UNDEB MYFYRWYR
BANGOR
STUDENTS' UNION

ANNUAL
STATEMENT
2013

73%
2013 17% 85%
10% 88%
89% 2% 89%
76% 2011 10%
33% 3%
10% 86% 1% 73% 72%
68% 2013

YOUR

ACADEMIC REPRESENTATION UNIT

INTRODUCTION:

This document focuses on the academic experience of Bangor students, at a school level. The purpose of this document is to highlight areas for improvement, both across the institution and within individual schools. Throughout the document we will also be highlighting areas of best practice in regards to teaching and learning.

We also sourced data from the Students' Union's annual survey '**Our Manifesto**' and conducted an Academic Survey, in turn, collecting responses from **over 1000 students** (approximately 10%).

We have taken note of the information provided by the Quality Assurance Agency for when writing a student written submission, and have kept to a similar format in order to aid sabbatical officers and staff when writing the next SU Student Written Submission. We have not included all of the recommended sections as this documents purpose is to look at students' academic experience at a school level, although it is important to consider the institution as a whole.

In order to compile this submission, we drew supporting evidence from a variety of sources including focus groups with students, individual student interviews, and minutes from University committee meetings. Furthermore, we also sourced data from the Students' Union's annual survey 'Our Manifesto' and conducted an Academic Survey, in turn, collecting responses from over 1000 students (approximately 10%).

We still very much stand by comments made in the 2011-12 Student Written Submission, that Bangor is an institution that "cares about its relationship with students". Further evidence of this can be seen in the institutions response to the students' unions written submission, its commitment to funding a course representative co-ordinator, its investment in module evaluation and giving priority to the student voice with the recruitment of a Student Voice Project Officer within the University. However, in some areas there is still work to be done.

Taking the above into account, our research shows that the University has a number of areas which we believe are worthy of praise including: its commitment to developing its IT systems; the Personal Tutor System, investment in library and learning resources, its firm commitment to Welsh-medium study; a strong partnership with the Students' Union and commitment to utilising and emphasising the student voice at a high-level, and developing this voice at a school level.

How effectively has the institution addressed the recommendations of its last audit/review?

Since the last QAA Institutional Review (2011-12) Bangor University has gone a long way to address some of the recommendations made by the Students' Union as part of its written submission. Last year's student submission highlighted that the institution could be doing more at an academic level to strengthen the partnership between academic schools and their students. As a result of the submission, the University produced a document of response, outlining the action that have been or will be taken and allowed further comments from the Students' Union. In addition to these actions, the University has also appointed a Student Voice Project Officer, in order to have a dedicated resource, looking at the student voice at a school level and partnership working between students and staff across the institution.

In terms of how these changes and recommendations were made to the student body, the University still has a way to go when closing the feedback loop. Although the University's response to the SWS was highlighted in various committee meetings, it is fair to say that more could have been done by the institution at a school level, to ensure that the students studying in each of the academic schools knew about the changes being made centrally and as a result of the representations made in the SWS on behalf of them. The students' Union recognises that closing the feedback loop is an area that does require some development and is currently working with the Student Voice Project Office in this area.

Recommendation:

Academic Schools to work with the University (Student Voice Project Officer) and the Students' Union to tackle closing the feedback loop to its' students.

In the 2011-12 Student Written submission, the SU highlighted the following areas as areas we believed improvement was necessary. These included; library resources, clarity in regards to categorical marking, consistency within the implementation of anonymous marking, support for joint honours students, clarification around the implementation of procedures for dealing with plagiarism and strengthening the student voice and partnerships at an academic level. Some of these areas we will be relooking at in this report in order to re-evaluate the situation and suggest further areas for improvement.

UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

Academic Schools to work with the University (Student Voice Project Officer) and the Students' Union to tackle closing the feedback loop to its' students.

These are University-wide issues, and not ideal for dissemination at the level of individual students in Schools – though the Registry did provide some material on this topic for a Student Union Facebook site. In addition, the issue has been discussed in a number of meetings of the Institutional Group. David Fordham and David Wright have also met with the SU President to discuss how to best structure a response.

The Student Engagement Project would also be a useful forum to discuss how to explore this issue.

How effectively does the institution manages the quality of students' learning opportunities?

2012 NSS STUDENT SATISFACTION AT BANGOR UNIVERSITY

2%

84%

2010 2011 **86%**

The staff teaching you on your course are appropriately and adequately qualified and trained

85% AGREE

You have had the opportunity to feedback on the quality of your lectures

85% AGREE

You know what happens to your feedback once you have given it

33% AGREE

You see a link between research undertaken by lecturers and the content of the modules

76% AGREE

My course is intellectually stimulating

83% AGREE

89% AGREE

Staff in the University are good at explaining things

2012 Student-Led Teaching Awards

Innovation Award category

over **33** nominations

10% of overall nominations for that year

Teaching & Learning:

According to the **2012** NSS results, student satisfaction at Bangor University totalled **84%**. This is a **2%** decrease on the **86%** scored in **2011** and **2010**. This decrease did cause some concern for the Students' Union and therefore we decided to commit to compiling further research into areas of teaching and learning that we felt could be improved or indeed were praise worthy.

