Student Voice in Governance

Case Studies
Introduction

It is a Welsh Government priority that students have a stronger voice in higher education in Wales. In order to demonstrate that these institutions are assisting with this objective, HEFCW requested that institutions provided case studies on how the student voice contributes to governance (2012).

This document collates the responses received from the institutions which responded to HEFCW’s request and have been published in the language in which they were submitted.

Two separate documents The influence of the student voice in governance and Why students are involved in the governance of institutions providing higher education in Wales have also been published using the information detailed in the case studies. These documents promote the best practices adopted across Wales and demonstrate the impact such practices can have both on the institution and the student body.

Contributing institutions

Aberystwyth University p2
Bangor University p22
Cardiff University p28
Cardiff Metropolitan University p35
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Glyndŵr University p45
The Open University in Wales p50
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Aberystwyth University

A Meaningful Student Voice

The work of Course Representatives at Aberystwyth

Student representation at Aberystwyth has existed for many years through both formal and informal processes. Staff-Student Consultative Committees (‘SSCCs’) have been in place for much of the last thirty years and student officers have been afforded representation on key University committees for many decades. However, as part of the Wales and UK-wide trends towards further and more meaningful student engagement, the system was professionalised in 2010 with the appointment of a Student Representation and Experience Coordinator to work between the University and the Students’ Union.

The existing network of SSCCs and student representatives was brought under a unified and coordinated system with a dedicated staff resource, enabling the network of 300 course representatives to be more active in effecting positive change throughout the Institution. Student officers and University policymakers now have access to an engaged and committed group of students, who can be consulted on all aspects of academic policy.

Course representatives receive initial training covering a wide range of topics including meeting skills, effective campaigning and utilising data. This training will be supplemented in the 2012/13 academic year by a programme of continuous development covering specific topics such as utilising National Student Survey results, chairing meetings and conflict resolution. The in-house training is complemented by student-centred events and training offered by partners such as the National Union of Students, the Higher Education Academy and the Quality Assurance Agency. As well as ensuring effective, informed and engaged student representatives, the programme of continuous development equips students with a broad range of transferable skills and experience for further study or employment.

The representatives impact on the student experience in two key ways. Firstly, issues are raised by a representative’s peers which require a reactive response; this could be a comment on the course’s management, or an issue with learning resources. Secondly, the Students’ Union and the University encourage representatives to work proactively to set and influence policy on topics such as feedback and assessment, teaching spaces or the Virtual Learning Environment. This approach ensures that students are recognised as genuine partners in the delivery of their education and that they can achieve a lasting positive impact.

With over 300 course representatives throughout the system, there was a need to simplify the feedback mechanism to ensure that adequate and efficient monitoring of student opinion could take place. This has been achieved by the Course Representatives’ Council, comprised of 34 Senior Representatives. Two course representatives from each of the 17 departments - ideally one undergraduate and one postgraduate - run for election at the beginning of the academic session. These Senior Representatives enable the Students’ Union and the University to receive a digest of issues throughout the academic departments and also discuss
University-wide issues, which also has the added benefit of feeding back to service departments. The Council has been a broadly successful initiative since its inception, advising University management and the Students’ Union officers on education policy. From the Council, six students are able to attend the three Faculty boards alongside a full-time officer of the Students’ Union. The input of a current student to these meetings has been invaluable and enables the University to remain student-centred in its approach.

The very nature of peer representation in a system such as this enables the University and the Students’ Union to gather opinions from traditionally hard to reach groups such as distance learners, international students or those studying part time. Cohorts with large numbers of these students often have a dedicated representative who is not only able to raise issues from their peers, but do so in a way which is convenient for them. An example of this is distance learners communicating via a VoIP service, or ‘mobile committees’ travelling across an area as is the case with the lifelong learning department within the University.

With a joined up approach to student representation at Aberystwyth, the University is now in a position to develop its structures further. A move to an Institutes model from the current 17 departments provides an exciting opportunity for embedding student engagement into the heart of the new Institutes and evaluating how students can be genuine partners in their education.

Sam Reynolds, Aberystwyth University

Aber Play Sport (APS) - LAPA (Local Authority Physical Activity) Project for multi-sport leagues for Students, Staff & Local Community

How we engaged with the student voice: For this project to succeed, engagement with the student voice was essential. Arranging informal meetings with student clubs was the first step. These meetings allowed us to gauge demand in sport and exercise and how we, as a Centre, could make sport accessible to all. The main points of concern were; the provision of mixed ability competitions, time, facility and availability of equipment. Representatives such as club presidents and captains acted as ambassadors for their sports, engaging with students in their teams and motivating them to recruit and enter teams in the intra mural competitions. Another approach to engaging with students was through Student Support and the International Office Departments. By liaising with halls’ residential and Students Union based representatives, the Sports Centre was able to address and connect with students. The connections were made face-to-face and through student social media. Approaching students in halls, we were able to welcome new students and encourage them to benefit from the social opportunities sport brings. Linking with the International Office provided us with an ear, capable of listening to international students interested in sport and yet currently underrepresented in BUCS. This resulted in a basketball competition with 75% of its participants being international students, most of whom do not play for a BUCS team.
Aims of the Project: The primary aim of the LAPA bid was to introduce a variant on intra-mural sport (Aber Play Sport - APS) to the University Sport Centre’s service portfolio. This was largely in response to the high number of students wishing to participate in organised recreational sport. It also involved working with the Local Authority’s Leisure Department to target and promote ‘participation through sport’ and to help develop links, and friendships between staff, students and the local community. Participants of all abilities were encouraged to take part in these friendly structured fixtures, all managed by an online computer package.

Project Overview: Having witnessed the over-subscription of students wishing to join AU sports teams and a burgeoning demand for recreational sport, we identified a clear and evident demand to provide additional playing opportunities. Having successfully applied for LAPA funding to support the delivery of this project, we used the existing club structures and links with the Students Union to launch this program to new incoming students at the Freshers’ Fayres held in September. We also met with existing student sports clubs that were organising student sports events, at the beginning of term to galvanise their support for rolling out the new programmes.

The key for us was to ensure that the programme was readily accessible to this new group of participants. We aimed to cater for those who couldn’t commit to BUCS or club fixtures and regular training and ensure there was minimal conflict with their timetable, in addition to any other commitments. The project also provided a perfect entry point for complete beginners to sign up and attend with designated sessions aimed at an introductory/social level, with the strap line ‘make a team, and join the league’.

Throughout the process, Software providers Sportalise.com have been very supportive too, making management and communication of information for these leagues simpler and less time consuming for participants and administrators alike.

In working closely with our clubs, student management groups, and sports officers we were also able to provide a clear exit route for those students who wished to continue their new chosen sport further and potentially begin competing for the University.

Delivery of Project: We are currently delivering regular weekly sessions in four different sports (football 6’s & 7’s, basketball 3v3, squash and badminton – singles & pairs). The football session are held on the new 3G pitch which accommodates the small-sided leagues. These fixture are timetabled around lecture & working day times, thus allowing everyone an opportunity to participate.

The basketball competition started with a weekend competition and now we have a weekly league implemented into the timetable.

The squash and badminton sessions were linked to the clubs, as they were finding it hard to accommodate all 120 members in their allotted club facility hours. To assist, we set up leagues for the club, which now sees all club members participating regularly in weekly fixtures.

Had it not been for the partnerships developed over the summer, with the Students Union, Club Committees & Local Authority’s Community Sports
Officer, it would have been virtually impossible to get the information out to the various participants. Thus far, the sessions have elicited an exceptional response, with around 300 people participating each week and we aim to build on this.

**Outcomes of Project:** In applying for the funding to support the project delivery we have built a fantastic relationship with Ceredigion Council Sports Development Department, as well as with our staff & student clubs and Students Union. For a rurally located university it is vitally important for us to build good relationships with Community providers, to enable us to sustain and enhance the service and experience offered.

We also established new relationships with other providers, which will lead to collaborative work within other areas, notably our Organisation's volunteering, employability and skills development targets.

Overall the project’s accomplishments primarily resulted from student engagement and from there, how the Sports Centre was able to help facilitate a growing student sports culture. In working to a common aim this project has helped us forge stronger relationships, which will ensure that this project and the benefits from it will carry on into the future and may provide a helpful model for other similarly placed organisations.

Mr Jeff Saycell, Sports Centre, Aberystwyth University

**Edusoc and Edutots**

With the introduction of the new single honours degree in Childhood Studies in 2009, there was a growing demand from students to have their own society to enhance academic and social activities within the School of Education and Lifelong Learning in Aberystwyth University. Members of staff within the school worked in conjunction with the Staff Student Consultative Committee (SSCC) to gauge student interest and to form a working party. The initial society was formed in December 2009 and began with a Christmas Social and exam revision sessions.

In 2010, the society, now known as *Edusoc*, developed with support from members of staff, but students were beginning to take on a more autonomous role. In 2011 the committee structure was made up entirely of students, with staff members providing support to the committee. 2011 also saw the largest ever intake for the Childhood Studies degree scheme, and there were Childhood Studies students present in each academic year. This swelled the numbers of members of *Edusoc* and saw the society take on a greater role within the school. The society contributed greatly to the School in creating relationships between the different academic years and degree schemes, and has been involved in several fund raising events for children’s charities. These initiatives reflected positively within the community. Specifically the society has been responsible for the following charity fundraising initiatives:

- Wear Spots to Raise Lots- raised money for Children in Need
- Teddy Bears Picnic Family Fun Day- This raised money for Save the Children
• Operation Christmas Child

In 2012, with support from the School, Edusoc formed its own university based play group Edutots, where members of the society were able to gain valuable experience working with young children. This initiative not only benefits students within the School, but promotes the School and university within the wider community. The university provided accommodation for the play group which now meets weekly on the main campus. This initiative not only brings members of the public onto our campus, but also provides essential work experience and employability skills for students who volunteer on the scheme. In addition to Edutots, the society has now developed Edutivities. Edutivities is a fun-day for children aged 3+ and runs for one weekend each month during term time. Children take part in craft activities, face painting and learning games, and again the scheme is run by students in community locations.

