

## Bangor University Responses

### to the 2015-16 Student Union Annual Statement

### and the 2015-16 Postgraduate Annual Statement

#### Introduction

This document presents the University's response to both the above documents.

Following the pattern over the previous three years, the *Student Union Annual Statement* is once again positive. The document this year has far fewer recommendations than in previous years, a fact which, we hope, underlines the strength and efficacy of our partnership working. The SU highlight a number of areas where improvements have been made, for example, the development of codes of practice and the focus on the individual learning experience of students. We are pleased to note these commendations.

As agreed with the SU last year, the *Postgraduate Annual Statement* this year builds on that produced for the previous academic year. This was done to enable the incoming Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Impact) to consider the findings for both years. This has already resulted in a positive dialogue between the SU and the Doctoral School in finding a way forward with a number of issues raised. As the responses noted below demonstrate, other areas are being dealt with proactively.

Overall, Bangor has seen a continued level of excellence in its NSS performance, second in Wales, and in the top 15 within the UK, and with some a number of schools gaining a 100% satisfaction rating. Results in the PTES have remained positive and the University has attained a number of national awards this year, many voted for by students. This further underlines the positive and productive nature of our joint efforts to make the student experience at Bangor the very best it can be.

On the more specific issues that are raised in the documents, our Response addresses each of the Recommendations in turn.

## Response to the 2015-16 Student Union Annual Statement

### Section One: University update since last statement

#### Recommendations

- The University to ensure that all costs associated with student's degree programmes are made available to students prior to the start of their studies.

*The University is working with schools via the Student Engagement Unit and the Head of Compliance to collate information in this area with a view to making all costs available to students prior to the commencement of their studies. We hope to produce a 'course calculator' tool to assist with this.*

- The University to take an institutional approach to developing student feedback, specifically to ensure that detailed feedback is given to students, with clear reference to how work can be improved for future assignments.

*This is an area where a great deal of work has already been undertaken and where there are many areas of good practice. The Teaching and Learning Task Group will revisit this with a view to ensuring compliance across the institution in line with the existing CoP.*

### Section Two: Library and Resources

#### Recommendations

- The Library to work with the SU to investigate the use of space outside of 9-5 working hours.

*The Pro Vice Chancellor (Students) has recently assumed responsibility for the Library and will take this issue forward with the Head of the Library and the SU over the coming academic year.*

- The University to ensure that all reading lists are available through the Talis Aspire System.

*The number of modules now Talis-compliant is increasing but we are still short of 100% compliance. The Library, along with the PVC (Students), will engage further with schools to promote the system and ensure that all modules have a Talis reading list entry by the end of the academic year.*

- The University to investigate the variety of referencing styles in Schools, and streamline the number used across the University. In addition, Schools should provide clear guidelines in the referencing style expected in the department and this should be readily available through myBangor.

*The Teaching and Learning Task group will discuss this issue with a view to ensuring that clear and consistent information is available in all schools and via myBangor.*

## Section Three: Inclusive Curriculum

### Recommendations

- The University to work with students to ensure that the curriculum represents all students, and is accessible due to student partnership working and feedback.

*This issue will be dealt with as part of the initiative to create a student-led Teaching and Learning Strategy and the Student Experience Strategy. The issue will be tabled at meetings of Directors of Teaching and Learning and of Student Engagement.*

## Section Four: Pastoral Support

### Recommendations

- The University to ensure that students are aware of procedures around changing Personal Tutors and are informed about the topics they may wish to cover in tutor meetings.

*Guidelines covering this already exist in the CoP for Personal Tutors but the information needs to be made clearer for students. This will be taken forward via the Senior Tutor Group, chaired by the PVC (Students).*

- The University to ensure that all students can see notes entered onto the Personal Tutor app prior to them being submitted.

*As above, this will be taken forward via the Senior Tutor Group in consultation with the Head of Compliance who oversees data protection issues for the University. Input from IT will be sought at a later date.*

## Section Five: Student Leaders

### Recommendations

- The University to work with students to evaluate and to review the curriculum.

*This is already underway in some schools. Broader coverage will be addressed through the creation of the student-led Teaching and Learning Strategy and via the Student Engagement Unit, working with school directors of Student Engagement.*

- The University to work with the SU to ensure that there is student representation on all University committees and in all University departments.

*This principle is already established. The PVC (Students) will work with the SU to identify where representation is still required, be it via sabbatical officers or course reps.*

- The Students' Union to develop student leaders to ensure that students are fully equipped to fulfil their roles as student representatives.

