 2026, underpinned by a higher education register and terms and conditions of funding for other parts of the tertiary education

sector, respecting institutional autonomy, academic freedom and the distinctive missions of tertiary education providers in Wales.

We will revise our strategic equality plan to align with our people and culture strategy, to ensure that equity, diversity and inclusion is embedded across Medr.

We will define our position in the educational, economic and social landscape of Wales, establishing baseline data and information to create a robust analysis of current performance and priorities for improvement. We will engage with partners to identify opportunities and challenges across the tertiary education sector.

Growth commitments

We will consult upon a system of funding to support the needs of each part of the tertiary education sector. This will encourage clear learning pathways, ease of transition, flexible learning, comprehensive provision and excellent standards of learner outcomes to meet the overall needs of a coherent, high-quality tertiary education sector.

We will, informed by risk, monitor compliance with the regulatory system, looking to providers in the first instance to take responsibility for their own performance and improvement strategies and taking proportionate steps to intervene where non-compliance is identified.

We will review the way in which we collect data and information from providers and develop plans to improve data collection systems and processes that minimise bureaucracy and workload. We will comprehensively evaluate each part of the tertiary education sector and the overall position in Wales to provide a strong evidence base both for our own planning and decision making and for influencing government policy.

We will review how data information systems can be used to evaluate the alignment of tertiary provision with Wales' economic and social needs. This will include scrutinising learner outcomes and identifying inequalities to inform improvement and will provide national and international comparability. We will have a presumption in favour of transparency, publishing performance data at system and provider level.

Strategic Aim 1

To focus the tertiary education sector around the needs of the learner - their experience, achievement and well-being - ensuring they are involved in decision-making and encouraging participation in learning at all stages in life

Medr and the providers we fund will place the voice and needs of our learners at the heart of our decision-making, involving learners meaningfully in shaping their education, training and learning experiences. Expectations of learners are changing and the sector must position itself to respond to those expectations.

We will create the conditions that enable learners to develop so that they can achieve the outcome which is right for them. We will provide opportunities that recognise the diversity of our learners and we are committed to removing barriers to learning. Our providers will engage with parents and guardians to support learners, particularly where additional learning needs have been identified for our younger learners. We will work with partners to encourage well-being, raise the aspirational thinking of our learners and support successful transition into, or development in the world of work.

Lifelong learning is an imperative in a rapidly changing economy and society. No longer can learning be confined to time spent in compulsory education - learning should be embraced at all stages of life. The benefits of lifelong learning are well documented and go beyond economic advantage, with learning positively impacting on individual and societal health and well-being. Regardless of level or type of learning, whether learning for the first time, upskilling, reskilling, or undertaking informal learning within communities, all learning makes an impact. We have a duty to encourage participation and we will seek to provide an infrastructure that supports learners engaging in learning at any stage of their life, enabling them to become active and engaged citizens.

Founding commitments

We will establish a learner engagement code and guidance around learner protection plans as part of our regulatory framework by 1 August 2026, supporting the diversity of learners so that all have appropriate opportunities for involvement and representation.

We will develop a common framework for mental health and well-being by 1 August 2026, affirming equality of opportunity and strengthened by regulatory conditions to support staff and learner welfare.

We will set out regulatory conditions to promote equality of opportunity to increase participation, support retention, reduce gaps in attainment and support good outcomes for learners from under-represented groups, regardless of economic, cultural, social and organisational barriers they might face.

We will create a learner voice forum by 1 August 2026 and will seek to understand how the environment we create, with its supporting systems, can influence learners to participate and remain in education and training.

Growth commitments

We will seek to ensure safe and inclusive education within the tertiary education sector, using all powers available. We will require commitments from providers to ensure that learners have accessible, effective routes to seek redress for any issue which might arise.

We will work with learners and providers to understand how best to secure active engagement by learners in their own learning, making the most of all the opportunities they have to realise their own potential

We will develop a system that encourages all learners to become engaged citizens, active in their community and promote opportunities for participation in outward mobility programmes. We will seek to ensure that learners and providers share their learning – especially from their research and innovation – with their wider community and economy and work with providers to determine how best the impact can be measured.

We will work with partners to promote the benefits of learning throughout life and set targets to increase participation. We will encourage access from groups traditionally under-represented in tertiary education, particularly those who may face social, cultural, economic or organisational barriers to education.

We will work with partners to develop ways to encourage pre-16 learners to transition smoothly to post compulsory education. Working with the Welsh Government and other partners, we will develop a system that supports a reduction in the numbers of people not in employment, education and training, setting targets which work towards the National Milestones set by the Welsh Government.

Strategic Aim 2

To create a coherent education and training system where all can acquire the skills and knowledge they need to make a real impact on a changing economy and society

Education, training, research and innovation play a central role in contributing to the development of a sustainable and innovative economy in Wales.

Globalization, technology, automation, artificial intelligence, climate change – knowledge and skills development must keep pace with the needs of a rapidly changing world. We will work with and listen to employers to understand the provision they need for their workforce and develop a system that simplifies access to upskilling or reskilling to meet demand. We want to support our providers to make effective use of changing technologies, so that learners are equipped for changing industries and ways of working.