As Edusoc continues to expand (membership is close to 100 students), the committee and staff are continuing to work hard to plan for the future. Several charity fund-raising initiatives have already been developed and committee members and staff are working towards developing further community and employability links.

Dr Stephen Atherton and Dr Malcolm Thomas, School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Aberystwyth University

Genuine Partnership

The Student Representation and Experience Coordinator

In 2010, Aberystwyth introduced a Student Representation and Experience Coordinator (‘SREC’) position, to work between the Students’ Union and the Vice-Chancellor’s Office. One of the first in Wales, the position was to work to enhance the role of the learner voice throughout the Institution and ensure that student opinion was a constant factor in the University’s decisions. Matrix-managed by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Learning, Teaching and Employability in conjunction with the Chief Executive of the Students’ Union, the SREC’s job is a leading example of student unions and their institutions working together to enhance the role of the student voice.

The SREC’s work is diverse and varied, but it is primarily concerned with the management and development of the University’s network of 300 student representatives in conjunction with departmental staff. As well as ensuring that there are effective representative structures in place throughout the academic departments, coordinating this work ensures that issues of a University-wide nature can be identified and also that the University management and Student Union officers have a broad knowledge of student opinion throughout.

Having a dedicated staff resource to manage the system also reduces the administration and organisational burden on student officers, who were previously responsible for running the system. Now, student officers can work with representatives more effectively in delivering campaigns and gathering student opinion.
Quality assurance is another key aspect of the SREC’s work. In preparation for two QAA audits in as many years, the SREC worked with student union officers, current students and student representatives in preparing the student submissions. The work from this will be expanded to produce an annual document which provides a snapshot of student opinion and identifies progress across certain recurring themes. The SREC’s work also includes coordinating the National Student Survey annually, as well as delivering a range of projects throughout the year concerned with the student voice.

Introducing the position has yielded numerous benefits. Student officers have benefitted from the additional support in research and administration, enabling key pledges and projects to be delivered. For the University, there has been a consistent link with student officers and student representatives supplemented with a knowledge of recurring issues.

Sam Reynolds, Aberystwyth University

“How far are you going in 2012-2013?”

This is an initiative growing from a successful programme established by the University’s central health, safety and environmental unit to help improve wellbeing.

There are many reports indicating that levels of physical activity in the population are generally low and that issues such as obesity are an ever increasing problem leading to long term illness such as heart disease and diabetes. Even a modest increase in physical exercise can reap significant benefits to health while reducing sickness absence in the workforce. The staff ‘Walk the World’ programme was introduced to encourage physical exercise and help increase health and wellbeing. Uptake has been very good with 25% of the workforce participating.

During the staff programme in the previous year, students expressed a desire to become involved. This contact came via student representatives on consultative committees and by direct approach to the HS&E unit.

Management and technical aspects of how the programme for staff was organised meant that the scheme was not directly applicable for the far larger numbers of students anticipated to take part so a reappraisal was required, which was undertaken in collaboration with student representatives.

Even though the student community is seen as a generally very active group there is inevitably a range of activity levels across the 8,000+ student population, some who are heavily involved in the sports community and others who may never enter the sports facilities during their time at Aberystwyth.

By working with the student body we hope to help establish activity patterns that will stay with them and help prevent the long term effects of inactivity.

“How far are you going” is a scheme to encourage all students to be more active. Students record any walking they do (either by step number or by miles), swims or cycle rides onto a website-fronted database that was developed in-house by the IT department at Aberystwyth. The total distance
travelled by the individual is accumulated and shown on a virtual map of the coastline of Great Britain, enabling students to compare how far each has gone and providing encouragement to do more. Locations on the coast are highlighted at 5-10 mile intervals, so that there is a drive to reach the next town, and give places to compare with friends “I've reached Lands End you are still in North Devon”. As a flexible system students can decide just to log one type of activity such as swim to Scotland or cycle the coast path of Wales.

A key aspect of the scheme is that normal everyday physical activity can be increased without the need to take time out in a gym. Students are motivated to make the 20 minute walk from town to campus rather than drive or catch a bus.

The website was developed during the summer vacation and the scheme launched at this year's Students Union Fresher's Fayre, with enthusiastic uptake. As with the staff initiative we will be building on this first years' experience to include more information about Health and Wellbeing and other aspects to encourage participation, with the aim that the project will grow each year with the active engagement of the student body.

Dr Andrew Walker, Health, Safety and Environment Office, Aberystwyth University

LLL/WfA Awards Ceremony

In Lifelong Learning we have a Student-Staff Committee. This committee provides an important forum for students and staff to exchange and discuss ideas. The Committee holds three meetings a year, with one of these meetings taking place outside Aberystwyth. To date meetings have been held in Cardigan and Brecon. This year Student Staff Committee meetings are planned for Newtown.

This occurs as Lifelong Learning has a presence in 4 counties across Wales and the Student Staff Committee represents all these students; not just the students in Aberystwyth. When we hold meetings outside of Aberystwyth all students in that area are invited to attend. The Student Staff Committee has several ways for students to express their opinions but we feel it is important that we give our students an opportunity to meet and share their views directly with the SSC and other local students in the area in which they study. In this way, we believe students are supported in their learning and really feel they belong and contribute to the Lifelong Learning department.

At a meeting in May 2008, one of our students suggested to the committee that Lifelong Learning should grant awards to students and tutors. He proposed this as a celebration of learning and teaching. As a result the first award ceremony was held in 2009.

We have had the support of all members of the Committee, especially the students, to reach this point. Together we put in place the criteria for the nominations, designed an attractive nomination form to engage learners and distributed the form to all our students and teachers. The nominees are selected by an independent panel to Lifelong Learning, whose decision is final.
Student and tutor attributes celebrated at the ceremony include inspiration, overcoming barriers, making a difference, involvement in the community, sharing new skills and practices, meeting students' needs, supporting others in adult learning and commitment to adult learning.

In the School of Education and Lifelong Learning there are other departments with a strong presence in the community such as the Mid Wales Welsh for Adults Centre. Consequently, following the first successful LLL award ceremony in 2009, the Award Ceremony was further extended to include students and tutors from Welsh for Adults. The Award Ceremony has now been established as a celebration for the School as a whole since 2010.

It is now a yearly celebration thanks to the participation of many students involved in the nomination process. This is an opportunity to reward excellence in learning and in teaching. The student voice was very loud here and we heard it clearly and took action.

Antonio Barriga Rubio and Dr Malcolm Thomas, School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Aberystwyth University

**PhD engagement in Reconfiguration**

Aberystwyth University is in the process of institutional reconfiguration, as a result of which, by 1 August 2013 all academic departments will be grouped into institutes and new, interdisciplinary and collaborative working arrangements will be created across the university. Since the early summer 2012 the Department of International Politics has been involving its PhD students in staff discussions about the implications of reconfiguration for the Department.

The International Politics Department at Aberystwyth has a particularly large and active graduate school, and the Department makes considerable efforts to integrate the PhD community (which numbers over 50) into its research culture. PhD students are widely regarded as future colleagues and work with academic staff to organise conferences and workshops as well as to teach undergraduates. It was therefore regarded as quite a natural extension of this relationship that PhD students should play a role in discussions about the future development of the Department and the University.

The involvement of PhD students has so far taken two forms: the inclusion of a representative from the PhD community at staff discussions; and regular briefings to the PhD students on the progress of institutional reconfiguration by senior members of staff (including the Acting Head of Department, the Department’s Director of Research and the Department’s Director of Graduate Studies). The presence of a PhD student representative at staff meetings specifically about reconfiguration during the summer of 2012 enabled the PhD community to be informed and to communicate their views to staff on a regular basis. This practice proved so valuable that the Department decided to introduce PhD student representation at Departmental Board meetings so that the community of doctoral students can be better informed and participate more fully in Departmental discussions on a variety of issues.
The process of institutional reconfiguration is ongoing but already the PhD students have made some very valuable suggestions about potential benefits of the new structures being created in the University. For example, several students commented on the possibility of developing more interdisciplinary postgraduate research training workshops or modules to take advantage of the interdisciplinary nature of the institute in which the Department will be located and this suggestion has been fed back to other parts of the University.

Dr Jenny Mathers, Department of International Politics, Aberystwyth University

Quality in Partnership

Student involvement with the QAA and Quality Assurance.

To many students, the idea of ‘quality’ in the delivery of their education is something that little used to be known of. Out of the comfort of strict regulation, visible inspections and centrally set and moderated examinations in their pre- and post-16 experiences, the higher education environment compares poorly in student perceptions of how standards are managed. Contrarily, the higher education sector is in fact a highly regulated environment, with quality assurance being delivered by numerous external and internal processes.

As part of a rolling project between the Students’ Union and the University, Aberystwyth set out to engage students with quality assurance in a more meaningful way. The project has three broad aims:

- Highlight the work of the QAA.
- Raise awareness of the Institution’s own internal processes.
- Empower students to contribute to quality assurance and enhancement.

The approach began when the University underwent Institutional Review in 2012. Writing the student submission, the Students’ Union found at focus groups that little was known of the QAA and the important work it did in assuring standards. Indeed, the Agency’s role is a difficult one to explain due to its unique approach of peer review rather than review by professional inspectors; thus, comparisons with Estyn or Ofsted proved unhelpful and it was decided that awareness amongst course representatives would be a useful starting point.

Course representatives now receive an introduction to the QAA at their initial training, and it is planned that additional sessions covering the Quality Code will be provided later this academic year. This is not about students becoming their own regulators, rather it equips students with the tools to contribute to and develop quality in their departments. This internal training is supplemented by attendance at external events run by the QAA and its partners, such as the Higher Education Academy and the National Union of Students.

These events are part of a renewed focus on student engagement by the QAA, which also includes policy research and tailored support for student representatives in institutions undergoing review. Review methods are also
designed to consider students at every stage with the student submission being an increasingly important document. Students are now also supported not only by the Review Coordinator or Assistant Director, but a dedicated student engagement team.

