



STUDENT EXPERIENCE REPORT 2017-18

Postgraduate Research



STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE REPORT 2017-18: POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

VISION FOR POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION AT BANGOR UNIVERSITY

In our first Postgraduate Annual Statement (2014-15) we declared that the Students' Union has a vision for postgraduates at the institution. This year we are writing a report with recommendations specifically for Postgraduate Research Students in an attempt to succeed in our vision. As these students *"develop innovative and creative teaching methods that contribute to Bangor University's reputation for excellent teaching, learning and research"* we believe that it is important that they have their own say about their experience as a Researcher at the University. We have said in the past that we should be looking *"...at the structure, purpose and place of postgraduate education within Higher Education"*. We would like to ensure that their experience is as *"...rewarding as those of undergraduate students..."* and as research students they feel supported enough to be successful in their field.

"Our vision for postgraduate education at Bangor University is an education where postgraduates' contributions are valued and trusted, and where education is rooted in the needs of students. Our vision is one where students are provided with opportunities for personal and professional development, where postgraduates are trusted partners in the development of their individual and collective experiences, and in the development of teaching and learning at the University."

Achieving this vision is our aim and this report and our recommendations provides these students with a voice to lead us to the vision.

INTRODUCTION

STUDENT SATISFACTION AT BANGOR

This report is built from research undertaken by Undeb Bangor and is a snapshot of postgraduate research students' experience studying at Bangor University. This research was conducted through the annual Undeb Bangor Survey 2017-18. Additionally, secondary data has been used from the Postgraduate Research Experience Report (PRES) 2017 created by the University's Student Engagement Unit.

Undeb Bangor Survey 2017-18

Undeb Bangor Survey is the main source of data collection that the Student Union uses. Representing a wide sample of students' at the University allowing us to provide quantitative information as evidence for our recommendations. We also reiterate students answers by asking them to comment on some aspects of their experience enabling us to provide further in-depth evidence in the report. We use the data we collect to make informed decisions on our recommendations, also to promote the good work that is currently happening through the commendations mentioned in the report.

Overall this year 117 research students took part in the Undeb Bangor Survey 2017-18. This was a representative sample of approximately 607 (PRES 2017) postgraduate research students at Bangor University.

Of the students that participated in the survey 77% were Home (UK students), 12% were International students from the European Union and 12% International students from outside the European Union.

Participants were also studying in a range of different schools as the bar graph shows in Figure 1.

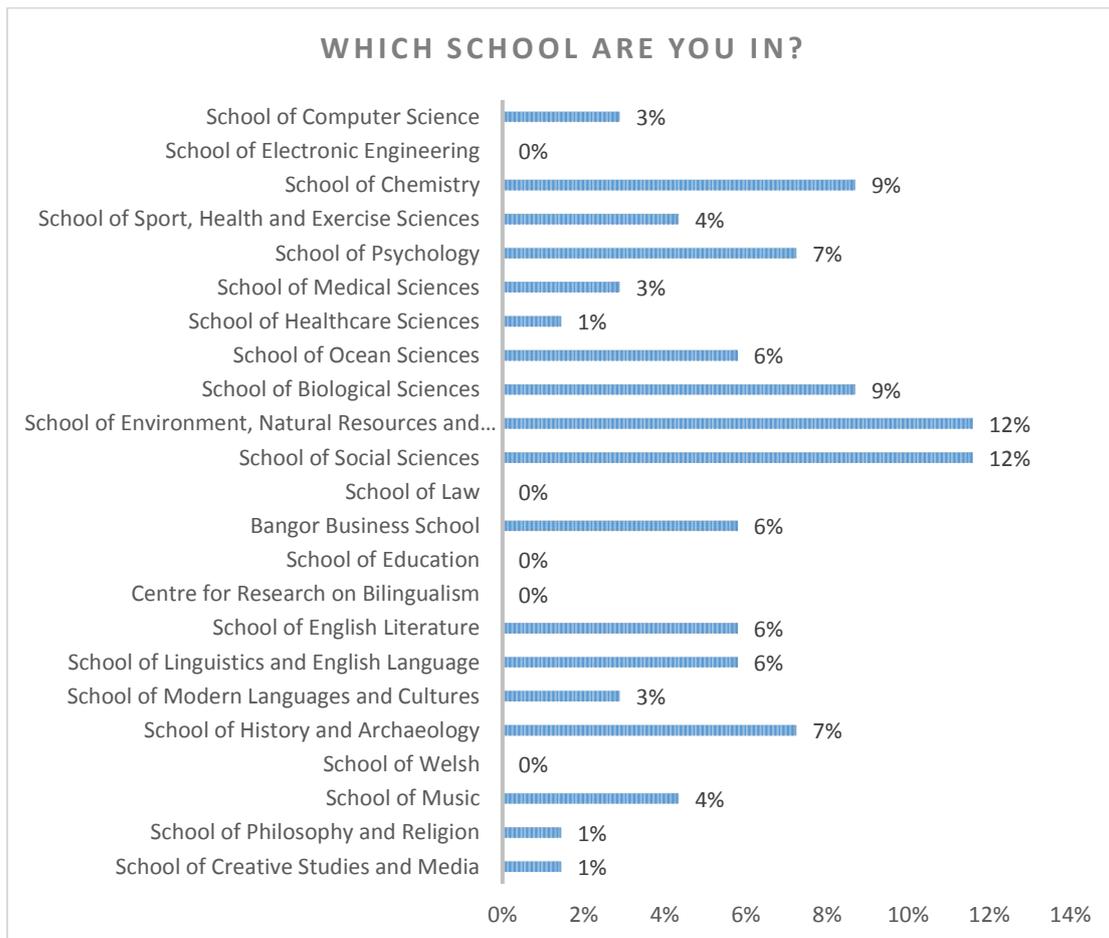


Figure 1 Percentage of participants studying in Bangor University Schools

The majority (64%) of the participants were mature students, 1% were care leavers and 4% considered themselves to be disabled. 10% of the students were distance learners and 13% were conducting their studies part time.

To enable us to reach as many participants as we could we used an online survey platform called Survey Monkey which students could access at any time online. For the duration of the data collection period the survey was available on the advert banner of the front page of Undeb Bangor website and also on the Your Voice section under Our Research page. It was available for students to access from the beginning of November 2017 until the end of January 2018.

To encourage students to take part, the survey was promoted at Course Rep Council, Course Rep Conference, Study Aid, and Opportunities General Meetings. The link was also sent in an e-mail to all postgraduate research student by the Doctoral School and was shared through

social media and prompt messages about the themes were sent regularly. The students had a chance of winning a £10 Amazon voucher after participating in the survey. The results were reviewed through Survey Monkey and analysed for reporting purposes.

The participant's information is anonymised and their answers are only used as evidence for our academic experience work. The respondents gave opt-in consent to participate in the research. The survey was presented online through Survey Monkey which provided a design, distribution and analysis service for the survey. The questions were a combination of factual and opinion questions and a mixture of open and closed questions. Students were directed to the appropriate questions throughout the survey. A mixture of two way, multiple-choice questions were used along with levels of satisfaction (e.g. strongly disagree to strongly agree).

The evidence gathered has merged into the themes of the report providing discussions and recommendations for each theme.

About the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

The Higher Education Academy arranges a national survey bi-annually (now annually) giving postgraduate research students an opportunity to provide feedback about their experience studying at their institution. The survey is open for over a month in the spring and is sent a link by the institution to log in. The survey encourages students to act as partners to their institution ensuring that their voice is heard in enhancing their research experience. The survey consists of 9 different themes with closed questions asking their level of satisfaction. There is also an opportunity for students to provide additional comments.

The overall response rate this year was 54%, this was higher than the previous survey (2015) which was 49%. The average overall satisfaction was 87% and this has significantly increased since 2013 and is higher than the sector average. The overall satisfaction scores for 3 schools were 100%, with 11 of the schools scoring more than 85%.

The PRES report highlights excellent aspects of Bangor University, scoring highly for Supervision, Responsibilities and Research Skills. Also, scoring the same or above the sector average for Research Culture and Professional Development. There are some concerns that aspects of Resources are scoring low compared to the sector average in terms of library



facilities and access to specialist resources. Satisfaction for Progress and Assessment seem to be quite low compared to the sector average. These include students' induction, monitoring process, knowing the required standard of their thesis and final assessment procedures.

ARRIVING AT BANGOR

WELCOME AND INDUCTION

We would like to raise again the issue of new and returning students not being offered an induction before they start their studies.

Part B of the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) Quality Code outline the expectations placed on institutions to ensure that research students have adequate information when they start their studies at Bangor University. *"Higher education providers ensure that the timing and content of induction programmes is appropriate and relevant to the diverse needs of specific groups of research students (including part-time and newly arriving international students, and those with professional commitments). Induction is delivered at the most suitable organisational level (provider/faculty/school/department/research centre/research institute, or a combination)."*

Induction

We would like to highlight again this year that a thorough Welcome Induction to a research students' life is an essential part, regardless of whether they are returning or are new students. We believe that offering *"a robust and useful induction period, beyond welcome activities, is incredibly important for retention and attainment."* (Postgraduate Annual Statement 2014-15)

Even though the University has proposed to alter the regulations to state two main start dates and we know a lot of work has been done on induction and some of the feedback we have had from students are positive. The issue here, as we understand it, isn't for the students who arrive in September or January, but for those who start outside of these times, and have to wait until the next main induction. We're concerned this may lead to them feeling isolated and uninformed about the University and the support it can offer students.

In our last report we recommended the University to review the Welcome and Induction programmes. In response we were pleased that the University has organised two central induction events for September/October and January as these are the main intake months. They have also encouraged Colleges/Schools to do the same. The University has also ensured that induction materials are available for students on the Doctoral School website, however

we would advise the University to keep this section of the website updated and full of information as at the time of this report was written (May 2018) the last Induction materials are from October 2017 rather than January 2018. Also, the University has provided a comprehensive amount of information under the [January 2017](#) section and we would like to see this inclusive information in all induction sections. Undeb Bangor are unaware of a “*recording of the generic induction*” that the University was hoping to include on the Doctoral School website. However, after discussions with the Doctoral School the induction has been recorded on Panopto and is available on Blackboard. The Doctoral School will sign post new students to this resource through their website

In this year’s annual survey we asked students what time of year they started their studies and if they received an induction. We concluded that some Students aren’t receiving a proper induction irrespective of what time of year they start their studies and in which school they study. 30% of the students that answered this question did not receive an induction. One student commented that,

“For those who don't start their PhDs in October or January, there is no induction event.”

From the Undeb Bangor Survey results a quarter of the students hadn’t attended the Doctoral School Induction event specifically for PGRs. However, the majority (69%) had attended.