The research capability of the tertiary education sector can support providing information for our education and training requirements, so that we can better understand future skills needs. Awareness of research and innovation will be promoted, results of research will be shared and knowledge will be practically applied to enable us to support a sustainable economy.

Our desire for a vibrant and sustainable society will be realised through engaged individuals who are willing to play an important part in the development of their communities. Our providers will encourage learners and will themselves promote their own learning and research. We want the tertiary education sector to be recognised as being creative and innovative partners in the building of their community.

Medr will work with partners to provide an environment that encourages adults in Wales to develop the skills and knowledge they need at any time in their lives, to lead a fulfilling life and make an impact on their society and the economy. This will require sufficient resource to encourage and sustain demand.

The learning environment is complex and we know that learning pathways are not always clear to learners – whether at the start of their learning journey, or as they progress through learning. Providers have told us that we need greater coherence within the tertiary education sector and we will encourage collaboration, valuing each part of the sector for its specific strengths, embracing diversity of mission. This will lead to more coherent learning pathways, enable ease of transition within the sector, provide opportunities for flexible learning and encourage learning throughout life.

Founding commitments

We will develop strong links with business, industry, Regional Skills Partnerships and providers to identify future skills requirements. Working with Qualifications Wales and other partners, we will use this intelligence to influence the skills system in Wales, ensuring continuous development of the curriculum and work experience to prepare learners to succeed. Working with providers, we will promote an effective deployment of funding to meet future skills needs.

We will, working in partnership with the Welsh Government and others, define what the Welsh apprenticeship provision should look like to meet the needs of learners and the economy in Wales, promote strong engagement with employers and ensure rigorous standards of occupational competence.

We will analyse the differing applications of civic mission and engagement within the tertiary education sector, focusing initially on higher and further education. We will create conditions that encourage learners to be valued members of their local communities and engaged citizens, that encourage providers to share their learning and work with providers to determine how best the impact can be measured.

Growth commitments

We will develop a tertiary education environment which allows learners to learn throughout their lives, stimulating flexible approaches to time, place and support for learning.

We will foster collaboration between providers to create clear, coherent and easy to navigate learning pathways, which facilitate ease of transition, support equality of opportunity and, working with employers, ensure that we support pathways that will contribute to a sustainable and innovative economy in Wales.

We will review the flexibility of adult education in the context of lifelong learning and increased participation and consider how basic skills provision should be delivered to improve skills acquisition across the adult population.

We will support excellent quality curriculum provision to meet economic and social demand. We will work with employers, partners and providers to promote high quality careers advice and guidance, raising aspirations for further learning and for career development in productive, well-paid and rewarding employment or further learning.

Strategic Aim 3

To ensure tertiary education aims for excellent standards, quality of provision and raises educational expectations in order for learners to achieve their ambitions

Medr is committed to continuous improvement of academic and vocational standards and quality of provision and will create an environment and conditions for the setting and achievement of excellent standards of learner outcomes. We will monitor standards of learner achievement, success and experience throughout the sector and will use our regulatory powers to drive continuous improvement.

We recognise the impact that Covid-19 has had on education and training and on learner outcomes. We know that whilst there has been an improvement in some areas, there is still more to do, simply to return to the standard of outcomes achieved before the Covid-19 pandemic. We need to expedite recovery of outcomes and will work with providers to set ambitious targets for learner outcomes.

We will support the tertiary education workforce to access effective professional learning, exploring ways to share best practice and extend effective pedagogy across the whole sector. Avoiding bureaucracy and considering workload in our ways of working, we will ensure that the workforce can focus on meeting learners' needs and improving outcomes.

We will develop systems that allow us to interrogate data and information to support evidence-based approaches to drive continuous improvement. To achieve this, we will need to make meaningful comparisons of data and understand how each part of the sector contributes to the delivery of our strategic aims and those of the Welsh Government. We will seek to position Wales as a leader in the field of tertiary education, training, research and innovation, establishing a reputation internationally for excellence in the quality of provision, learner experience and learner outcomes which meet economic, social, environmental and cultural needs.

Founding commitments

We will implement a quality framework as part of our regulatory arrangements, by 1 August 2026, which will include a focus on performance relating to learner experience and outcomes. We will recognise the necessity for arrangements that are responsive to differing parts of the sector and will build on relationships with partners – within and outside Wales – involved in the

assessment of our regulated institutions to drive coherent oversight of quality.

We will consult with providers on relevant performance indicators, derived from baseline standards, to promote continuous improvement, recognising the diversity of our learners and provision, prioritising standards of learner outcomes and acting quickly where standards are not met.

Growth commitments

We will promote a clear understanding of what excellent standards of learner outcomes and high-quality provision mean in each part of the tertiary education sector. We will set ambitious targets for learner outcomes and experiences, acknowledging that measurements of success and performance indicators will vary with learner circumstances and in differing parts of the sector.

We will review how funding and registration models may influence the achievement of performance indicators, focusing on the responsibility of each provider to set and deliver its own ambitions for continuous improvement. We will establish ways of monitoring, managing and improving the performance of the tertiary education sector, intervening as necessary where performance is below threshold standards and using our convening and influencing powers to promote innovation and enhancement.

