

Languages Policy

[Return to index](#) [1]

3.1

Introduction and general principles

1. The Learning Machine intends to support languages other than English as fully as possible but is not in a position to do so immediately. In principle, the company will respond flexibly to any proposals for language support as it is the intention to reduce barriers to IT certification globally. In England all assessments will take place in English. In Northern Ireland assessment will normally be in English but where there has been translation into Irish this will be permitted. It is a key advantage of the way Open Source communities work to be able to do language localisations freely. It is the reason why software such as OpenOffice.org is translated into more languages than any other similar product. Inevitably, the speed and number of languages supported by any Awarding Body for its particular products is determined to some extent by economics but by making the option to translate open, even when it is not economic for the Awarding Body, the local community can if it so wishes provide the leadership for translation. Furthermore, since the translation is realistically achievable by an individual, it is very unlikely that lack of a target language translation would prevent candidates who wanted certification to get it.

2. At the time of writing (August 2008), the company policy is that the English version of the handbook, the assessment criteria and the supporting documentation in English define any awards made that are recognised by the UK Regulatory Authorities. As sufficient demand is built in a non-native English speaking or bilingual region to justify implementing the full quality assurance procedures applied to Centres in England, all the necessary language support will be provided and the Regulatory Authorities will be contacted in order to obtain permission to issue approved certificates in the target language. In the meantime, resources are made freely available in several languages for those interested to try them out.

3. The copyright and licensing of the materials enables them to be freely translated by anyone and used for local assessment. This lowers the barrier to take up which is a fundamental aim of The Learning Machine for its Awards. **However, certificates approved by the Regulatory Authorities will be only made available to Centres where the full quality assurance procedures can be implemented** and where the translation is verified to be equivalent to the English version in defining student outcomes. The Learning Machine will co-operate fully with any individual or group wanting to support translation into a particular language in addition to any languages where there is sufficient demand for The Learning Machine to fully support the language centrally. There are so many possible languages to deal with that it is not reasonably possible to deal with all of them before there is at least some proven demand but the strategy makes the practical take up of a wide range of languages over the next few years much more likely. By making it possible for minority language groups to do their own translations we increase the flexibility and lower the barrier to any particular minority language that wants to take part since it is perfectly viable for an individual to do the necessary translations should they be motivated to do so. This is exactly the same philosophy that has been so successful with Open Source software. If a minority wants to modify the software for particular cultural reasons it is possible for them to do so.

Communicating bi-lingually with Centres

4. The Learning Machine will only accept centres that are prepared to communicate in English until

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(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){(i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1*new Date();a=s.createElement(o),m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m)})(window,document,'script','//www.google-analytics.com/analytics.js','ga'); ga('create', 'UA-46896377-2', 'auto'); ga('send', 'pageview');
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such time as it is economically viable to employ translators. This will be determined by demand for particular languages from the Centres. In the interim we will work pro-actively with any Centre or prospective Centre on including a particular language. To start with this might be a joint project in translation with communication in English. The project would involve trials using certificates that do not carry the logos of the Regulatory Authorities building to a position where it is possible to employ a person bilingual in English and the target language to act as the trained agent of The Learning Machine Ltd and to be responsible for QA in that region. This would provide the region where the supported language is in operation with a Regional Moderator. The management planning and the way the web site is designed takes account of this expansion strategy.

5. In summary, The Learning Machine Ltd HQ will operate and communicate with non-English speaking centres through a local agent who is trained to Gold assessor trainer level and is bilingual in English and the target language. This is the current case with Spanish, Polish and German but at present there is insufficient take up to fully implement the QA procedures. This means it is QA rather than language that is the limiting factor in getting certification fully running in these countries.

6. In the cases of Welsh and Irish, as soon as there is demand from centres where these languages are spoken, we will implement the same procedures for translation that have already been successful with Polish, German and Spanish seeking Regulatory Authority approval for these language versions when the QA can be assured.

Translating the criteria, handbook and supporting documentation

7. Any translations of the criteria and handbook that appear on the web site will be carried out by a native speaker of the target language who has a good command of English and is technologically capable beyond the L2 certification. This will ensure that the translations expect a consistent and comparable demand on students. For approved certificates to be issued in a language other than English, there must be at least a good translation of the web site, the handbook and the policy statements banked with the regulatory authorities into the target language. The Learning Machine Ltd will make all the documents available to any language community that wishes to do its own translation.

8. The Learning Machine is willing to get independent verification that the translation is a fair reflection of the definitive English versions. In addition, there must be sufficient density of demand to enable the quality assurance procedures to be put in place and in practice that is likely to be a greater limiting factor than the language itself. Plain English Documents that are finalised as suitable for banking by the Regulatory Authorities will have already been read by several people including non-native speakers of English and with varying technical knowledge. The final versions will be edited by a qualified technical writer who is trained in making technical documents accessible to non-technical people.

9. In the mean time, if any part of any document is identified as needing clarification it will be reviewed and re-edited. In keeping with the Creative Commons licensing, anyone is free to redraft any document and submit it to The Learning Machine Ltd for consideration. All such submissions will be taken seriously and if it is judged to be an improvement it will be adopted. This is again in keeping with the Open Source culture which encourages participation by the community in the resources used by the community.

The Use of Welsh and Irish

11. The Learning Machine Ltd intends to support languages other than English as fully as possible. In the specific cases of Welsh and Irish, the intention is to provide full language translations as soon as there is evidence of demand from Centres where Welsh and Irish are in use. The speed of getting the translation work done will depend to an extent on the economics of carrying out the work. The Learning Machine will co-operate fully with any individual or group wanting to support translation

into Welsh or Irish in keeping with its wider languages policy irrespective of whether there is specific demand in any registered centres. This enables Welsh or Irish language versions of the qualification to be supported before there is any demand in any of the centres to justify the costs to the Awarding Body. Under such circumstances, having such translations available could encourage centres to participate in Welsh and Irish that would not otherwise have done so and this will then generate the income to enable the AB to take over maintenance of these language versions of the certification. In any case, The Learning Machine Ltd will produce and support full translations in Welsh and Irish within 24 months of recognition by the regulatory authorities.

Sign language

English or Irish sign language can be used as a reasonable adjustment for candidates that have appropriate professional support as long as the centre can demonstrate that the assessment can be conveyed accurately in this manner.

[Return to index](#) **[1]**

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Links

[1] https://theingots.org/community/ofqual_policies