More than half of the students had received an “*additional induction event from my College/School*” however a third of the students answering the question did not. The lack of induction is also reflected in the PRES score for “*I received an appropriate induction to my research degree programme*”. For this question only 69% of students agreed with the statement. Even though this score has improved by 9% since the last report, this score is significantly less than the Sector average of 77%.

Some students indicated the event was helpful

“All the induction events were really useful :)”

They also mentioned other events they attended for induction purposes.

“Health and safety induction, also KESS induction”

We would like to highlight the importance of ensuring students receive some kind of induction at the start of their study. Especially for those students that don't have the time to find out the information beforehand and those working whilst studying.

"I had a long lead in time to my PhD and so had found out most of the information offered by an induction event by the time I registered. I registered in October and so missed the induction event for that year which was in September. By the time I was offered another induction event 18 months had gone by so I did not feel it would be a good use of time by then"

"I am not sure if we have a school doctoral induction"

"School/college induction I received last year was woeful, but I believe based on previous feedback that this has been improved greatly for this year, which is excellent."

"I started my PhD in November so missed the induction, however everyone was very helpful in providing the information I needed [which other PhD students had received]"

"I haven't attended any induction events so far. But I have to work part-time and this might be one reason why I missed some of the events. It's busy doing a PhD and working at the same time."

Part time students have very different experience from others and online inductions are paramount for these students. From their comments they obviously feel unsupported by the University.

"As I am a part time student and does not live in Bangor and who also works full time, I receive very little support, inductions or online substitutions for events held at the University"

"Part-time not living in Bangor, attending sessions is not always possible"

Adequate Information

We wanted the University to ensure that Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) receive adequate information and guidance before starting their studies, including a point of contact for queries stipulated in the welcome information sent to all PGRs. The University responded to our recommendation by committing to producing a downloadable pdf version (or e-book) of the PGR student handbook and providing a list of School PGR contacts on the Doctoral School website. They would distribute this on a BU USB to all PGRs and review information included in the PGR welcome booklet. We are aware that the work is ongoing at a University level on the student handbook and we are pleased with the progress being made here. We're not 100% sure how much of the handbook will be relevant to PGR students and if the plan is still to

produce an additional pdf version of the PGR handbook. From looking at the Doctoral School pages, the only school specific handbook we can see linked is Psychology, but there is a lot of information on induction etc. for students. However, we can see from MyBangor Postgraduate Research student pages there are plenty of information about starting a research study from the Doctoral School, Health and Safety, Facilities, Policies and Procedures to Jargon Buster. We would like to emphasise that information on the Handbook need to be updated regularly. After discussions with the Doctoral School they have reassured us that the generic handbook has been recently updated and general information are now available through MyBangor. The Doctoral School agreed that the way forward with this would be to ask students for feedback about what exactly would be useful for them in terms of what format to use for general information.

In their response to the last report the University has fulfilled their promise to collate a contact list of postgraduate staff for each school on the Doctoral School website. Through our survey we found that most students were aware of or have used the online student handbook aimed at PGR students, however less students agreed that *“the information provided in the handbook was comprehensive”*. Worryingly, nearly a third of the students were not aware of the handbook or had used it.

“I have only recently heard that there is a handbook, but I haven't seen it and have no information where it is to be found.”

“The school specific student handbook was blank when I looked at it (Chemistry)”

Perhaps by ensuring that staff from each School directing new students to the Doctoral School and MyBangor websites could ensure that students are aware of the information available to them online. Further to discussions with the Doctoral School, suggestions were made for including the information in school inductions and the possibility of Postgraduate Research Representatives being involved.

Commendations:

- We were pleased that the University has organised two central induction events for September/October and January as these are the main intake months. They have also encouraged Colleges/Schools to do the same

- We are pleased to see that the University is developing the induction process for postgraduate research students and that they continue to provide as much information to new and returning students as they start their research journey
- In their response to the last report, we commend the University for fulfilling their promise to collate a contact list of postgraduate staff for each school on the Doctoral School website

Recommendations:

Induction

- The Doctoral School to sign post new students to the general induction recording on Blackboard from their website
- The University to work towards only accepting students starting their studies in October and January (possibly a third in April) and providing two (or three) inductions a year

Adequate Information

- The University/Doctoral School to collect feedback from research students about what they would find useful as an alternative to the Handbook. Also, in what format should the University publish this information
- The University to ensure that staff from each School (possibly through inductions) directs new students to the Doctoral School and MyBangor websites to ensure that students are aware of the information available to them online
- The Doctoral School and Undeb Bangor to investigate the possibility of Postgraduate Research Representatives being involved in inducting new students

A SUPPORTIVE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

PERSONAL TUTOR

Bangor Student Charter

Our commitments to all our students:

Ensure that your environment is inclusive, welcoming and supportive by:

- *Providing appropriate academic and pastoral support*
- *Ensuring ready access to general information about the university and its organisation*
- *Ensuring easy access to counselling, disability and financial advisory services*
- *Fostering cultural wealth and community involvement*
- *Fostering a safe environment, free from negative discrimination or harassment, based on mutual respect*

According to [Code 15](#) of the University's Code of Practice for Pastoral Support:

“All postgraduates will be assigned a Personal Tutor as a central point of contact in the academic School. For research postgraduates, the assigning of a Personal Tutor or named contact will be in addition to the Supervisor.”

We understand that students at the University are given Supervisors and it is clear to each student the identity of the Supervisor. However, students aren't always told who their Personal Tutor is and students assume that they gain pastoral support as well as academic support from their Supervisor. We want to ensure that all PGRs are allocated a Personal Tutor in addition to a Supervisor and this was a recommendation we gave the University in the last report. The University will include the Personal Tutor's name on progression / monitoring paperwork so as to monitor implementation. Additionally, they will clarify the role of the Personal Tutor and what student should expect from their Personal Tutor. We welcomed the response from this recommendation. We would be keen to see Personal Tutor's allocated to PGR's that are independent from their supervisor or chair. We understand that the Code of Practice 03 of the Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards of Postgraduate Research Programmes is currently being revised and that it will be updated to coincide with our recommendation.

This year we wanted to know if students were allocated a Personal Tutor independently from their Supervisor or Chair. The majority of (55%) of students disagreed that they had been *“assigned a Personal Tutor that is independent from my supervisor or chair”*. However, 35% agreed and strongly agreed with the statement.

Chair

We were pleased to see that the University has clear information about the role of the Supervisory Committee on MyBangor available for research students on the website. They explain, *“The Chair of the committee will be a senior member of staff; in practice senior means experienced at postgraduate supervision and not necessarily a Senior Lecturer or above.....It is the Chair’s role to ensure good practice, that University procedures are followed, and to look after the student’s best interests.”*

We asked students to provide comments about their Personal Tutor also being the Chair of their Supervisory Committee, if the situation was relevant to them. To students that provided comments/information about this, were mainly happy (34%) with the situation and said:

“In my school, if you’re personal tutor/supervisor is the chair of the supervisory committee (in his role as Director of Postgraduate Studies), he is replaced by another staff member as chair of the supervisory committee.”

“Although I have two different members of staff assigned for the role, in effect, I also consulted my Chair on personal matters.”

“It is fine, they are impartial and available if needed.”

“Fine - at this level (PhD) there really should be no conflict in this - a maturity of relationship is required”

“I feel really good about it. She acts as an advocate.”

Students foresee that this could be a problem if they didn’t have a good relationship with their Personal Tutor.

“My Personal Tutor is my primary supervisor and also a member of my Supervisory Committee. Whilst I am happy about this arrangement in my case as we enjoy excellent personal and academic relations I can see that this might be a problem in other cases.”

“My personal tutor is my main supervisor and a member of my Supervisory Committee. In my case I am happy with this but I can see that this could raise issues on other cases”

"I like my chairperson so it's not a problem for me, but I guess having a totally independent personal tutor would be desirable"

"Not in my case as we have a very good relationship. However, I think that this may be better as a matter of policy."

"Not in my case as we get on well. However, I can see that there could be problems with conflicts of personality / interests"

Some (13%) students weren't sure about the situation due to the University/School not communicating about the situation very well:

"I didn't learn about the fact that I was to have a personal tutor and that person would be the chair of my thesis committee until the middle of my fourth year. I think that is totally inappropriate - at least in my case"

"I am unaware who the chair will be for my supervisory committee"

Worryingly, 13% of the students that answered the question didn't have or didn't know who their Personal Tutor were. This was a problem we raised with the University in our last report and this is evident that they have not rectified the situation.

"I have not been told who my personal tutor is"

"I was unaware of my personal tutor for a while, it was not made clear that I had one."

"I do not have a personal tutor."

"I had no idea postgraduates have a personal tutor"

A minority were worried about having a Personal Tutor as the Chair for their Supervisory Committee. Due to the Personal Tutor having involvement in both their personal life and their academic work.

"I feel, and have argued previously, that this is inappropriate. The personal tutor should be someone who has no representation, or involvement with my academic research. They should be there for pastoral support only, and I feel that any discussions which I may have with my personal tutor may influence their thinking around my PhD progress."

Reiterating the concerns of the minority, 39% of the students agreed that they would prefer their Personal Tutor to be independent to their Supervisory Committee.

"I think it's always good to have somebody apart from the supervisors to talk to."

“I'd like the choice if there appears to be a conflict in the future”

“Yes possibly, it would be beneficial to have a personal tutor who is in a similar field and can provide guidance about field specific matters i.e. there are some slight differences between publishing in a physical journal compared to a biological journal.”

“My PhD will be finished next year, so it won't probably affect me very much at this stage.

But if I just started my PhD, I would probably prefer an independent tutor.”

“I'd prefer to not have only one contact in the department”

We would advise that the The Doctoral School page on MyBangor include information about Research Students having a Personal Tutor being assigned to them. Also, an explanation that their Personal Tutor could possibly be their Chair in their Supervisory Committee. As some students view Personal Tutors also being their Chair as negative, it could be useful to have an explanation on the same pages to reassure students about the situation.

Counselling Service

In our Undeb Bangor Survey this year we included questions on the Counselling Service that the University provides for students. Of the research postgraduate students that participated in the survey, 17% of them had used the service during their time at Bangor. Most of them had used the individual counselling service. However, students had also used other services provided such as Support Sessions, Mindfulness and Emotional Resilience skills classes etc. We are very pleased to highlight that 91% of the students were quite satisfied and very satisfied with the service they were offered. A high percentage of 83% also would recommend the service to a friend. The Counselling Service have an influence with retaining students as we found that 50% of the students say that the counselling helped them to stay at University. We were pleased to see that 67% say that counselling was an important factor or most significant factor for students to do better in their academic work. Three quarters of the students said that counselling was an important factor or most significant factor to improving their overall experience of University.

