

## Postgraduate Annual Statement 2015-16 Summary

### INTRODUCTION

In our first Postgraduate Annual Statement the Student's Union released last year we reported that the Union is committed to ensuring that postgraduate students' experiences are as rewarding as those of undergraduate students. We declared

*'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, and 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.'*

### STUDENT SATISFACTION

This document is a follow up/summary of our first Postgraduate Annual Statement 2014/15 released last year highlighting our Postgraduate Vision for Education. Annually at the Students' Union we conduct research through, what is now called, our Bangor Students Survey and use information from internal reports such as Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2015, Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2015, and Course Representatives' feedback to gather information about postgraduate experiences.

#### Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)

The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) provides us with the wealth of knowledge about how satisfied postgraduates are on their course, the support they receive and overall experience. In the 2015 report 441 responses from students were received which was 23% of the eligible cohort. This was a significant decrease from the 2014 report response rate at 30%. Overall 86% of the students were satisfied with their courses, which was above the sector average of 82% and the 84% in PTES 2014.

The main positive and negative comments that were given by students were about teaching and learning and other negatives were also given about Engagement, Assessment & Feedback

and Organisation & Management. Students were most satisfied with the provision of teaching, resources and quality of information by the University. They were less satisfied with the assessment, organisation and engagement, however the scores for these themes were higher than the sector median.

### Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

The PRES is a national survey taken every other year by postgraduates following a research course. 617 students were eligible to take part in the survey and 300 completed it, this was a 49% response rate the same percentage as in 2013 and significantly higher to the sector average of 40%.

Overall 84% of students were satisfied with their experience, which was slightly lower than Bangor's score of 85% in 2013, but considerably higher than the sector average of 82%. Students' commended their supervision, research skills and professional development. The aspects that the University could work on according to the report was the support provided to students who teach, also induction progression and assessment.

### ARRIVING AT BANGOR

We reported last year that we were aware that students did not receive sufficient information before they started their postgraduate studies even though their induction is an integral part of their student life. Our recommendations were for the University to review their *'welcome and induction programme for all new and returning students'* and to *'ensure that postgraduates receive adequate information and guidance before starting their studies, including a point of contact for queries before welcome events'*. Our research this year found that this issue has not been rectified as 44% of students informed us that they did not receive sufficient information compared to 40% in 2014/15. Also, only 44% of students agreed that they were fully aware of additional costs prior to their studies this has significantly decreased from last year where 54% were aware. We received comments about this, reporting that they:

*'Received information but very last minute'*

*'Never been given a handbook'*

*'Information that was given came late and when I asked I received conflicting information from different staff members'*

*'There was a bit of a communication breakdown so that I was not informed that I had been successful on the course and did not receive any information prior to commencing the course. My first indication that I had been successful was an e-mail detailing the welcome meetings.*

*It took a further 3 weeks after I started the course before my registration was completed. I was not a late entry, I applied before the closing date, but there was a bit of miscommunication within the university. I suspect, had that not been the case, I might have received more information prior to starting. I would have appreciated a campus map at the very least to help me find my way around. As it was I was I was directed to the website but I could not access overly much in the absence of a login.'*

*'The registration process went with no one willing to explain. I had to pick up information as and when I could and pass to other students as lost and confused as I was.'*

Students were also unhappy about how unorganised their course was and additional costs of parking, textbooks and having to attend additional conferences.

## **A SUPPORTIVE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT**

A recommendation given to the University last year to help them ensure that they provide a welcoming and supportive environment to the students, was *'to ensure that all postgraduate students are allocated a Personal Tutor at the beginning of the academic term'*. In response this year to our survey asking if students know who their personal tutor is, less (73%) students knew who they were compared to last year of 83%. We also asked if they found their personal tutor useful which 50% agreed that they did but 23% did not. This is quite concerning especially as we have received the following comments to reiterate this information:

*'Have been told I can't change personal tutor'*

*'I was introduced to my tutor but never saw her again. I feel more comfortable asking for pastoral support from a person with whom I have a relationship (a recurrent lecturer for example) rather than someone I don't even remember the name'*

*'As a postgraduate research (PhD) student, I don't believe I am allocated a personal tutor.'*

