



ANNUAL STUDENT STATEMENT

WWW.BANGORSTUDENTS.COM

2014 2015



UNDEB MYFYRWYR
BANGOR
STUDENTS' UNION

INTRODUCTION:

Over the last few years, Bangor University and Bangor Students' Union have worked together to embed the ethos and practice of 'students as true partners' in their education. The relationship between the Union and University has grown significantly in strength and we have been working with more departments and staff on issues affecting students. It is abundantly clear that the University appreciates the work of the Students' Union in improving the experiences of students at Bangor, and there is a mutual respect between University senior staff and Students' Union Officers.

Student satisfaction is at an all-time high in Bangor, and this is no doubt due to the partnership work between the Union and University. Clear developments in the student and academic experience are being seen by students and this is evident in the increase of the University's student satisfaction scores in the National Student Survey (NSS) and we know there is a strong commitment across the organisation to continue to improve in these areas.

There are an increasing number of projects (some of which we will be highlighting in this document) that the Union and University are working together on, particularly at a senior level, and more work is being done for this work to continue across all departments and in every school. Although in some areas there is still a way to go, it is clear to the Union and students alike, that there is a commitment from the institution to continue in this direction; embedding true partnership work, in order to create an approach that goes beyond consultation and basic representation, allowing students to be the driving force behind the partnership agenda.

Partnership is about more than just listening to the student voice and enabling students to have input in decisions that affect them. True partnership relies upon an environment where the priorities, content and direction of the learning experience are all set by students and staff in partnership.

Welsh Government Policy Statement on Higher Education, June 2013

In order to ensure that students are the driving force behind new developments, some work does need to be done at a local level in order to challenge some cultures that exist in schools around what working in partnership actually means. However, there is also a role for the Students' Union to play, in terms of engaging students at a school level about the ethos of this work and how course reps and students can move even further forward with this agenda.

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

In line with the University's Student Experience Strategy 2015-2018 Bangor Students' Union is keen to develop partnership working to focus on the impact that decisions, policies and procedures have on individual students.

We must ensure that partnership is inclusive and diverse and provides an environment where all students can take part in our work, no matter their background or how they define.

It's also important that we recognise the diversity of students' experiences. There is no one student experience. Students engage with Higher Education and the opportunities that it provides in a number of ways. We cannot openly and meaningfully discuss what an inclusive education looks like when we talk about students as a homogenous group who all share the same experience.

Through ensuring that partnership working is realised across the University, where staff and students discuss issues in an environment where staff and students are respected and valued, Bangor University can ensure that students' experiences of Higher Education are transformational and exciting.

This report provides a snapshot of students' experiences in 2014/15 and also reflects on some of the more significant areas for development at Bangor University. To voice student's experience, this report takes into account the response of the students from the Our Manifesto 2014/15 survey co-ordinated by the Student's Union and focus group activities with undergraduate students. Our main areas of investigation are; teaching and learning, assessment and feedback, the course representative system, learning resources, welsh medium provision and an inclusive curriculum.

SECTION ONE: QAA MID CYCLE REVIEW REPORT

We noted in our report to the QAA that **“the Students’ Union and the University’s relationship is underpinned by a partnership approach.”** There are a number of projects every year that the University and Union work in partnership to develop and deliver, and we very much feel like the work and research of the SU’s Academic Representation Unit, home of the course representative system and the annual student statement is valued and respected by the Institution. We noted numerous investments made by the University to ensure the parity of students’ academic experiences; such as an investment in online services to ensure accuracy in the information provided to students, including ‘MyBangor’, the University’s online intranet and the development of an online student handbook, which includes school, college and University specific information. Additionally, over the course of the last two academic years the University and Students’ Union have successfully developed new projects to allow students to feed into the design, development and review of modules and programmes. In 2013/14 we developed a partnership project, which now sees Internal

Quality Audit (IQA) Panel members provided with Student Submissions. Rooted in feedback, these submissions inform the questioning, recommendations and commendations of School IQAs. The process is highly valued by staff and students.

 **the Students’ Union and the University’s relationship is underpinned by a partnership approach** 

Some of the topics covered in the Mid-cycle review report, and discussed in further detail in this document, but the Students’ Union was keen to highlight the following areas:

1 MODULE EVALUATION:

Since the last review the University has rolled out online module evaluation in all schools. We have worked with the University to ensure that responses to module evaluations increase and that student feedback is implemented and used to improve programmes. However, the Students’ Union would like to see initiatives developed across the University in order to further close the feedback loop and to improve students’ academic experiences. One suggestion, in order to help with this issue is to evaluate courses at a programme level, (as opposed to module) which would hopefully drive up response rate and better engage students in issues, especially if they no longer have to fill out several of the same evaluations each semester.

Our representational work is underpinned by research. We have requested access to some, anonymous, module evaluation data to better inform our representation work, specifically around our Annual Student Statements and support for students compiling Student Submissions for Internal Quality Audits.

2. POSTGRADUATE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

We are pleased to see the University placing a greater emphasis on improving the experiences of postgraduate students following research undertaken by the Students' Union over the last year. The University has introduced a number of new initiatives to improve PG students' experiences, such as ensuring that PGT students have allocated personal tutors. Additionally, induction processes and events for PG students have been reviewed and improved to ensure the proper orientation for new students to Bangor University and transition to postgraduate study.

Through on-going casework and research we uncovered a number of issues with the consistency, parity and perceived usefulness of induction programmes, and parity of supervision and monitoring procedures for Doctoral candidates in particular but also for PGT thesis supervision. As a result, we have decided to produce an additional annual statement to focus on the experiences of Postgraduate students, including Postgraduate Taught (PGT), Postgraduate Research (PGR) and PGCE.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The University to work with schools with a semester two intake, in order to ensure there are comparable inductions and welcome events.

The University and Bangor College to work with the Students' Union to ensure that access to information and representation is transparent and available to students studying in CSUFT.

The University to investigate programme level module evaluation for students.

The University to provide the Students' Union with access to module evaluation data that can be used to inform our representational work

The University to identify staff responsible for the Postgraduate Annual Statement and work with the Union to implement the recommendations.

3. INTERNATIONALISATION

Since the last review the University has expanded its international provision and has committed to internationalising the curriculum. The University have also reviewed the induction processes and events for international students to ensure proper induction processes for all international students arriving at Bangor University.

A semester 2 intake for international students has been introduced for some courses in the Business School. Improvements in induction and welcome events for September-start students have not been replicated for this intake of students, and the Students' Union feels that it would be beneficial to develop this in order to ensure parity of induction and integration into academic and social life at Bangor.

In addition, the University has, since September 2015, entered a partnership with the Central South University for Forestry and Technology to establish Bangor College China. Currently the students are studying ILETS courses. The Students' Union President and Academic Representation Unit Co-ordinator have recently been appointed to the relevant committee that oversees the monitoring of the China Campus (CSUFT). The Students' Union's responsibilities include academic representation for central complaints and appeals processes and monitoring the implementation of student representation structures in the joint college. Expectations of the SU long-term have not been clearly defined.

SECTION TWO: UNIVERSITY UPDATE SINCE LAST STATEMENT

The University's increase in student satisfaction across the National Student Survey (NSS) displays the importance that the University has placed on students' experiences in Higher Education. Through working in partnership with the Students' Union and course representatives, Bangor is striving to address the issues that negatively impact on students' academic lives, in areas that nationally are challenging for Institutions, such as feedback, course organisation and management.

This section looks at some of the issues the Students' Union has raised through its annual student statements and discusses student feedback following a review of the recommendations made to the University, to see how things have improved.