Only a quarter of the students said that counselling was a factor in helping them to develop skills that could be useful in obtaining employment. This could be due to students not realising that personal skills they gain through the service could potentially influence skills used such as in interviews, team work, presenting information etc. The University or the Counselling

Service could work on this aspect of their work and this will raise the profile of the service much more to students. Possibly collaborating with other departments such as the Career Service could be an even better solution.

Commendations:

Chair

- We were pleased to see that the University has clear information about the role of the Supervisory Committee on MyBangor available for research students

Counselling Service

- We are very pleased to highlight that a significantly high percentage of students were satisfied with the service they were offered by the Counselling Service

Recommendations:

Personal Tutor

- The University to revise the Code of Practice 03 of the Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards of Postgraduate Research Programmes and update to coincide with our recommendation of ensuring that all PGRs are allocated a Personal Tutor in addition to a Supervisor
- The Doctoral School and Undeb Bangor to brief students about being allocated a Personal Tutor and the possibility of the Personal Tutor being the Chair of the Supervisory Committee

Counselling Service

- The University or the Counselling Service to explain to students how the skills they gain from using the Counselling Service could potentially influence skills used such as in interviews, team work, presenting information etc. Work on this aspect of their work will raise the profile of the service much more to students. Possibly collaborating with other departments such as the Career Service could be an even better solution

PARTNERS IN OUR EDUCATION

As part of the Vision of the University's Strategic Plan, they emphasise the importance of working in partnership with students:

“Through our highly valued emphasis on the Student Voice and by working in partnership with the Students' Union in the operation and delivery of the University's activities, we will continue our emphasis on student satisfaction and on engaging students as partners.”

(Bangor University Strategic Plan 2015-2020)

Additionally, as part of the Strategic Priority 1 of the plan:

“Our student experience ambitions are driven by a strategy developed with the student body that will enable the University to lead the sector in an approach that is founded on partnership-working with students.”

(Bangor University Strategic Plan 2015-2020)

As the University has completely ensured that undergraduates work in partnership with the institution. We emphasised in our last report the importance of ensuring that this also is embedded for postgraduate students. We believe that ensuring this can impact on students' retention, attainment and developing postgraduate research within the schools and the University. We believe that the University needs to focus on this to ensure that they fulfil their priorities of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan outlined above.

Feedback from Students

Working in partnership with students could develop through the University asking students about their studying experience and providing the students with the opportunity to give feedback to their school and University. In a discussion with the Doctoral School we explored the possibility of creating TogetherWe boards to gain feedback from students. This will give students the opportunity to lead the partnership work along with support from the University and Undeb Bangor.

In the PRES 2017 report only 66% of students agreed that their institution “...values and responds to feedback from research degree students”. This score is 2% less than the last report however, higher than the sector average. This is quite concerning, consequently we would like

to emphasise the importance of acquiring feedback from postgraduate research students to ensure that they get the best experience studying at Bangor.

Evaluation Systems

As the University acquire feedback through a module evaluation system for undergraduates we urge the institution to set up an evaluation system suitable for research students. This will then provide the University with evidence based knowledge about how to enhance research students experience studying here. It could also help to support the evidence the University is given through the PRES reports.

We would like the University to encourage school-level evaluation systems looking at resources, equipment, supervision and staff availability. The University's response to our recommendation in our last report was that the system has been built into the new Personal Development Review forms for PhD students. The University has given the responsibility to the School Directors of Graduate Studies to monitor the actions on individual forms and "*bring it to the attention of the School Management Committee/Executive for action*". These will then be reported to the Research Degrees Task Group. The University has suggested that the Doctoral School and Undeb Bangor could possibly conduct something more 'external' occasionally. We think it is excellent that there is a committee that can monitor progress in this area and that it has been built into the Personal Development Review system.

Staff-Student Conference

To further ensure that students work in partnership with their School and University, in our last report we recommended "*The University's Student Engagement Project Officer to work with the Students' Union to develop a means to host Staff-Student Conferences for PTES and PRES.*" We were under the impression that it was not clear to the University what the purpose of this recommendation was when they responded to the statement. They're response was "*If integration/promotion of interdisciplinary working is the aim, this might be better achieved through more innovative formats than the traditional conference e.g. three-minute thesis competition. Student conferences have also not been well attended in the past. Might initiate 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)*". We know discussions about 3 minute thesis etc. have been held in Doctoral School

meetings and by working with the Doctoral School, Undeb Bangor have implemented this event. However, this recommendation was aimed towards a staff/student conference for PTES and PRES, for example, like the Undergraduate National Student Survey staff/student conferences. According to the Doctoral School some Colleges conduct this kind of event already. We at Undeb Bangor would be very keen to work with the Doctoral School to develop these moving forward.

PRES response rate

This year the response rate for the PRES 2017 report was 54%, higher than 2015 (49%). However, this is still a very low rate with only half the students providing feedback to the University. Also, comparing the response rate of the undergraduate NSS survey which was 71% the same year, it is evident that the University is not engaging enough with students to provide feedback about their experience. We asked the University to commit to improving response rates for the PRES and investing in the promotion of this survey. The University suggested that they could integrate this into the campaign for promoting the National Student Survey through the Student Engagement Unit. They could promote through producing “*You said/we did*” posters or at least on the Doctoral School website. They committed to considering incentivise participation in some way. According to the Doctoral School another option would be to integrate it into the MyBangor PGR student interface that’s being developed (e.g. any activity at the appropriate time would take students to the survey page). This recommendation is linked to increasing the number of students participating in the survey. Since the introduction of the NSS staff/student conferences, the response rate has increased. We would hope that this could also be the same for the PRES if the University was to adopt the same approach.

Commendations:

Evaluation Systems

- We commend the University for encouraging a school-level evaluation system by having a committee that can monitor progress in this area and that it has been built into the Personal Development Review system

Recommendations:

- The University to ensure that postgraduate students work in partnership with Bangor University to drive enhancement

Feedback from Students

- The University to ask students about their studying experience and providing the students with the opportunity to give feedback to their School and University
- The University and Doctoral School to explore the possibility of creating TogetherWe boards to gain feedback from students

Staff-student Conference

- The Head of Student Engagement to work with Undeb Bangor on developing a way to host a Staff-Student Conference PRES
- The University to commit to improving response rates for the PRES and investing in the promotion of this survey

OUR REPRESENTATION

As we stated in our last postgraduate report and is indicated in Chapter B5 Student Engagement in The Quality Code of the QAA.

“Effective representation of the collective student voice at all organisational levels, and these arrangements provide opportunities for all students to be heard.”

This statement emphasises that the Course Representative System is essential to institutions. Using a system like this ensures that all students are partners in their education and encourage further active involvement. We believe that students are best represented by their peers and we are pleased to report that the Student Submissions to Internal Quality Audits has continued to be a positive initiative that the University embedded to ensure students are well represented at school level.

Undeb Bangor is still keen to develop a representative system for postgraduate research students. Ensuring that peers of research students play an active part in representing them and play an equal part in developing teaching and learning and their academic and research environment. We have again consulted with postgraduates this year through our survey about the best model of representation. We would like to ensure that we at Undeb Bangor provide a structure that represents the diversity of postgraduate research students.

Of the students that took part in the survey 18% of them were Postgraduate Research Representatives (PGR Reps). To ensure we had a full picture of how research students would like to be represented, we asked them a variety of questions.

We wanted to know if students understood the role of Course Representatives and asked them what they knew about the role.

Bridge

A minority of 6% of the students believed it to be a role that acts like a bridge between students and staff, where students liaise with academic staff.

“Intermediary between staff and students to bridge the gap on matters relating to personal or academic life.”

“I am there to liaise between staff and students and bring up problems that are raised by the group as a whole.”

Gathering opinion

Students also see the role to be a way of gathering opinions from their peers.

“It is my role to gather feedback to ensure student satisfaction and that any arising issues can be dealt with appropriately. As a PhD representative, I also assist with additional tasks in the department such as helping to organise PhD events.”

“Represent student opinion, concerns and praise at various meetings and boards, as well as taking concerns forward to relevant staff. Gather opinions from students, both face to face and via email. Enable PGR student interaction and socialising events and activities.”

Support

Additionally, the students look at the role as providing students with help and support from their peers.

“They are there as a support and engagement person to encourage activities and interaction”

Meetings

A further part of their role according to the students is for them to attend meetings with academic staff.

“They take the concerns and issues of their course mates to a meeting with the head of school and tutors”

“I have in the past consulted them on academic issues, i.e. change in personal tutor enforced by the school or similar. They offered to bring up issues in the appropriate meetings within the School/College.”

Reporting

Nearly a quarter of students stated that reporting to staff and students are the main responsibilities of this role.

“Summarise the general opinion amongst the students and report them back to the Course Directors to improve any provision or Service offered to the relevant students” (Translated Comment)

“To attend meetings, to pass on any relevant information from other PhD students to the director of graduate studies. To try and help other students with problems they might have. To pass on relevant information to other students.”

“They are there to receive postgraduates’ views and relay them back to various other committees, as well as to organise social events among postgraduates”

Representing

Almost a quarter of the students that answered the question believed that representing were the main responsibilities of the role.

“Represent student opinion, concerns and praise at various meetings and boards, as well as taking concerns forward to relevant staff. Gather opinions from students, both face to face and via email. Enable PGR student interaction and socialising events and activities.”

“I am the voice of the PGR community, if there are problems they can come to me as a voice on the Doctoral School Committee. It is also my responsibility to make sure that PGR students are fully informed.”

Further Information

A significant 26% of students said that they knew nothing about the Course Representative role. This could be solved by the Doctoral School promoting and providing further information about the role more as mentioned earlier and schools collaborating with the Students’ Union on promoting the importance of the role. Some students would like the responsibilities of the role to be communicated clearly. This is the responsibility of Undeb Bangor however the University could play a role by again promoting the position.

“Some understanding - I've been a rep before - but the role and the exact duties could be made clearer”

5% of students commented on the fact course reps attend meetings and committees.

“There should be union PGR course rep council meetings to share issues more formally.”

Most (71%) students were aware of who their Course Representative were. However, over a quarter of the students did not. We reiterate again that this could be rectified by promoting the role and the person elected, at School level.

Undeb Bangor is now in the process of setting a new system up with PGR students' and further information can be seen at the end of this chapter.

These students would also like to have more meetings between the Reps themselves.

"PGR course reps contribute to SSLC meetings, but I also think that meetings between all PGR students in a school or college could be useful."