*'Clywais dylaf cael tiwtor personol ar wahân i fy ngoruchwyliwr ond dwi heb dderbyn un. Ni chefais diwtor personol ar gyfer fy MA chwaith.'* (I was told that I should have a personal

*tutor separate to my supervisor but I haven't received one. I didn't have a Personal Tutor for my MA either.)*

*'I have never had a meeting with my personal tutor and I'm a second year post graduate student'*

*'Not allocated a personal tutor'*

However, we were pleased to see very positive comments by students that were experiencing the support that the University endeavours to:

*'My personal tutor has been a rock this year and I'm immensely grateful for her!!'*

*'My personal tutor makes regular appointments with me and has also made it clear that she is available for me to see at any time. I think that this is a valuable support mechanism and I know that I would feel able to approach her should I feel the need.'*

To ensure that students' engagement is monitored and to support them we have recommended to the University to ensure that *'Personal Tutors and students are engaging where necessary'*.

## **PARTNERS IN OUR EDUCATION**

As the University has well-embedded students as partners in undergraduate study we believe it is important to encourage this kind of partnership with postgraduates. Student engagement can encourage student retention, attainment and develop a postgraduate community and this should become a strategic focus. To encourage partnerships we believe that small steps in promoting students' voice and the Students' Union working with the University will fulfil this need.

In our research we found that only half of the respondents are regularly asked for their opinion on how their course is run and this percentage hasn't changed since last year. On a positive note in the PRES 2015 report 68% of students said their *'institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students'* compared to the sector average of 61% and in the PTES 2015 report 81% of students reported that *'I have appropriate opportunities to give feedback on my experience'* which is significantly higher than the sector average of 75%. The module evaluation system are continuing to develop with undergraduates and we urge the

University to provide a system for PGRs and PGTs. The Bangor Students Survey 2015-16 tells us that 37% of the students surveyed reported deadline clumping and only 45% said that the feedback they receive helps them with how to improve further work. A module evaluation system similar to the undergraduate system could help to improve these situations.

Due to the nature of their studies MRes and PhD students have different needs to Postgraduate Taught. In the Bangor Students' Survey 2015-16 we found that 78% of the students would like more research skills training and only 38% are satisfied with the office space they have. We are pleased to report that the PRES 2015 reports that 77% which is the same as the sector average receive training to develop their research skills and the University scored 85% for students having increasingly managed their own professional development during their programme compared to 82% of the sector average. We recommend the University to encourage school-level evaluation systems looking at resources, equipment, supervision and staff availability.

To enable the University to fulfil the first recommendation *'to identify staff responsible for the Postgraduate Annual Statement and work with the Union to implement the recommendations.'* the Postgraduate Annual Statement 2014/15 was presented to the new Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research at the beginning of 2016.

There were three more recommendations given in this section in regards to hosting staff-student conference and improving response rates for PTES and PRES and implementing a Student Fellows project. These recommendations are important to carry out and enable partnership working in our education.

## OUR REPRESENTATION

The belief that students are better represented by their peers makes a course representative system for postgraduates so important to ensure that students are actively involved and have ownership of their learning and research environments. The Students' Union are eager to develop the role of the Postgraduate Course Representatives so they equally have the opportunity to develop their whole academic experience.

The Students' Union Course Representation team are working on engagement with postgraduate students and will be consulting with them about the postgraduate course representation system. They will be gathering ideas from the students to find out how they would like the system to work and presenting the proposed system recommended in our Postgraduate Annual Statement 2014-15 and this will lead to specific training and raising awareness of their role. The Students' Union will also be working on a Code of Practice for the new representative system as recommended in our last Student Statement.

### WHY WE CHOSE BANGOR

Choosing the right course and institution is a challenging and important decision for a Graduate and we wanted to know why postgraduates chose to come to Bangor to study. This year the reason with the highest percentage was the contents of the course at 68%. The reputation of their school and staff were important for 42% of the students and along with the location of the University for 41%. Again this year, there were comments related to the University's fee structure. For Teaching and Learning, Bangor University scored 85% again this year in the PTES 2015 report compared to the sector average of 82%.

We found 20% of the students did not agree that the contact hours they are provided with are sufficient to understand their topic. A comment was made suggesting that the University could provide help to students about how they manage their own study time.

