

Press release

Wednesday, 18 August 2010

Welsh higher education satisfies students

The sixth annual survey of students has shown that more than four in five of Wales's students continue to be satisfied with their university course.

Results from the National Student Survey (NSS) show that 82% of respondents in Wales were satisfied with their course.

Although, after five years of growth, the overall result dropped for the first time by 1 percentage point, the results also saw slightly improved outcomes for some of the areas of most importance to students, including assessment, feedback and academic support.

The survey took account of the views of more than 13,000 students studying at Welsh universities.

Students on NHS practice placements were particularly satisfied, with 92% of respondents satisfied that they had been allocated a suitable placement and that their contribution as part of the clinical team during their placement had been valued.

| Questions | | 2009 UK | 2009 Wales | 2010 UK | 2010 Wales |
|-----------|-----------------------------|----------|---------------|---------|---------------|
| | | % agreed | | | |
| 1-4 | The teaching on my course | 83 | 83 | 83 | 84 |
| 5-9 | Assessment and feedback | 64 | 65 | 66 | 66 |
| 10-12 | Academic support | 74 | 76 | 75 | 77 |
| 13-15 | Organisation and management | 72 | 73 | 73 | 73 |
| 16-18 | Learning resources | 81 | 80 | 80 | 79 |
| 19-21 | Personal development | 78 | 79 | 79 | 79 |
| 22 | Overall satisfaction | 82 | 83 | 82 | 82 |

The results for assessment and feedback increased by four percentage points since the survey's inception in 2005, while academic support, personal developments and the teaching on their course have also increased over the six years.

Professor Philip Gummett, Chief Executive of HEFCW, said: "The National Student Survey is the best independent indicator we have of the high level of satisfaction with higher education in Wales.

"The questions cover many aspects around a student's course, and highlight courses' strengths, as well as areas for improvement. We are pleased to see, for example, the continued improvement in how satisfied students are with the assessment and feedback they get for their courses. Universities continue to tackle the needs of the modern student population in innovative ways, and we hope that their responsiveness will mean that Welsh institutions continue to perform positively in this survey."

Ben Craft, who graduated in Maths, Operational Research and Statistics in 2010, said: "I was thoroughly impressed with my university and the Mathematics

department throughout my time there. Everyone makes you feel welcome from day one and they are always there if you need help or advice.

“The course gave me an opportunity to spend a year in industry which was a fantastic experience, and significantly improves anyone’s employability after graduating. I wouldn't change anything about my past four years.

“I am now looking forward to starting my job as a Football Analyst later in the summer.”

Helen Pitt, who also graduated from Cardiff University in 2010, with a First Class Honours degree in Ecology, said: “Studying in Wales was great. The people in Cardiff are all really friendly and the city has a great atmosphere. My course was fantastic and gave me lots of opportunities to develop both life skills and academic skills. It also gave me once in a lifetime opportunities like a trip to Borneo.”

The NSS data will be available on Unistats.com, which helps prospective students of higher education compare information about different subjects and institutions.

The survey covered higher education students in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and 12 Scottish institutions.

Notes

Contact for further information

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(Photo of graduate Ben available on request.)

The National Student Survey (NSS) - background

1. The percentages used in this press release relate to students registered with Welsh higher education institutions.
2. NSS data are available on the HEFCE web-site under Learning & teaching/Quality assurance/National Student Survey/TQI data.
3. The Unistats web-site (www.unistats.com) gives data on all students in the survey, and will be available on 18 August 2010.
4. The NSS covers higher education students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and 12 Scottish institutions, and the independent University of Buckingham.
5. The total number of students who responded to the sixth annual National Student Survey increased this year by over 29,000 to 252,449 students, of which 13,285 were from Wales; this gives an overall response rate for the UK of 63 per cent (65% for Wales). A total of 155 higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK and 113 further education colleges (FECs) in England also took part.
6. Once more the lowest satisfaction was expressed with assessment and feedback, although there was again an increase from the 65% satisfaction of students in Welsh HEIs in 2009 to 66% in 2010.
7. The threshold for publication of NSS results is 50 percent for institutions and at least 23 students for subjects.
8. The NSS was carried out by Ipsos MORI. Unistats is developed and maintained by UCAS and Hotcourses, www.unistats.com.

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is an Assembly

Government Sponsored Body responsible for administering funds made available by the Welsh Assembly Government for:

- education in higher education institutions (HEIs);
- research by HEIs; and
- certain higher education courses at further education institutions.

HEFCW is also responsible for accrediting providers of **initial teaching training** for school teachers and commissioning research to improve the standards of teachers and teacher training.

In addition to its funding responsibilities, HEFCW provides advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on the funding needs, aspirations and concerns of the higher education sector in Wales.

HEFCW will be considering the outcomes of the NSS as part of its overall scrutiny of the performance of universities in Wales. The latest Corporate Strategy www.hefcw.ac.uk/publications/corporate_documents/corporate_strategy_plan.aspx uses the NSS as a basis for a new target for higher education in Wales:

“The three year rolling average score for Wales in the National Student Survey ‘overall satisfaction’ question will be equal to, or greater than the comparative score for the UK.”

Where there are rare cases of low scores, HEFCW will pursue plans for action with the universities concerned.

An additional 30,000 students were included in the survey in 2010. The increase relates to an increase in the number of students in higher education and the inclusion of more students on flexible programmes.