● Response Percentage
● Response Count



1 THE STUDENT CHARTER:

In 2012 we noted that we had "some concerns around how the charter is communicated to students". One of the recommendations made was for the Union to ask a question about the charter in our annual survey, 'Our Manifesto'. This year we discussed the purpose of the Charter with students to discover if they were aware of the document and how much they knew about it. 67% of respondents reported that they did not know about the charter, with

some commenting; "I might have heard of it, but I don't think I've read it, or would know where to find it..." or "I've heard of it but unsure what it's about." (Our manifesto, 2014-15)

Due to these findings, it is no real surprise to see, that when asked "What commitments, for the University and yourself, do you believe is included in the student charter?" students answered the following:

What commitments, for the University and yourself, do you believe is included in the student charter?



It is clear that more work needs to be done in order to ensure that the Student Charter and its purpose is communicated to students and the Students' Union would be happy to take a role in ensuring this message reaches all students.

2. EMPLOYABILITY

We also continued to survey students on their opinions of the Bangor Employability Award (BEA). Since the recommendations in 2013-14 around communication and purpose of the scheme, the Union noted that work had been done with the BEA team in order to address these issues.

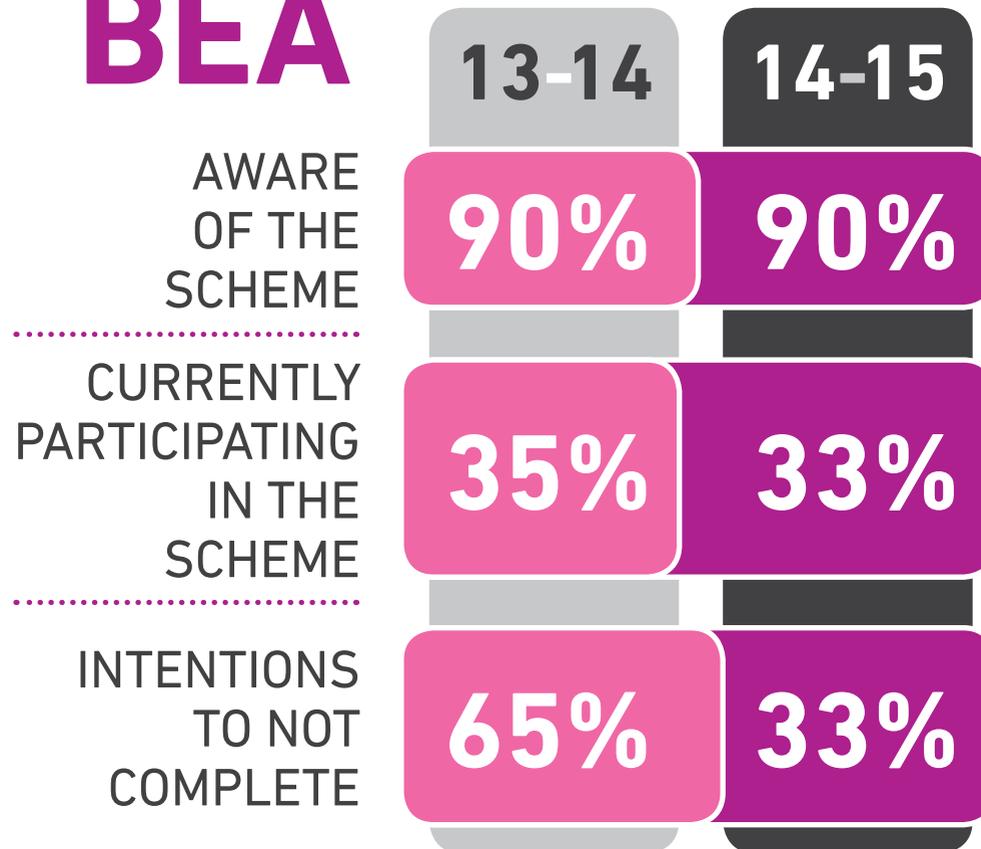
We decided, in order to compare results for the previous year we would ask the same questions as we had done before. The results were as follows; when asked if they were aware of the BEA, over 90% of respondents concurred that they were in fact, aware of the scheme, however only 33% of respondents confirmed that they are currently participating in the scheme. This is a similar picture to the survey answers last year, with 90% stating they were aware of the scheme in 2013-14 but 65% of students confirming that they were not actively participating in the scheme.

When looking at the question around students intentions to complete the scheme, last year 65% of students indicated they were not aiming to complete the BEA, however it is encouraging to see this figure has now been reversed and this year only 33% of students surveyed stated that they were not aiming to complete the scheme and 33% of students were unsure.

Although these figures are lower than what we expected given the changes to the BEA, it is comforting to know that the number of students aiming to complete the award is higher than in previous years, particularly as these students will be graduating with a Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR).

Furthermore, we are also pleased to see that 47% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement **"The BEA will help me demonstrate to future employers the skills I have developed at University."** Whilst this is good to see, the Union still has concerns around how and why the award is promoted to students and would like to see the BEA team engage further with the SU in order to facilitate more student focussed consultation in regards to the purpose of the scheme.

THE BEA



47% AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED WITH THE STATEMENT

▮▮ The BEA will help me demonstrate to future employers the skills I have developed at University. ▮▮

3

JOINT HONOURS

In the 2013-14 Annual Student Statement we recommended that the University ensured that all joint honour students had a personal tutor in both Schools; that Colleges worked with the SU to roll out Joint Honours events in order to highlight issues and make changes to improve the experiences of students studying across schools and colleges and also to investigate the feasibility of Peer Guides specifically for Joint Honours students.

We are aware that not all of these changes have been implemented, partly due to resources both on the side of the University and the Students Union, but would be keen to see this area invested in over the next academic year. What is particularly concerning, is the responses to this year's 'Our Manifesto' survey, in which only 40% of students responded 'agree' or 'strongly agree' to the question; "I have a personal tutor in each of the schools I study in."

It is apparent from this year's survey, that communication is still a huge problem for Joint Honour students, with less than 30% of students stating that they know who the course rep is in each of the schools they study in. Although the SU has a role to play with course reps,

and all rep details are available on the Union website, it is clear that there is an issue with when and how information is communicated to students, particularly those on Joint Honours courses, in terms of procedures, processes and organisation of their course.

Some of the more common complaints from Course Rep Council 3, this academic year, have focussed on Joint Honour students. Many representatives noted that Joint Honour students only had one Personal Tutor, whilst other reps noted that students on joint courses feel 'lost in the system' and clashes between schools often cause unnecessary stress, and could easily be resolved with better communication between Schools and Colleges.

As a result of these comments and similar throughout the year, we asked students the following question; "I feel a sense of belonging to each of the schools I study in." 45% of students responded that they do feel a sense of belonging in both schools; however, of those who responded positively, only 13% 'strongly agreed' with the statement.

40% AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED WITH THE STATEMENT

I have a personal tutor in each of the schools I study in.

LESS THAN 30% JOINT HONOUR STUDENTS know who the course rep is in each of the schools they study in

WE ASKED STUDENTS

I feel a sense of belonging to each of the schools I study in

45% responded positively for both schools
only 13% 'strongly agreed'

SECTION TWO: UNIVERSITY UPDATE SINCE LAST STATEMENT

.....

COMMENDATIONS:

.....

The University to continue to work with the SU on their annual student statement recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS:

.....

The University to work with the Students' Union to implement a communication strategy for the Student Charter in order to highlight its purpose and content.

The University to work with the Students' Union and course reps to look at feedback relating to the BEA in order to improve students understanding of the scheme and further investigate the reasons behind why students are not taking part or aiming to complete the Award.

The University to work with the Students' Union to further roll out the draft Joint Honours charter to all colleges and schools.

The University to ensure that all joint honours students have a personal tutor in each school.

SECTION THREE: THE BANGOR UNIVERSITY STUDENT EXPERIENCE



In March 2015, Bangor Students' Union received an award from NUS Wales based on its working on improving experiences in education. The partnership ethos between the University and Students' Union has been a large factor of success in this area.