The Doctoral School has worked on resources that could help students thinking of pursuing a PHD and these resources are available on their website. This includes Postgraduate Research video resources which can be used for inductions and training events. Other links on the website include training opportunities for students and advice and information on events for Doctoral Supervisors.

The recommendations we gave last year to the University was to ensure that students were provided with accurate information before registration. We also recommended that *'postgraduate students should engage in validation and re-validation processes to support the enhancement of teaching, learning and the curriculum'*. The University this year has ensured that at Internal Quality Audit (IQA) panels students are involved before the IQA rather than

afterwards the same as the Undergraduate students ensuring they are part of the validation process.

## FEEDBACK AND ASSESSMENT

We believe that feedback should measure, improve and support students' learning. Also, to be a continuous process involving useful written and verbal feedback from lectures and peers. Assessments should be dependable and supported by feedback allowing students to understand how they are performing.

Taught students (PTES 2015) agree that they receive useful feedback at 80% compared to the lower sector average of 74%. However 24% of students disagreed that they were given a clear deadline for feedback on their work in the Bangor Students Survey 2015-16 and 37% found that their deadlines were unfairly clumped together at certain times of the year. Only 45% reported that the feedback they receive has given them information on how to improve further work. Comments given included that feedback didn't exist and that they do not get feedback on their exams to know how/where to improve. We recommended in the Postgraduate Annual Statement 2014-15 that the *'University's guidelines for returning feedback and setting return dates are applied at all levels of study, as outlined in the Code of Practice for the Assessment of Students on Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes'*.

PRES 2015 shows that Bangor scored highly with 90% again for research students having regular contact with their supervisors compared to the sector average of 88%. The University scored 80%, significantly lower than the sector average of 85% for students understanding of *'the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress'*. Last year we recommended that the University *'develop clear and consistent Supervisory and Monitoring Guidelines and seek feedback from students on their implementation'*.

The Students' Union would also like to work with the University to *'develop Supervisory Guidelines for PGT Dissertation supervision'*.

## OUR LIBRARY SERVICE

With the University having invested in the Library's resources and services recently it would be useful to invest in line with students' feedback. In the 2015 PRES report the 80% of research students reported that there is adequate provision of library facilities available to them, this percentage was slightly lower than the sector average of 84%. Also, the PTES 2015 report showed that 83% of students believe that the library service and resources are good enough for their needs compared to a marginally higher 84% of sector average.

In partnership with the Students' Union the University could review the information provided about the library's purchasing and inter-library loan system and the ease of their processes. The Bangor Students Survey 2015-16 revealed that 61% of students knew they could request the library purchase book and access specific journals and 31% said they had used the system. Also, 29% of students were not aware of the inter-library loan system, suggesting that this could be rectified through communication.

To ensure accurate investment to the Talis Aspire reading system a recommendation given in the last statement was to implement the system across all programmes of study.

## A RELEVANT AND ATTRACTIVE CURRICULUM FOR THE FUTURE

To ensure that the University offers a relevant curriculum to students at Bangor University the Students' Union would like to work with the University to enable the teaching and learning activity in partnership with students. The majority (54%) of students reporting through the Bangor Students' Survey 2015-16 are *'satisfied with the choice of modules'* offered at their school but this is significantly lower than the 72% reported last year. *'The modules I have taken have been up-to-date and relevant'* scored 78% slightly lower than the 82% the year before and 47% reporting that *'I received enough clear information to make informed decisions when picking modules'* also lower than the previous year of 62%.

These results indicate that there is a need for the University to ensure that the recommendations we gave in our last statement are fulfilled. These recommendations involved the University to ensure that students receive clear and accurate information about

modules and that they are notified of any changes of modules as soon as possible. Also, for the Students' Union to work with University to develop different ways for students to be involved in developing the curriculum in the schools.

### **INCLUSIVE, WELCOMING AND SUPPORTIVE CURRICULUM**

To improve attainment at the University we believe that ensuring a welcoming and inclusive curriculum and environment will enable this. Creating an environment supporting staff and students to facilitate conversations around enhancing postgraduates' experiences. In our Bangor Students Survey 2015-16 we found that 73% felt that they are included in discussions and activities in lectures and seminars, which is a slightly lower percentage than last year. Only 66% of students feel that the context of their work is reflective of their life experiences compared to 73% the previous year.