When surveyed in the SU's academic survey **2013**, students were asked some additional questions relating to their teaching and learning experiences. When asked "Do you consider the staff teaching you on your course appropriately and adequately qualified and trained, over **85%** of student agreed that this statement was correct.

However, when asked "Do you feel you have had the opportunity to feedback on the quality of your lectures" and "Do you know what happens to your feedback once you have given it" the responses were a little more disappointing. Although **85%** of students agreed with the statement that they have had the opportunity to give feedback on their lectures, only **32.5%** knew what happens to their feedback once it has been given. The SU is aware

that, in October **2012** a new electronic module evaluation system was implemented University wide, allowing students to comment of the quality of their lectures and reflect on their experiences in their modules. In the past, module feedback has been collected by the module organiser and it has been the responsibility of the lecturer to ensure that this is fed into the University's QA2 forms.

Since the implementation of this new system, module feedback is collected not only by the school, but it is collected centrally and works along the principle of academic reflection as opposed to evaluation. In the first instance, staff involved in delivering a module, are given access to the data to allow them to make improvements. Heads of School, as well as central departments, also have access to the data, to target support where it is most needed, and to make institution wide data comparisons. The Students' Union has been involved in discussions concerning the new system, and highly supportive at University Task Groups.

The Students' Union has also had some limited access to anonymised data, and looks forward to continuing

discussions on this topic. However, it is clear that there is still further work to be done in this area. Feedback from the SU Course Rep Council suggests that students generally like the new system but they would like the opportunity to give this feedback within lecture time. In addition, comments have also been made at Course Rep Council about how students would also like feedback from their module organiser in relation to the feedback they have given about the course, in order to close the feedback loop.

Course Reps have stressed that the best way to do this would be face to face so that they could fully explain their comments. Currently the school of Music operates a system similar to this, in which the school meets with students, thanks them for their feedback and explains how the school has taken it on board and what the outcomes of the feedback is, and asks for further comments. The Students' Union is fully supportive of a system like this and would recommend that other schools adopted a similar approach in the future.

Furthermore, the Union was interested in finding out if students saw a link between "research undertaken by

lecturers and the content of the modules" our survey stated that **75.8%** of students did see a link between the two. This is also supported by the **2012** NSS results, in which **83%** of students agreed that their course was "intellectually stimulating" and the **89%** of students who agree that "staff in the University are good at explaining things." It was also noted by some students in our focus groups, that staff teaching modules, particularly in the School of Psychology, are using more innovative methods of teaching and learning, allowing students to take more ownership of their modules and become directly involved in the teaching and learning. This corresponds with the results of our **2012** Student-Led Teaching Awards, in which over 33 nominations (**10%** of overall nominations for that year) were received in the Innovation Award category.

Recommendation:

1 Academic schools to work with the Students' Union to co-create a system that reports actions based on student feedback provided in their module evaluation forms

2 The Students' Union to work with the University to roll out the Share and Inspire lecture series year round, in order to allow staff to share best practice on their teaching styles and innovative learning resources.

UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

Academic schools to work with the Students' Union to co-create a system that reports actions based on student feedback provided in their module evaluation forms

This a key issue, and has been addressed in a number of ways: Placing module evaluation data in Electronic Handbooks with School responses (planned for summer 2014); a series of 'Student suggestions implemented' posters (already in

place); and suggestions to lecturers to use part of Lecture 1 of a semester to report back on last year's suggestions (already in place). Staff-student Liaison Committees would also be useful in this regard.

The Students' Union to work with the University to roll out the Share and Inspire lecture series year round, in order to allow staff to share best practice on their teaching styles and innovative learning resources.

There are already plans for a further roll out of Share-and-inspire, as part of the activities of the proposed

Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) unit.

Academic Standards:

Have you ever been given, or do you know how, to access external examiners reports in your school/department?"

ONLY **17%** SAID YES

Students were involved in the design, approval and review process of modules, and assessment methods

FEWER THAN **22%** AGREED

When asked to explain their answer, the following comments were made:

"Yes for all new modules, not for everything else."

"I'm a course rep"

"Never invited for input, wouldn't know how to."

"I am not involved beyond module evaluations"

Anecdotally, the Students' Union had been informed that students do not know what happens when external examiners come to their school or indeed what happens to the reports they write. Keen to obtain some evidence of this, the students' union asked the following question **"Have you ever been given, or do you know how, to access external examiners reports in your school/department?"** Only **16.6%** of students answered yes to this question, further exemplifying the point that schools may need to do more when closing the feedback loop to students. This includes sharing information with their students in areas in which they have been commended by external examiners.

One recommendation that the Union would make in regards to this issue, would be to include 'external examiners reports' on the agenda of their SSLiC or boards of studies, both of which have student representatives present. In addition, schools could also have these reports, clearly identified on their individual school pages, so that students know exactly where to find this information.

As was noted earlier, since the last SWS, the University has implemented some key changes, to ensure that the student voice here at Bangor is strengthened at an academic level. The Students Union would like to commend the University for its' efforts in this area and believes that this is an important part of the students experience and it is great to see Bangor University working in partnership, not only with the students union sabbatical officers, but with course representatives and student ambassadors. This ensures that the student voice is heard at all levels, across all schools and central services.