In 2014-15 annual survey, we asked **"From your time at Bangor, what would you say the University does well for students?"**

There were 1094 survey respondents, who reported the following;

Wide range of modules in Welsh and English

Support from academic staff

Good support system for first years

Amazingly helpful for students with learning difficulties

Developed students potential

Providing a home away from home

Provide a safe, friendly & well established learning environment

Cares about student experience

Pastoral care

The Library being open 24 hours is really useful

**Student's comments;
Our Manifesto 2014-15**

Over the last academic year, Bangor University has seen huge increases in its National Student Survey (NSS) results, with the Institution being placed 1st for Wales and within the Top 7 in the UK. Additionally, the University also came in the Top 20 in the Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey. As we have stated before, this is in no doubt, due to the relationship and working practices between the institution, its Students' Union and its students.

ANNUAL STUDENT STATEMENT 2014-15

As the Union sees its role as a critical friend of the University, and vice-versa, in the same survey, we asked students **“What is your top priority for improvement?”**

Responses stated;

A common room with kitchen utilities e.g. Microwave, kettle etc.

Lectures finishing at 5pm to allow for people who have to pick up children from nursery

Better inter-school interactions and opportunities for joint honours students

Support and facilities for students travelling in from home everyday

More copies of core text books in the library

Wednesdays free of lectures

More clear reading lists in advance before lectures begin

More feedback on module exams

24 hour Deiniol library

More lecture hours

Both libraries open 24 hour throughout the whole academic year

It is clear that there is, of course, always room for improvement, but what is encouraging, is that not only are none of these issues any surprise to the University (as many of them have already been discussed in task groups and between senior management and the Union), but also we are pleased to see the emphasis the University is putting on students being activists in creating and setting the direction for change and improvements to be made, such as some of those listed above.

Student's comments; Our Manifesto 2014-15

SECTION THREE: THE BANGOR UNIVERSITY STUDENT EXPERIENCE

COMMENDATIONS:

The University to continue to provide a wide selection of module for students available in Welsh and English.

The University to continue with its commitment to pastoral support by ensuring there is a strong emphasis on the Personal Tutor system

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The University to work with the Students' Union to investigate further the usage at each library and ensure there is a parity of experience for all students in terms of access to library resources and reading lists.

The University to ensure that Wednesday afternoons are free from academic study for all students.

The University to work with the Students' Union to investigate the student experience for home students to ensure it is comparable with students living in Bangor.

SECTION FOUR: TEACHING AND LEARNING

1 INVESTMENT IN TEACHING

Over the past year, we have seen an increased amount of investment in the teaching spaces across the campus. **The University has committed to investing £350,000 a year on teaching rooms and approximately £200,000 on IT and audio visual equipment. This investment is huge for students and we feel that it will really contribute to a more enhanced and conducive learning environment for students.**

Currently the University's Student Experience Strategy (SES) is currently the only institutional strategy that discusses improvements in teaching and learning at Bangor University. It draws together the various aspects of a student's' experience, including services and facilities, and maps the overall approach to improving students' experiences in those areas. Whilst we understand that there is no obligation or requirement for a University to have a Teaching and Learning strategy, this is something that we believe could be another way for the institution to display its commitment to students and its partnership approach by allowing the Union to lead on the development of this strategy, alongside course representatives to deliver a sector-leading, student-led teaching and learning strategy.

2 ADDITIONAL COURSE COSTS

Throughout the semester, Course representatives have been informally feeding back to the Student Union regarding the extras they have to pay for in order to complete their degree, on top of their tuition fees. With this in mind, using Course Rep Council as a platform, we took the opportunity to survey students from different schools and colleges to collect information on what they have had to pay. This group of students focused on the overall costs that are incurred throughout University, which ranged from compulsory school data collection trips to printing and binding costs for dissertations as well as the lack of communication surrounding these costs prior to starting the degree.

A PRINTING COSTS

B DISSERTATION SUBMISSIONS

C TRAINING AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

A. PRINTING COSTS

Course representatives identified that printing costs throughout their degree were particularly problematic. For Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught students, the prices of printing currently stands at:

A4 Monochrome - 5p per A4 side

A3 Monochrome - 25p per A3 side

A4 Colour - 25p per A4 side

A3 Colour - 50p per A3 side

Course representatives from 10 schools across the University informed us that when it comes to printing the prices are quite high, resulting in students printing off less than they would like, meaning that they are not able to fully access all the materials they want, particularly when it comes to reading journals and lecture slides. Comments are as follows:

“All of the schools documents are now online but a lot of students find it very difficult to read off of a computer screen, especially those with access requirements and therefore need to print relevant online articles and literature”

Nursing Students

“With e-journals becoming a bigger resource, it is really important to be able to have them to hand and read them through but it is hard to do this off of a computer all the time and printing takes up a lot of my weekly budget”

Psychology students

“If all assignments were paperless then it would greatly help our costs and sustainability”

SENRGy students

“It would be great if copies of lecture slides were provided at the start of each lecture so we can follow the discussion”

Business students

“Printing costs of assignments with graphs is really expensive as it is compulsory to print in colour to adhere to formatting requirements.”

History and Biological science students

“The majority of our students are international and so paying a large fee already!”

Business students

“Printing costs are extortionate. It would be one less worry if printing was free.”

Across all schools

We would like to see further consultation with students regarding; printing and access to online resources and the number of copies required when submitting assignments.

B. DISSERTATION SUBMISSIONS

All students taking a dissertation module are expected to print and bind their dissertation copies. Across schools however, it is clear that the process surrounding dissertation submissions varies with regards to types of binding as well as the amount of copies to be submitted. Students have fed back the following;

“The process of binding is really unclear. Why do we need to submit electronic copies and hand in two hard copies?”

Psychology students

“Binding and printing of dissertations should be free. Particularly when we have to give in two copies and the majority of our students have two projects!”

Music students

Considering the differences across school as well as the alternative options for binding, some that are more affordable than others, we would like to work with the University on streamlining the dissertation submission process for it to be consistent across each college, as well as improving the affordability of binding alternatives within the institution. This will ensure consistency of information provided to students as well as clarity for prospective students prior to applications.

C. TRAINING AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

It has been highlighted that in order to take part in some compulsory components of a degree, students have been expected to pay for further training and information. Course representatives reported that due to a lack of communication relating to these additional costs, there have been numerous students facing barriers and stress. Here are a few examples that course representatives referred to:

“As trainee teachers we have to get CRB Checks which we pay for”

“Compulsory placement element makes our degree £1500 more expensive than other PGCEs”

Education students

“When using the Archive is part of the library, it is strange that it costs to take a picture of an archive but not to take out a book”

History students

“If we want to promote our research or learn more by attending conferences, sometimes it costs so much that we can't go”

History and Psychology students

“With 7 of our 10 holiday weeks are not during school holidays, there are extra costs for older students or student parents with travel and child care”

Nursing students

“It is great that we do have some subsidised trips, however finding the rest of the funding for compulsory ones is difficult for some students”

SENRGy students

Course representatives have stressed that these hidden course costs and extra requirements to take part in activities that benefit their academic experience have impacted what they can get involved with. With this in mind, we would recommend that any opportunities throughout each degree, compulsory or optional, as well as further costs such as CRB documentation should be advertised to students via the website and prospectus prior to registration.

Additionally, for schools to work with the finance support unit to promote the financial support offered for University academic trips.

Finally for the University to work with schools to work out the amount of added cost there currently is for each program and investigate alternatives of funding opportunities/required work.

3. THE STUDENT LED TEACHING AWARDS

Since 2012, Bangor Students' Union has been running the Student-Led Teaching Award project in partnership with the University. The project consists of a student panel of course representatives, one from each College; the Pro Vice Chancellors (Teaching & Learning and Students); the Union's VP Education and Welfare; and staff support from within the Union's Academic Representation Unit. The panel each year decides on the categories of the awards, the criteria and also decides the winners. Any student can nominate any member of staff and the project culminates in an awards evening at the end of semester two, where staff shortlisted and those who win each of the awards are presented with a certificate, a mug and for the winners, a glass award.