It was also decided that more needed to be done to highlight the institution’s own quality assurance mechanisms. Student representatives now attend meetings of the three faculties. Senior management also now encourages module convenors to share external examiners’ reports, scheme reviews and action plans with course representatives at Staff-Student Liaison Committees so that students can be better informed. It is also envisaged that there will be further awareness raised on the numerous other ways in which the University ensures quality, such as through mark moderation, peer observation and internal review.

With the concepts of quality and enhancement fast becoming entrenched in the mindset of the HE sector, the continuation of such an approach ensures that students remain key partners in the delivery of their education.

Sam Reynolds, Aberystwyth University

Recognising Excellence in Teaching

The Student-Led Teaching Awards at Aberystwyth

Student-Led Teaching Awards were run for the first time in Aberystwyth in 2012. The idea behind these awards is to recognise excellence in teaching with a staff member’s students themselves providing the nominations. They are intended to complement existing methods of recognition, such as peer-nominated or externally-awarded prizes. The awards act as an invaluable tool to engage students in their own learning and encourage examples of best practice to be recognised and shared.

The idea was initially pioneered by several Scottish students’ associations in partnership with their institutions in 2009/10. The initiative was picked up by the National Union of Students and the Higher Education Academy to encourage the awards to be rolled out across the United Kingdom and a project website was created\(^1\) to showcase resources and provide guidance. Now in its second year, the project has been very successful in developing best practice in the design and implementation of these awards.

In Aberystwyth, the Students’ Union brought the idea of running Student-Led Teaching Awards to the University’s management at the beginning of the 2011/12 academic session and the University agreed to provide funding. The project was led by the Education Officer of the Students’ Union and Union staff, with assistance from the University throughout.

Nominations opened in March, with students being able to nominate online or by paper at several points across campus and in residences. An overwhelming amount of nominations were received across the following month, all of an exceptionally high standard. A judging panel consisting of Student Union officers, Union staff and the University’s Pro-Vice Chancellor

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\(^1\) [www.studentledteachingawards.org.uk](http://www.studentledteachingawards.org.uk)
for Learning, Teaching and Employability then decided on the winning entries against the criteria for each award. Students could nominate staff in eight categories recognising excellence in many aspects of their university experience. As well as awards for creative teaching, use of technology in learning and employability enhancement; there were awards to recognise outstanding support staff, excellent personal tutoring and an accolade for the best course representative.

The awards evening itself took place in the Union building. All nominees and the students who nominated them were invited, along with several course representatives and University staff. The evening was an enormous success, with students and staff alike remarking on the experience. Planning has begun for the 2013 awards, with an ambitious target to boost the amount of nominations and deliver an even more successful event that will showcase the very best teaching practice.

Sam Reynolds, Aberystwyth University

**Shaping our future – Consulting on a new strategic Plan**

Aberystwyth University’s Strategic Plan 2012-2017 was published in November 2012 following a year of consultation with staff and students on the strategic direction of the University and its priorities for the next five years. The student body was involved at every stage of the process, from consultation sessions to meetings to discuss the structure and content of the plan.

In November 2011 the University launched its ‘Shaping our Future’ project, inviting students and staff by an email and poster campaign to attend sessions to consider the aims and ambitions that should shape the new Strategic Plan. A range of interactive exercises was developed to guide discussions and participants were invited to work in groups of eight. Meetings were held across the University, with two events held in the Students Union building.

The sessions began with an ice-breaking exercise looking at strategic plans from a range of UK HEIs and asking the groups to identify strengths and weaknesses in the balance of words highlighted in each. The groups were then given the challenge of writing positive headlines for Aberystwyth for 2017 for three newspapers - the *Western Mail* (for a local, Wales-based viewpoint), the *New York Times* (for an international approach) and the *THE* (for an educational sector voice). This exercise produced the most entertaining and creative responses and reflected the pride and confidence that students and staff have in the work carried out at Aberystwyth. There were also headlines about future success in areas where participants saw opportunities for improvement or for building on current strengths, indicating that success here would show how far the University had travelled by 2017. For the final exercise participants were asked one simple question – *what do we need to prioritise to build the Aberystwyth 2017 that you want?*

To ensure that all views were captured, each group was provided with a trained facilitator whose task it was to encourage discussion and record the ideas generated. Views were also captured through a Twitter hashtag and a
graffiti wall on which participants were invited to write ideas and use stickers to ‘vote’ for the ideas of others.

In order to effectively analyse the wealth of information arising from the events the University utilised the psychology expertise of its Psychology and Sports and Exercise Science departments. Students and staff from these departments worked with staff from the Planning Office, sharing their expertise in qualitative research analysis to draw out from the mass of information the messages and themes that would feed into the new Strategic Plan. The results of these meetings were written up into a document that was circulated to a group which included representatives from the Students’ Union who met to discuss the structure of the plan. This group provided a steer for the shape of the plan. The emerging draft of the plan was then circulated to committees, on which the student body had representation, providing further opportunities for the Student Voice to influence the content and message of the developing plan.

The entire process, from initial consultation to final sign off of the new plan, took one year, time well spent to ensure that the University now has a strategic plan which has the support of its students and staff.

Professor April McMahon, Vice-Chancellor, Aberystwyth University

Student Input into Departmental Teaching Strategy. Case Study: Historiography

Background

The module HY30020 Historians and the Writing of History, and two single semester short versions of the same course, has proven to be a problematic element of the department’s teaching provision for some years. On the one hand, dealing with, as it does, the practice of history and some crucial methodological and theoretical elements of our craft, it is regarded as a core element of the single honours degree scheme (both in practice and intellectually), and was in an earlier incarnation designed and taught by one of the department’s most eminent historians Professor Sir Rees Davies. Historians and the Writing of History is also linked to one of the department’s research centres – Historiography and Historical Cultures - and an internationally-praised and departmentally-produced textbook, Peter Lambert and Phillipp R. Schofield (eds), Making History: An Introduction to the History and Practices of a Discipline (London: Routledge, 2004). On the other it is a course that has regularly received negative feedback from students in questionnaires; a matter made more serious given its ‘must pass’ status, and comparatively high fail rates. An MA course in a similar area has recently been withdrawn by the department after poor take up in the years following its introduction.

Restructuring HY30020 Historians and the Writing of History

Student feedback forms revealed a number of problematic areas causing concerns for students, including the delivery of theoretical material that they found difficult to apply to their other work in the department; an apparent emphasis upon modern history; the completion of essay work that did not
count towards the final course mark, and, the most common issue raised, dissatisfaction with very large seminars held in lecture theatres following a lecture on the same theme. The same issues were raised in a Staff Student Consultative Committee Meeting and in personal communication with the course co-ordinator and co-tutors. After discussing these matters in the department’s Learning and Teaching Committee, the Head of Department and Director of Learning and Teaching brought the subject back to the Staff Student Consultative Committee. It was this body that came up with the notion of abandoning the system of lecture followed by whole group seminar in favour of a model based on another of the department’s suite of modules – the Survey course, meaning lectures front-loaded followed by a choice of smaller seminars at the end of the course.

Outcome

This was taken to the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Departmental Board, and has been the mode of teaching for the module (in its Welsh and English identifiers) since 2011-12. In the Autumn 2012 meeting of the Staff Student Consultative Committee student representatives were far more positive about the course. The new mode of teaching suggested by the students has addressed a number of areas – adding a dimension of choice, enabling them to specialise in areas of interest, reducing the size of seminar classes, and introducing the seminar component at a time in the course when students were better prepared for discussion. Student input has also resulted in a quantitative improvement. The fail rate in 2012 dropped significantly (2011 fail rate – 15%, 2012 – 5.7%).

The future

Discussions have continued with the Staff Student Consultative Committee on the development of this course. Current changes being mooted include a shift in the nature of assessment, making the two essays submitted count for credit and thus reducing the weight of the three day take away exam that has been the sole means of assessing this course. Staff and students are also discussing ways of allowing further room for choice and specialisation within the course.

Dr Martyn Powell, Department of History and Welsh History, Aberystwyth University

Aberystwyth University, Institute of Human Sciences, Psychology Department: Student Peer Support Service

Making the transition to higher education can be a challenging time for new students. The Institute of Human Science, Psychology Department has listened to the student voice, and is responding to student’s reported needs for more support when facing the demands of undergraduate life. The department has developed a distinctive and innovative peer support service, designed and delivered by students, for students. Following successful piloting in 2010, the service has been refined and is supported both within the department, and by external support from the main Aberystwyth SignPost Mentoring Scheme.
The philosophy behind the scheme is that students understand the concerns of their fellow students in a way which is different to the understanding of staff. Mentors are sought from second-year students who volunteer to participate. These students are trained in listening skills by University ‘Sign-Post’ staff and then undertake the role of peer mentors for ‘freshers’. As these students progress they mentor those that follow them. In this way, the numbers of student mentors, and their experience, is maintained with the aim of making the service sustainable. On-going supervision support is provided by Sign Post staff and students also support each other.

The system is managed by Joseph Keenan, a post-graduate student in the department and one of Psychology’s first graduates. Joseph is a veteran of student mentoring having undertaken this role during his school years prior to joining the department. Being a student centered service reduces perceived barriers to engagement permitting the delivery of effective and appropriate support where, and when, it is most needed. Both mentors and mentees benefit. The undergraduates develop the team working, communication and negotiation skills essential for employability. The postgraduates develop interviewing and selection skills valuable for professional life. Whilst mentees receive help with matters they may feel inhibited about discussing with staff; mentors develop their psychological awareness of the needs of others, and how to develop awareness of their own requirements for self-care when working with the challenges of common student problems.

Going forward, the aim is to roll out the scheme across the Institute of Human Sciences in 2013 allowing students in both Psychology, and Sport and Exercise Science, to benefit from the opportunity. The scheme is reviewed and updated annually and additional training provided. For example, in January 2013, MindAberystwyth will be providing ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) which will provide students, and staff, with the skills to identify, and respond appropriately, to individuals who are at risk of self-harm.