One area within the subject, that the SU was particular keen to gather more evidence on, was the involvement of students in the design, approval and review of modules, and assessment methods. When surveyed on this question, fewer than **22%** of students agreed that they were in some way involved in this process. When asked to explain their answer, the following comments were made:

"Yes for all new modules, not for everything else."

"Never invited for input, wouldn't know how to."

"I'm a course rep"

"I am not involved beyond module evaluations"

What is encouraging to see, is that although this figure is low, and the students Union would like to see work done in this area to increase the numbers of students who feel involved in course design and implementation, the number of students who answered "I'm a course rep" was extremely encouraging and highlights that the system in place to ensure student representation in all schools across the University is working, and students some students do understand the role of a course rep and the effect that it has one the design and review of modules.

Recommendation:

1 Academic Schools to include external examiners reports on the agenda of their SSLiC/Board of Studies or ensure that these reports are clearly identified on their individual school pages.

2 The University to work with the Students' Union to devise and develop a project that allows students and/or course reps to feed into the design, development and review of modules.

3 Academic schools to work with the SU and their course reps to clearly promote the role of a course rep detailing how reps feed into areas such as audit, revalidation, and boards of studies etc.

UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

Academic Schools to include external examiners reports on the agenda of their SSLiC/Board of Studies or ensure that these reports are clearly identified on their individual school pages.

It is now a University requirement that External Examiners reports are made available to all students. Schools have been asked to ensure that reports are placed in a position where they can be accessed (e.g a School Blackboard site). They have also been asked to ensure that they are discussed at Staff Student Committees and in Boards of Study and for such consideration to be recorded in the minutes. We are working, at committee level, on the question of how we might structure the Agendas of School Boards of Studies to facilitate this reporting.

The University to work with the Students' Union to devise and develop a project that allows students and/or course reps to feed into the design, development and review of modules.

In principle, this is a good idea - but could be carried out in a number of ways, and needs careful implementation. We have opted to pilot the notion of student input into revalidation in a small number of Schools, so establish which approaches are most effective. A project is under way in the School of Modern Languages in 2013 and in Chemistry in 2014 that will see students providing input into the Internal Quality Audit and course revalidation processes. This is being led by the Students' Union and the Student Engagement Project Officer.

Academic schools to work with the SU and their course reps to clearly promote the role of a course rep detailing how reps feed into areas such as audit, revalidation, and boards of studies etc.

In the last year there has been engagement between Course Representatives and the PVCs (Students) and (Teaching & Learning), at a number of meetings open to all Course Representatives. We would be happy to continue/increase this level of engagement, and work on further approaches to engagement.

Assessment & Feedback:

STUDENT SATISFACTION FOR ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

2011 71% **2012 68%** ↓ 3%

LOWEST SCORING QUESTION "feedback on my work has been prompt" ONLY **61%** AGREED

I RECEIVED FEEDBACK within 4 WEEKS — OVER **73%** AGREED

FEEDBACK WAS 'PROMPT' ONLY **63%** AGREED

"I WOULD LIKE MY FEEDBACK"
64% 'MORE DETAILED'
57% 'IN TIME FOR MY NEXT EXAM/ASSIGNMENT'

STUDENTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE THEIR ASSIGNMENT FEEDBACK QUICKER **45%**

IT CAN BE SURMISED THAT TIMELY AND PROMPT, IN TERMS OF STUDENT SATISFACTION, MEANS "BEFORE THE NEXT ASSIGNMENT"

It is no surprise that nationally, when it comes to assessment and feedback, Universities score considerably lower in their NSS results in comparison with other areas. This is true for Bangor. In **2011**, student satisfaction for Assessment and Feedback according to the NSS was **71%**. In **2012**, however, this decreased to **68%**. The lowest scoring question within this section for the University was "feedback on my work has been prompt" with only **61%** of student agreeing with this statement. From focus groups and research undertaken by the students' union over the last academic year, we surmised that this was due to the fact that students did not know when to expect their feedback back after an assignment, and therefore 'prompt' was an extremely subjective word to describe a timely manner.

Keen to address this issue, in **2011-12**, in partnership with the Union, the University ensured that students were aware of the University's policy on work being returned within 4 weeks of an assignment being submitted. The Union was also heavily involved in discussion relating to the 4 week deadline policy, and work was done to ensure that the policy was as transparent as it possible could be for both staff and students in the institution. As you can see, one year later, there has not been any significant improvement in the score on this question and so further work must be done on this issue.

In "Our Manifesto **2012-13**" we were keen to find out if students were receiving their work within 4 weeks of the assignment deadline and if they considered their feedback to be prompt. Over **73%** of students agreed that they did receive their feedback within 4 weeks, but only **63%** of students reported that their feedback was 'prompt'. It is clear from the evidence, that

in most cases, the 4 week deadline policy of the University is being adhered to, but students still do not consider this to be timely enough to be described as prompt.

What is interesting about our survey is that when asked to answer the question "I would like my feedback..." **64%** of students replied 'more detailed'; and **57%** stated 'in time for my next exam/assignment'. Although some students would like to see their assignment feedback quicker (**45%**), it can be surmised that timely and prompt, in terms of student satisfaction, means 'before the next assignment.' Therefore the SU would recommend that when assignments are given a submission date, they are also give a date for when feedback will be returned, and that date is prior to the next assignment.