“In all my years I don't think I have ever had a teacher as good as (LECTURER). S/he has lectured at least one module every year of my degree and it has always been the one that I have been most interested in, has never been hard to understand and therefore have been able to get more in depth with, and also one that has offered the most variety - in terms of teaching style, techniques, format and assignment type.”

Student nomination: Shortlisted staff member

Category: Teacher of the Year 2015

The project itself is extremely positive, but what it has demonstrated to the Union is the value that students place on the teaching and pastoral support that is available for them whilst studying at Bangor. Every year we receive around 330 nominations and each year the number of individual staff nominated has risen. We are currently in the process of analysing the data from this year's awards, but the trends we can see from the nominations are that students really do appreciate the teaching, research and pastoral support they receive from staff at Bangor. Some examples of nominations are;

3 THE STUDENT LED TEACHING AWARDS

“ S/he uses a mix of lecture slides with text and pictures, and online videos this allows her/him to formulate a concept, explain it with words, show us a diagram and then show a video of how it links together. The way I see it is as her/him building up layers, or dimensions of understanding. ”

Student nomination: **Shortlisted staff member**

Category: **Teacher of the Year 2015**

“ There are also tons of additional related reading papers associated with the lecture, but they are not necessary to understand the topic, just help in linking ideas together. ”

Student nomination: **Shortlisted staff member**

Category: **Teacher of the Year 2015**

“ (STAFF MEMBER) is simply outstanding. Without him/her, our department would fall apart. S/he is the glue that holds staff and students together... There's nothing better than being in the department and knowing help is only a couple of steps away, and it will always be the best help you can imagine. ”

Student nomination: **Shortlisted staff member**

Category: **Support Staff Member of the Year 2015**

“ His/her knowledge is faultless, if you have a problem or even simply a worry, s/he will have a solution. S/he's the most efficient person I've ever met, the sort of person who would never break a promise. It's as if s/he's at the top of the family tree and looks after us all as his/her own. S/he is wonderful, and I will miss her/him very much when I leave. ”

Student nomination: **Shortlisted staff member**

Category: **Support Staff Member of the Year 2015**

“ I honestly don't know how the (SCHOOL) would cope without (STAFF MEMBER). Everyone can see how busy s/he always is, but s/he is always happy to help with any question, no matter how stupid the question may seem...Most importantly, she is a calming influence around exam times. I have always felt much better about exams and assignments after talking to him/her... Not only does s/he deal with all his/her administration duties, but s/he truly cares about the students as well. ”

Student nomination: **Shortlisted staff member**

Category: **Support Staff Member of the Year 2015**

“ ...Any teacher can give pastoral care to a student who they see regularly at Bangor, but few have the energy or patience to reach out and offer distance learners the care and attention they need but are sometimes too shy to ask for... ”

Student nomination: **Shortlisted staff member**

Category: **Award for Outstanding Pastoral Support 2015**

It is clear that staff, both academic and support, play a huge part in enhancing the experiences of students who are studying at Bangor University and without this commitment, students genuinely believe they would not still be studying. It is a huge honour every year for the Students' Union to host this event and say thank you on behalf of the student population for all their hard work and dedication.

SECTION FOUR: TEACHING AND LEARNING

COMMENDATIONS:

The University to continue to support the Students' Union in delivering the Student Led Teaching Award project and other student-led initiatives.

The University to continue to invest in teaching spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The University to support the Students' Union and work together to deliver a student-led Teaching and Learning Strategy.

The University to ensure that all extra course costs are clearly defined to students and where possible, eliminate or subsidise some of these costs.

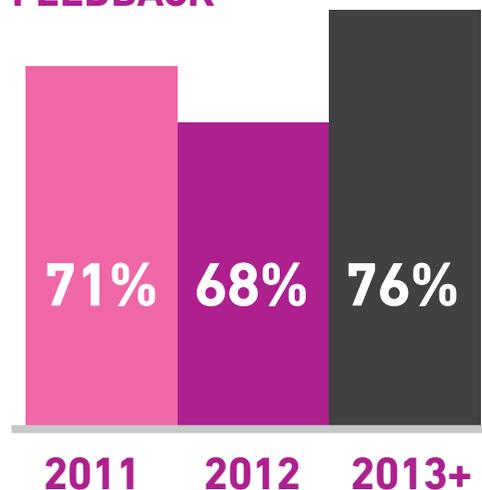
The University to review the procedure on the number of copies required for printing, including dissertation printing and binding, and review the cost to print for students.

SECTION FIVE:

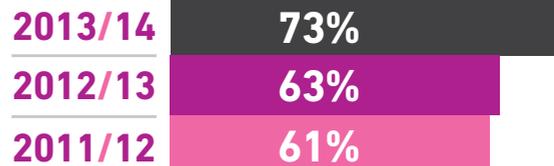
ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

We know that nationally, assessment and feedback is the lowest scoring section of the National Student Survey (NSS). In 2011, student satisfaction for Assessment and Feedback according to the NSS was 71%. In 2012, however, this decreased to 68%. Since then, the University has developed initiatives to work on in partnership with the Students' Union in order to improve student's experiences in this area. Since 2012, we have seen scores in the NSS increase to 76%, and a most notable improvement in response to the question **"feedback on my work has been prompt"** rising from 61% in 2011/12, to 63% in 2012/13 and 73% in 2013/14.

STUDENT SATISFACTION FOR ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK



feedback on my work has been prompt



1 MARKING CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT

In the Code of Practice for the Assessment of Students on Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Courses (Code 2) it states that;

When assignments (i.e. coursework) are set, Schools should give: [i] A clear date for submission; [ii] A clear indication of the criteria that will be used in marking. That is, explicit criteria that will be used for marking should be given to the student prior to commencing the assignment; [iii] A clear rationale for an assignment by expressing the relationship between the learning outcomes of the module and the assignment.

Bangor University, Code of Practice for the Assessment of Students on Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Courses

Recently, the Academic Representation Unit (ARU) has been dealing with an increasing number of students who have not been able to access their marking criteria in advance of assignments being set. This has been dealt with very much on a local level, and the schools in question have been approached by the SU to discuss the issues. However, with further investigation it has transpired that marking criteria is in fact available to student prior to an assignment being set, in line with the code of practice, however the location of this varies from school to school and even within schools from module to module.

This is a cause for concern for the Students' Union as although the Code is being adhered to, the ease of access for students in retrieving this information and being able to use it to inform their assignments is causing some problems. Students ultimately feel less prepared to complete the assignment if they do not know who it is going to be marked and are fearing that this may have an overall impact on the module grade and in some cases, their overall degree

results. This is not only an issue for individual students, but also for prospective students and the University – as if this is the case, the number of 'good degrees' could be being affected and the University's position in the league tables could suffer as a result. Although the Union is not concerned particularly with league tables, increasingly the sector is being judged in this way and it appears on the surface that a simple issue could be a contributing factor.

Although we have no hard evidence at present, we are of the understanding that those students in schools who have marking criteria available via the online handbook appear to be the ones who are finding it the most difficult to access, as navigating the book online is somewhat difficult. We have been in talks with IT Services this year about doing usability testing with course representatives to tease out some of the more specific issues. Although we haven't yet been able to complete this, it is becoming increasingly more important that this happens in the next semester.

2 ONLINE SUBMISSION AND FEEDBACK

This year, online submission of assessment and electronic feedback has been piloted in some schools and the Centre for Enhancement of Learning & Teaching (CELT) is discussing the development of training and regulations for the use of online assessment and feedback, which is welcomed by the Students' Union. We have, however, been approached by students, peer guides and course reps, who all had concerns about the process and potential changes to submitting work.