Additionally, suggestions have been made about how PGR Reps gather feedback and that it would be useful for this to be done on a more regular basis:

"By reps within the school, but it would be helpful if those reps were more active in soliciting views more regularly and on specific topics, rather than simply sending out an email twice a year. Meetings of all the postgrads within the school with an agenda and points for discussion should precede each meeting the reps have with staff."

A portion (18%) of students are happy with the existing system.

"By a similar system to undergrad"

"The course representative systems seems to work well"

9% of the students did not want this kind of system to exist. Which suggests that students should be informed more about the importance of being represented as a student and outside of University in their future career.

"I'm a big boy, I don't need to be represented."

"I'm not sure the representation system achieves very much, so not bothered"

"I dont feel like I need to be represented but thankfully I never had any problem requiring me to ask for help"

Other students suggested that an online representation system could be useful or better as the students don't necessarily meet up often. Replacing a more face to face system that is used now.

"It is a bit hard for PGR student because they were not really in Uni. It will be better to talk with them email."

"Course rep system I think is fine for PhDs too but because many PhD students do not necessarily see each other regularly (due to field work or being based elsewhere) it may be useful to use an online forum for sharing or passing on thoughts or ideas to course reps (e.g. blackboard)."

More suggestions were given for the current system:

"A stronger voice within the SU. PGR's are usually forgotten about as the university revolves around Undergraduates. PGR's being given a space to showcase their research externally would be a distinct advantage. For example, being able to make more use out of the services provided by the Corporate Comms and Marketing Dept, to publicise the work undertaken by PGR's would help to propel PGR's names"

Students that study part time feel that they would need a PGR representative specifically for part time students.

"I feel as if there would need to be a separate PGR representative for part-time students and full time students"

Ensuring that the PGR community has a voice in the University and Undeb Bangor is important to students. Students provided suggestions on the way for us and the University to provide a voice.

"Post-graduate students need to have more voice in student affairs and in Undeb. We need someone who is passionate about post-grads and understand the different difficulties post-grads encounter compared to undergrads."

"Similar system but with more 'bite'/influence, given that we are closer to being at a staff level"

"I think for PGR students, the system would need to be a bit different, given different needs of mature students as myself."

Raising issues and giving feedback

We asked students *"If you needed to raise issues / feedback on academic experience what would be the best way/most comfortable way of doing it?"* Students have said that they would contact their Chair or Director of Graduate studies, if they needed to raise any issues or

provide feedback. Some students (9%) would prefer raising issues or provide feedback electronically such as using email rather than speaking to someone face to face.

“Probably some kind of person/place, where I could talk confidentially about any issues and who could give me useful, informed advice what to do about it.”

Certain Students would like feedback to be given through surveys and suggestion boxes.

“To take anonymous feedback every year from the students.”

“Perhaps a confidential suggestion box could be placed somewhere”

10% of students said they would be comfortable bringing issues up and giving feedback to the Head of School. Staff and student meetings were places that particular students found the best place for these discussions.

Students’ feel that the University isn’t doing enough to improve their experience

“The school only deal and advertises the easy things to change. The department care not for the real improvements which they could make”

Students’ think that the University could use the Doctoral School to help with this.

“...It'd also be good to have an outlet in the Doctoral School for more general things, or at college level.”

“I dedicated person overseeing me or PGR representative whom I could contact about issues or insecurities. The new informal Doc Soc can maybe help a little with supporting PGRs too.”

Several (18%) students did not specify a certain person they would talk to, however staff at the University were the people they referred to.

“With an independent person within respective departments who possibly doesn't have PhD students and may be able to see new ways around any issues.”

“Staff member not linked to my committee.”

Students have also said they like to raise issues by speaking to other students.

“Discussing with fellow PhDs or supervisory staff. The relationship is different at this level. I am not treated as an undergraduate. The school is effective at discerning between different requirements.”

Personal Tutor is another person students (11%) would raise issues or give feedback to:

“Personal tutor (if not chair of committee).”

“Discussing with a supervisor/personal tutor for a personal issue. If it is a course-wide issue, then the course-rep.”

In our Postgraduate Annual Statement 2014-15 we recommended the following course representation system for research students:

- One PGR (MRes) Course Rep should be elected per academic School. These Course Reps should meet as part of School’s Research Committees, where a dedicated section of this meeting is allocated to discuss student representation issues. These students should not meet as part of Undergraduate level study.
- One PGR (PhD) Course Rep should be elected by subject/research area within each academic School. These Course Reps should meet as part of School’s Research Committees, where a dedicated section of this meeting is allocated to discuss student representation issues. These students should not meet as part of Undergraduate level study.

We also highlighted the importance of the role of the Postgraduate Students’ Society (now Doc Soc) within representation. Additionally, we gave the following recommendation:

- There should be 3 College Representatives on the Doc Soc Committee for PGR students (MRes and PhD) to engage and represent PGR issues within the Society

Furthermore, in the last report we recommended that Undeb Bangor and the University develop a Code of Practice for the new system and we will work on this following the feedback we have now received by the students. The University’s restructure provides an opportunity to look at a new system in more detail and how to proceed going forward.

In the past year, Undeb Bangor and the Doctoral School have collaborated in events aimed at postgraduate research students. An event called PhTea aimed at providing opportunities for PhD students to get together once a week has been arranged. It gives research students an opportunity to discuss their work, any issues they are having and to chat to other PhD students about their lives at Bangor. This Provides students with an environment where they can pop in any time, have a drink and biscuit and stay and have a chat for as long as they like. Most

(88%) students participating in our survey had heard of the PhTea event and 76% would like to see more of these events.

Research students also had the opportunity to present their thesis to other PhD students at our 3 Minute Thesis event. It gave students the chance to practice their presentation and receive feedback from their peers.

Due to more engagement through these events and in general with PGR Reps compared to other years, PGR Reps have taken an interest to arrange and set up their own PGR Representative Council, which will be driven by them with Undeb Bangor's support. The first one in May was a huge success and PGR Reps have already set a date for another meeting at the end of July. We believe it is important to keep it engaging and relevant to them and therefore there is a focus on the importance of it being directed by PGR reps themselves. The meeting will be run in a similar way to the existing Course Rep Council which is for the taught students at the University. However, the Postgraduate Research Council will not be tied by semester and can be run throughout the year rather than be restricted to the academic year.

In our last report, we asked the University if they could support Undeb Bangor in developing Postgraduate Representatives. They responded by ensuring that they include the description and benefits of being a Rep in Induction events as well as supporting Undeb Bangor to deliver training for new Postgraduate Reps. They would also clarify the role and expectations from PGR Reps. Credit for being a Rep will also be given through the Bangor Employability Award scheme and they will promote Reps on the Doctoral School website. This is something that we haven't progressed much on but would like to work with the Doctoral School over the summer to develop. There is information on the Doctoral School webpages, however it is a little out date.

Commendations:

- We commend the University for ensuring that the Student Submissions to Internal Quality Audits has continued to be a positive initiative that the University embedded to ensure students are well represented at school level
- We would like to commend the Student Voice Team and the Doctoral School in collaborating and promoting successful events e.g. PhTea event

Recommendations:

- Undeb Bangor to arrange PGR Rep Council meetings to discuss matters formally
- Undeb Bangor and the University to develop a Code of Practice for the new PGR representation system

Further Information

- The University /Doctoral School to support Undeb Bangor in promoting and providing clear information about the responsibility of the representation role to students.
- The Schools to collaborate with the Students' Union on promoting the importance of the role and the importance of being represented as a student

THE WELSH LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

FY ADDYSG GYMRAEG

In the University's [Welsh Language Policy and Action Plan](#) they highlight that the University has committed to the Welsh Language being a strategic priority and the steps the University will take:

“The [Bangor University Strategic Plan 2015-2020: Building on Success](#) states that Welsh Language and Culture is one of the University's four strategic priorities. This policy outlines the steps Bangor University will take to:

- *ensure that the university complies with the statutory duties placed on it by the Welsh Language Standards*
- *ensure that the Welsh language remains central to the life and work of the University*
- *ensure that the university contributes proactively towards the Welsh Government's vision of there being a million Welsh speakers by 2050”*

We are always keen to highlight the Welsh language as a strength of the University and are eager to enhance the provision and provide further recommendations on the subject. The collaboration between the University and Coleg Cenedlaethol Cymraeg enhances the opportunities for Welsh speaking students to research and study through their own language.

In the Undeb Bangor Survey 2017-18, of the students' that answered the question and said they spoke Welsh, 16% were Welsh Speakers and 29% considered themselves to be Welsh learners. We were delighted to see that nearly three quarters (74%) of the Welsh Speakers/Learners felt that the University were giving them enough Welsh provision in their studies.

Students provided useful comments to this question. They wanted the University to consider providing free Welsh classes to research students and make this an integral part of being a student at Bangor. This could help with recruiting more students.

“All emails are in welsh/english, I don't have any course materials and my supervisor doesn't speak welsh so nothing else needs to be in welsh. However it would be nice if PhD students could have access to the free welsh classes the staff have access to. You are so busy as a phd student I think more PhD students would learn if courses were free like they are for staff. I

know they are discounted but when you don't know if you can make the class every week due to PhD time constraints it is off putting."

"I find it hard to fit in my Welsh lessons - it would be hugely beneficial if Welsh provision and my department (Business School) offered an integrated provision (for example, on a Friday when the compulsory sessions are scheduled)"

Students also noted that they are grateful for the opportunity to conduct research through Welsh.

"My research includes speaking to Welsh speaking families so I appreciate the opportunity to use my Welsh."

Students would like to be provided with more information about transcription, proofreading and translating posters and suggests that the Doctoral School held workshops specifically on conducting interviews in Welsh.

"Yes, any improvements suggest would like more information about Welsh transcription & possible Doctoral Workshops about conducting interviews in Welsh & possible proofreading a translated poster."

According to the Doctoral School they provide students with this information at induction events and promote the Coleg Cenedlaethol Cymraeg provision.

Doctoral School web pages

The Welsh version of the Doctoral School website needs to be revisited as there are many sections not available in Welsh. We are unaware of any information provided for students about Welsh-medium courses on the Doctoral School website as the University has previously promised. The University responded to this statement *"Ensure that information on Welsh-medium courses is readily available to students."* By saying they circulate information when students' request information about this during induction. To ensure that students' know this is available to them, the University should include the information in induction rather than students having to request the information. This current system could also cause problems to those students who miss or do not get an induction.

Through Masquerading as a Research student on MyBangor the Welsh version is not entirely in Welsh and the amount of information is much less than the English version. This section of MyBangor also needs to be addressed quickly.

In the Bangor University Welsh Language Policy and Action Plan, one of the core principles is: *“Our services will be of the same quality in Welsh and in English by being equally visible, equally easy to use and equally effective.”* This principle is not being met by the Doctoral School website and in the research student section of My Bangor.