In addition, when the subject of feedback and assessment arose in Course Rep Council it transpired that there were several areas in which feedback could be improved.

" **Course Reps (roughly 10) said that sometimes written feedback was illegible, and that even sometimes the lecturers themselves do not know what they have written (Chemistry, SENRGY, Ocean Sciences, SBS)** – Music Course Reps said that their school has moved to typed feedback in all modules and this has been a vast improvement."
(Course Rep Council Nov 2012)

" **Course Reps (roughly 13) said that they mostly receive only a grade in their feedback, with no qualitative comments (Chemistry, Biology, Medical Science (Biology modules only)).** "
(Course Rep Council Nov 2012)

" **When polled, roughly 25 Course Reps said they'd prefer written feedback, 20 spoken feedback, but nearly all Course Reps agreed they'd like a mixture of both.** "
(Course Rep Council Nov 2012)

Recommendation:

1 At the point when an assignment is set, academic schools to provide a return date for assignment feedback to enable students to know exactly when feedback on their work will be available.

2 The University to work with the Students' Union to review the code of practice on feedback.

UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

At the point when an assignment is set, academic schools to provide a return date for assignment feedback to enable students to know exactly when feedback on their work will be available.

Much of what is mentioned in this section is dealt with via the 'Minimum standards of assessment and feedback practice' that were approved and circulated as part of the Student Experience Enhancement Strategy. As part of the 'minimum standards', staff have to let students know when they will get feedback, avoid clumping of deadlines etc. We are working to ensure that this is standard practice in all Schools, including through discussions with Schools. We especially note that our NSS score increased by some 5% in the 2013 scores (based on data gathered in early 2013), so that this process appears to have been effective.

The University to work with the Students' Union to review the code of practice on feedback.

We note that there is no formal Code of Practice on the topic of feedback (with information distributed elsewhere in the regulations). The Minimum standards regulation (see above) may be sufficient here, and we are happy to discuss this at the Teaching and Learning Task Group.
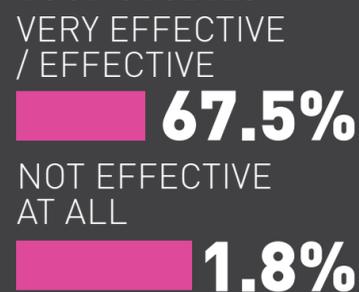
Learning Resources:

'THE LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES ARE GOOD ENOUGH FOR MY NEEDS'

2011 79%   **2012** 80% ▲ 1%

'I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS GENERAL IT RESOURCES WHEN I NEEDED TO'

2011 88%   **2012** 85% ▼ 3%

"LEARNING RESOURCES AVAILABLE ARE ADEQUATE AND APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR SUBJECT"

FEWER THAN **82%** AGREED

OUR MANIFESTO 2012-13
HOW EFFECTIVE IS BLACKBOARD AT HELPING YOU WITH YOUR STUDIES

VERY EFFECTIVE / EFFECTIVE
67.5%

NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL
1.8%

I DO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO FEEDBACK ON THE LEARNING RESOURCES

77% AGREED

HOW DO YOU GIVE THIS FEEDBACK

"Through module evaluation forms"

"Discussed at SSLiC and usually acted upon"

In **2011 79%** of respondents to the NSS agreed that 'the library resources and services are good enough for my needs'. This increased by **1%** in **2012**. In addition, **88%** of students in **2011** agreed that they 'have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to'. Although this took a slight decrease in **2012** to **85%** this is extremely positive and an area worthwhile of praise from the Students' Union. In addition, just fewer than **82%** of students agreed that the "learning resources available are adequate and appropriate for your subject" further exemplifying that the investment in learning resources and library provision across the institution is heading in the right direction.

The SU was extremely keen to delve into specifics in this area to find out exactly were any issues in this area exist and how students feel the services could be improved. In "Our Manifesto **2012-13**", students' were surveyed as to how effective they think Blackboard is at helping them with their studies. **67.5%** of students surveyed agreed that Blackboard is either very effective or effective when it comes to helping with their studies. Only **1.8%** of students agreed with the statement 'blackboard is 'not effective at all.'' In order to ensure parity of experience of BlackBoard, the SU has lobbied the University to produce minimum standards of use of BlackBoard and is currently working with students and the University to define what that is.

Further investigations resulted in students being asked if they feel like they have had the opportunity to feedback on the learning resources on their course.

The results of this show that **77%** of students agreed that they do have the opportunity to feedback on the learning resources and when answering:

"How do you give this feedback", **some of the comments were as follows:**

"Discussed at SSLiC and usually acted upon"

"Through module evaluation forms"

One area of concern is the method of evaluating learning resources varies dramatically from school to school, with many students stating that their feedback is given "directly to the lecturer" or "contact lecturer during contact hours". Whilst it is great to see that students feel like they can approach staff in their schools and raise the issue of learning resources with them, without any formal feedback, there are some concerns about how changes can be implementation if they are not formally recorded. One the other hand, in answering the above question, some students stated that they filled in "end of module forms" but that this was "too late to have an affect".

The IT department has been working closely with the Students' Union over the last 12-18 months and as a result of this close working relationship, the SU has been able to ensure that feedback from course rep council, concerning IT issues has been given directly to the Director of IT and changes have been made accordingly. In addition, the department has also continuously updated course reps on changes to the systems as a result of the feedback from those meetings.