Professor Kate Bullen, Institute of Human Sciences, Aberystwyth University

**Penglais Farm Student Residences Project**

The University is providing a significant new provision of ‘high-end’ residential accommodation for 2014 comprising 900 en-suite bedrooms and 100 en-suite studio flats to with a CapEx value of c.£50m adjacent to its main Penglais Campus. This provision is designed to provide an appropriate resource for a University that prides itself on its ‘residential student experience’ that will attract a full range of home, EU and overseas undergraduates and postgraduates, and is a key element in delivery of the University’s Strategic Plan. Part of the development is also intended to provide bespoke accommodation and facilities for the University’s Welsh medium student body, as a substitute for existing provision at Neuadd Pantycelyn. The procurement route is via the OJEU Competitive Dialogue process.

Engagement with the student body (as part of a stakeholder approach) has been in place through the process:

- Student representation in the technical and design work-streams (those
areas that affect the user-interface) throughout the process has resulted in decision-making by the Project Team that has taken account views from the student body.

- Student representatives have been able to view and critique design solutions for building internals and externals, overall master plan, and landscaping, and physical mock-ups of study bedrooms, that has resulted in significant improvements to design solutions.

- Companies participating in the procurement process have been required to make their expert teams available to present their design and technical solutions directly to the student representatives in face to face sessions, and receive direct feedback, and in this way the student representatives have had an opportunity to be heard directly, to explain first-hand the modern day expectations and lifestyles of students, and, as representatives of the student body, now have valuable understanding of some parts of the workings of a fully commercial OJEU process.

- The involvement of successive UMCA Presidents over the timescale of the procurement process has been able to ensure that the particular views of the University’s Welsh medium students have been heard during the design process.

- The President of the Students Union and the President of UMCA are full members of the University Council and are present in meetings when formal reports are made to Council on the Penglais Farm Project. In this way they can ensure that their views and concerns are being taken into account in the procurement process and reported correctly to the University’s decision-making bodies.

- Due to the commercial and confidential requirements of the OJEU process representation of the student body has been through the elected officers of the Guild of Students.

James Wallace, Aberystwyth University

### Student-led Conference

The Department of International Politics has launched a new annual ‘Student Conference’ initiative, with the first conference due to take place in March 2013 on the Aberystwyth University campus. The conference is organised by students, for students and with full student participation as panel organisers, presenters and chairs. The conference theme and organising team were chosen through a competitive process open to all undergraduate and taught postgraduate students in the Department. The winning team proposed the theme “2013: The United Nations Year of Water Cooperation”, and the conference is expected to attract 50-70 participants.

We envisage many positive impacts from the conference. First and foremost it is an intellectual endeavour that will generate a buzz of ideas and debate, showcasing student excellence and extending the Department’s vibrant research culture (currently most visible and developed among research postgraduates) to those studying for taught degrees. It will provide a great
opportunity for participating students to undertake writing and public debate, to express their ideas and perhaps develop intellectual networks. There is also plenty of potential to disseminate their findings and opinions. The student organisers envisage a range outputs, including publishing a ‘special issue’ of the Department’s student journal *Interstate*, writing posts for the Department student blog, and using social media to publicise the conference and extend the networks it creates. The organisers also have plans to attract local and regional media interest. All of these activities offer extremely valuable achievements, experiences and skills to our students, and also promote the role of the University within wider intellectual debate and cultural life in Wales.

The conference will provide a range of opportunities for the student organisers and participants to enhance their employability. The organisers must develop a stimulating intellectual rationale, organise and think through the logistics of the event, set and work within a budget, develop a marketing strategy and disseminate the conference outputs. The tendering process itself offers valuable experience that is relevant to a wide range of career paths. Through tendering, the student teams bidding to organise the conference must complete an application form succinctly and convincingly, and all teams receive feedback on their applications, from which they can learn and hone their skills. The conference also offers fantastic opportunities to the conference paper-givers, encouraging writing skills and providing a friendly yet professionalised forum in which they, and conference participants in general, can develop their public speaking skills. All participants should find opportunities in this activity to strengthen their CVs and provide experiences on which to draw when in writing job applications.

The Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth has a very strong reputation for its world-renowned research and excellent teaching. This ‘Student Conference’ builds on those strengths, extending our historic mission to ‘tell the world about the world’ to our vibrant student community.

Dr Lucy Taylor, Department of International Politics, Aberystwyth University

**Students as Partners – the 24/7 Focus Group**

Aberystwyth University has been working with students as partners in an innovative way to inform university policy and practice. The 24/7 Student Focus Group, close liaison with the Student Union, and an E-learning Learner Experience survey have helped us listen to the student voice more closely.

The 24/7 Student Focus Group invites student input into decisions and recommendations made by Information Services (IS). A broad range of students participate in the group, which meets several times a year. Topics have included: use of technology to enhance learning, a new email system, new Blackboard provision, library search portal, service desk provision, printing needs for printer acquisition and reading lists.

Students were recruited through several methods. Initially, we used the IS user survey combined with general publicity, at times inviting students who were present in the library to join. In 2012-13, a graduate trainee recruited 140 students at the Fresher’s Fayre. From that list, a balanced group representing all university departments was invited to attend individual sessions.
Sessions had from six to twelve students. A general facilitator, a note-taker, and a staff member from the area of IS relevant to the session topic participated. Methods used in sessions include traditional focus group methodology, buzz groups, nominal groups, H-form (pros and cons), written questionnaires, and demonstrations. Student input was captured using Post-it notes, flipchart paper, and audio recording. We favoured methods that allowed students to jot down their own ideas first, prior to discussion, because that generated a wider range of responses.

Rewards for participants included a modest amount of printer credit and seasonal treats such as mince pies. While treats created a relaxed atmosphere, the biggest benefit was having student opinions heard and acted upon. For example, students said that they needed to print in colour but price was a barrier. IS responded by acquiring new printers that permitted a drastic reduction in price for colour printing.

There were unexpected fringe benefits in the programme. IS staff, who normally have little contact with students, can talk with them directly. Students can learn about services they were previously unaware of. Sessions also give students an additional way to meet each other - they often exchanged emails.

Some considerations when running sessions such as these are:

- **Timetable** - Hold the session as early as possible before a decision is made;
- **Prepare** - Students appreciate the effort made by staff. We recommend drawing up a plan with realistic estimated timings;
- **Keep to time** - Getting off-topic can sometimes reveal useful information, but make sure to leave enough time to cover the targeted topics;
- **Listen** - Spend more of the session time listening to students than you do speaking to them.

Two other activities complemented the 24/7 group. Close collaboration with the Student Union is invaluable. For example, Union officers were invited to preview and provide input into the new Blackboard interface prior to development.

We held an e-learning learner experience (LEX) study as part of Aberystwyth’s Gwella activity. Several 24/7 group sessions explored topics from the survey in more depth. LEX was a student experience survey, rather than a league-table-type satisfaction survey. It asked students about their use of technology for learning, how technology is being used by their tutors, and recommendations for tutors. We garnered many useful lessons from the study.

A university-level profile is publicly available on the Nexus website (http://nexus.aber.ac.uk/xwiki/bin/view/Main/About+Gwella). Results were then broken down by department. Results were sent to the Pro Vice Chancellor for Learning and Teaching, with departmental profiles forwarded to academic departments for action.

We will run the survey again in 2013, so that we can see how use of technology has developed in our institution over the past two years.
Using a coordinated combination of activities is much stronger than using one or two methods in isolation. It allows us to make changes confident in the knowledge that we have properly listened to the student voice and engaged them as partners.

Mary Jacobs, Information Services, Aberystwyth University

**Aberystwyth University: Student voice and engagement for the Annual Fund**

Aberystwyth University’s Development & Alumni Relations Office organises an annual fundraising campaign from amongst its alumni and other stakeholders. This “Annual Fund” looks to support relatively small-scale and quickly achievable projects in the £10,000 to £45,000 range.

Whereas traditionally such projects would be nominated by academic departments and senior management, Aberystwyth has worked closely with the Students’ Union to develop fundraising projects which meet the needs and concerns of students and the student experience at the University. All of the Annual Fund’s projects improve either the facilities and services provided to students or provide enhanced access opportunities to the University.

Recent examples of this includes:

- The creation of major Student Hardship Fund available to all students;
- A set of portable floodlights for evening sports training during the winter months;
- The creation of a substantial student competition for innovation and enterprise;
- Renovation of Students’ Union entrance with enhanced display boards and posters;
- The creation of a mentoring network for students and young graduates from amongst alumni;
- A series of fully-funded three-year PhD studentships;
- A series of bursaries for a new LLM course.

In 2012/13, three quarters of the projects chosen were as a result of the recommendations of the Students’ Union (a sports coaching project and equipment for a student media organisation) or through their approval of the continuation an existing project (the Student Hardship Fund).

The primary method for raising these funds is via two four-week telephone campaigns per annum wherein alumni are called (following receipt of a letter and brochure) and asked to support whichever project inspires them. It is worth noting that these calls are undertaken by students themselves who gain valuable and marketable skills in telephone sales, making an argument, negotiating and closing. It also improves their confidence and provides work experience and a job reference. Well over one hundred students per year benefit from this training.
Students themselves take an active part in the fundraising for their projects, with the Union organising events to generate additional income for the Annual Fund.

Julian Smyth, Aberystwyth University

**Training for Effective Student Representation**

This initiative was introduced to develop the role of student course representatives from the Staff Student Consultative Committee (SSCC) within the Department of Sport and Exercise Science and the wider University. The purpose was to prepare student representatives to fulfil their roles effectively and illustrates the Department’s commitment to ensuring that students provide proper and effective representation on academic issues.

The SSCC provides a forum and formal means for students to voice their opinions and provide feedback on academic issues affecting their studies. Student course representatives from the Department of Sport and Exercise Science are involved in relaying peer feedback and opinion on teaching and learning matters with the aim of improving the overall learning experience for students within the Department.