We are not aware of any training and development programme about the Welsh Language skills in the Doctoral School as the University promised in the last report. However, the Doctoral School has reported that Canolfan Bedwyr do play a part in the induction events.

Commendations:

- We commend the University for collaborating with Coleg Cenedlaethol Cymraeg enhancing opportunities for Welsh speaking students to research and study through their own language

Recommendations:

- The University to publicise that free Welsh classes are available to research students as it is an integral part of being a student
- The University to provide students with more information about transcription, proofreading and translating posters

Doctoral School web pages

- The Doctoral School to revise the Welsh version of the Doctoral School website as there are many sections not available in Welsh
- The University to address the Welsh version of the postgraduate research section of MyBangor
- The Doctoral School to provide training and development on Welsh Language skills

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

Undeb Bangor believe that feedback help students to improve their learning and support students to learn and assess independently. Assessments should be followed by feedback that students can use to understand and decide for themselves how they are performing. We believe that lectures and peers should provide continuous feedback in writing or verbally providing students with the opportunity to self-assess their learning.

PRES 2017 shows that Bangor has scored less this year on the *“I have regular contact with my supervisor/s, appropriate for my needs”* question compared to the 2015 report at 89%, however it is the same as the sector average. Even though the score is quite high we would like to highlight to the University that not all students receive the same support by their supervisors and measures should be made to ensure that students are fully supported with their studies.

We were pleased to see that the institution has scored higher than the sector average of 92% for the *“My supervisor/s have the skills and subject knowledge to support research”* with 93%. This reflects the quality of students’ learning at the University.

In the past we have reported that students felt that they did not receive an adequate amount of feedback about their work from their supervisors and particularly from the Supervisory Committee. However, this year 89% of students participating in the PRES reported that *“My supervisor/provide feedback that helps me direct my research activities”*. This score is less by 1% compared to the last report. While the score is higher than the sector average of 88% we would like to emphasise the need for staff to ensure they provide adequate feedback to students about their academic work.

Worryingly only 76% of students agreed with *“I understand the required standard for my thesis.”* This score has increased since the last report however not enough to reach the sector average of 79%. 73% of students agreed with the statement *“The final assessment procedures for my degree are clear to me”* this has improved by 7% since the last report with the sector average being 74%. We would urge the University to provide guidelines showing the standard required for students’ thesis and staff to be aware and distribute this information to students. Additionally, this is evident that clear guidelines for final assessment procedures are needed.

We understood from the Doctoral School that students receive monthly reminders about workshops on these subjects. They have also piloted 3rd Year inductions for PhD students explaining the process of their final year in their research studies. We encourage the Doctoral School to ask students for feedback about the 3rd Year Inductions to ensure that students understand the process. The Doctoral School also mentioned that copies of a good thesis for each subject will be available for students as reference to help them to know more about the standard they need to reach with their thesis.

In terms of feedback to support the students' career development the institution scored 80% for "My supervisor/s help me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher". We commend the University for significantly scoring higher than the sector average of 76%. Planning for the future is an important aspect of a students' time at University and being able to undertake training that will benefit them after leaving University is paramount to the student experience.

Online Monitoring and Supervision

In our last report we commended the Doctoral School for ensuring that a consistent monitoring and supervision system was in place across the University. Which will support staff and students to monitor their progress. We have already highlighted, as we did in our last report, about the importance of staff providing useful feedback to students for them to be able to self-reflect and improve their academic work. Also, that it is clear to students and staff what commitments is expected from Supervisors, Committee members and students. Again, we would like to reinforce the importance of clear and appropriate records of the outcomes of meetings, activities, and feedback. In the QAA Quality Code Chapter B11: Research Degrees they describe the importance of a monitoring system:

"The main purpose of the monitoring process is to provide overall support for the research student to maximise his or her likelihood of completing the research programme successfully within an appropriate timescale. The purpose and frequency of monitoring arrangements are made clear from the outset, so that both the research students and the supervisor can plan adequately for them, prepare relevant documents, and consult other individuals as appropriate."

The monitoring process also enables staff to ascertain when a research student's progress is not satisfactory. Support is given to help the research students make improvements."

In the PRES 2017 report participants answered the statement *“I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress.”* Bangor University scored 81% which was significantly less compared to the sector average of 86%.

Guidelines

We asked the University to *“develop clear and consistent supervisory and monitoring guidelines and seek feedback from PGRs on their implementation”*. In our last report the University promised that this would be done through revising the monitoring process that they were implementing the previous year. They suggested that they could collect feedback through PGR Representatives by running focus groups with students and having Reps delivering them. They will be revising regulations with the University changes. Additionally, they suggested that training sessions could be established with the PGR Reps so that guidance etc. will cascade. We believe that the new online monitoring form looks like a great solution to the issues raised by students here. Sessions on explaining and demonstrating the system have been well attended and we are keen to see feedback once a cycle has been complete.

In Section 5 of the PRES 2017 report students have stated their understanding of their Supervisor’s role and responsibilities. 88% of students agreed that they understood their own responsibilities as a research student. We are disappointed that this percentage is 3% less than the last report and lower than the sector average of 89%. 88% of students are aware of their Supervisors’ responsibilities towards them, this score is 5% less than the last report. However, we are pleased to see that this score is higher than the sector average of 87%. We would recommend that the University ensures that students have clear guidelines about their Supervisors role and responsibilities and their own responsibilities as a research student. From the Doctoral School website we can see that under the [Current Students & Staff](#) page there is a section named [Doctoral Supervisors](#) which explains the role and responsibilities of the Supervisor and is very useful for Supervisors themselves with information of workshop dates etc.

Students are confident about who to approach, other than their Supervisor, if they have a concern about their degree programme with 83% agreeing which is 9% higher than the last report and significantly higher than the sector average of 78%. This is also evident in the

comments written by the students in the Undeb Bangor Survey 2017-18 which can be seen in the Our Representation section.

According to the University Monitoring of Student Attendance and Engagement Policy Statement *“Non-timetabled (e.g. postgraduate research students and postgraduate taught students during their project/ dissertation periods) will be monitored for engagement and attendance by their personal tutors, supervisors and other designated staff. Postgraduate research students should contact their supervisor at least every 2 weeks.”* ([Student attendance](#))

20% of the students that participated in the Undeb Bangor Survey 2017-18 were unaware of the new online monitoring system for postgraduate research students. This included distance learning students who said

“As I am not regularly at the University I do not know anything about it really, there should be more support for students who do not physically study in Bangor.”

This result coincides with the score given for *“I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress”* in the PRES 2017 report on the Progress and Assessment section. 81% of students said they agreed with the statement. This score has decreased by 1% compared to the former report and significantly less than the sector average of 86%. Students’ clearly need guidance from the University on this.

The Students’ Union is not aware of any information about the system being available online for students. It may be useful for the Doctoral School to provide further information on their website.

“Confusing, time-consuming and unnecessary. I received no information or instructions about it before it was implemented”

Some students were quite negative towards the system.

“I am sure when the new monitoring system is up and running it will be good and better than the old system. But at the moment the system didn't work for me just permanently said awaiting meeting, even after my meeting. So it had to be over-ridden therefore I didn't get to see any feedback from my meeting.”

"It seemed to work ok but I was not aware that the process had not been completed by my supervisor - it was introduced before the system of chairs was set up so did not work well in the first year and caused duplication of reports. The automatic messages it generates are not always appropriate to the situation"

"It hasn't worked for me, being part time some of the questions were not applicable"

"Difficult if studying with supervisors from another institution - can't access system"

We were pleased to see that 30% of the students that provided comments were positive about the system.

"It's good as it keeps track of the student's progress."

"A little complicated but on the whole worked well. A little effort was required to get supervisor and chair to complete"

"It had a few teething issues, however, was easy to use (after having attended the training) and hopefully, the process will be quicker with the new system in future."

Commendations:

- We commend the University on scoring highly in the PRES 2017 report on the skills and subject knowledge the Supervisors provide research students.
- We commend the University for significantly scoring higher than the sector average on the PRES 2017 report for the support Supervisors provide students with in terms of training and developing students as researchers
- We commend the University for scoring higher than the sector average for feedback Supervisors give to students. However, we would like to encourage the University to ensure that staff provide students with adequate and useful feedback about their academic work

Recommendations:

- The University to provide guidelines showing the standard required for students' thesis and final assessment procedures. Also, for staff to be aware of this and distribute the information to students
- The Doctoral School to ask students for feedback about the 3rd Year Inductions to ensure that students understand the process

Online Monitoring and Supervision

- The University to reinforce the importance of clear and appropriate records of the outcomes of meetings, activities and feedback between Supervisors and Students.

Guidelines

- The University to arrange feedback from students on the sessions they attend on explaining and demonstrating the monitoring system
- The University to ensure that students have clear guidelines about their Supervisors role and responsibilities and their own responsibilities as a research student
- The University to provide students with clear guidance about the online monitoring system and ensure it is available on the Doctoral School website

OUR LIBRARY SERVICES

The QAA Chapter B11: Research Degrees states:

“An appropriate environment in which to do and learn about research may include: adequate learning and research tools including access to IT equipment, library and electronic publications”

As a recommendation, in our last report, we requested that the University would review the information provided about the library’s purchasing and inter-library loan system in partnership with Undeb Bangor. The University noted that the Doctoral School will work with the Library in this area and that College/School inductions should include presentations by subject librarians to cover this topic. The Doctoral School has informed us that library inductions are advertised on the Events page on the Doctoral School website and links to the library service is under the Useful Links page.

A high percentage (85%) of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *“I am aware of the services the library has to offer (such as inter-library loans and the ‘click and collect’ delivery service.”* in the Undeb Bangor Survey 2017-18. Only 6% disagreed or strongly disagreed which we are very happy to report and commend the University on ensuring students are informed of the Library Services.

Even though the Library has data on when students use the library we wanted to understand how many students use the library out of the usual 9am-5pm hours. Over a quarter (28%) of students use the library before 9am, which is a significant percentage of students. However, over half (58%) use the library after 5pm indicating that the most popular times for research students to use the library is in the evening rather than early morning.

Library problems in term time

We asked students if they encountered any problems using the library in term time and to give details of the problem. 74% of the students did not feel they had any problems at term time at all.

In Section 2 about Resources in the PRES 2017 report 84% of students agreed that *“There is adequate provision of library facilities (including physical and on-line resources)”*. This score is

up 4% since the last report. However, Bangor has scored slightly less than the sector average of 87%.