Recommendation:

1 The University to work with the SU to develop systems to allow for formal feedback on IT provision that does not solely rely on end of module evaluations.

2 The University to continue to work with the SU to define and develop minimum standards of BlackBoard.

3 The IT department to continue to work closely with the SU and obtain feedback from Course Rep Council on relevant issues.

UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

The University to work with the SU to develop systems to allow for formal feedback on IT provision that does not solely rely on end of module evaluations.

We would be happy to work on this at the Information Systems Task Group. In addition, the Director of Information Services is in regular contact with the Student Union.

**The University to continue to work with the SU to define and develop minimum standards of BlackBoard.**

This item is being followed up by staff from Information Services, and is scheduled for discussion in our Information Services Task Group.

The IT department to continue to work closely with the SU and obtain feedback from Course Rep Council on relevant issues.

This discussion seems best managed through the Information Systems Task Group.

Library Provision & Opening hours

LIBRARY RESOURCES
AND SERVICES ARE GOOD
ENOUGH FOR YOUR NEEDS
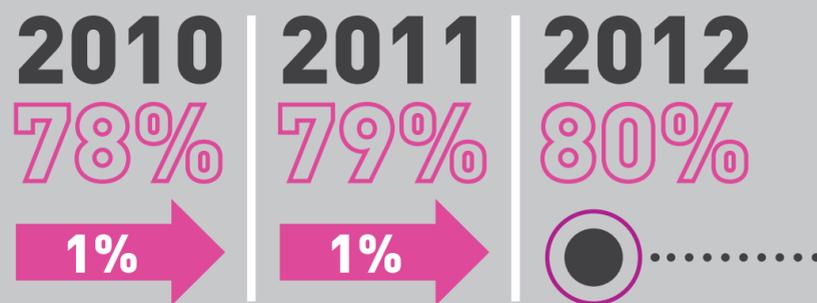
2010 | **2011** | **2012**

78% | 79% | 80%

1% → 1% → ●·········

"HAVE YOU EVER BEEN
UNABLE TO ACCESS
THE LIBRARY DUE TO
ITS OPENING HOURS?"

54% AGREED

"HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO
THE LIBRARY AND BEEN
UNABLE TO ACCESS A BOOK/
JOURNAL THAT YOU NEEDED?"

60% AGREED

One area that was highlighted by the SU in its Student Written Submission was the library and its resources available to students. In **2011** in the National Student Survey, **79%** of undergraduates agreed that the library resources and services were good enough for their needs. This figure was **1%** up on the previous year's survey **(2010)**. In the **2012** NSS, **80%** of undergraduates agreed with this statement, meaning students satisfaction had yet again increase by **1%** in this area.

In March **2012**, a report was considered in the Library Task Group. A new Head Librarian in was now in post with a plan to review library provision and develop a new strategy. The new Library and Archives strategy was signed off by Executive May **2012**. A review of staffing is now underway with implementation of new structure aimed for 1st August **2013**. The Students' Union fully supports this move forward and is very keen to see further investment in this area over the next few years.

In addition to questions relating to library resources, we were also keen to investigate with the student population, whether 24 hour library access was necessary for student in Bangor. When asked in Our Manifesto **2012-13** "Have you ever been unable to access the library due to its opening hours?" **54%** of students replied 'yes' to this question. Keen to explore this further, the SU held a series of focus groups in order to obtain more context on this issue. Comments such as; "as a postgrad, it is difficult to get to the library during the 9-5 day, but often, when I am able to go; its closed" and "during exam times I like to spend as much time there as possible... its difficult when you're in the middle of revising and you have to leave." supported the view that extended opening hours were necessary for the library services in Bangor. Keen to ensure that the library was open at the most opportune times for students, we also asked a further question in our Manifesto, "opening hours question" and the response was clear. Students would like to see extended opening hours during the "summer vacation" and during evenings and weekends". There was clear evidence to suggest that during exam times, 24hour library access was also required.

As a result, the Students' Union, working with the Library service, lobbied the University and it has been agreed that a 24hour pilot scheme would start in May **2013**, with the agreement that if successful, funding will come from institutional fee plan thereafter. The SU is extremely pleased with the response from the University in this area and is keen to continue and develop their working relationship with the library to continue to enhance the student experience.

The final area of concern for the SU in regards to library resources is in relation to core text books. In the **2012** SWS, the Union made the recommendation that the University should develop and institution wide definition of core text books and implement a central monitoring system of book-to-student ratio to ensure parity of experience across academic schools. Keen to investigate this further, in the **2012** annual student survey, Our Manifesto, we asked students, "Have you ever been to the library and been unable to access a book/journal that you needed?" **60%** of respondents answered 'yes' to this question, suggesting that the student to book ratio still needed investment from the University. When bringing this to the attention of the University we have been assured that the Head Librarian has already instigated definition of core texts, re-defined budget allocations and introduced new model of buying books based on user demand.

In March **2013**, The Talis Aspire digital reading list system was implemented by the University and the system is being piloted with approximately 10 Schools. In addition, The University has also agreed that there will be further funding from the **2013-14** Institutional Fee Plan to support reading lists. This includes two posts to support implementation of reading lists, the on-going costs of the reading list system and approximately £420 k per annum for core texts etc. The Students' Union has worked extremely closely with the library service over the last two years and is extremely pleased to see great investment in this area.