As a result, we surveyed students and found that the majority of students stated that they would prefer to submit their work online and receive their feedback in the same way. When we presented this information to students, they were concerned about exactly who had responded to the survey, as so we decided to look into this issue further to tease out any potential issues and to ensure that we could raise all concerns appropriately. The question we asked was; "Would you prefer to use online only submission for your academic work?" we discovered that, although the majority of first and second year students who responded to the survey in Welsh and English, would prefer an online only submission, those who are third year students, responding to the survey in Welsh, were not sure if they would prefer this type of system.

When it came to looking at the data by School, it was clear that the majority of students would prefer an online only submission system for academic work but students from specific schools did raise some valid concerns. The positives they found varied but the following were consistent throughout the schools in the colleges: They felt that the online system would be best for people with a disability or having access difficulties to the University. They find it was extra work and time for them to submit hard copies and some found it difficult to access a printer. Sustainability reasons were raised about an online system being friendlier to the environment, reducing paper consumption and the cost of travel for students away from the University at submission times. Comments were also made towards the University rather than the students paying for paper copies if they needed hard copies.

The concerns about an online only submission system were also consistent throughout. Technological problems caused a worry and some felt they would be anxious about assignments not being received unknown to the student because of errors in the system and handing in a hard copy would minimise technical errors. They were apprehensive about receiving good quality feedback and were concerned that it would limit the written feedback if they received

the advice of their tutors online. They found it easier to understand hand written comments on a hard copy assignment compared to online. Some students thought the University could print a hard copy and send feedback onto the students. They felt that it would be useful to have both options available in case of technological issues or difficulty with location and they would know that it had definitely been submitted.

Each College have specific concerns about their own matters on online only submission.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

The students at the School of Music, Linguistics and English Language, History, Welsh History and Archaeology, English Literature and Creative Studies and Media prefer online submissions. They thought it would eliminate damaged work and it would be easier to submit work.

The schools in this College that did not prefer an online only submission system were the School of Welsh, Philosophy and Religion, Modern Languages and Cultures and Lifelong Learning. They were concerned that the feedback would be less detailed online and annotations of the assignment would get lost.

They suggested that it would be useful to upload their work to several platforms as they feel that Blackboard is not reliable enough on its own. In the School of Linguistics and English Language, due to the requirements of Linguistics assignments the items required is hard to render online and the nature of the requirements are easier to submit on paper. They would prefer the ability to submit their work both ways online and on hard copy.

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, LAW, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

All of the schools in the College of Business, Law, Education and Social Sciences would prefer an online only submission system for their assignments but the students that completed the survey in Welsh in the School of Law did not.

In Education quite a high percentage of students were not sure on preference and their concerns were that it would be difficult to provide assignments with physical resource and they would not be able to submit some aspects of this online. The only concern Bangor Business School had was that they would have technical and equation writing problems using an online system only and at the School of Law they need written front cover sheets for legal essays.

COLLEGE OF NATURAL SCIENCES

All of the schools in the College of Natural Sciences prefer an online submission only system.

They felt that this would be useful for checking plagiarism and they find it was less pressure when submitting online. It is easier to collect feedback online and it can ensure proof of submission.

Their concerns were that they would receive more information on their feedback about personal development and improvement on a paper copy **'I feel that for the money we pay for an education the feedback we receive is very poor and generalised'**. For students at the School of Biological Sciences they felt that as drawing work was needed as a hard copy they find it difficult to upload laboratory drawings online, both online and hard copy submissions would be preferable. In the School of Environment, Natural Resources and Geography they were concerned about the unreliability of Blackboard, the availability of both hard copy and online systems would be useful for mapping work and hand written work. A student thought the feedback from lecturers online **'Allows lecturers to be lazy and give same feedback to multiple students.'**

COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES

In all of the schools at the College of Health and Behavioural Sciences the majority of the students prefer to use online only submission for academic assignments.

They raised concerns about Blackboard issues effecting the time it takes for staff to feedback to the students on their submitted assignments and some students find it difficult to understand comments from lecturers if they are provided online.

COLLEGE OF PHYSICAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES

The majority of the students in the School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering prefer an online only submission system.

They would also like feedback of their work online through documents such as Word or PDF. But their concerns included the difficulty of submitting mathematical equations or circuit diagrams online and they would prefer to be able to submit both paper and online versions.

However, the majority of the students in the School of Chemistry preferred not to use online only submissions system,

noting the fact that they have a problem in actually submitting their work online as laboratory reports are designed to be submitted as a hard copy.

SECTION FIVE: ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

COMMENDATIONS:

The University to continue to ensure that feedback to students is prompt and detailed.

The University to continue with its training programme in order to inform staff of the benefits and flexibility of an online marking system, including how to use it effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The University to ensure that marking criteria is available in all schools and publicised in the same place in order to ensure students are aware of the documentation.

The University to ensure there are clear guidelines on what detailed feedback should look like for students and ensure this is available to both staff and students throughout the year.

The University to investigate using and either/or system where students can provide either an online copy or a hard copy depending on their preference.

SECTION SIX: COURSE REPRESENTATIVES

The University has committed to 'supporting an active Course Representative system'. We believe students are partners in learning and should be consulted at the earliest possible opportunity about every aspect of their University experience. Bangor Students' Union has been working with the University since 2010 in order to increase its representation at a school and college level. Since the appointment of a fee plan funded course rep coordinator, we have been able to build the course representative system, which this year had just over 400 students involved.

With this amount of course representatives in place, this scheme shows how useful it can be to highlight issues such as:

- Teaching Methods
- Library resources
- Feedback
- Online Marking
- Access to lecture rooms and learning spaces across sites
- Equipment and facilities
- Parking on teaching sites
- Inclusive Curriculum
- Employability opportunities
- Exam organisation
- PLSP implementation

It is clear that having a student led course representative system is a useful tool for partnership and effective change, with 46% of students from our survey agree to strongly agree. However there is still work to be done with the promotion of the course representative system, to both staff and students, as 41% of students remaining neutral regarding the effectiveness of the system. By clearly stating the purpose of the scheme and solidifying stronger communication between schools, the University, students and the Union, the promotion of the scheme would allow for further clarity of what the scheme is all about and how it can affect overall academic experience. This will then help to engage students more with the representative scheme and therefore be aware of who their representative is.

The course representative scheme has shown that support of schools in collaboration with the Student Union is vital to an effective system. With this in mind, the use of the course representative code of practice (Code 16) throughout schools is one of the key factors to sustained feedback, particularly in areas such as democratic elections, feedback avenues through Staff-Student Committees (SSLiC) and other forums on both college and school level. Adding to this, it is suggested that the University work alongside the Student Union and schools to investigate the best avenue for communication, in order for schools to work in partnership in the Union so that student feedback is sustainably fed through the University

HAVING A
**STUDENT LED COURSE
REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM**
IS A USEFUL TOOL FOR
PARTNERSHIP & EFFECTIVE CHANGE

————— **46%** —————
OF STUDENTS FROM OUR SURVEY
AGREE TO STRONGLY AGREE.

————— **41%** —————
OF STUDENTS
REMAINING NEUTRAL
REGARDING THE
**EFFECTIVENESS OF
THE SYSTEM**

1. ELECTIONS

As in the code of practice, it states:

“ Schools should ensure that Course Reps are elected by fellow students using a timely, transparent and inclusive system ”

Course representatives have fed back to the Union a variation of methods that are put in place when schools are electing representatives. This includes using electronic systems such as survey monkey, reps giving speeches prior to elections and even being selected rather than elected by students.

This year we have also begun to implement course representative elections in semester 2 for students going from undergraduate 1 and 2, prior to the next academic year.

Even though this is a requirement in the code of practice, we believe that putting this in place for future years will help students have a continuous feedback structure from start to finish of their academic year. So far this year we have 85 representatives elected from 9 schools, which will allow staff to work with representatives prior to welcome week, in order to ensure student engagement throughout the year.