Books

In our research some students provided comments about books *“A lot of times I cannot access the books I need and have to make requests or find them through other means. More electronic books would be helpful.”* Others on Journals *“Find the library very useful only difficulty experienced is accessing some journal articles. Especially Taylor & Thomas etc.”*

Computers

Other students have problems with the computer systems at the library. Comments from our survey included:

“Yes extremely poor computing power. The computers there can barely handle with large data sets in excel let alone any subject specific software which itself incorporates its own issue that a lot of software is not developed to run as an app on Windows 10 and therefore works even more poorly.”

“Computers in the library are very slow.”

Hours

Opening hours are causing some inconvenience to some students (Undeb Bangor Survey 2017-18):

“Deiniol library needs longer opening hours. Should be 24 hours access or at least open from 8, understandably not always manned by library staff”

“I noticed a delay in the start of 24-hours/library well into November.”

“As I am a commuting student and also work part time, I would like to be able to use the library more at weekends. I find it frustrating that it is not staffed before midday on Saturdays and Sundays, meaning I cannot collect interlibrary loans before this time.”

“...can you think about longer opening hours outside term time as well? Research students like me, who also stay and work here during holidays, would really appreciate that as well.”

Space

Research students (8%) find it hard to find space in the library at term time.

“In the Humanities research room I have found that I have difficulty getting a desk to use the books in there as students use the room to sleep in”

"Yes, there are not enough computers to use, the study areas are always full of undergrads.

There is hardly any space for post-graduate research study areas."

"Rooms booked by classes"

"Not enough space in the area where you can eat and drink coffee."

Students also would like more space with sockets where they could use their laptop and possibly the library to provide lockers for personal belongings.

"Not enough quiet spaces for studying, especially if I need to concentrate on something. Especially laptop desks with sockets are very crowded and noisy (e.g. some students talk and eat in the library, use their phones and leave them permanently vibrating on study desks etc....), while other spaces without sockets are almost empty at times. So, please, please, provide more quiet study spaces with sockets. Most of my data is on my laptop, so I need to bring it with me, but I also need to concentrate on my work. And my time is limited, because I work part-time as well. Another, very useful thing: can you introduce overnight lockers to leave books, necessary personal belongings etc. in the library? It's a real hassle sometimes to move the things I need all the time, because I can't leave anything permanently in the library."

Noise

Noise was a problem for 9% of the students and they provided details about this.

"Too busy or loud some days"

"Can be noisy, even in silent study areas."

"Lloyd gets v noisy with undergrads in the afternoon. Nowhere else to work!"

"I find the library generally quite noisy. The postgraduate area for PhD researchers is better but it is not well kept and is generally grubby and unappealing."

Ensuring that students are aware of spaces that are available for students to use to study around the campus could help with this problem. This could possibly, tackle the problem of students being noisy in study areas in the library. By being informed of places they could work and also have discussions with their fellow students in areas such as in Pontio. This could help with group work or for students who don't mind having noise around them when they are working. Providing support to staff on how to deal with students' that are being too noisy could be an answer to this students' term time problems *"library staff are not confident enough to tackle disruptive students in quiet work spaces"*.

Library problems in Exam time

Through our survey we asked students for details of any problems they encountered in the library during exam time. 86% of the students said that they had no problems during exam time, which we were very pleased about.

10% of the students felt that the library was busy and 4% found it noisy.

“During exam times, the main libraries are open 24 hours, which is great. Still there are way too many students and not enough space.”

“It gets busy, but what else can you expect of a single library?”

“Yes, not enough quiet spaces for work with my laptop, if I want to use the library. Study spaces tend to be crowded and noisy.”

This is understandable at this time of the year, however, as we mentioned before ensuring students know about other study spaces available around Campus could help this situation.

Commendations:

- We commend the University on ensuring students are informed of the Library Services

Recommendations:

Noise and Library problems in Exam time

- The University to ensure that students are aware of spaces that are available for students to use to study around the campus
- The University to provide support to staff on how to deal with students' that are being too noisy

INCLUSIVE, WELCOMING AND SUPPORTIVE CURRICULUM

The Bangor University Charter says that the institution will ensure that students' environment *"..is inclusive, welcoming and supportive"*. We believe that this helps with attaining and retaining students at University and in turn will support staff and students and discuss how to improve students' experience at the University.

We have recommended to the University to offer Bangor University wide and school specific joint events and collaboration, such as Research Seminars with Undeb Bangor and the Postgraduate Society (now Doc Soc). They responded by saying that they will collate a BU-wide Doctoral Skills brochure with all school / discipline specific events collated together. They will then be able to feed them through the advertising and booking system. This is an element that we are also going to discuss during the meeting about PGR representation. We have discussed options in Doctoral School Board meetings and Undeb Bangor Officer Team. We are also keen to develop the Postgraduate Research events and opportunities.

Commendations:

- We commend Bangor University for including in the Bangor University Charter that the institution will ensure that students' environment *"..is inclusive, welcoming and supportive"*

Recommendations:

- The University to offer Bangor University wide and school specific joint events and collaboration, such as Research Seminars with Undeb Bangor and the Doc Soc

A MODERN POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

A SKILLS FOCUSED EDUCATION

As we mentioned in our last report transferable skills are essential for students graduating and starting their career. It is also the responsibility of the University to ensure that students are aware of these skills they gain from all aspects of their student life, including non-academic activities and how students can transfer them to other activities and opportunities.

We have requested that the University could offer additional training opportunities e.g. Research Skills, Data Management, Careers. We have also asked if they could work with Undeb Bangor to research the types of training themes and programmes students should be offered. The University responded with an explanation that the training programme will be going through a review and enhancement where finances allow. They were happy to work with Undeb Bangor and current PhD students to identify gaps in the training the institution provides. Develop an on-line version of training courses for student such as part-time and distance learners where attending courses at Bangor is difficult, was another idea. They also suggested that they could encourage Colleges to open their training opportunities. We are not sure what additional programmes have been offered through the Doctoral School but we know that the workshops offered currently are very well attended. We have not had any recent feedback to suggest there are gaps, but we know some sessions do fill up quite quickly.

We asked the University to develop an online resource to host all training opportunities available. We were pleased to hear that the recommendation was already in action by the Doctoral School. The Doctoral School website is an effective way of advertising opportunities and we are aware that emails to postgraduate research students are also sent highlighting opportunities.

We've also recommended to the University to work with Undeb Bangor on training needs and 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.”* The University responded by saying that *“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 on to Vitae's RDF and can be customised according to need. This is almost ready to go up on the DS website. We welcome student feedback in order to improve it. We could tackle this through a working*

group later in the academic year.” According to the Doctoral School the PDP plan is now available on the Doctoral School website. Feedback is also gathered regularly from the Supervisor and research students. Students are informed of the PDP at induction and is checked at review committee. On the Doctoral School website we were delighted to see that there are guidance and forms aimed at the personal development of research students.

Supervisory Support

We were pleased to see that in Section 1: Supervision of the PRES 2017 report 80% of students agreed that *“My supervisor/s help me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher”*. This score was 6 points higher compared to the last report and much higher than the sector average of 76%. However, a significant percentage of students do not get this help from their Supervisor and we would suggest that the University ensures that Supervisors are being told the importance of identifying these needs with postgraduate research students.

Research Skills

Students were scoring highly about the research skills they gain from the University through Section 6: Research Skills of the 2017 PRES report. 93%, which was 4% higher than the last report agreed that *“My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme”*. We were very pleased to see this score and wanted to highlight that the score was significantly higher than the 90% of the sector average score.

Skills such as critically analysing and evaluating findings and results are very important transferable skills that students’ gain at University. We were very thrilled to see in the PRES 2017 report that 90% of students felt they had developed these skills through their studies. This was again higher than the University’s last score of 86% and higher than the sector average of 89%.

Students were asked if they had gained confidence in being creative or innovative at their time in Bangor University. 85% agreed this year, this being significantly higher than the sector average of 80% and scoring 2% more than the previous year.

Research students also gain skills that involve 'integrity' whilst undertaking research projects. For example, skills to do with ethical research, transparency in their findings etc. This year, 90% of Bangor University students agreed they gained these kind of skills. This was 3% higher than their last score and higher than the sector average of 86%.

Professional Development

Towards students' professional Development 86% (PRES 2017 report) of students believed that their project management skills had developed through their research projects. We were pleased to see that this score was 6% higher than the previous report and significantly higher than the sector average of 81%.

Communication is an important element of personal development and paramount in the world of work. Being able to communicate effectively to different audiences is important and 83% of Bangor University students (PRES 2017) agreed that they had developed these skills through their time here. Again, the University has scored higher this year by 4% and higher than the sector average of 80%.

As part of their Professional Development networking with professionals and making contacts can be valuable and 75% of students agreed with *"I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme"* (PRES 2017). Another score higher than the last report by 4% and higher than the sector average of 72%.

Managing their own development is imperative for their future career. Bangor has scored highly in PRES 2017 with 86% agreeing with *"I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme"*. Again, scoring 4% higher and significantly higher than 82% of the sector average.

Through the Undeb research work a significant 39% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement *"The University provides a robust career personal development programme for me"*. Worryingly, only 32% of the students agreed and strongly agreed with the statement suggesting that students are not getting the career development support that they need.

We have also received feedback from students having different needs as they come from different backgrounds.

Distance Learner

As a Distance Learner student, students commented that the training they had been informed about was irrelevant as they could not physically attend. Investigating a different way to provide the training for distance learners would greatly benefit them. Possibly by using systems such as Panopto. A difficulty the Doctoral School informed us of, is that guest speakers are not always happy about recording their talk and it being readily available to anyone. We also discussed the importance of Supervisors being aware of distance learner needs and using the website as a learning resource would be the best way forward.

Mature Students

The majority (64%) of the students that participated in our survey were mature students. As mature students they have commented that the career personal development programme are *"....not very much is designed with my needs in mind..."* and have not received *".....personal development advice at all at School level"*. Further to a discussion with the Doctoral School relevant resources are available on the Vitae website and they refer students to the website for career advice.

Communication

Over a quarter of the students that provided a comment to this question indicated that there was not enough communication about what is available for Postgraduate Research students in terms of a career personal development programme. Students' have said:

"I know there are career days but have not come accross any personal i.e. one-to-one support"

"CAREER ADVICE NOT ADVERTISED"

"I'm not aware of any personal development programme but do receive ad hoc emails about careers fairs etc"

"I am aware of department wide careers event but I am unaware of any personal development programs"

"There has been nothing mentioned. We only heard about the Higher PGCE after we no longer were eligible for it."

Students' mentioned that they would like more guidance:

"I would like more guidance on how to progress a career from PhD student to academic researcher or lecturer."

Amongst the students comments a minority did not find the career personal development programme they received very useful to them.