Recommendation:

1 The Library service to continue to work with the Students' Union to investigate the student to book ratio and consider further investment in this area.

2 The University to review, with the Students' Union, the 24 hour library trial and if successful, commit to funding thereafter.

UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

The Library service to continue to work with the Students' Union to investigate the student to book ratio and consider further investment in this area.

There has been roughly £500 000 additional investment in the Library book fund, which makes it surprising that this has been raised as a formal issue. It may be that it is less visible to students because much of this investment is in the digital domain? The introduction of the Talis Aspire reading list system should also allow for better control over this area.

The University to review, with the Students' Union, the 24 hour library trial and if successful, commit to funding thereafter.

The 24-hour system has now been fully implemented, and will run through the academic year.

Unfair Practice:

Anecdotally and from focus groups held during the past academic year, the Students' Union has been made aware that the rules surrounding plagiarism are not completely clear to students and there is still some misunderstanding amongst the student population as to what plagiarism and unfair practice is.

During the **2012-13** academic year, the Academic Representation Unit has seen an influx of casework relating to plagiarism and on many occasions, has had to spend a fair amount of time with students clarifying the rules and what this means to them. In addition, there still appears to be some inconsistencies across schools in how plagiarism is dealt with, despite there being a central regulation on the topic.

The Students' Union would be keen to work with the University to ensure that all students, not only understand exactly what plagiarism is, but how, when they are suspected of plagiarism, what the process is for dealing with it, and the rights the students have, in relation to support and attending meetings to resolve the issue. Furthermore, the Students'

Union believes there could be further work done in the area regarding special circumstances and the process students have to go through, in order to obtain additional time, or help during exams. This process is lengthy and for students whose circumstances do not change throughout their degree, it does cause additional stress every time they have an exam.

Recommendation:

1 The University to work with the Students' Union to collate feedback on plagiarism and review the code of practice and its dissemination to schools accordingly.

2 The University to work with the Students' Union to promote the rules surrounding plagiarism to students clearly and effectively.

3 The University to work with the Students' Union to review the procedure for requesting special circumstances and support during exam periods.

UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

The University to work with the Students' Union to collate feedback on plagiarism and review the code of practice and its dissemination to schools accordingly.

We were surprised to see this item appearing as a Recommendation. There has been extensive work with the Student Union on the plagiarism issue, in a number of Task Groups. We appear to have built a policy that is both fair and logistically manageable, and appears in the University Handbook. We also do not have indications of it being implemented unequally across Schools.

The University to work with the Students' Union to promote the rules surrounding plagiarism to students clearly and effectively.

As noted above, there has been progress on this issue, though it the question of communicating the regulations to students remains challenging.

The University to work with the Students' Union to review the procedure for requesting special circumstances and support during exam periods.

The management of this, via MyBangor, is a priority for development in 2013/14.

Inter-department communication for Joint Honour students:

Another area that was highlighted by the **2011-12** Student Written Submission, was joint honour students and their pastoral support. Although the institution took to recommendations made in the SWS to the Teaching and Learning Task Group in March **2012** and it was noted that the Code of Practice on Personal Tutors should be revised to place and emphasis on the needs of Joint Honours students, one of the biggest issues raised through the SU Course Representative Council in the **2012-13** academic year has been Joint Honours students, in particularly, on the subject of inter-department communication.

In **2012**, the Students' Union prepared a report on Joint Honours students, highlighting their problems and identifying some potential solutions. The report included focus groups with joint honours students, feedback from course rep council from joint honours representatives, and feedback from students when sabbatical officers have been out GOATing (Going out and talking to students across campus.) This included issues such as **"having to contact multiple members of staff"** as information is not being passed on from one school to the other; **"clumping of deadlines"** and **"a lack of support and information"** all of which results in students feeling **'isolated'**. The Students' Union highlighted potential solutions such as; having one personal tutor in each school, having dedicated joint honours tutors within schools and looking at assignment deadlines.

These recommendations have been supported by the student population, who in answer to questions surrounding Personal Tutors and Joint Honour students, replied with the following:

"A Personal Tutor from both sides of a joint honours [degree] would make life and issues with my degree such as module struggles and so on a great deal easier.

(Our Manifesto 2011-12)

In May **2013**, the Students Union published a paper outlining these issues and as a result the University has agreed a trial in the college of Arts and Humanities for specific joint honours tutors within each of the schools. The Students' Union is extremely supportive of this trial and would be keen to see this rolled out to all Colleges over the next academic year.

Recommendation:

1 The University and Students' Union to review the Personal Tutor trial in the College of Arts and Humanities and duplicate appropriate systems for joint honour students in all colleges for 2014-15.

2 Academic Schools to review assignment deadlines to avoid 'clumping'.

3 The Students' Union to work with the University to facilitate annual focus groups for Joint Honours students.

4 The University and Students' Union to investigate the feasibility of Joint Honours Course Reps.

UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

The University and Students' Union to review the Personal Tutor trial in the College of Arts and Humanities and duplicate appropriate systems for joint honours students in all colleges for 2014-15.

This is planned.

Academic Schools to review assignment deadlines to avoid 'clumping'.