The Department of Sport and Exercise Science has worked closely with the Students’ Union, which has delivered a range of training courses to SSCC representatives in the 2011–2012 and 2012–2013 academic sessions. In total, 12 sessions were offered to student representatives across the University at the beginning of the 2012–2013 academic session. The courses were well attended by SSCC representatives from the Department of Sport and Exercise Science, with six attendees in the 2011–2012 session (6 undergraduates) and six in the 2012–2013 session (5 undergraduates, 1 postgraduate). These courses have allowed students to discuss their role with other representatives across the University, become aware of student representation structures and to become familiar with resources to assist in their role (for example, National Student Survey results and Key Information Sets). The training also helps students to develop transferable and employment-relevant skills such as problem solving and communication. The Department is in discussion with the Students’ Union to explore the introduction of additional training for SSCC representatives on “How to chair meetings”. It is hoped that this will empower students to take a more prominent role in the governance of the Departmental SSCC in future and enhance staff-student interaction.

The Department of Sport and Exercise Science is committed to continually developing effective student representation and staff-student communication within the Department. The inclusion of Departmental course representatives in training courses, run by the Students’ Union, is an example of this. Student representatives are better prepared to carry out their role and benefit from improved support from peer networks across the University and the Students’ Union.

Dr Joanne Hudson, Aberystwyth University
Twitter as a Learning Tool

Since the autumn of 2010, I have been using Twitter in my undergraduate and Master’s teaching alongside more traditional, face-to-face teaching methods such as lectures and seminar discussions. I began to experiment with using Twitter in teaching as a way of encouraging students to engage with the subject outside of scheduled contact hours. I have found that when students follow relevant Twitter accounts (such as those of policymakers, non-governmental organisations, journalists and activists as well as other academics), it can help them to appreciate the ‘real world’ relevance of the discipline.

I had previously experimented with using discussion and blog features of the University’s virtual learning environment (VLE) to encourage student discussion outside the classroom. I found that, while some students responded well to the opportunity to comment on topics related to the material they were studying and to link to relevant websites, only a small minority actively participated and all had to be reminded to ‘visit’ the VLE. The fact that many students were already familiar with Twitter and had their own accounts, as well as the ease with which the technology could be accessed (on phones as well as on computers) has increased the participation and mimics the sort of informal conversations that students often have about their courses outside the classroom.

At the beginning of a semester, I provide students with a general introduction to Twitter and how it will be used in the module. Students are given suggestions of accounts to follow (including my own) and encouraged to use a hashtag that includes the course code (such as #IP36720) in any tweets about the module. Twitter gives students the opportunity to see for themselves, in real time, that the topics they are reading about and discussing in their degree studies are also being debated and acted on by professionals. This brings the subject to life for many students in a way that classroom discussions simply cannot.

I have also found that Twitter allows my students to be more than simply passive observers or consumers of information. It permits an expansion of the academic community, allowing them to share links to news stories or blogs with each other and to ask questions and make comments (to each other and to me) about the course material. It also allows students to engage directly and indirectly with professionals outside the academic community. For example, I take note of particularly insightful comments made during seminar discussions and tweet a few of them each week. In each of the modules where I have used Twitter, some of the non-academic professionals whose Twitter accounts I follow (and who, in turn, follow mine) notice what I am doing and ask questions or make comments about my tweets relating to the module, leading to exchanges about the students’ views on a topic. Sometimes students themselves tweet about, or directly to, a journalist, activist or official they are following and this initiates some discussion between them. In one case a student had a series of exchanges with a Moscow-based Western journalist about his dissertation project on civil society in Russia and quoted the information he obtained through Twitter in the submitted dissertation.
In 2012-13 I am convening the Department’s undergraduate dissertation module, and the students and I have been tweeting about the processes of identifying a suitable research topic, finding relevant sources and of course writing the dissertation itself.

My experiences of using Twitter in teaching indicate that it is possible to take advantage of students’ engagement with social media to expand their engagement with their academic studies, and that this engagement can provide an additional – and perhaps unexpected – way to hear the student voice.

Dr Jenny Mathers, Department of International Politics, Aberystwyth University

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**Bangor University**

**Bangor University Students and their relationship with the University Council.**

The Student Voice contributes to governance through Council in the following ways:

a. Students are represented by their sabbatical officers on all Task Groups (ie the University’s key decision-making bodies), major task and end groups and development and project boards. The University also established from 2005 a ‘Student Forum’ – which contains representatives of the University Executive as well as sabbatical officers, but also representatives of all categories of students (including postgraduate, part-time, international etc). All these bodies in turn feed into the University Executive and are reported to Council.

b. Two students, appointed by the Students’ Union (one of whom must be the President of the Students’ Union) serve on the University Council. Student representatives are encouraged to contribute to discussions and are given training on their role as Council members. This includes their role in feeding back to the student body on decisions taken at Council. There is a formal committee on which students are represented (the SU Task Group) which oversees the relationship with the Students Union on behalf of the Council. A new Relationship Agreement, approved by the Students’ Union Task Group, was signed in 2012.

c. Processes are now in hand to increase the flow of information from the student body to Council. During 2011/12, Bangor was subject to Institutional Review by the Quality Assurance Agency. For this, the Students’ Union produced an in-depth and detailed appraisal of the student experience in their Student Written Submission, which was reviewed and discussed at University Council. Following this, the Students’ Union have committed to producing an evidence-based annual report on the student experience, the first of which is to be published at the end of this academic year. This document will be presented to Council annually along with the results of the NSS. The Students’ Union gives a formal presentation on its activities annually at the meeting of the
University Court (which includes all members of the Council, together with representatives of various organisations in North Wales). We are also intending to include a briefing from the Students Union in the University’s ‘Governor Development Programme’ from September 2013.

d. Members of Council regularly attend and support student-led activities such as sporting events, fundraisers, concerts etc. Council themselves have also instituted events and awards which enable them to engage with the student body in a variety of ways; for example, the Council instituted a 'High Sheriff's Award' to support voluntary activity by students in the local community (this was made possible by the efforts of one Council member during the year in which he served as High Sheriff, but it has continued). A presentation was made in the presence of all Council members at a lunch in the University. This also led to the Chair of Council inviting leading members of 'Student Volunteering Bangor' to tea with him and a tour of the House of Lords in April 2012.

How student voice is captured through different elements of the student experience

Bangor University is placing a great deal of emphasis on capturing and responding to the student voice in relation to the full range of its student-facing activities. This emphasis, while largely operational, also informs discussion at Executive and Council level, thus contributing to governance by informing policy and reassuring Council that the needs of the student body are being met.

A major vehicle for this dialogue is the Student Experience Enhancement Strategy which maps out our strategic approach from 2011 to 2014. It represents a commitment to the enhancement of the student experience which requires the University to review all student-related activity from the perspective of its diverse and changing student body. Underpinned by the principle of working with students as partners and written in collaboration with Bangor Students’ Union, following University-wide consultation, the strategy builds on Bangor University’s existing strengths, responds to the national context and identifies key priorities for development. It takes into account key performance indicators such as the National Student Survey as well as publications such as HEFCW’s Strategic Approach to the Student Experience and NUS' Surfing the Wave: The Future Landscape of the Student Movement. The strategy’s priorities for enhancement are aligned to the University’s Joint Strategies for Learning and Teaching & Widening Access 2011/12 to 2012/14 and the International Education Strategy 2011-2015, as well as Bangor’s Institutional Fee Plan. The following three key sections, taken from the strategy document (in italics), demonstrate how the student voice is captured and fed into academic strategy and the development of services. Each of the sections has been written in direct response to student consultation. A full version of the strategy can be found here:

www.bangor.ac.uk/about/sees.php.en
Strategic priorities for enhancement include:

**The Student Learning Experience**

Students at Bangor benefit from good academic staff-student relationships. Numerous areas of innovation in teaching and learning exist across academic schools, and the University is supported by a reliable and resilient IT infrastructure which provides students with tools to study flexibly from wherever they are. A wide variety of programme choice is a positive feature of study at Bangor with a breadth of combined and joint honours courses promoting inter-disciplinary learning. The following strategic priorities for enhancement build on Bangor’s student-centred approach to teaching and learning to ensure all students receive the optimum conditions in which to realise their academic potential.

- **Through a commitment to inducting all students at all levels of study to the specific requirements of their new learning environment, the University will support students in overcoming barriers to academic progression due to variations in background and prior experience (for example: students from non-UK education systems (in line with our International Curriculum Enhancement Project), students with no previous family experience of HE or older students with non-traditional entry qualifications (in line with the Strategic Aims and Objectives of our Widening Access Strategy).**
  
  Academic support for students will be provided through a combination of embedded, progressive skills development within the curriculum (including in-session English language teaching as outlined in our International Education Strategy) and a Study Skills Centre (in line with our Institutional Fee Plan for 2012/13) that will provide students with direct access to advice and information on all aspects of academic practices. The Study Skills Centre will work in collaboration with academic schools to support the embedding of skills development within the curriculum.

- **To ensure that all students receive equitable treatment in support of their learning, the University’s minimum standard of assessment and feedback practice will be reviewed through the Assessment and Feedback Enhancement Project to ensure consistent implementation across all schools. These minimum standards will be clearly communicated to all students and implementation in all forms of assessment at all levels will be monitored through robust school-based systems, overseen through a themed Quality Assurance Audit. Minimum standards will include: use of formative assessment, clear assignment briefs, explicit marking criteria, and feedback that is timely and of sufficient detail and clarity to enable students to improve.**

- **The University is committed to supporting a fully embedded Students’ Union run Course Rep System active in all schools and at all levels (as referenced in our current Learning and Teaching Strategy and Institutional Fee Plan for 2012/13). Each school will provide a nominated staff member to be responsible for ensuring Course Reps are recruited (via an elections process) and facilitated in communicating with students within the school. Each school will have a fully operational staff-student liaison committee, meeting at least every semester, populated with key academic and administrative staff, Course Reps and a cross-section of students from all**
levels of study, with outcomes fully communicated to all staff and students within the school.