Adding to this, by having the opportunity to elect representatives earlier we are also able to work with senior representatives for each school, allowing for further student support with first year elections, training and assisting in reps getting to know one another across schools.

SO FAR THIS
YEAR WE HAVE
85
REPRESENTATIVES
ELECTED

FROM
9
SCHOOLS

2. STAFF STUDENT COMMITTEES

Each school is expected to hold two Staff Student Committee (SSLiC) meetings each semester that all course representatives are invited to attend. These meetings are held in order for representatives to have an official forum for student feedback as well as follow up with the school regarding any issues or commendations.

At the Student Union, we collect the minutes that are taken by each school at their committee meetings to take on board rep feedback and to investigate trends across schools and colleges. Unfortunately out of the 23 meetings that are held for undergraduate representatives, only 1 school sent through their minutes for all 4 of their meetings throughout the year, with 13 not sending minutes at all in the 1st semester and 12 in the 2nd semester.

This does not mean to say that meetings are not being held in the respective schools, however it does reinforce a communication problem between schools and the course representative scheme, potentially missing an opportunity for students to provide feedback.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that SSLiC's are very helpful for representatives to learn how the school works, feed into any academic changes as well as get involved in further activity such as NSS day and Student Submission IQA's. However, students have reported that not all school meetings include standing items relating to student opportunities or feedback. With this in mind, we suggest that schools utilise a structure for Staff Student Committee's, including possible agenda points that reflect activity going on throughout the year such as module evaluations, National Student Survey (NSS), Internal Quality Audit (IQA's), Student Led Teaching Awards (SLTA's) and other opportunities.

NUMBER OF MINUTES SENT	1ST SEMESTER MINUTES RECEIVED	2ND SEMESTER MINUTES RECEIVED
2 SETS	6	4
1 SET	4	7
NO MINUTES	13	12

3 IMPACT

Throughout the year, course representatives work in partnership with their respective schools, to make sure that their cohort's voice is heard. The support that they give to their fellow students allows for a student led academic experience of the highest standard. In order to find out what our reps have been doing to improve their experiences, we ran a Course Representative Impact survey, circulated to all reps. From the survey, the activity that we have listed below is just a snippet of what we know representatives have been able to achieve this year for our students.

COLLEGE OF NATURAL SCIENCES (CNS)

SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

At present, the school of biological sciences and the school of medical sciences are going through a merger. The course representatives in these schools worked together alongside the Students' Union, to gather feedback regarding the impact that this could have on returning and incoming students. Additionally the representatives worked with their school to ensure Deiniol opening times reflected student requirements, change the dissertation submission protocol with number of copies required, as well as the collection times for assignments from Wheldon.

Adding to this, the Biological Science course representative have utilised many different opportunities presented by the Student Union such as our Course Representative Activity Fund (CRAF). This fund was made available to all course reps, in order to create new initiatives to engage students for feedback relating to their course and overall academic experience. These students used this support to gather information from all courses in the biological sciences department in order to fully understand the issues students are facing.

SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND GEOGRAPHY

In SENRGy, course representatives worked with third year students to collate feedback about how students were allocated dissertation titles as well as deadline for students to select their titles. With exams being held for all students in January, the deadline did not give students enough time to experience other modules in semester two that related to certain projects available, or the time to discuss and create their own titles. With this in mind, these representatives worked with staff members to present evidence of why extending the deadline would be beneficial, resulting in a two week extension.

SCHOOL OF OCEAN SCIENCES

Course representatives in Ocean Sciences have worked hard this year to ensure that resources are available for their students both in other departments such as the library, as well as their own. An example of this includes the use of practical notebooks. As a 1st year student, these notebooks are allocated to each student free of charge however a cost was incurred on students in 2nd and 3rd year. Course representatives contacted the school, detailing the request to remove this cost and the reasons why. This led to the school retracting this cost as long as the free books were used and not lost.

COLLEGE OF PHYSICAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES (COPAS)

SCHOOL OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

In the School of Computer Science, students requested representatives to speak to staff members about communication within the school, especially when relaying changes that have been made based on student feedback to staff/student committees. Course representatives in the school raised this communication issue as something that could be rectified using methods other than social media and email. In turn, the school took this on board and engaged with representatives more to ensure that students were informed as much as they could be.

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, EDUCATION, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (COBLESS)

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Course representatives in the school of social science have worked with staff and students to promote the importance of the Welsh language and the medium of Welsh and English as equal options throughout. Course representatives went to lectures to physically ask what students wanted from their courses as well as what changes they would like to see, this was then fed throughout the course rep meetings.

COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES (COHABS)

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

As well as general course representatives, the School of Psychology has a number of representatives that are responsible for ensuring a particular group of students are consulted when issues are raised. The mature student course representative this year has worked with mature students to voice concerns about the lack of facilities available for students who are unable to go back home to prepare food, afford store prepared food every day or a room available to relax and come away from work. Course representatives worked with the Students Union to source any alternative venues to provide this provision, eventually securing access for mature students to access a room nearby with facilities for food and revision.

Additionally, third year representatives have worked with the school based on feedback that the dissertation binding process was not clear regarding printing, costs, the number of copies bound and so on, with information spread across many different documents. After taking this to the staff members in charge of the module as well as academic administrative support, all of the information was collated by reps from each of the separate documents into a more specific list.

SCHOOL OF SPORTS, HEALTH AND EXERCISE SCIENCES

Representation of both Welsh and English modules is crucial to ensure that all academic changes or commendations are communicated back to the students that are impacted. It was brought to the attention of a couple of course representatives that in some modules, students were not being told of changes that affected their assignments. This was relayed by representatives in the staff student committee meetings as well as to the necessary module organisers, resulting in further consultation of any changes to modules including student's perspectives and feedback at the next meeting.

SCHOOL OF HEALTHCARE SCIENCES

Recently, we have been working more with our satellite campuses both in London and Wrexham campus. During our discussions with them, course representatives raised issues regarding the support given to communicate who they are, such as access to notice boards, facilities in the common room areas on the Archimedes campus, information for all students, as well as facilities on campus to heat food or make drinks particularly for students who cannot afford the cost of food on campus. Additionally, course representatives from Wrexham have worked hard to feed into our course rep councils, for example with the library opening hours on site not being appropriate for nursing students as well as parking issues when trying to attend lectures.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES (CAH)

SCHOOL OF HISTORY, WELSH HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

The School of History representatives have worked alongside the Student Union, their college library champions and their school to improve access to resources in the University. This includes library resources being available for the specific modules, archive information being available for students without a cost, engaging in the schools Internal Quality Audit (IQA) and locating a space for the school's students to work in the department. Adding to this, returning course representatives have worked closely with the school again to engage with first year representatives and other new representatives across each year. By working in collaboration across years, the course reps have relayed that this support network has helped to ensure any issues across the school are communicated effectively.

SCHOOL OF LINGUISTICS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Students in the School approached course representatives regarding a number of clustered assignment dates as well as concerns raised about the support needed for each not being accessible if the deadlines did not change. With this in mind, course representatives requested that the assignment date be changed in order for students to access equal support for assignments as well as enough time to create a high standard piece of work for submission. This was taken on board by staff members at a SSLiC and resulted in these changes being implemented.

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

The School of Music has worked very closely with their course representatives this year. At the beginning of the semester, returning students reported the issues with administrative constraints due to changes made when accessing school information and support. Additionally, this was also conveyed by the college level course representative for CAH, who held a college level meeting for representatives to feed into, therefore college level themes could be identified. With this in mind, the school and reps worked together to communicate any changes that had happened as well as reasoning behind this as well as ways to help the process run as smoothly as possible.