There have been meetings with Schools to request that assessment is better distributed across the Semesters. We would welcome feedback on whether this has been effective in the 2013-14 academic year.

The Students' Union to work with the University to facilitate annual focus groups for Joint Honours students.

An event on this topic is planned for January 2014, aimed at Joint Honours students across Arts and Humanities.

The University and Students' Union to investigate the feasibility of Joint Honours Course Reps.

This is a topic appropriate for discussion at the Teaching and Learning Task Group.

How effectively the institution manages the quality of the public information that it provides, including that for students and applicants

THERE WERE NO ADDITIONAL COSTS RELATING TO THEIR COURSE

2011 **82.1%** → 3.4% → 2012 **85.5%**

INFORMATION GIVEN IN THE PROSPECTUS WAS FAIR AND ACCURATE

2011 **76.8%** → 1% → 2012 **77.8%**

70.3% RECEIVED THEIR SCHOOL HANDBOOK PRIOR TO ARRIVING AT BANGOR

In **2011**, The students' Union annual survey "Our Manifesto" highlighted the fact that students in general where satisfied with the information provided to them prior to arriving at Bangor **82.1%** of students agreed that this information given in the prospectus was fair and accurate, and **76.8%** agreed that there were no additional costs relating to their course, other than ones that they were expecting.

The Union, keen to ensure that this remained consistent year on year, asked the same questions in their **2012** annual survey. The results again showed that the majority of student (**85.5%**) agreed that the prospectus gave a fair and accurate impression of Bangor, with **77.8%** of students stating that they did not have any additional costs relating to their course. However, only **70.3%** of students confirmed that they had received their school handbook prior to arriving at Bangor.

In addition, Bangor University adopted a student charter, setting out the mutual expectations of the institution and its students.

The charter can be found on their website

www.bangor.ac.uk/studentcharter

Currently the charter is undergoing a review and the Students' Union asked its members at the annual general meeting to feed into this process. Despite this, the Union does have some concerns around how the charter is communicated to students, and believes that further work should be done in this area. Although there is currently no quantitive data to support this view, anecdotally we are aware that students do not know much about the charter, and where information on it can be found.

Recommendation:

1 The University to work with the Students' Union to ensure that the Student Charter is promoted to students.

2 The Student's Union to add a question about the Charter to the annual survey, Our Manifesto.

UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

The University to work with the Students' Union to ensure that the Student Charter is promoted to students.

This has been widely publicised, and is available in the electronic Handbook, and on MyBangor.

The Student's Union to add a question about the Charter to the annual survey, Our Manifesto.

This Recommendation applies – of course - to the Student Union (rather than the University)

Welsh Medium Education:

Bangor University is a bilingual institution and its commitment to improving its welsh medium education is apparent and often praised both locally and nationally.

In 2011, the Students Union survey over 2000 students and highly commended the University for their work in this area, as **over 90%** of students agreed with the following statements:

1. Does the University communicate with you in the language of your choice?

2. Are you aware that you are able to submit assignments in either language?

3. Have you ever been unable to access a service in the language of your choice?

As the results were extremely positive, we asked this year, an additional question:

"Are you able to access your exam papers in the language of your choice?"

What is extremely positive to hear is that **96.4% of respondents in the 2012-13 survey answered 'yes'** to the above question. In addition, the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol has improved provision, in school's that traditional have not been able to offer modules in the medium of Welsh. Furthermore, the relationship between UMCB, the Welsh Students' Union, has grown from strength to strength and much work has been done to ensure that students studying through the medium of welsh, and welsh speaking students have fair representation at a University Level.

However, what is concerning is the discontinuation of the Welsh Medium Premium that has previously been awarded to support students studying in Welsh and the potential impact this may have on the provision of welsh medium education throughout the University. The Students' Union is aware that this is a recent cut from HEFCW but would like to see a commitment to ensuring that this is not completely lost.

Recommendation:

1 The University to work with the Students' Union and UMCB to ensure that adequate provision is made in terms of replacing the Premium and that provision continues to be enhanced.

2 Academic schools to work with the Students' Union to review their provision of Welsh medium education.

3 The University to continue to work with UMCB, to continue to improve the experiences of Welsh speaking students.

UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

The University to work with the Students' Union and UMCB to ensure that adequate provision is made in terms of replacing the Premium and that provision continues to be enhanced.

This is first and foremost a political question. BU has been working (and will continue to work) with other universities in Wales to lobby Welsh government on a number of related issues which impact upon the question of the Welsh-medium Premium.

Academic schools to work with the Students' Union to review their provision of Welsh medium education.

The PVC for Welsh Medium is ensuring that academic schools review their provision of Welsh-medium education.

The University to continue to work with UMCB, to continue to improve the experiences of Welsh speaking students.

The PVC for Welsh Medium is in close contact with UMCB and sees the continuation and development of this relationship as a priority.