"I don't really feel that there is a clear career development program in addition to the degree itself"

Students suggested that the University was directing career development towards undergraduates and careers in academia

"The university itself is limited in this aspect, as it is geared towards undergraduates"
"Focuses on careers in academia whereas I want to pursue careers in industry or policy."

Training

Students have made suggestions about training events that would be useful to them.

"Would be good to have workshop about working with industry as many students have to work with industry."

"There was no opportunity for me as a PhD student to participate in any apprenticeship or internship to help with career development."

"The set of workshops is good, however, I would like a bit more variety through the years as they seem the same each year."

We are aware that the University offer opportunities such as KESS and Concordat for students to have outside academic experience and career development support.

Resources

Some students have provided suggestions for additional resources that they as research students would find useful. This included a quiet room where they could make conference calls related to their work without disturbing other students. Another student indicated that *"PGRs should be included in the University ECR network. Ridiculous that we're not when doctoral school say we're more like staff than students"*

We were pleased to see that students found that the career personal development programme “...offers a lot of resources to help me develop.”

Support

Students mention the support they receive from the University and/or their School and we sincerely commend the University for this.

“Psychology professional development series.”

“I have support and advice when needed. There is the option of extra training when needed.”

“My supervisor and I are discussing potential extra qualifications for my long-term goals.”

Some students are asking for more support.

“I would prefer more support for students working in social theory/sociology. Most of the career programmes seem to aim at criminology and social work/policy”

“I arranged the PGCert.HE enrolment rather than the school.”

“...There is no support to attend conferences or to publish. The only support I get is from my supervisor, who is using his own professional experience to mentor me. However, that is his own initiative and has nothing to do with anything the university provides.”

Conferences

Conferences have been mentioned by a number of students:

“Supervisors encourage the attendance of training programmes and recommend conferences to attend”

“...There is no support to attend conferences or to publish...”

Others were very positive about the additional training they receive and we commend the University and Doctoral School for this.

“Supervisors encourage the attendance of training programmes and recommend conferences to attend”

“Celt has been great - I am now a Fellow of the HEA and hold a PGCertHE”

“The Vitae activities were useful to consider personal development and the postgrad school offers many training opportunities.”

"I have support and advice when needed. There is the option of extra training when needed."

Personal Development Plan

We asked the University to develop a robust career personal development programme for postgraduate research students. The University promised that a relevant document would be available for students to download from the Doctoral School website, which is now up and running. The document can be adapted for each student and the Supervisors will have been notified of the document in their training. The University has developed a [BEA Researcher Programme](#), which supports students with their Personal Development Plan.

We were pleased to see that the Careers and Employability Service have been conducting Employability Workshop specifically for Postgraduate students. This covered subjects such as Social Media for Postgraduates; Postgraduate masterclasses for CVs, Applications, interview skills, job search; Facilitation: how to lead on collaborations; Making the most of LinkedIn; Working in the UK for international students.

Commendations:

- The Doctoral School website is an effective way of advertising opportunities and we are aware that emails to postgraduate research students are also sent highlighting opportunities.

Supervisory Support

- We commend the University for increasing their score and scoring higher than the sector average in the PRES 2017 report for Supervisors supporting students with identifying their training and development needs

Research Skills

- We commend the University for scoring a significantly high score in the PRES report for students learning to *"....applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme"*

Professional Development

- We commend the University for providing students with management skills and developing the skills through their research projects.

Communication

- We commend the University for developing research students with effective communication skills

Support

- We sincerely commend the University and School for providing full support to research students at the institution

Conferences

- We commend the Doctoral School and University for providing additional training programmes for research students

Personal Development Plan

- We commend the University for providing a Personal Development Plan on the Doctoral School website available for students to use and adapt to their personal needs. The University has developed a [BEA Researcher Programme](#), which supports students with their Personal Development Plan

Recommendations:

Distance Learner

- The University to investigate a different way to provide the skills training for distance learners. Possibly by using systems such as Panopto.

Mature Students

- The University to ensure that career personal development programmes and advice are relevant for mature students.

Communication

- The University to make sure that there is enough communication about what is available for Postgraduate Research students in terms of a career personal development programme
- The University to develop the career personal development programme to explore further areas beyond academia

Resources

- The University to provide students with a quiet room where they could make conference calls related to their work without disturbing other students

Training

- The Doctoral School and Careers Department to explore opportunities such as apprenticeships and internships and experience of working with industry

MY(POSTGRADUATE)BANGOR

MyBangor

MyBangor has become a key part of Bangor University's students' lives and has enhanced the student experience. This year again we would like to encourage the University to continuously assess the system. Especially towards the postgraduate experience specifically for research students.

One of our recommendations for the University in our last report was to create a timeline for the MyBangor postgraduates' page and to develop this further for postgraduate research students. The University agreed that it was a good idea and promised to develop it as their resources would allow. Following further discussions with the Doctoral School, as each research student has different targets etc. due to their specific subject area and project, a timeline that students could adapt themselves would be more useful rather than having the same format as the timeline for taught students. The Doctoral School could then support students with managing their time in general and reflect this on their MyBangor timeline.

In our research work this year 35% were positive about MyBangor being useful to them as a research student. Worryingly however, 32% did not find it to be a valuable tool for them to use. We believe that consulting with research students and asking them for their feedback about the system could help greatly with this situation. Giving students what they need will enhance their experience of using the system.

Blackboard

We also found in our research that only 33% of students find Blackboard to be a useful tool to develop their studies. Nearly half (48%) were negative towards the system. However, half of the students found the system easy to navigate and to find information.

Commendations:

- We commend the University in providing MyBangor to students as a way to enhance the student experience

Recommendations:

- The University to continuously assess the MyBangor system. Especially towards the postgraduate experience specifically for research students. We believe that consulting with research students through PGR Focus Groups and asking them for their feedback about the system could help greatly with this situation
- The IT service to create a timeline that research students can adapt themselves to suit their needs
- Once the IT service has created a flexible timeline for research students , the Doctoral School to provide support to students with managing their time and using the timeline for this purpose

OUR RESEARCH COMMUNITY

Research Community

Since our last report we have collaborated effectively with the Doctoral School to enhance research students experience at the University. The Doctoral School continues to encourage a research community with research students at the centre whilst providing support to the University staff with supervisory training. A research community helps students to enhance a wide range of skills at the same time as specialising in their own area.

We suggested that the University should develop a research community by encouraging best practice through Undeb Bangor and the Doctoral School. The University replied by expressing this as a main aim for the Doctoral School. They have attempted to do this through competitions such as Research Image and Research Impact Award and European Research Councils. As students weren't engaging much with the competitions the Doctoral School would like further help from Undeb Bangor with advertising. According to the University clear guidance on what is expected from a research student will be provided through a new regulations/code of practice. Currently, this document is still at draft level. The final version will include information about their expectations of being part of a research community and what this might mean, for example, regular contact with staff and other students. We believe that this is a difficult recommendation to implement and is something that we could discuss moving forward. Undeb Bangor has revamped its democratic structures and we could use this to publicise the events and competitions more.

We were pleased to see that the score for the statement *"I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department"* in the PRES 2017 report has increased this year by 9% to 61%. This is exactly the same as the sector average. We would encourage the Doctoral School to continue with this work and collaborate with Undeb Bangor to encourage a wider research community within the institution.

Financial Support

We wanted the University to provide guidance for postgraduate research students about receiving financial support from the University, such as, to attend academic conferences. Their response was that they could add a section on this to the Doctoral School pages on PGR funding. They also noted that the information may be quite generic however they could ask

for discipline-specific information from Schools resources. They will also be raising awareness regarding the benefits of attending conferences. The PGR funding section on the Doctoral School website has a wealth of information for students. The website also contains school specific information. Possibly, the Doctoral School could ensure that schools keep this information updated.

Library and Archives Services

In our last report we wanted the University to encourage Library and Archives Services to provide students with more information, training and guidance regarding copyright, open access and creative commons licences. The University assured us that College/School induction include presentation by subject librarians to ensure that students have full knowledge of the service. The Doctoral School has plenty of information about the Library systems under [Links & Resources](#) section of their website. This section has a wealth of information for students including open access, one to one support and information on borrowing. Furthermore, the Doctoral School offers [workshops](#) on subjects related to the Library such as Open Access.

Research Culture

Students have responded quite positively towards the Research Culture that the University provides. 76% of students agreed in the 2017 PRES report that *“My department provides a good seminar programme”*. This score was 1% higher than the last report and 2% higher than the sector average of 74%. Undeb Bangor believe that peer support and connection is important to students’ wellbeing and to their academic achievements. 68% agreed with *“I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students”*. Again, 4% higher than the last report and 2% higher than the sector average.

Work Environment

Having the right work environment supports students’ work. Unfortunately, this year the University’s score has decreased by 2%, 69% agreed with *“The research ambience in my department or faculty stimulates my work”*. However, the University has scored significantly higher than the sector average of 63%.

Training

In our own research work we have found that most students are happy with the support they receive from the Doctoral School. 82% agreed that they had *“attended additional training arranged by the Doctoral School”*. 65% of the students found the service useful for their studies and research work.

“The Doctoral workshops are very useful to help with my PhD.”

“Attended courses: How to be an effective Researcher. How to manage your PHD (1 Year) - both really good workshops!”

“I appreciate that some sessions are held a few times a year.”

“Library staff helpful, varied training provided across the board”

“Certain courses are helpful and others are not”

“I have been to various training sessions and courses put on by the Doctoral School with both internal and external speakers, all have been excellent. Two that stand out however are; 'How to be an effective researcher for PGRs' and 'Project Management: Managing the PhD' They have been very helpful, which is more than I can ask for considering the awkward time of year that I started”

“the Doc school will be extremely useful during my studies”

Social Life

The Doctoral School also benefits students' social life.

“The social events arranged by the Doctoral School are a great way to meet other PGRs, particularly as most university events seem aimed at undergrads.”

Service provided

19% of the survey participants did not find the service very useful and some suggested ways to improve the support.

“The doctoral school could do more courses in R and other data Programming tools.”

“Courses are too focused towards completing the degree with few options on establishing a research career. The R course was brilliant but oversubscribed. People weren't turning up/ leaving early which prevented others from benefiting from the course.”

“DATA ANALYSIS COURSES SORELY LACKING”

“On the whole most of the training events have been superficial and not specific enough for my needs.”

“It's a recent innovation, I have relied on in-house and CAH events”

“Some of the workshops are not really interesting to me but I guess that might be in general beneficial for a phd student”

“It would be useful to have the training programme for the whole year in advance (instead of just the current term) in order to help students not 100% based at Bangor to plan/choose the most suitable courses and training.”