SECTION SIX: COURSE REPRESENTATIVES

COMMENDATIONS:

- The University to continue to invest in the Course Representative system.
- Schools to continue to work with the Students' Union to ensure that course reps are recognised for their work through the Course Representative Awards.
- Schools to continue to elect 2nd and 3rd year representatives prior to the end of the academic year in line with the Course Representative Code of Practice. (Code 16)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The University to work with the Students' Union to ensure that minutes of Staff Student Committee meetings are sent to the SU in a timely manner
- Schools to work with the Students' Union to ensure that SSLiC agenda's include standing items such as; NSS, as highlighted in this document.
- Schools to work with the SU to increase the profile of the course rep system in their schools and colleges.

SECTION SEVEN:

INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

1. GENDER NEUTRAL REGISTRATION

In last year's Annual Student Statement, we made the following recommendation:

“The University to de-genderise its rules, regulations and procedures in order to remove any hetro-normative language”

It is clear the University has taken this recommendation on board, with steps already in place to degenderise the rules, regulations, and procedures that structure this University creating a more comfortable environment for LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, plus) students. Adding to this, the Equality Objectives which the University has begun to implement signify that an inclusive community throughout each student's academic experience is top of the agenda.

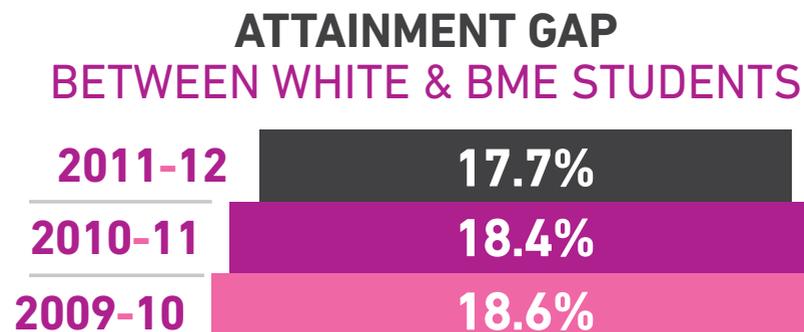
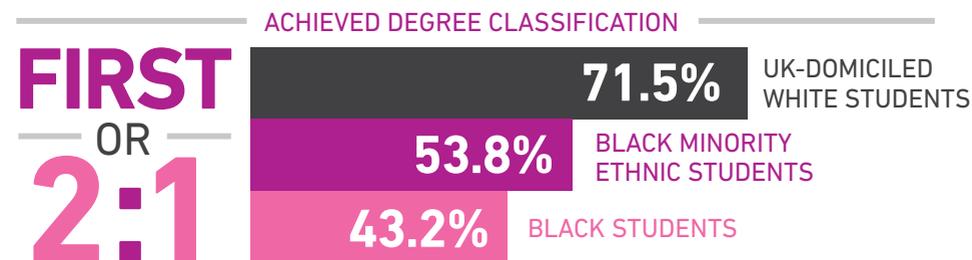
Recently, students have expressed the need for further awareness for those who do not self-define as male or female, specifically when registering to study at the University. Students have requested that the University take steps to make any official data collection forms inclusive for individuals whom are gender neutral. NUS in "NUS Up and Out: LGBT Campaign Manifesto", and Bangor students in the LGBTQ+ community, have suggested amendment to data collection surveys to include having an option for 'Mx' as a gender neutral title as well as an 'other' free text box options for students who prefer an alternative title.

2. BME ATTAINMENT GAP

Within Higher Education there is a discrepancy between white students who are performing better than their Black Minority Ethnic counterparts in terms of their grades upon degree completion. In fact, it is the biggest attainment gap within higher education. (D. Abrahams 2012). The statistics published by the Equality Challenge Unit in the 2013 Equality Higher Education Statistical Report, revealed that 71.5% of UK-domiciled white students

achieved a first or a 2:1 in 2011-12 whilst for BME students the percentage was 53.8%. The gap widens even further for black students with an even smaller percentage of 43.2% receiving a first or 2:1. This reveals the significant existence of a 17.7% attainment gap between white and BME students in 2011-12. Although it is an improvement from the 18.4% attainment gap which existed in 2010-11, and 18.6% in 2009-10, it is still considerable.

2011-12 EQUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION STATISTICAL REPORT



In order to establish if the BME attainment gap is an issue at Bangor University, we would like to conduct further research into the experience of BME students in order to establish if the finding by NUS - that in the UK a significant minority of BME students feel unhappy with their teaching and learning environment – is true for BME students at Bangor University.

Education and training is key in order to achieve a more diverse and inclusive learning experience for BME students. By educating staff and students about the issues BME students face in higher education they can begin moving beyond them. A lack of understanding can create tensions and places barriers in the way of a conductive and effective staff-student partnership but the hope is that fostering mutual understanding and trust will lead to a better learning environment and to inclusive teaching practices. One way in which to achieve this could be that staff, course reps and student council receive awareness training on the issues faced by BME students and how they can be part of the attempt to tackle these.

Education itself also needs to be transformed, Aneez Esmail, associate vice-president for social responsibility, equality and diversity and professor of general practice at the University of Manchester, argues that BME students are less likely to engage with educational opportunities than their white peers because of social inequality. This inequality exists in the academic curriculum of the UK as a whole with it often being white-washed, therefore by diversifying the curriculum and making it relevant and accessible for more people, the learning environment and the ability of BME students to engage with it could be improved.

In addition, another way to encourage BME students to engage with their course could be to engage BME students in quality assurance, particularly with regards to assessing how inclusive it is. In order to achieve this, the methods of gaining feedback themselves need to be inclusive. One way to reach this goal would be to ensure that when asking for feedback on modules, courses, the University, the Students Union, there is always a question which is aimed at discovering whether the student has felt included. It could also be done by ensuring that when reviewing strategies or courses, the aim of meeting the requirements of a diverse body of students needs to be strived for. It would also be encouraged that people within both the University and the Students Union always ensure that when creating new projects that they are founded on the principle of inclusivity and even to review current projects to ensure that this is the case.

Achieving an inclusive education system and community would have many benefits to students, the Students Union and the University. The first and most obvious is the achievement of equality and inclusivity, however it could potentially go much further. If BME students were encouraged and supported not only to take part in this project but also to take a leading position, working on the principles of community organising, it would not only empower BME students to make change but could also be a way to further enhance the degree to which BME students feel they can engage in their education and the Students Union. The benefits of this project for the University are twofold for if successful it would not only improve the inclusive community of the University, thus achieving aims highlighted in the strategic plan, but would also impact positively on the University's place in league tables because of higher grades and improved job prospects. The existence of a more diverse curriculum and community within Bangor could also potentially benefit the University by leading to an increase in applicants of BME and international students.

SECTION SEVEN: INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

COMMENDATIONS:

The University to continue to support an inclusive curriculum, with focus on BME students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The University to include an option of 'Mx' as a gender neutral title, in the registration process, as well as an 'other' free text box options for students who prefer an alternative title.

The Students' Union, with support from the University, to develop a research project focussing on the issue of the BME attainment gap.

The University to issue inclusivity training to staff.

The University to add an additional question into module evaluation to see if students have felt included in their curriculum.

SECTION EIGHT: LIBRARY & LEARNING RESOURCES

1. 24 HOUR LIBRARY

Since the trial and opening of 24-hour library access in 2013/14 student satisfaction in the National Student Survey has increased. The trial opening took place at two of the main library sites across the campus in 2013-14 and data supported that the more popular site was the Main Arts Library.

The SU supported the decision for the Deiniol Library to close at midnight and reopen the next morning and for the Main Arts site to remain 24-hours throughout term time. This has been met with some complaints by the study body, who wanted to be able to study at the Deiniol site 24-hours too.

We conducted research as to why students wanted to use the site, and proximity to their accommodation was a heavy feature in the decision as to which library students studied at. We have some anecdotal evidence that suggests the library students is a subject specific decision, with the Arts and Humanities preferring Main Arts and Sciences preferring Deiniol. We do realise however, that the University allows students to take books out to study in a different library and that there is also a delivery service available for students to take full advantage of, so it might just be that more communication about these services may appease some of the student disgruntlement.