Most (73%) of the students agreed that they feel comfortable raising issues, either publicly or privately with a staff member although this is slightly lower than in 2014-15. A lower percentage (54%) of students this year said that they feel comfortable raising these issues with a course representative and 78% felt safe in their learning environment. According to PRES 2015, 90% of the students have regular contact with their supervisor. The Students' Union would like to work with the University to raise awareness of the role of Course Representatives as part of the recommendations.

To encourage a community feel between postgraduate students, the Students' Union would like to encourage the University and schools to provide joint events and collaboration such as Research Seminars. Also, for a postgraduate community we would like to recommend that the University discusses ways of developing this with the Students' Union and the Postgraduate Society.

### **A SKILLS FOCUSED EDUCATION**

We indicated in our last report that transferable skills is an essential skill for students to learn for their career. The sector average in the PRES 2015 report for students receiving training to

develop their transferable skills was 46% and a significantly lower 34% of Bangor University students reported that they received this training. Our research has found again this year that students would benefit from additional training opportunities. The majority (78%) of students would like to receive more training/development in Research Skills and 42% would like more Data Management training and Careers training/guidance. Other comments given were about how they would like to learn more about

*'How academia works and the grant system',  
'I'd like to see all the information compile and updated on a single accessible web page,  
covering everything from employers, graduate employment statistics to grant availabilities.  
All UP TO DATE and wanting to learn more on technical training, GIS and statistics'.*

Also, they would like to learn more about how to debate and write academic articles. The PRES 2015 report shows that Bangor University has improved since the PRES 2013 as 77% said in 2015 that they received training in research skills on par with the sector average and higher than the last PRES report. We have recommended that the University could develop an online resource to host all training opportunities available, and to work with the Student's Union to research the types of training themes and programmes students would like to be offered.

We have asked students again this year about the Bangor Employability Award Master (BEA) asking them for feedback about the award. Our survey still shows that the majority (67%) of respondents are not currently participating in the scheme and 38% did not know how the award would help them demonstrate to future employers the skills they've developed at University with only 19% saying they did know. Comments were given about students and employers not knowing what the scheme was. Our recommendation to the BEA team is to review with the Students' Union and Postgraduate Students' Society about *'how the award is tailored to postgraduates and its promotion'*.

In terms of Postgraduate Research students' personal development the University could work with the Students' Union and develop a 'Progress Plan Report' to identify students' needs and create an agreement between the student and a relevant staff at the beginning of their degree.

## MY(POSTGRADUATE) BANGOR

MyBangor provides students with an online service for their timetable, exam results and for financial information. Whilst this is a great resource for undergraduates some improvements could be made for the postgraduate students. Nearly three quarters (74%) of the students find the system easy to use this is slightly lower than last year. This year a much higher percentage of 86% compared to last year's statement of students used MyBangor to access the timetable, 95% accessed their emails and 73% accessed their marks. We are pleased to see that the percentages are significantly higher than last year's survey results indicating that postgraduates' usage has increased significantly. Here are some feedback from students.

*'Blackboard should be accessible for all courses/modules/department by all postgraduate student of a faculty, meanwhile restricting access to only the blackboard of a students department/level limits students personal reading activities.'*

*'But timetables on MyBangor are very often wrong, to the point that students cannot rely on them at all'*

*'There is no integration between Uni pages, you have to keep logging into MyBangor, Blackboard, Library all the time. MyBangor puts too much effort on "fun" but the timetable for my lectures is ALWAYS wrong, I have both missed lectures and been to the Uni uselessly when there were no lectures because of errors in the timetable. They have to make it less fun and more functional.'*

*'The finance part needs updating at the moment it's just a list of payments but it doesn't say what they are for. I can't find out how much each module costs and I can't find the overall price of the course. Bangor Uni appears not to have realised its students are paying customers!'*

*'I am a course rep & I did not know I can send message to my classmates. Hope you arrange the training sessions for Dec. soon'*

We recommended that a timeline should be created for the MyBangor postgraduates' page, this could be developed further especially for Postgraduate Research students.