- **To enhance our systems for internal communications, the University will develop a holistic facility that is used consistently across all schools and services resulting in each student’s university homepage delivering relevant and timely information that is tailored to their degree discipline, stage of study and personal circumstances. The facility will include a range of relevant, convenient on-line services to streamline administrative touch-points with the University.**

- **As part of its commitment to the development of excellence in the student learning experience, the University will facilitate a university-wide approach to the rapid dissemination of school-based innovations in teaching and learning through the work of the Academic Development Unit. Through the sharing of best practice in areas such as interactive teaching methods, deployment of Blackboard and lecture capture technology, all students can benefit from innovations within schools.**

- **To ensure comparability in the student learning experience across schools, consistency in the quality of provision of learning resources and teaching facilities will be maintained across all degree programmes (as referenced in our Institutional Fee Plan for 2012/13). This comparability of provision will cover the availability and range of books, journals and e-resources, the consistent use of Blackboard to support learning and the provision of high quality teaching and learning spaces and facilities.**

- **As part of its continuing commitment to providing an equitable educational environment, the University will strategically review its mechanisms for embedding inclusive policy and practice at both central and school level.**

- **The University acknowledges the unique challenges faced by part-time students and will incorporate this awareness into the planning and development of teaching and learning paying attention to issues such as timetabling, advance notice of changes to arrangements, access to facilities and the availability of academic support.**

- **To enhance provision for students studying joint and combined honours programmes, a review of the experience of these students will be conducted to identify issues and areas of best practice. This review will be the starting point for working with schools to develop robust mechanisms for ensuring equitable treatment for students studying joint and combined honours programmes.**

**Welsh Medium Provision**

Bangor University is at the forefront of Welsh medium education and offers a wide range of modules and courses at undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) levels through the medium of Welsh or bilingually. The University’s comprehensive Welsh Language Scheme also ensures that students can access services in Welsh and that Welsh and English enjoy equal status in all aspects of University life. There are close links between the University’s Welsh speaking population and the wider Welsh language community. Key priorities for continuing enhancement include:
• Further promotion of the full range of Welsh medium provision through diverse publicity methods to increase awareness amongst prospective students and encourage engagement amongst undergraduates and postgraduate students;

• Continuing development of the range of Welsh medium modules available to students through, for example, the Welsh medium enhancement project and opportunities offered through Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol;

• Further promotion of Welsh medium funding opportunities available to undergraduate and postgraduate students (from internal and external funds);

• Further promotion and development of the support offered to students to maintain and further improve their Welsh language skills (oral and written communication) as well as an emphasis of the relevance of Welsh language and bilingual skills to the employability agenda;

• A College-level approach to the evaluation of the Welsh medium student experience to share best practice and better support to students within schools with smaller numbers of Welsh medium students;

• Further promotion of the University’s bilingual services for students;

• Facilitation of University-wide social activities to bring together both fluent Welsh speaking students and Welsh learners with specific emphasis on day-time activities in order to better engage non-residential students;

• Further opportunities for Welsh medium students to engage with the Wales-wide community in order to develop and enhance the cultural, economic, social and political agenda;

• Further enhancement of the Welsh medium training opportunities for postgraduate students;

• Development of knowledge transfer opportunities with Welsh language organisations at undergraduate and postgraduate levels through workplacements, work-based learning and KTP partnerships;

• Promotion and development of Welsh medium opportunities for doctoral and post-doctoral researchers;

• Further development of Welsh medium training and work experience opportunities that respond to the skills and employability agenda in order to help prepare Welsh-speaking students for the workplace.

Development and Design of Services and Facilities
Bangor University provides a wide range of services and facilities to its students in support of the student experience, from accommodation to sports facilities to support services promoting personal well-being. In order to ensure that services and facilities are responsive to the needs of the diverse student body, the University is committed to a partnership approach to service and facility development that will embed student feedback and suggestions into evaluation and forward planning.

• In acknowledgement of the diversity of the student population, all university activities will be evaluated and designed with the full range of
students in mind taking into account the needs of undergraduates and postgraduates, home and non-UK students, part-time and non-residential students. Moving beyond the traditional office-hours-based provision will ensure greater flexibility of access to cater for the diverse needs of our students. This will be supported by the development, in collaboration with Information Services, of online service delivery to improve access to and flexibility of services.

- To ensure that services and facilities are meeting the needs of our students, all services will develop appropriate mechanisms for gathering feedback from students as part of the evaluation and forward planning of the service. Each service’s plan for integrating student feedback into evaluation and forward planning will be developed through facilitation from the Director of Student Experience, in consultation with the Students’ Union, to ensure robust student representation across all activities that impact on the student experience. Likewise, future developments in facilities will be planned in full consultation with the Students’ Union so that the University can best direct resources towards the needs of its students.

- The University is sympathetic to the financial cost of a university education, and is committed to maintaining controlled and transparent pricing for all the facilities it provides for students such as accommodation, catering, sports, nightclub and other social facilities. Where profits are made from students’ use of these facilities, there will be reinvestment into the continuing improvement and development of the facilities in line with student feedback.

The implementation of the strategy is overseen by a Steering Group reporting to the University’s Executive through the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Students). The strategy was presented to Council prior to its launch. To date, many of the initiatives have been launched, including, but not limited to the Study Skills Centre, the Assessment and Feedback standards, the Course Representative System and the Teaching Facilities improvement scheme. Each of these has been undertaken in dialogue with the Students’ Union and as a result of student feedback during the consultation process and through the NSS, the QAA and our internal quality assurance mechanisms.

The Student Experience Enhancement Strategy will be reviewed in the summer in order to identify issues which remain outstanding and in order to begin the consultation for the next strategy which will cover 2014-2017.

Innovative methods of listening to the student voice

Bangor University has recently invested in a three-year project focussed on increasing opportunities for student engagement. The Embedding the Student Voice Project employs one full-time member of staff reporting directly to the PVC (Students). The project officer works closely with academic schools to enhance mechanisms that involve students in the development of teaching and learning. The project aims are tied to the Wales Initiative for Student Engagement and we are fully committed to developing best practice in this area. The overarching aim of the project is to support the development
of a University-wide network of innovative, school-based systems that embed students in the process of quality assurance and the enhancement of teaching and learning. Through collaborative working with academic staff within schools, the project will identify, develop and disseminate best practice in gathering and utilising student feedback to enhance teaching and learning and increase student engagement.

Aspects of the project include research into sector-wide best practice around student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement processes, and identifying existing best practice within Bangor University; working with the Quality Assurance Unit to identify priority areas for improving student engagement with and participation in quality assurance and enhancement processes; working collaboratively with academic schools in the development of localised systems for embedding students in quality assurance processes; supporting academic schools in developing initiatives which encourage and enhance student engagement in learning, and actively disseminating these innovations between schools; developing, with academic schools, systems for communicating to students any improvements which have been developed in line with student feedback, with the aim of increasing their engagement; working with academic schools to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of new and existing mechanisms for gathering and utilising student feedback; upholding the institution's commitment to partnership with the Students' Union to develop a co-ordinated approach to student representation at school level; and identifying external networks through which to disseminate Bangor's innovations in this area.

The Project began in September 2012 but has already begun to open dialogue between staff and students on enhancing the student experience. For example, during the first half of this academic year, the Student Voice Project initiated an NSS Action Plan Day in our College of Arts and Humanities. Working with the Students' Union, the day brought together students and staff from every academic school in the College to discuss and dissect last year's NSS results. The aim of this day was to enable staff to better understand the NSS data from a student perspective and build relationships with the shared aim improving the student experience. Much fruitful discussion came from staff and students identifying differences in their interpretation of the data, and working together each school drew up action plans based on this dialogue. These plans are now being implemented in each academic school, with progress monitored via Staff / Student Liaison Committees.

Cardiff University

College Forums and the Education Exec at Cardiff University

Prior to the beginning of 2012/13, Cardiff University restructured its 27 Academic Schools into three Colleges:

- College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
- College of Biomedical and Life Sciences
- College of Physical Sciences
Cardiff University Students’ Union were keen to embrace this new structure and reflected this in their revision of Academic Council. Academic Council had previously been a forum for Senior Student Academic Representatives (one Undergraduate and one Postgraduate from each Academic School) to come together to discuss issues and provide input to University developments. These forums ran three times a year and recent discussion points have included the development of our Education Strategy and our Student Charter.²

Whilst Academic Council worked well and provided valuable contributions to key University business, the restriction on attendance meant that certain areas of the student population were under-represented, particularly from our larger schools. The introduction of the new College structure provided the opportunity to look at how more students could be included in the important discussions stimulated by these forums, and how more time could be spent considering discipline-specific issues. The decision was taken to disband the Academic Council and form in its place College Forums for each of the three Colleges, with each to be held three times per session. Membership has been expanded to include all Student Chairs of Student-Staff Panels, which has developed the inclusivity of the forums and is reflective of the varied sizes of the Schools.

Thanks to the excellent partnership relationship between the Union and the University, whilst the College Forums are facilitated by the Students’ Union, Cardiff University staff are invited to attend and present developments for consultation purposes. The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience and Academic Standards, is also invited to attend and has found these to be an important element in listening to and acting on the Student Voice; bringing the outcomes from the forums together with other evidence from Student Voice activity to develop University policies and procedures. Where a college has a particular area of concern, appropriate speakers from the Professional Services are invited along to the Forum to answer the specific questions, but more importantly to listen to the students concerns and work with the students to develop solutions.

To ensure that overarching, University-wide issues are given their due concern within the College structure, an Education Exec has also been established. The Education Exec consists of four reps from each of the three Colleges, including two undergraduates and two postgraduates (Taught and Research). All 12 members are democratically-elected by their peers. The Education Exec works closely with the Education and University Affairs Officer, meeting on a monthly basis, and helping with educational campaigns, running the College Forums and attending various University meetings including the Education and Students Policy Network. The members of the Education Exec are well briefed on University matters whilst also grounded in the educational concerns that are important to students. The Education Exec

² These are outlined in further detail in the HEA Wales publication: Future Directions for Higher Education in Wales: Students as Partners (2012). Available online at: www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/events/academyevents/2012/Students_as_Partners_190412_1138_FINAL.pdf
are the first point of contact when student opinion is needed on educational issues by the Students’ Union or the University.