Conclusion:
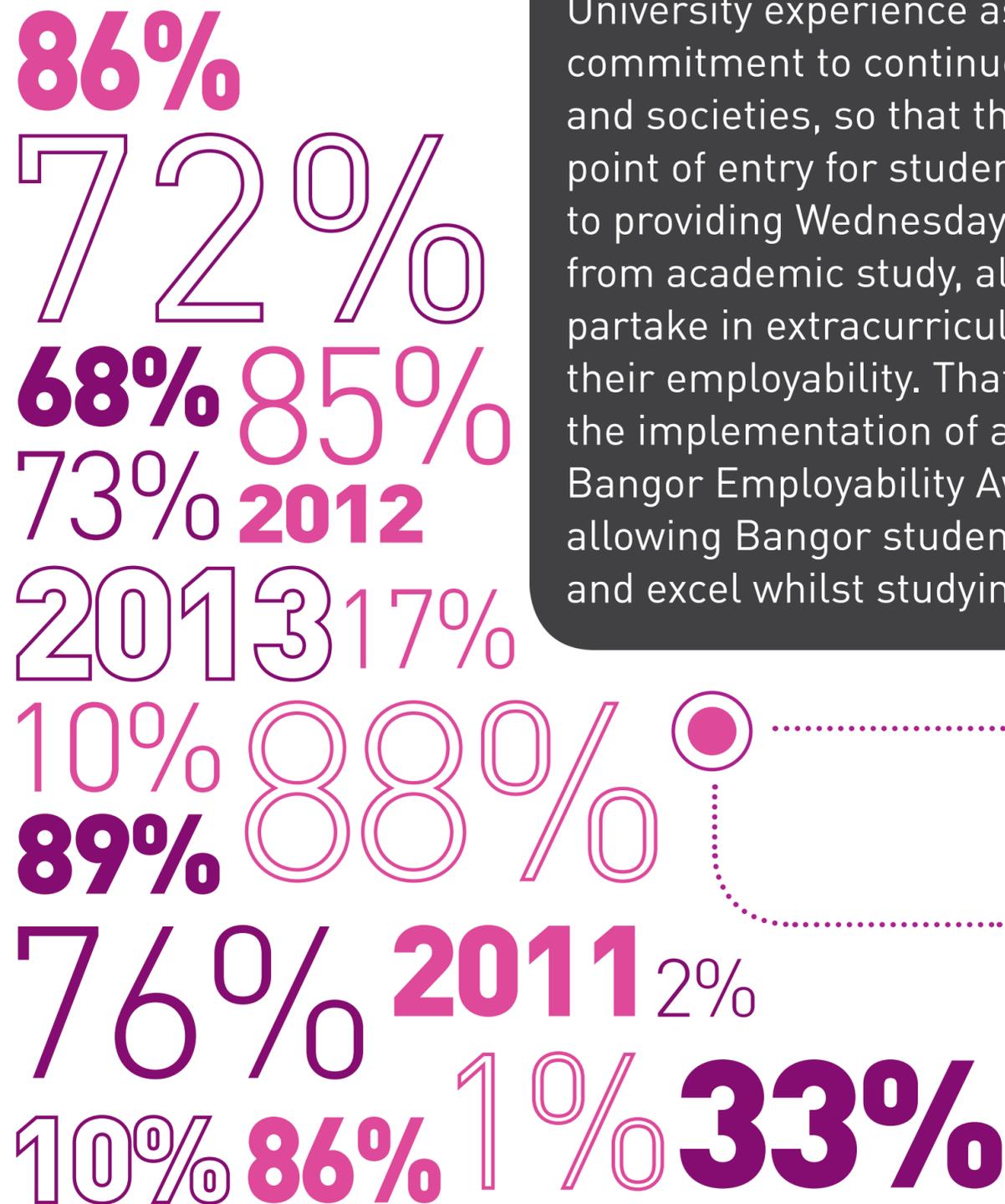
It is clear to see that Bangor University is investing, not only in the academic experience of students, but in their University experience as a whole. The commitment to continue to fund clubs and societies, so that they are free at the point of entry for students, in addition to providing Wednesday afternoon's free from academic study, allow students to partake in extracurricular activity to boost their employability. That, coupled with the implementation of a University-wide Bangor Employability Award, is certainly allowing Bangor students to develop and excel whilst studying at Bangor.

There is however, still some work to be done. Whilst it is great to see much needed investment in the Library and IT provision, both these areas still need constant consultation with the student body, to ensure their needs are met, including work in areas such as BlackBoard and a review of the 24 hour library trial. Bangor Students' Union is extremely proud of the working relationships it has with staff, both in these departments and at a senior management level and hopes that these relationships continue to flourish.

We believe, that by working with the institution on the recommendations made in this document in areas such as; closing the feedback loop, encouraging and promoting innovative teaching and learning practices, clarity on assessment return dates, a review of the code of practice on feedback, further promotion of course reps and their roles, including how they feed into audits, revalidation and board of studies, joint honours students, the student charter, and welsh medium education then we can improve the student experience tenfold. We are keen to express that we do believe Bangor University is committed to strengthening its partnership, both with students and the SU and are looking forward to continuing to develop the student experience in the future.

86%
72%
68% **85%**
73% **2012**
2013 **17%**
10% **88%**
89%
76% **2011** **2%**
10% **86%** **1%** **33%**

UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

The University welcomes this first Student Union Annual Statement. It offers a balanced acknowledgement of the existing work of the University, together with a list of various suggestions for improvement. As our Response makes clear, there has been engagement on all of the topics identified in the 2013-14 academic year, and we look forward to working with the Student Union to further enhance the quality of the student experience in future years.