## PUBLICISING AND SHARING RESEARCH

From our research last year we identified that there was a need for the University to help develop research communities in Schools. These communities enables research postgraduates to enhance a wide range of skills in addition to their academic research. Our Bangor Student Survey this year reported that 64% of students thought their school provided a good range of seminar programs, which is slightly lower than last year of 66%. However, the University scored 76% which is higher compared to the sector average of 74% for *'a good seminar programme'*. 64% of students also said that they felt their school foster a good research community for students which coincides with 63% of the student on par with the Sector Average in the PRES 2015 report for students saying that they had a research ambience in their department.

Students publicising their work through conferences and seminars at Bangor and elsewhere can develop a research community and enhance students' careers. Over half (53%) have had the opportunity to submit their work or present at a seminar/conference at Bangor and 66% had the chance to do so elsewhere, according to our survey. These are quite high percentages especially as some students are only in their first year and are not ready to take advantage of opportunities like these. However, the data indicates that there are less opportunities for students to present their work at the University compared to outside the University. This could potentially be an opportunity for the Doctoral School to encourage these opportunities for students more at Bangor. We have recommended that the University develops the research community through encouraging best practice through the Students' Union and the Doctoral School.

Bangor also in the PRES 2015 scored less than the sector average for students to have the opportunity to attend academic research conferences at 67% compared to sector average of 72%. Just over half (54%) of students presented a poster or paper at an academic research conference compared to 59%. Only 31% compared to the sector average of 36% of students had the opportunity to submit a paper for publication. To enable more students to attend academic conferences, we would like to encourage the University to provide guidance for students about receiving financial support from the University.

Knowledge about copyright, Open Access and Creative Commons are very important for students and their work. Last year we found 38% of students weren't confident in their knowledge of copyright issues, we are pleased to report that this year the percentage has significantly lowered to 18% of students. When asked if they had received training on this topic the same percentage of students (18%) indicated that they had not received training. This suggests that providing training on this area is significant to their knowledge of the subject. Also, 36% (2015-16 survey) of students reported that they weren't confident with their knowledge of Open Access issues and Creative Commons licences, again significantly less than last year of 43% however training in this areas is clearly needed. We would like to encourage the Library and Archives Services to provide students with more information, training and guidance about these topics.

## RESEARCH FACILITIES AND STUDY SPACES

Having appropriate facilities including a professional and quiet working environment for students to study and complete research is extremely important for research students. Our Bangor Students Survey 2015-16 showed that only 46% were happy with the amount of research space they have and only 38% were satisfied with their office space. This was significantly less satisfaction than last year with 54% for research space and 62% for office space. Students complained about inadequate computers available in the comments they provided.

The PRES 2015 score of 80% was lower than the sector average of 84% for '*adequate provision of computing resources and facilities*'. Others stated that the library wasn't comfortable and quiet to work in and that their PG room was difficult to access, their PHD room had no natural light and was overcrowded. They indicated that offices were needed for those students that teach and that lockable lockers would be useful. We have recommended to the University to investigate available study spaces and invest more in this area in line with student feedback. Also, to consult with students and the Students' Union about the location of a Postgraduate Centre as part of the new Science Site.

## A FAIR DEAL FOR POSTGRADUATES WHO TEACH

To ensure that the University delivers high-quality teaching, postgraduates who teach deserve recognition, respect and support for their work. Our Bangor Student Survey 2015-16 showed that 53% of students has had the opportunity to teach at their School, which is slightly lower than the 67% reported in 2014-15, suggesting that less students are being asked to teach this year. In the PRES 2015 report, 55% of the students reported they had taught/demonstrated at the University which is a higher percentage compared to the sector average of 51%. 61% compared to the sector average of 60% were also given support and guidance for their teaching. We found that only 8% of the students were appointed through a selection process and half were asked by a member of staff directly.

In response to our survey, only 24% of the students agreed with the statement *'The training I received was useful and satisfactory'* with 32% disagreeing/strongly disagreeing with the statement. To emphasise this, the percentage (32%) of students agreeing that they received formal training to teach in the PRES 2015 Report was significantly lower than the sector average of 64%. We were concerned that the percentage of students receiving a contract for their work was only 20% and 22% were paid through the pink slip system. 10% of students were unpaid for their teaching work and 12% reported that teaching was expected as part of a bursary/studentship.