While the operation of the Education Exec is still in its early days, and lessons have been learnt to improve this for next year, its formation is providing the Students’ Union and the University with a group of well-informed students who can provide an enhanced and agile route for the student voice to feed into the governance of the University.

**Figure 1:** An overview of how the Student Representation System, the College Forums and the Education Exec feed into the governance of Cardiff University.

**Taking a Strategic Approach to Student Voice**

Student Voice is the opportunity for students to actively express their opinions and be partners in the decision making of the University regarding the planning, implementation and evaluation of their educational experience. The Cardiff University approach to Student Voice has been developed, in partnership with our students, based on the concept that there are opportunities to involve students at three levels of engagement:
**Involvement** Opportunities are provided for students to express individual opinions, perspectives, ideas and concerns on their experiences.

**Participation** Opportunities are provided for students to take a more active role in a defined activity.

**Partnership** Collaboration between the University/Schools and students, involving joint ownership and decision making over both the process and the outcome.

The Student Voice Framework was developed at Cardiff University in 2011, based on the NUS Student Engagement Toolkit. The Framework provides an overall matrix of good practice that is being used to:

- benchmark existing practice;
- provide a threshold for our Academic Schools across each of the three levels of engagement;
- highlight areas of new practice or activity that need to be developed.

The activities incorporated in the Student Voice Framework are:

- gathering, evaluating and responding to School-level, University & National feedback and surveys;
- Student Academic Representation;
- Student-Staff Panels;
- Students’ Union Elected Officers;
- and student engagement with curriculum design.

The Student Voice Framework is being used to achieve more consistent approaches to Student Voice activity across the University; providing a more robust Student Voice evidence-base to feed into the governance of the University by bringing the outcomes from a wide variety of Student Voice activity together, such as student surveys and Student-Staff Panel meetings.

To ensure our students understand the importance placed on the Student Voice by the University we have outlined the specific expectations we have of students in our Student Charter, published in August 2012. Specifically these are that students are expected to take up the opportunities provided to express their opinions, and to recognise the importance of their contributions and how this builds a legacy for the benefit of future students.

To ensure our staff understand the importance of the Student Voice the University has taken a strategic approach and implemented University guidance and procedures on the operation of the Student Academic Rep System and Student-Staff Panels. In July 2012 a definition for the purpose of our students surveys was agreed; providing a shared understanding on this aspect of the Student Voice for our Academic Schools. The purpose of student surveys for Cardiff University has been defined as:

- enabling students to provide feedback at different stages of the student lifecycle;
- enabling staff within professional services, academic schools and the Students’ Union to identify trends and patterns, and to address particular issues or concerns;
providing evidence to support the University’s processes for quality assurance and quality enhancement, both in terms of quantitative and qualitative data;

promoting engagement between the University’s academic and administrative staff, the Students’ Union and the wider student body;

identifying and disseminating areas of good practice arising from student surveys and evaluations;

helping to develop an embedded culture of continuous improvement.

We ensure that our student feedback and survey mechanisms achieve this by:

assuring students that they are being listened to, and will not suffer for any feedback they provide;

encompassing as many elements of the student experience and life cycle as possible, in order that students are given the opportunity to provide feedback on the widest range of academic, pastoral and social experiences;

providing clear instructions of the precise purpose of individual surveys and related evaluation exercises, and how these individual activities fit into the wider picture of recognising and acting upon the Student Voice;

providing clear reporting lines and structures for survey outcomes, in order that the evidence arising can be acted and reported upon in a timely, integrated and effective manner by appropriate stakeholders;

communicating the results of surveys to students in an understandable format. This helps to encourage students to respond to future feedback activities and enables students to feel part of the wider University community (the “You Said, We Did” approach);

ensuring that our survey and feedback provision is reviewed regularly, in order that the evidence arising from student surveys and evaluations can continue to inform the University’s strategic requirements and act as an appropriate measure of the student experience at a time of significant change to the financing of the HE sector.

The role and purpose of student evaluation and surveys at Cardiff University is summarised in Figure 1 below.

Ensuring that our students understand how seriously the University takes their responses to student surveys provides us with more students willing to complete surveys and offer their voice; as indicated by achieving joint-second place in the UK for response rates in the 2012 NSS, with 78% of eligible students taking part in the survey. The currently unadjusted figures for 2013 show a response rate of 80% of our eligible students taking part in the survey; an increase on the same point last year and over 10% above the sector average.

The University undertakes deep analysis of the responses from our student surveys, and has been increasing the synthesis of the free text comments
received. Templates have been established for the coding of free text comments from all student surveys (NSS, PTES, PRES, ISB and internal surveys) to ensure we can draw out the overarching messages, such as the overwhelmingly positive comments received about the teaching experience here at Cardiff. A similar method of categorising and coding the outcomes from Student-Staff Panels has been established to enable this information to be considered alongside that from student surveys. To ensure up-to-date information on Student-Staff Panels is available to both the Students’ Union and the University the coding is carried out in Google Docs, providing a single-source of evidence for access and use by the both partners. Bringing all the outcomes from Student Voice activities together provides the University with a reliable evidence-base that is used to inform all levels of governance and the development of projects and initiatives.

Figure 1: Role and Purpose of Student Surveys at Cardiff University

- **Students are surveyed:**
  - on entry (Project Q)
  - during their programme (module evaluation) (second year survey for UG) (PTES, PRES)
  - final year (NSS)
  - 6 months after graduation (DLHE Destinations of Leavers from Higher education)

- **The University:**
  - gauges level of student satisfaction
  - identifies trends and patterns
  - considers the outcomes
  - responds as required

- **This feeds into:**
  - quality processes
  - identifying good practice

- **Leading to:**
  - actions to improve the student experience
  - transparent communication of outcomes and actions
The Education and Students Policy Network

In 2011-12 Cardiff University underwent a change to its committee structure and as part of this the formal Learning and Teaching Committee was put into abeyance, making way for a new Education and Students Policy Network. Previously there had been three student members of Learning and Teaching Committee, and these places were usually taken by Elected Officers of the Students’ Union. It had been noted as part of the development of our Student Voice Framework that we needed to develop mechanisms to ensure that the wider student population were able to input directly to decision-making bodies.

The Education and Students Policy Network provided the opportunity for a more inclusive approach to be taken to its membership, of both staff and students. The Policy Network is now open to all Directors of Learning and Teaching in the 27 Academic Schools at Cardiff, and an open-invitation is sent to our Student Academic Representatives (in addition to the Students’ Union Elected Officers), with students making up approximately 20% of the attendees at each meeting. Staff from the Professional Services are also invited.

The Education and Students Policy Network meets four times a year, and its first meeting was held in January 2012. Its remit is to act as a:

- forum for policy discussion and consultation;
- mechanism for developing new proposals;
- mechanism for obtaining views on the operation of existing policy;
- means of providing advice and guidance to decision making committees or individuals;
- mechanism to help formulate the University’s position on key issues and external consultations;
- mechanism to communicate key messages to the Schools;
- mechanism to raise issues and points of interest;
- forum to share best practice;
- forum to discuss equality and diversity, as it relates to Education and Students;
- forum to discuss sustainability, as it relates to Education and Students.

The meetings of the Policy Network run as a series of structured discussion sessions, with conversation generally taking place within smaller groups rather than across the full group. Each group will have at least one student member. Operating the meetings through a series of small group discussions means that everyone in the group has time to give their opinion on the topic in depth, without feeling as if they are holding up proceedings. This format also ensures that it is a relaxed environment in which the student members can make valuable contributions, which may not have been voiced if they felt uncomfortable speaking in front of the full group. The topics for discussion, and the specific questions posed, are carefully thought through to ensure that the students feel able to participate fully.

Since its inception, the Education and Students Policy Network has been a key route for some of the University’s major developments, for example:

- **The Student Charter**: allowing the network to identify positives from early drafts and raise any concerns.
Key Information Sets (KIS): discussing how contact hours might best be defined and captured to be presented through KIS, leading to the swift publication of guidance.

Module Evaluation: discussing the principles that a University-wide approach to module evaluation should take and providing a consultative group for the core set of questions prior to approval.

The student input into these key developments, as equal members of the Education and Students Policy Network, has been extremely valuable; providing an additional pathway for our wider student population to feed directly into the University’s governance.

Cardiff Metropolitan University

Introduction

In its communication dated 29 October 2012, HEFCW identifies that the aim of the circular is to address a task set in its 2012-13 remit letter from the Education Minister on behalf of the Welsh Government, namely;

“I want students to have a say in the governance arrangements of their institution by ensuring that mechanisms are in place to allow the student voice to be heard and acted upon.”

It then requests that Institutions are asked to provide case studies on how the student voice contributes to governance in their institutional context.

Cardiff Met & Cardiff Met SU’s Response:-

The Students’ Union is recognised by the University as the authoritative voice of the student body and its sabbatical officers as the elected representatives. It is our view that putting forward individual case studies in isolation can be seen to be in certain instances selective as a process and may be non-representative of the relationship as a whole. Nor will they necessarily reflect the culture that exists within the University itself. We would submit that a more important outcome from this exercise is to evidence the culture of student representation and engagement within the University and the role that the SU plays in the life of the University, which is of far greater significance and relevance to meeting the Welsh Governments agenda of quality.

Any case studies that can then be highlighted from the cultural evidence can then be viewed as more representative of a positive and institutional approach to student engagement.

The University and the Students’ Union have a close collaborative relationship, which has been evidenced in submissions to the HEFCW on initiatives such as the Student Charter and the Relationship Agreement developed in accordance with the HEFCW circular W12/09HE.

Within the Institution there is a robust process for Student Engagement and consultation from the Board of Governors, Senior Management structure down through the individual Schools themselves.
We are pleased to submit this response, which has been compiled following consultation with appropriate staff and units in the University. The response provides a detailed narrative of how the student voice contributes to the governance of the University and includes examples of case studies as requested in HEFCW Circular W12/34HE.