“How to be an effective researcher - only 50% of class stayed to the end.”

Distance Learners

Distance Learners feel that they do not benefit much from the School as they cannot attend in person. Possibly providing the service through Panopto could benefit these students and possibly others that could not attend due to ill health, work etc.

“Live away from Bangor so cannot attend”

“I did find it useful when I lived locally but I have now moved out of the area. It is disappointing that The Doctoral School appears to have no capacity for providing online access to training and workshop materials. In 2017, I would expect better.”

“There are no arrangements available for off-site postgraduates. When I raised this, I was told that the nature of training means 'you have to be in the room'. That seems rather poor in 2017!!”

Commendations:

- We commend the University and Doctoral School in increasing their score in the PRES 2017 report for the statement *“I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department”* this year

Recommendations:

- The University to provide clear guidance on what is expected from a research student through the new regulations/code of practice
- The University to provide guidance for postgraduate research students about receiving financial support from the University, such as, to attend academic conferences and adding a section on this to the Doctoral School website pages on PGR funding

RESEARCH FACILITIES AND STUDY SPACES

To ensure that students make the most of their research opportunities having enough study space is extremely important. Experiencing a professional quiet environment to study and complete their research work is essential to the research student experience.

We found in our last report that students' were unhappy with their research facilities and study spaces. We asked the University to investigate available study spaces for Postgraduate Research students and invest more in this area. Additionally, to consult with students and Undeb Bangor about the location of a Postgraduate Centre as part of the new Science Site. The University explained that the Doctoral School has consulted with the library service and received feedback from students about what they would like as a space. They have promised that they *"will continue to seek additional spaces as opportunities arise."* Following discussions with the Doctoral School changes are being made in line with our recommendations in some schools as a result of the action plans from the PRES 2017 report.

We have discussed students' views on availability of study space in the Our Library Service section of this report. We would like to reiterate that students' are saying they need more space to work and study. The University, Doctoral School and the Library need to ensure that students know about different study spaces available around the Campus not just in the Library. Students are saying that there are not enough study spaces near sockets in the Library and it is important that they are told that there are other study spaces on campus not necessarily in the library.

In the PRES 2017 report, research students gave their opinion on resources they have available to them at the University. Space was one of the topics and we were pleased that the University scored higher than the sector average (78%) and have gained 1% from last year where they scored 82% for this statement *"I have a suitable working space"*. 85% agreed that *"There is adequate provision of computing resources and facilities"*. This score has improved by 3% since last year and significantly higher than the sector average of 79%. Specialist resources is paramount for the students' research work. Even though the University's score is higher this year (2%) with a score of 77% for this statement *"I have access to the specialist resources necessary for my research"*, it is still under the sector average score of 80%. In our own research we found that most students (67%) agreed and strongly agreed that *"The University*

provides sufficient areas for studying". 13% strongly disagreed and disagreed with this statement.

We would like to reiterate the importance of availability of study space for students in general. Ensuring that students are aware of available study space across campus is essential to solving this problem in the institution.

Commendations:

- We were pleased that the University scored higher than the sector average in the PRES 2017 for students having a suitable working space for studying
- We were pleased that the University's score for providing students with adequate computing resources and facilities has improved and is significantly higher than the sector average in the PRES 2017 report

Recommendations:

- The University to continue to seek additional spaces as opportunities arise
- The University, Doctoral School and the Library need to ensure that students know about different study spaces available around the Campus not just in the Library. Students are saying that there are not enough study spaces near sockets in the Library and it is important that they are told that there are other study spaces on campus not necessarily in the library.

CONCLUSION

Bangor University continues to invest in students and their academic experience strengthening the ethos of the partnership. This is reflected in the overall satisfaction that students express through internal and external surveys throughout the academic year.

We as a Students' Union continue to champion postgraduate education and experience, and to challenge and support the University in enhancing several areas. We continue to think creatively in addressing challenges postgraduate research students face, allowing an education system that supports students as individuals and allows students to thrive. The sector is full of challenges and we are confident that the University will continue to embrace those challenges as it has done for undergraduate students.

We have dedicated this report to postgraduate research students and will continue to do so bi-annually. As their needs and experience are quite different to Taught students we believe that we as a Students' Union should give research students a platform to voice their experience and concerns as a researcher at the University. Also, for us to provide the University with effective recommendations so that we can accomplish our aims and achieve our vision for these students.

To ensure that students' opinions are taken into complete consideration in our report we aim to use as much primary and secondary data available to us. This is to safeguard evidence of the student voice and certify that it is being clearly heard by the Union and University.

Throughout the report we have discovered very positive aspects of the postgraduate research experience such as assessment and feedback, a skills focussed education and the University's research facilities and study spaces to name a few. We have also seen aspects both Undeb Bangor and the University can develop to make the research student experience even better.

The positive responses we've seen through our Undeb Bangor Survey and the Postgraduate Research Surveys about their experience is extremely reassuring. Using the recommendations in this report will enable Undeb Bangor and the University to further improve their student experience and achieve a working partnership with postgraduate research students.



We look forward to working with the University on the recommendations made in this report and we encourage the University to continue to invest in the postgraduate experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ARRIVING AT BANGOR

Induction

1. The Doctoral School to sign post new students to the general induction recording on Blackboard from their website
2. The University to work towards only accepting students starting their studies in October and January (possibly a third in April) and providing two (or three) inductions a year

Adequate Information

3. The University/Doctoral School to collect feedback from research students about what they would find useful as an alternative to the Handbook. Also, in what format should the University publish this information
4. The University to ensure that staff from each School (possibly through inductions) directs new students to the Doctoral School and MyBangor websites to ensure that students are aware of the information available to them online
5. The Doctoral School and Undeb Bangor to investigate the possibility of Postgraduate Research Representatives being involved in inducting new students

A SUPPORTIVE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

Personal Tutor

6. The University to revise the Code of Practice 03 of the Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards of Postgraduate Research Programmes and update to coincide with our recommendation of ensuring that all PGRs are allocated a Personal Tutor in addition to a Supervisor
7. The Doctoral School and Undeb Bangor to brief students about being allocated a Personal Tutor and the possibility of the Personal Tutor being the Chair of the Supervisory Committee

Counselling Service

8. The University or the Counselling Service to explain to students how the skills they gain from using the Counselling Service could potentially influence skills used such as in interviews, team work, presenting information etc. Work on this aspect of their work will raise the profile of the service much more to students. Possibly collaborating with other departments such as the Career Service could be an even better solution

PARTNERS IN OUR EDUCATION

9. The University to ensure that postgraduate students work in partnership with Bangor University to drive enhancement

Feedback from Students

10. The University to ask students about their studying experience and providing the students with the opportunity to give feedback to their School and University
11. The University and Doctoral School to explore the possibility of creating TogetherWe boards to gain feedback from students

Staff-student Conference

12. The Head of Student Engagement to work with Undeb Bangor on developing a way to host a Staff-Student Conference PRES
13. The University to commit to improving response rates for the PRES and investing in the promotion of this survey

OUR REPRESENTATION

14. Undeb Bangor to arrange PGR Rep Council meetings to discuss matters formally
15. Undeb Bangor and the University to develop a Code of Practice for the new PGR representation system

Further Information

16. The University /Doctoral School to support Undeb Bangor in promoting and providing clear information about the responsibility of the representation role to students.
17. The Schools to collaborate with the Students' Union on promoting the importance of the role and the importance of being represented as a student

THE WELSH LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

FY ADDYSG GYMRAEG

18. The University to publicise that free Welsh classes are available to research students as it is an integral part of being a student
19. The University to provide students with more information about transcription, proofreading and translating posters

Doctoral School web pages

20. The Doctoral School to revise the Welsh version of the Doctoral School website as there are many sections not available in Welsh
21. The University to address the Welsh version of the postgraduate research section of MyBangor
22. The Doctoral School to provide training and development on Welsh Language skills

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

23. The University to provide guidelines showing the standard required for students' thesis and final assessment procedures. Also, for staff to be aware of this and distribute the information to students
24. The Doctoral School to ask students for feedback about the 3rd Year Inductions to ensure that students understand the process

Online Monitoring and Supervision

25. The University to reinforce the importance of clear and appropriate records of the outcomes of meetings, activities and feedback between Supervisors and Students

Guidelines

26. The University to arrange feedback from students on the sessions they attend on explaining and demonstrating the monitoring system
27. The University to ensure that students have clear guidelines about their Supervisors role and responsibilities and their own responsibilities as a research student
28. The University to provide students with clear guidance about the online monitoring system and ensure it is available on the Doctoral School website

OUR LIBRARY SERVICES

Noise and Library problems in Exam time

29. The University to ensure that students are aware of spaces that are available for students to use to study around the campus
30. The University to provide support to staff on how to deal with students' that are being too noisy

INCLUSIVE, WELCOMING AND SUPPORTIVE CURRICULUM

31. The University to offer Bangor University wide and school specific joint events and collaboration, such as Research Seminars with Undeb Bangor and the Doc Soc

A MODERN POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

A SKILLS FOCUSED EDUCATION

Distance Learner

32. The University to investigate a different way to provide the skills training for distance learners. Possibly by using systems such as Panopto

Mature Students

33. The University to ensure that career personal development programmes and advice are relevant for mature students

Communication

34. The University to make sure that there is enough communication about what is available for Postgraduate Research students in terms of a career personal development programme
35. The University to develop the career personal development programme to explore further areas beyond academia

Resources

36. The University to provide students with a quiet room where they could make conference calls related to their work without disturbing other students

Training

37. The Doctoral School and Careers Department to explore opportunities such as apprenticeships and internships and experience of working with industry

MY(POSTGRADUATE)BANGOR

MyBangor

38. The University to continuously assess the MyBangor system. Especially towards the postgraduate experience specifically for research students. We believe that consulting with research students through PGR Focus Groups and asking them for their feedback about the system could help greatly with this situation

39. The IT service to create a timeline that research students can adapt themselves to suit their needs
40. Once the IT service has created a flexible timeline for research students , the Doctoral School to provide support to students with managing their time and using the timeline for this purpose

OUR RESEARCH COMMUNITY

41. The University to provide clear guidance on what is expected from a research student through the new regulations/code of practice
42. The University to provide guidance for postgraduate research students about receiving financial support from the University, such as, to attend academic conferences and adding a section on this to the Doctoral School website pages on PGR funding

RESEARCH FACILITIES AND STUDY SPACES

43. The University to continue to seek additional spaces as opportunities arise
44. The University, Doctoral School and the Library need to ensure that students know about different study spaces available around the Campus not just in the Library. Students are saying that there are not enough study spaces near sockets in the Library and it is important that they are told that there are other study spaces on campus not necessarily in the library.