These postgraduates are key to developing new teaching and assessment methods and they have employment rights. This is why the Students' Union have urged the University to provide clear guidelines and regulations to monitor students that teach to create a Code of Practice for the Use of Postgraduate Students in Teaching.

This Code of Practice has now been effective since the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2016 and it applies to all postgraduate students. The Code provides guidelines about training and instruction, payment students receive, appointing, teaching commitments and monitoring and feedback. As the Code is quite new our research will show the effect this Code has had on students who teach next year.

## PGCertHE

In addition to the Code of Practice for the Use of Postgraduate Students in Teaching, the University has developed a PGCertHE programme to ensure that students who teach are receiving appropriate training. Most of the students from our Bangor Students Survey 2015-16 are aware of the PGCertHE and only 12% have said they do not have time to take part which is significantly less than the 27% of students saying this last year. Comments were made about the qualification not being relevant to some students as they were qualified teachers already, some students did not have enough teaching time and that their School do not allow PhD students to enrol on the course.

This feedback suggests that more information should be given about the importance of the qualification especially to Schools and that it is aimed at teaching at Higher Education level rather than Primary and Secondary school level. To encourage this we have recommended that the Doctoral School and CELT develop their publicity and encourage awareness of the benefits of the programme and *'develop a robust Career Personal Development programme for postgraduates'*.

## FY ADDYSG GYMRAEG

In the Postgraduate Annual Statement 2014-15 we commended the University and Coleg Cenedlaethol Cymraeg for their work on Welsh Medium courses and highlighted that the University's 2015-2020 strategic plan noted that

*'We are the leading provider of higher education through the medium of Welsh, in terms of volume, breadth of courses and expertise, and we also the sector's standard bearer for Welsh Language services and support'*.

In our recommendations last year we asked the University *'to review the opportunities available for students to develop their Welsh Language skills relevant to their course'* as only 36% of respondents reported this last year. 33% of those taking part in our Bangor Student Survey 2015-16 were Welsh Speakers / Learners. We received comments in the Bangor Student Survey 2015-16 saying that students would like

*'More Welsh for learners activities where people are given a safe environment to practice Welsh for free'*  
*'Welsh lessons'*

As the University *'has the highest number of students studying through the medium of Welsh'* and that only just over half of the students thought last year that the information provided on Welsh-medium module choices were readily available to them when making module choices we recommended that the University ensures that this information was available to students. This was reiterated in the Comments given by students in the PTES 2015 report and included the following:

*'Mwy o ddeunydd Cymraeg mewn modiwlau cyfrwng Saesneg. (More Welsh materials in modules taught through English)'*

*'Yr un peth i wella'n sicr fyddai cynnwys mwy o fodiwlau Cymraeg. (One thing to certainly improve would be the provision of more Welsh modules).'*

In the English Language Support section comments that were received included:

*'Also able to accommodate my Welsh language needs which in my opinion is much more important to me.'*

*'Oes ddim pwynt rhoi cymorth anghenion Saesneg i fyfyrwyr sydd eisiau gwneud cwrs drwy'r gyfrwng Gymraeg, Ym Mangor... mae'n rhaid cynnig cymorth ar gyfer eu anghenion Cymraeg... (There is no point providing support for English language needs to students who wish to undertake the course through the medium of Welsh in Bangor....support must be offered for our Welsh needs...).'*

The third recommendation we gave was *'to review the information available to students about Welsh language skills development and employability'*. This was again echoed in the comments provided in the PTES 2015 report:

*'.....learners of Welsh are not encouraged to take elective modules taught through the medium of Welsh, even if the student is completely aware of the added difficulty. I do not think this policy makes any good for the maintenance and development of a minority language and I believe it should be revisited.'*

We were pleased to see that students' enjoy:

*'Cael gwneud ychydig ohono drwy'r gyfrwng Gymraeg. Mae'n rhaid cynnig hyn i fyfyrwyr ar POB cwrs. (Being able to do some of it through the medium of Welsh. This should be offered to students on EVERY course).'*

## PGCE STUDENTS

A low number of PGCE students responded to this survey, this should be taken into account when considering the percentages included in this section.