We will analyse learner outcomes to ensure that learning has had a positive effect on the futures of learners, the economy and society and allows us to understand how well the tertiary education sector supports Wales to advance its desired objectives, adopting proportionate interventions where evidence shows this is not the case.

Strategic Aim 4

To grow internationally acclaimed research and inspire innovation throughout the tertiary education sector

Research and innovation make vital contributions to the economy and society of Wales. Our research and innovation systems are strong, but we are ambitious and we want to grow the scale and excellence of the research base in Wales, recognising our opportunity as a single tertiary entity to complement the focus of research and innovation with the development of education and training provision.

Collaboration within the tertiary education sector, with employers, the public and third sectors and communities, as well as international collaboration, will drive forward our ambitions to ensure that the impact from our research and innovation activity is fully exploited. We recognise the opportunities for a more systematic approach to advancing the multiple pathways between research, the economy and society. We will support areas of distinctive strength and expertise to build further on these in communities, regions, nationally and internationally.

We want Wales to become renowned for being a great place to undertake research, receptive to new relationships, acclaimed for research that delivers sustainable economic, cultural and social benefit. We will encourage Welsh participation in national, European and international research programmes.

Founding commitments

We will promote research environments that provide a culture that supports integrity, diversity, inclusivity, well-being and respect, attracting and retaining the best researchers from across the world and supporting a more diverse and inclusive research base.

We will work closely with relevant bodies responsible for research and innovation across the UK and support our providers to gain competitive advantage, to secure a greater share of available funding from public and private sources, nationally and internationally, to grow the research base in Wales.

We will identify how we can use data to measure and demonstrate the impact of the research and innovation that we fund and review how we share our knowledge and learning within communities.

Growth commitments

We will encourage research and innovation activities that have potential for positive impact on the economic, social and cultural life of Wales, maximise opportunities for collaboration around the strengths of our research base and which demonstrate global influence.

We will promote a culture of innovation and knowledge exchange throughout the tertiary education sector and encourage collaboration with business, industry investors and government, to contribute to improving productivity within our economy and better contribute to providing a sustainable pipeline of skills.

We will work with providers to promote the opportunities for new businesses, including spin-out companies and social enterprises which are established, sustained and grown in Wales as the result of knowledge generated in Wales.

Strategic Aim 5

To encourage greater use of the Welsh language, increasing demand for and participation in, learning and assessment through the medium of Welsh

Medr has a significant role to play in contributing to the Welsh Government's ambition to achieve 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050. We have a duty to encourage demand for and participation in, learning through the medium of Welsh and to ensure sufficient provision in the Welsh language to meet demand.

Our vision is to drive a tertiary education system that supports learning at all stages of life for the Welsh language and one in which the Welsh language becomes an integral part of the pattern of lifelong learning in Wales. We will plan strategically, in partnership with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol as our designated person within the Act, to increase and improve the provision and promotion of Welsh-medium education and assessment.

We will embrace our role within the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill. We will work with partners, including local authorities, in the development and delivery of Welsh Language Plans and will work with providers to offer seamless pathways for learners across the tertiary sector.

Founding commitments

We will develop a Welsh Language Strategy to ensure that Medr is a bilingual workplace where staff, partners and stakeholders can use their Welsh naturally.

We will work with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, Qualifications Wales and other stakeholders to develop a national plan for the Welsh language across the entire tertiary education sector, enabling seamless pathways for Welsh language learning.

Growth commitments

We will monitor progress of the achievement of our national strategy over the life of our Strategic Plan, working collaboratively to assess progress, taking action where progress needs to be supported.

We will, together with partners, promote the benefits of learning Welsh in order that more people are encouraged to embrace the Welsh language and to develop their Welsh language skills throughout their lives.

We will work with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to design policies that promote a Welsh language ethos and culture within the tertiary education sector, that expand the proportion of the workforce who can teach through the medium of Welsh and that encourage the wider tertiary education workforce to develop their Welsh language skills.

Delivering our Strategic Plan: Key Milestones

Medr does not deliver education and training – it facilitates delivery, providing oversight, funding and regulation. We know that it is only by working collaboratively that we can achieve the vision within the Plan.

Over the next 5 years, we will collaborate with partners to deliver our Plan and our Board will review progress against our aims and commitments, reporting annually to Welsh Ministers. The Plan will form the basis for a series of operational plans which will contain more specific actions and timeframes and inform the allocation of our resources. These operational plans will be refined to contain performance indicators, predicated on robust baseline data, to drive continuous improvement within the tertiary education sector.

By the end of the life of this Plan, we will have:

- established a learner voice forum
- established a learner engagement code
- developed a common framework for mental health and well-being
- established a framework for quality assessment and enhancement
developed a regulatory system, enacted through registration, or terms and conditions of funding
- established baseline data and information, from which we will have derived and set performance indicators
- developed a funding model that promotes excellent learner outcomes and experience, which benefit our economy and society
- developed a national plan for Welsh language within the tertiary education sector