*The University greatly values the contribution of student representatives and will work with the SU to enhance their role as required.*

## Response to 2015-16 Postgraduate Annual Statement

Responses have been provided by the Doctoral School on behalf of the University.

### Recommendations

- 1 The University to review welcome and induction programmes for all new and returning students.

*The following actions have already been taken: These have been reviewed in the current academic year at the central and College level. Two central induction events will be held (Sept/Oct and Jan) to correspond to the two main intakes. Colleges/Schools have been encouraged to do the same. Proposals have been made to alter the regulations to state two main start dates although exceptions will always be possible. Inductions will be evaluated to feed into the review / planning cycle. Induction materials will be available on the Doctoral School website and it is hoped that there will also be a recording of the generic induction on the website.*

- 2 The University to ensure that postgraduates receive adequate information and guidance before starting their studies, including a point of contact for queries stipulated in the welcome information sent to all postgraduates.

*The following actions are being undertaken: a downloadable pdf version (or e-book) of the postgraduate student handbook is being produced and a list of School postgraduate contacts collated for the Doctoral School website. This will be distributed on a BU USB to all postgraduates. Information included in the postgraduate welcome booklet is being reviewed.*

- 3 The University to ensure that all postgraduates are allocated a personal tutor.

*The following actions are being undertaken: For small numbers of students in small schools, this will default to the School DoGS, as it will be difficult to assign staff who are not already involved in the student's supervisory team or review committee. For larger schools, it will be expected that they will allocate personal tutors in the same way as is done for undergraduates. The personal tutor's name will be included on progression / monitoring paperwork so as to monitor implementation. The role of and expectations from a personal tutor will be clarified. The scheme will be rolled out in*

*same way as for undergraduates and a new field to be added to student profile in myBangor.*

- 4 The University to encourage school-level evaluation systems looking at resources, equipment, supervision and staff availability.

*The following actions have already been undertaken: The mechanism for this is built into the new PDR forms for PhD students. It is the responsibility of the School DoGS to extract actions from the individual forms in each cycle and bring it to the attention of the School Management Committee/Executive for action. Actions will be reported to the Research Degrees Task Group. Doctoral School and SU could also conduct something more 'external' periodically.*

- 5 The University to host a staff-student conference.

*The Doctoral School is happy to explore this type of initiative with the SU. However, if integration/promotion of interdisciplinary working is the aim, this might be better achieved through more innovative formats than the traditional conference e.g. a three-minute thesis competition. Student conferences have also not been well attended in the past. We will set up a student survey/focus group to explore the need further. In the meantime we could encourage all Colleges to hold annual PhD conferences (as is currently the case in at least CoHABS and CNS)*

- 6 The University to improve response rates for PRES.

*The Doctoral School will work with the Student Engagement Unit to explore whether it is possible to integrate this into the campaign for promoting the NSS survey. We will also explore the option of producing "You said/we did" feedback on the Doctoral School website. We will explore incentivising participation in some way and also integrating the survey into myBangor.*

- 7 The University to implement a Student Fellows project.

*The Doctoral school is happy to explore the options for this initiative with the SU.*

- 8 The University to support the SU in the development of postgraduate Course Reps.

*The Doctoral School is happy to work with the SU in this area. They will include a description and outline of the benefits of being a rep in Induction events in order to clarify*

*the role of and expectations from postgraduate course reps. They will support the SU to deliver training for new postgraduate Course Reps. Credit for being a rep will be given through the BEA scheme. Reps will be promoted on the Doctoral School website.*

- 9 The University to develop clear and consistent supervisory and monitoring guidelines and seek feedback from postgraduate reps on their implementation.

*The following actions have been undertaken: This has been done through the revision of the monitoring process being implemented this year. Feedback will be sought through reps and focus groups will be run after the cycle; Course Reps could have a role in delivering these. The revision of regulations will reflect the changes in progress. We might also consider training sessions with the PhD course reps so that guidance etc. will cascade.*

- 10 The University to review the information provided about the library's purchasing and inter-library loan system in partnership with the SU.

*The Doctoral School will work with the Library in this area. College/School inductions should include presentation by subject librarians to cover this topic. Workshops are scheduled and some online materials are planned for the Doctoral School website. Library resources will be highlighted on the USB (see 2) and in the postgraduate handbook.*

- 11 The University to offer BU-wide and school specific joint events and collaboration; e.g. Research Seminars with the SU and Postgraduate Society.