In our research we asked students about their placement on the PGCE course. 55% of students were not satisfied with the amount of time they were given between getting their placement details and starting their placement. Comments from the students were provided through the PTES 2015 report, which included

*'Better organisation of the PGCE course is needed.'*

*'The dissertation for the PGCE course was due in during Easter holidays which proved challenging when trying to contact tutors who were on holiday.'*

However 76% are satisfied with the experience they have had on placement and 66% were satisfied with the support they receive from their placement mentor. We have recommended to the University to *'review the information available to students prior to beginning their course'*, to ensure that information is provided to students on placement learning before starting their course, and that confirmation of placements are agreed as early as possible. Also, the University could ensure that all Placement Supervisors/Mentors have the opportunity to engage in training and development.

We stated last year that the Pastoral and Academic support available to students varied from student to student. Mainly, students were more comfortable talking about their problems with fellow students and placement mentors rather than the school administrators. Most (55%) of the students did not agree that their pastoral support fitted with their expectations and 66% of the students disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement *'I am satisfied with the support I receive from the School of Education'*. However all of the students felt that their fellow students were supportive and we have recommended to the *'Student Services to review the support and information available to students out of hours'*.

From our Postgraduate Annual Statement 2014-15 we reported that postgraduates wanted to enhance their sense of belonging to a community at University. This year we asked PGCE students about their sense of belonging at the University as we believe that a sense of belonging and community is beneficial to students. The majority of students felt that they belonged to Bangor University and the School of Education. The majority also reported that they were comfortable talking to their Personal Tutor/Supervisor about a problem even though 33% disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement.

We found that the course did not fit the students' expectations for most (55%) and the assessment on their course was not what they expected it to be for 66% of the students. Nevertheless all of the students believed that completing their degree will help them achieve their future goal.

### Conclusion

With the University positively embracing the ethos of partnership and investing in students' academic experiences in recent years, we have seen overall student satisfaction increasing through our research and other performance league tables. The Students' Union is committed to challenging and supporting the University in areas where needed for postgraduate education. In response to this we are confident that the University will embrace these challenges.

We've summarised positive examples of improvements in the document including the creation of the Code of Practice for the Use of Postgraduate Students in Teaching. Even though we have also highlighted areas for development we are encouraged by the responses from the Bangor Student Survey 2014-15 and the Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research Surveys that through further investment the University will easily progress in student satisfaction for postgraduates as they have done so for undergraduate students.

We look forward to working with the University in their developmental work and would like to encourage the University to continue with their investment in the postgraduate experience.

## Recommendations

### ARRIVING AT BANGOR

1. The University to review its welcome and induction programme for all new and returning students, including for students beginning in January.
2. The University to ensure that postgraduates receive adequate information and guidance before starting their studies, including a point of contact for queries before welcome events.

### A SUPPORTIVE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

3. The University to ensure that all postgraduate students are allocated a Personal Tutor at the beginning of the academic term.
4. The University to ensure that Personal Tutors and students are engaging where necessary to ensure that students' engagement is monitored and that students are supported.

### PARTNERS IN OUR EDUCATION

5. The University to identify staff responsible for the Postgraduate Annual Statement and work with the Union to implement the recommendations.
6. The University to work with the Students' Union to develop an evaluation system relevant to PGT and PGR students across the University, that enhances the University's ability to provide quality academic experiences for PG students.
7. 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.
8. The University to commit to improving the response rates to PTES and PRES, including investing in their promotion
9. The University to work with the Students' Union to implement its Student Fellows project.

### OUR REPRESENTATION

10. The Students' Union and University to develop a Code of Practice for the Postgraduate Course Representative System, in line with the structure as outlined above.

11. The Students' Union to develop PG specific training for students involved in representation activity.

#### WHY WE CHOSE BANGOR

12. The University to ensure the clarity and accuracy of information provided to students before registration, including course content, support, and opportunities to enhance their employability.
13. The University to provide opportunities for postgraduate students to engage in validation and re-validation processes to support the enhancement of teaching, learning and the curriculum at Bangor.