One issue that was of a concern at the start of the year was that despite the University making the decision to change the opening times of Deiniol Library over the summer vacation, there were huge issues with communication of opening hours at both sites once students arrived back in September, causing many students to be dissatisfied with the service. We have been working with the University Library service in order to ensure these issues do not occur again and to emphasise the importance of effective and timely communication with students.

Although the Library opening hours feature quite prominently in our annual survey feedback it is unclear as to whether this dissatisfaction is in relation to the opening times of the communication issues. The Students' Union has endeavoured to work with the Library service to investigate this issue further during the next academic session.

2. LIBRARY CHAMPIONS

In 2014/15 we worked with the University's Student Engagement Officer and Library service to recruit 6 Student Library Champions to work with the Library and Course Reps to generate projects and ideas based on student feedback.

This has been a positive experience and helps to realise the University's commitment to partnership. Whilst, with any new scheme

there is always room for improvement, it is encouraging to see a partnership initiative existing within the library department and we hope to see students being the driving force behind this project in the future. Feedback from the Library Champions suggests that they would have liked more time to complete the project (as the budget only covered approx. 2 hours per week), and that the recruitment process, even for those students who applied but were not successful on this occasion, was of a great benefit to all involved.

3 ■ READING LISTS

We have noted in previous statements that we have worked positively with the library on a variety of issues and feedback mechanisms such as implementing actions relating to student feedback on opening times, access and other matters such as student to core book ratios.

We are pleased to see that the University has invested in the student:book ratio through the introduction of software such as Talis Aspire. We welcome the investment in this area however, at present the uptake of the use of Talis Aspire software varies significantly across schools and modules. Although it is fair to say this is an area that the University is concerned about themselves, and is working with staff to try and increase the number of modules which have an online reading list, it is still important to note here that the Union is fully behind this initiative and student feedback suggests that this is of huge benefit.

SECTION EIGHT: LIBRARY & LEARNING RESOURCES

COMMENDATIONS:

The University to continue to develop student partnership initiatives such as the Library Champions project.

The University to continue to invest in the Talis Aspire system to ensure that all schools have online reading lists.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The University to work with the Students' Union to develop a communication strategy for the Library to ensure students are fully aware of the availability of the services.

The University to investigate the feasibility of a café or food preparation area for students studying when food and catering services in the University are closed.

SECTION NINE:

WELSH MEDIUM PROVISION

In Bangor University's 2015-2020 strategic plan it is 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.”

Year on year we identify the Welsh language provision of the University as a core strength and make recommendations to further enhance the experiences of students studying through Welsh. As a Students' Union in one of Wales' leading institutions in terms of investment from the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (CCC) we also see this as an opportunity to affect the wider sector and its development.

We are pleased to see the University increasing the number of students studying through the medium of Welsh despite a decrease in the number of Welsh-speaking students studying at the institution. This has been supported by an increase in the study skills support available to students through Student Services, and the introduction of initiatives such as Welsh medium module fairs.

In 2013 HEFCW removed institutional funding for Welsh medium provision through the removal of the Welsh Medium Premium which is an “extra payment for enrolments to part-time or postgraduate taught Welsh medium courses or modules” (HEFCW). We are concerned about the removal of this funding and access to Welsh-medium postgraduate education and would like to see a greater emphasis on postgraduate Welsh-medium study in addition to undergraduate provision.

1

COLEG CYMRAEG CENEDLAETHOL

In our 2013-14 Annual Student Statement we commended Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (CCC) for the financial support that they provide to develop Welsh medium provision following the removal of HEFCW's Welsh Medium Premium. Across a range of subject areas the Coleg's funding has generated opportunities for students to study through Welsh in Schools where this provision did not exist previously.

We did however report that we would like to see steps taken to ensure a wide breadth of choice provided through the Coleg. We are pleased to hear funding will move towards the development of subject areas in the future as opposed to directly funding staff positions, and believe that this will further enhance the take-up of Welsh medium education and will positively impact the employment sectors where investment is made.

Every year we request feedback from students on the quality of their education through the medium of Welsh and their experience of accessing services through the medium of Welsh. We are always pleased to report positive responses to our research and we are encouraged by the University's commitment to enhancing Welsh medium services across the University.

2

COLEG CYMRAEG CENEDLAETHOL STUDENT REPRESENTATION

In this year's Annual Review of Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, it stated that “**each branch has student representatives who meet regularly**”, and we have supported the Coleg in their efforts to gather feedback from students and develop representation structures.

We would like to see a more consistent approach across institutions in Wales, and encourage the Coleg to consult with students on how students wish to be represented across the Coleg.

3 TRANSLATION OF WORK

In the previous Annual Student Statement we raised concerns about student's unwillingness to submit work through the medium of Welsh, despite a large number of students (83%) reporting that they were aware of the service. In our 2014-15 Our Manifesto survey nearly half of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, **'When submitting my work for translation from Welsh to English, seeing the English version before final submission would be beneficial to me'**.

We would like to see this issue investigated further following reports from students that this situation has deteriorated in particular subjects. We have received reports from students who had previously been submitting in Welsh, who were now refusing to do so for their final year dissertation. We echo our recommendation from our 2013-14 Annual Student Statement; **"The University to work with the SU to evaluate the process for students submitting their work to be translated and review the promotion of this service to Welsh speaking students."**

We are pleased to see that Bangor University are now officially the largest provider of Welsh language education in Wales with funding from Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol reflecting this. In the Coleg's latest round of its staffing plan 4 new posts were made available, which is in addition to Bangor's current 29 CCC funded staff. Bangor was also awarded 4 of 10 PHD opportunities across Wales for the period starting 2015/16.

We are also pleased to note that the University is investing in the enhancement of Welsh Medium Education through the Welsh Medium Enhancement Fund as part of the institutional Fee Plan that will fund small initiatives to help sustain provision in individual schools where numbers are small.

SECTION NINE: WELSH MEDIUM PROVISION

COMMENDATIONS:

The University to continue with its commitment to the Welsh language and use its relationship with y Coleg to influence improvements across Wales.

The University to continue to invest in areas where provision is small to provide opportunities for students to study through Welsh.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The University to work with UMCB to support the Union's calls for a strategy for student representation across the Coleg.

The University to promote the option for students to submit work in Welsh or English, whatever the language of their module.

The University to promote the availability of translation services for students submitting work in Welsh for English-language modules.

ANNUAL STUDENT STATEMENT 2014-15

CONCLUSION

It is clear to see that Bangor University is investing, not only in the academic experience of students, but in their University experience as a whole. Every year when the Students' Union gathers feedback, it is clear that Bangor students feel right at the heart of the University and they can see that decisions that are made, are made to enhance their learning experiences.

We are extremely proud of the working relationships we have with staff, both in schools, departments and at a senior management level and hope that these relationships continue to flourish.

We note that in this year's annual statement, we have gone in to much more detail than we have done before, paying close attention in some areas at a school level. Although we make a variety of recommendations, it is only fair to note that the more we work with the University and the closer this partnership becomes, the more specific the issues that we raise become.

As with everything, there is always room for improvement, as a Students' Union, we would not be doing our job if we did not represent all our students and push for more. It is, however, fantastic to see how on board the University is with working alongside the SU and students in order to keep partnership working at the top of the agenda and how clear it is that students are the driving force behind it.

There have been great improvements in the Library and IT services, and we hope to continue to work with the University to further enhance these areas in the years to come. Additionally, the investment in teaching spaces, an inclusive curriculum and the support for student-led initiatives such as the Student Led Teaching Awards are other fine examples of the University's commitment to students and their student experiences.

We are really excited about the year ahead, and hope that together with the University we can work on the recommendations outlined in this document to further enhance the lives of students at Bangor University.