

Machine Translation (MT) Guide

Translation Unit, Centre for Welsh Language Services

This is a guide for staff on using machine translation resources. The guide covers the following points.

- If you are using MT – **Microsoft Translate** is the resource that we recommend.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** – AI resources are not as good as Microsoft Translate when it comes to translating into Welsh. AI resources such as ChatGPT/Microsoft CoPilot should not be used for translation.
- You **should not** send MT work to be **proof-read** If you have not reviewed it first, this does not save time.
- Machine translation is primarily a resource to assist Welsh speaking staff to work bilingually.

What is Machine Translation?

Machine translation is the process of using a system or software to automatically translate text from one language to another without a human translator. Microsoft Translate or Google Translate are examples of machine translation resources.

Which Machine Translation resource should I use?

University staff have access to **Microsoft Translate** which is integrated into Microsoft Office programmes (e.g. Word). Microsoft Translate (in Welsh) was originally developed through a partnership between the then Welsh Assembly and Microsoft over a decade ago, and the standard has improved over time. The University's Translation Unit uses it as a resource, and Microsoft's confidentiality and data protection arrangements are robust (see 'Confidentiality' below). Microsoft Translate is the package that we would recommend for staff to use for their work at the University rather than other resources such as Google Translate or AI resources such as ChatGPT.

How dependable is Machine Translation?

It can be an extremely useful tool to get a quick rough translation automatically. Many factors influence how successful the machine translation's attempt is, including the context and wording of the original text. Like any resource such as artificial intelligence (AI), automatic translations must be proof-read very carefully. We intend to publish guidance for Welsh speaking staff by the summer of 2026 on how to edit MT translations effectively, and some of the main errors seen within machine translations.

In general, the most successful machine translations are created if there is enough context and if the language is neutral or corporate/official. Machine translations often struggle with signs for example because there is not enough context.

What about Artificial Intelligence (AI) such as CoPilot or ChatGPT?

From our experience, artificial intelligence resources such as CoPilot or ChatGPT are no better than Microsoft Translate. These translations tend to be of a lower standard in our experience and may contain unintelligible words. This happens often with AI, and it is known as a 'hallucination'.

Sending translations made using AI to the translation team to proof-read does not save us time. It is usually easier for the translation team to receive the original text to translate from scratch

using our 'translation memory' software which includes Microsoft Translate. You can use AI programmes such as CoPilot in Welsh as part of your work in accordance with the University's guidelines, but when it comes to translation, Microsoft Translate is of better quality.

Who can use Machine Translation?

Staff who are Welsh speakers (with Welsh language skills at levels around B2+)

Machine translation could be used to facilitate the drafting of bilingual content e.g.

- Internal emails.
- Responding to queries.
- Instructions or guidelines for staff.
- Content for the website.
- Internal newsletters or blogs.

In accordance with data protection regulations, personal details should not be included (see the 'Confidentiality' section below) and **the translation must be proof-read carefully**. Invariably, there will be sentences that will need to be edited with any machine translation.

The nature of the text also greatly influences how successful the translation is e.g. it does not produce translations as well with creative pieces or pieces that use natural language. For internal correspondence, newsletters, blogs, forms or web pages for example, MT can be a useful resource for those who work bilingually and can confidently proof-read in Welsh. Care will be required with regards to the names of departments/projects etc.

Staff with some Welsh language skills (e.g. A1-B1)

It could be used to get an idea of the Welsh text if you are unsure or to help you if you are drafting content in Welsh. You should ensure that the text has been proof-read carefully (see above)

Non-Welsh speaking staff (e.g. A0)

It could be used to get an idea of the Welsh text e.g. to identify which department/service/staff to direct an enquiry to. MT **should not** be used to respond in Welsh if you are not confident to proof-read the translations.

When shouldn't Machine Translation be used?

It should not be used with **confidential** text or text containing **personal, sensitive, or special data**. Similarly we would not advise using MT when translating student assessments and exams.

It should not be used to write and publish Welsh text if you are not confident in proof-reading and editing the text yourself.

Support from the Translation Service

The University has a translation unit which provides a translation and proof-reading service to the University's departments.

Feel free to send us text to proof-read but do not send machine translations if a Welsh speaker has not read the translation first. The translation team also has access to MT, and it does not save time to submit a 'proof-reading' request unless a Welsh speaker has already looked at the text.

Do not send translations from AI resources such as Microsoft CoPilot or ChatGPT for proof-reading, these translations tend to be of lower quality in our experience and can contain unintelligible words. This happens often with AI, and it is known as a 'hallucination'.

How to use Microsoft Translate?

Microsoft Translate is integrated into a number of Microsoft programmes such as Word or Outlook.

To use MT within these programmes (with your university account) go to

Review > Language > Translate > Choose to 'Translate Selected Text' or 'Translate Document'

You will need to select the languages before clicking on 'Translate'.

Confidentiality (Microsoft Translate)

Microsoft's website states:

"Customer data submitted for translation to Azure Cognitive Services Translator (both standard and custom models), Speech service, the Microsoft Translator Speech API, and the text translation features in [Microsoft Office](#) products are not written to persistent storage. There will be no record of the submitted text or voice, or any portion thereof, in any Microsoft data center. The audio and text will not be used for training purposes either." [Microsoft](#)

Microsoft's data protection arrangements are very robust. If you have any questions regarding using Microsoft Translate in a specific context, please contact infogovernance@aber.ac.uk for further advice.

Successful use of MT / Examples of common errors

We intend to publish a guide for Welsh speaking staff on the successful use of MT by the summer of 2026. This guide will identify issues to bear in mind when using machine translation and will provide an overview of some of the most common errors. The guide will provide specific examples and advice on how to create quality translations using MT.

What other resources are available to help staff to work bilingually?

Cysgliad (Cysill and CysGair)

[Cysgliad](#) is a computing package for your PC and it helps you to correct linguistic errors in Welsh and includes a dictionary. To download Cysgliad on your computer go to <https://faqs.aber.ac.uk/index.php?id=696>

To Bach

[To Bach](#) is a programme that is available to download free of charge from the Software Centre to facilitate the use of accents. By pressing Alt Gr and a vowel, it puts a circumflex on that vowel e.g. â ê î ô û wŷ.

Byd Term Cymru

[Term Cymru](#) is a database of terms used by the Welsh Government that was created and is maintained by the Welsh Government's Translation Service.

Microsoft Spell Checker (Microsoft Packages)

You can change the language of the spell checker in Microsoft programmes by going to [Review > Language > Set Proofing Language > Choose English or Welsh](#)

Dictionaries

[Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's Terminology Portal](#)

[The Welsh Academy English-Welsh Dictionary](#)

[A Dictionary of the Welsh Language](#)

[Standard Welsh Place-Names](#)

[Welsh Government Translation Style Guide](#)