#### FEEDBACK AND ASSESSMENT

14. The University to ensure that the University's guidelines for returning feedback and setting return dates are applied at all levels of study, as outlined in the Code of Practice for the Assessment of Students on Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes.
15. The University to develop clear and consistent Supervisory and Monitoring Guidelines and seek feedback from students on their implementation.
16. The University to work with the Students' Union to develop Supervisory Guidelines for PGT Dissertation supervision.

#### OUR LIBRARY SERVICE

17. The University to review, in partnership with students and the Students' Union, the information provided about the library's purchasing and inter-library loan system, and the ease of these processes for students.
18. The University to ensure the implementation of the Talis Aspire reading system across all programmes of study to ensure accurate investment in resources.

#### A RELEVANT AND ATTRACTIVE CURRICULUM FOR THE FUTURE

19. The University to ensure that module information provided to students is clear and accurate and that students are notified in advance of modules that are unable to run in sufficient time.

20. The University to work with the Students' Union to develop ways for students to contribute to the development of the curriculum in their school.

#### INCLUSIVE, WELCOMING AND SUPPORTIVE CURRICULUM

21. The University to work with the Students' Union to raise awareness of the identity and role of Course Representatives to students.
22. The University to encourage integration between postgraduates from all schools through joint events and collaboration, in activities such as Research Seminars.
23. The University's Director of PGT & PGR to work with the Students' Union and PG Society to discuss ways of developing a postgraduate community at Bangor.

#### A SKILLS FOCUSED EDUCATION

24. "The University to develop an online resource that hosts all training opportunities available to postgraduates to register."
25. The University to work with the Students' Union to research the types of training themes and programmes students would like offered.
26. The BEA team work with the Students' Union and Postgraduate Students' Society to review the promotion and how the Award is tailored to postgraduates.
27. The University to work with the Students' Union to develop a 'Progress Plan Report' so that each research student's development needs are identified and agreed jointly by the student and appropriate staff at the start of the degree.

#### MY(POSTGRADUATE) BANGOR

28. The University's Student Engagement Project Officer to work with the Students' Union to replicate the undergraduate academic year timeline for postgraduate students.

#### PUBLICISING AND SHARING RESEARCH

29. The University to support the development of a research community within Schools and across the institution by sharing best practice through the Doctoral School and Students' Union.

30. The Library and Archives Services to work with the Students' Union to provide students with more information, training, and guidance about copyright issues, Open Access issues and Creative Commons licences.
31. The University to provide guidance for students on receiving financial support from the University to attend academic conferences.

#### RESEARCH FACILITIES AND STUDY SPACES

32. The University to investigate current study spaces available to research students and invest in these areas in line with student feedback.
33. The University to investigate, in consultation with students and the Students' Union, as part of the new Science Site redevelopment, the location of a Postgraduate Centre.

#### A FAIR DEAL FOR POSTGRADUATES WHO TEACH

34. Doctoral School and HR to ensure that the implementation of University's new Code of Practice, including recruitment and contracting, is monitored across the institution to ensure fairness and compliance with its principles and requirements.
35. The University to adhere to the principles agreed by the Doctoral School when considering the feedback received from Schools on the new Code of Practice.
36. The University to ensure clear and flexible recruitment processes for Schools to adhere to during the recruitment of postgraduate students.
37. Doctoral School and CELT to work with the Students' Union to ensure the development of robust training opportunities that reflect the needs of students engaged in teaching.

#### PGCertHE

38. Doctoral School and CELT to work with the Postgraduate Students' Society to improve publicity and awareness of the programme and its benefits.
39. CELT and the Doctoral School to work with the SU and Postgraduate Students' Society to develop a robust CPD programme for postgraduates.

### FY ADDYSG GYMRAEG

40. The University to review the opportunities available to students to develop Welsh Language skills relevant to their course.
41. The University to ensure that information on Welsh medium modules is readily available to students.
42. The University to review the information available to students about Welsh language skills development and employability.

### PGCE STUDENTS

43. University to review the information available to students prior to beginning their course about travel costs and the financial support available to them at the University.
44. University to ensure that information is provided to students on placement learning before starting their course, and that confirmation of placements are agreed as early as possible.
45. Student Services to review the support and information available to students out-of-hours.
46. The University to ensure that all Placement Supervisors/mentors in respective Providers have the opportunity to engage in training and development.