*This links with item 5 (see above). We are collating a BU-wide Doctoral Skills brochure which is where all school / discipline specific events will be pulled together. We can then feed these through the advertising and booking system.*

- 12 The University to offer additional training opportunities (e.g. Research Skills, Data Management, Careers) and work with the SU to research the types of training themes and programmes students should be offered.

*The training programme is subject to annual review and enhancement where finances allow. We are happy to work with the SU and PhD students to identify gaps in this training. We would also like to develop on-line versions of training courses for part-time and distance learners who find it difficult to attend courses in Bangor. We will encourage Colleges to open up their training opportunities. Some on-line provision is already available and we will continue to add courses as the opportunities and funding allow.*

13 The University to develop an online resource to host all training opportunities available.

*This has already been actioned.*

14 The University to work with the SU to develop a Progress Plan Report to identify students' needs and create an agreement between the student and relevant staff at the beginning of their degree.

*A version of this is already in use by some colleges, based on the Vitae Training Needs Analysis. We are developing a more generic PDP that maps onto Vitae's RDF and can be customised according to need. This is almost ready to go up on the Doctoral School website. We welcome student feedback in order to improve it. We could tackle this through a working group later in the academic year.*

15 The University to consider providing a timeline for the myBangor Postgraduates' page.

*This is an excellent idea and will be developed as resources allow*

16 The University to develop the research community through encouraging best practice through the SU and the Doctoral School.

*This is one of the main aims of the Doctoral School. We have attempted to address this by establishing cross-institution competitions such as the Research Image and Research Impact Award for postgraduates and ECRs. Take-up was poor in the first round of these competitions and we would welcome the SU's assistance in publicising these more widely. The new regulations/code of practice document currently being put together will lay out clearly the expectations that research students should be part of a research community and what that might involve (e.g. opportunities for regular interaction with staff and other students through frequent group or school meetings etc.) Having BU-wide Doctoral skills provision will enable more interactions between disciplines / schools.*

17 The University to provide guidance for postgraduates about receiving financial support for BU e.g. to attend academic conferences.

*The following actions will be undertaken: a section on this will be added to the Doctoral School pages on postgraduate funding. This may have to be fairly generic but we could request information from Schools re discipline-specific sources. Awareness will be raised on the benefits of attending conferences. We will look at the possibility of a bid-in pot to support this and add details to the USB stick circulated to all (see 2).*

- 18 The University to encourage the Library and Archives Services to provide students with more information, training and guidance re copyright, open access and creative commons licences.

*As with item 10 (see above)*

- 19 The University to investigate available study spaces for postgraduates and invest more in this area.

*The following actions will be undertaken: we will consult with postgraduates and the SU about the location of a postgraduate Centre as part of the new Science Site. The Doctoral School has been involved in consultation with the Library service during the past year. We have also sought feedback from students on what they want from a postgraduate space. We will continue to seek additional spaces as opportunities arise. A formal request for space for the Doctoral School has already been made.*

- 20 The University to encourage the Doctoral School and CELT to develop publicity and encourage awareness of the benefits of the PGCertHE.

*This will be developed as part of a new integrated suite of courses for training for teaching aimed at postgraduates who teach, which can be taken to the level desired. While this might stop short of the full PGCertHE, which takes a significant amount of time, it is hoped that the modules taken will provide credit towards the PGCertHE eventually.*

- 21 The University to develop a robust career personal development programme for postgraduates.

*A generic PDP document will be available as a download on the Doctoral School website; this document can be customised to suit need. Use of this document will be integrated into doctoral supervisor training. The PDP links in with the newly developed BEA Researcher initiative.*

- 22 The University to ensure that information re Welsh-medium courses is available to students.

*Information is always requested and circulated as part of induction. A new section will be created on the Doctoral School website*

23 The University to review the information available to students about Welsh language skills development and employability.

*This has already been actioned and is available in the Doctoral School training and development programme. It is also covered in induction.*

### **Conclusion:**

**The University very much looks forward to working with the SU on the above and, indeed, the many other initiatives which are currently underway or in planning. The impact of our partnership working is being felt to the benefit of students across the institution and helps to enable Bangor to retain its high standing as a university which cares a great deal about the well-being of its students.**

Professor Carol Tully

Pro Vice Chancellor (Students)

August 2016