**Board of Governors**

For this current academic year it was agreed by the Board of Governors that the number of student representatives attending Board meetings would increase to 2. Both Sabbatical Officers attend and contribute at this highest level of University governance, which includes membership of the University’s Stakeholder Forum.

In addition:

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**The President submits a report to each meeting as a standing agenda item that provides members with an update on any issues affecting the student body and progress reports on developments taking place within the Students’ Union itself**. This written report is taken early in the meeting immediately after periodic reports by the Chair and Vice-Chancellor.

“There are no restrictions placed on the content of the report and it does not go to any pre meeting for vetting before being distributed to members of the Board”. Similarly, this agenda item provides the opportunity for governors to put questions to the Students’ Union President and Vice-President.

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**Case Study 1**

The Sabbatical officers receive induction training at the commencement of the academic year with the Clerk to the Governors and attend the away day planning sessions and this year attended a training session organised by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education in London. The feedback from the Sabbatical Officers was that attendance at this event emphasised the value that the University placed on the importance of their roles.

“A new development in the last year is where the Chair of Governors meets quarterly with the officers of the Students’ Union on an informal basis, providing the opportunity for a wider discussion on institution matters affecting students”.

“This provides one element of a communication process to disseminate information from Governors, which is supplemented by agenda items at the meetings with the senior management team, podcasts from the Chair, emails and staff briefings. It has been agreed that communication to the student body should wherever possible goes through the Students’ Union media”.

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**Case Study 2**
Students’ Union Representation Structure

In recent years the Students Union has made a number of changes/improvements to its representation structure to enhance the student voice and its contribution across the University structures.

“The Students’ Union regularly reviews the representation structure and reports to the Governors via Academic Board on any proposed improvements. This year a new development to further enhance the structure was the introduction of 1st, 2nd and 3rd Year Lead Reps who would work alongside the School Representative thus creating a School specific exec team”.  
“This development will strengthen the student voice across the year groups and provide the School Reps with more feedback for meetings with the senior management in their schools”.

Case Study 3

“To improve the communication with part time, distance learning and partner / International students we have introduced a virtual 24/7 Rep. Operating through our SU website it provides students with the opportunity to submit enquiries or raise issues at anytime of the day, which are forwarded to the Vice President ensuing that they receive a prompt response”.

Case Study 4

Working with a diverse student body can be challenging, particularly when it comes to students studying at partner institutions.

“An initiative primarily aimed at enhancing the quality agenda on the academic programme, has also had knock-on benefits in terms of the student voice. Working in association with the University’s Learning & Teaching Development Unit, we introduced a Student Led Teaching Fellowship Award. Students at the London School of Commerce, a partner organisation piloted the first award and the level of engagement from the student body following on site presentations by our staff and officers was exceptional”.

Case Study 5

We have just completed our Student Submission on the Foundation Degree Program, which will be submitted to the Quality Assurance Agency. Feedback from these students was gathered using a number of techniques, ranging from questionnaires to focus groups and for students studying Dentistry.

“We piloted a new initiative where we undertook a skype focus group which to date had been used by Lecturers to deliver aspects of the academic program”.

Case Study 6

One of the main contact points between student reps and the school staff is at the Student / Staff Liaison Committees.
“One of the issues that was identified was that the structure of these could be improved by having fixed agenda items that were standard across all the schools to which the School Reps can provide updated reports”.  

Case Study 7

This means that our School Reps all feed into the meetings on issues that are important to the student body, but obviously allowing school specific issues to be added in. All minutes of these meetings are fed back to the Sabbatical Officers so they can overview what is being discussed.

Vice Chancellor Board / Cardiff Met SU

We have a regular schedule of meetings with the Vice Chancellor’s senior management team which is attended by the Sabbatical Officers and School Reps. This provides an opportunity for HE and Institution specific briefings and to agenda items that the Officers may want to discuss on specific issues with members of the senior management team that do not sit either in the school specific or academic committees.

As useful as it is for the Students’ Union officers, it provides a unique opportunity for senior management to engage with students from every school on matters that are of direct relevance to the student body.

The benefits from this level of engagement have been evidenced by the recent developments where the University has supported:-

1) The building of a new campus centre at Cyncoed and the transfer of commercial activities;
2) The refurbishment of facilities in the Student Centre at Llandaff;
3) The partnership approach to the implementation of a Fee Plan, which has allowed the Students’ Union to introduce specific services which contribute to the Government and Universities employability agenda.

A jointly developed strategic / financial plan for medium term future of the Students’ Union has been developed with senior management and is supported and endorsed by the University’s Governors. This will provide a sound financial platform ensuring that the Students' Union can provide the services expected from it by the Minister and HEFCW and allows the Students’ Union to continue to develop the above essential services for future students.

Culture of Engagement

The continued development of our representation structure has challenged all areas of the University to engage with the students to the extent that it is becoming embedded as part of the culture at the University, accepted from Governors down to the individual Schools and departments and the students themselves.
The student voice has never been more powerful, relevant and accepted by the University, which contributes significantly to the academic standards and student experience.

Ruth Foster, Students’ Union President

**Coleg Sir Gâr**

**How the learner voice is collected in Art:**
We have learner representatives at programme level - one for each year of study.
On a termly basis, the curriculum area arranges meetings to discuss Curriculum, Teaching and Learning issues and feeds back accordingly.
We also have campus groups that meet twice a year to pick up more estate related issues.
We have also had consultations over the fee plan which has identified specific issues related to its development.

**Jobs Well – Your feedback**
Over the past two years, learner and staff voice on this campus has led to:
- The movement of the Art library from Pibwrlwyd to UWTSD;
- Drop in fortnightly library sessions at the campus;
- A HE Fee Plan that includes studio fees in the overall tuition fee of £7,500;
- The continuation of the Art shop on campus with ‘Emrys Art’;
- Access to UWTSD Student Accommodation for first year students (from 2013-14);
- A regular visiting lecturer programme;
- The appointment of paid Student Ambassadors;
- The continuation of hot metal pouring on campus;
- More emphasis on employability after graduation with dedicated events;
- An improved structure for the Multi-disciplinary pathway;
- Improved marketing and branding for HE courses;
- A better system for UCAS application with local campus ownership;
- Financial support for national employer exhibitions and showcases, eg, New Designers, London Fashion week etc;
- Bursaries targeted at community first wards, childcare, care leavers, successful completion and rural transport;
- Non-means tested bursaries of up to £1000;
- Collaboration with Schools/Colleges to promote the work of the School of Art;
- Supported scholarly activity for teaching staff to underpin learning developments with students;
- Better vending facilities in reception.
University of Glamorgan

**Case Study Category: How the Student Voice is captured throughout different elements of the student experience.**

**The University of Glamorgan's multi-element approach**

The University of Glamorgan was among the first to design a multi-element system of student representation which has now been replicated by other institutions. It is not a hierarchical system since there are no reporting, management, or seniority lines between the layers; rather it is about components which meet different needs but which must work effectively together and interlink in order to engage with the student voice at all levels. The first component is the small sabbatical team of the Students Union. This team comprises the President and two Vice Presidents and it is from here that student engagement with higher level governance groups is largely, but not exclusively, drawn. The second is the faculty and project-based ‘Student Voice Representatives (SVRs)’, a 23 strong group which engages with issues outside and above their own course and take these forward to faculty level management/governance groups. The third element is the large body of democratically elected Course representatives.

**Project-based SVRs** engage with staff and students on, for example, specific strategic projects such as Welsh medium learning, Internationalising the Curriculum, or community and citizenship activities such as organising student volunteering, charity, and teambuilding events. An example of the work undertaken by the Project SVRs was in a CELT (Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching) project entitled *Internationalising the curriculum: the international students’ voice*. Two international students were appointed to lead sub-groups. The project established a web-presence with two distinct areas: a wiki for the confidential discussions of the reference group led by international students and supported by interested and knowledgeable staff, and a public facing blog to support dialogue in the community and disseminate the products of the dialogue through good practice.

The **faculty-based SVRs’** role is to liaise with students and course reps to identify issues of concern, or good practice, which can be taken forward with appropriate members of staff, groups and committees. They inform the student body of the results of issues raised on their behalf at faculty level groups. The group also liaises with the Students' Union officers, where a need arises and they attend faculty and University groups. The faculty groups on which SVRs sit are, typically, the Quality Assurance groups, Learning & Teaching Enhancement, and Research Committees. One SVR from each faculty also represents the student voice on University-level policy committees such as the Learning & Teaching Enhancement Committee, and the Research Committee.

All Student Voice Reps have direct access to the Governing Body through a termly report. Each faculty team of SVRs and each Project SVR provides their own contribution **without restrictions**; they are free to report on their activities covering any issue they would like and, consequently, the topics can have a wide variation. In the most recent of these reports the scope of matters
reported included (among other things) how the SVRs were working with staff to:

- make improvements to the procedure for applying for ‘extenuating circumstances’ applying to an element of assessment;
- draft action plans using NSS data for subjects with lower satisfaction;
- provide guidance on the use of electronic devices (iPads, smartphones etc) in lectures;
- consider amending the title of a degree programme to more accurately reflect its content and maximise students’ employability.

SVRs apply for the role, are appointed through a competitive process and they receive a merit-based scholarship payment which is assessed through the submission of a reflective portfolio and based on the levels of their engagement throughout the academic year.

Course representatives are the largest group through which the student voice is heard and they particularly capture the fine-detailed course elements of the student experience. They are democratically elected and 421 strong (at the time of writing). They engage with module tutors, course leaders and faculty support staff on matters directly at the course level. They are provided with the contact details of the SVRs and the Students’ Union sabbatical officers through their annually updated Handbook.

Through this multi-element structure, Glamorgan is optimistic that its students make a meaningful input to the different elements of their experience including improved communications, curriculum design and quality assurance and enhancement, and extra-curricular activities of campus life.

**Case Study Category: Other**

**Effective training, linkages and communications**

**Training:** The University sees it as essential that students’ representatives are fully trained and have access to on-going support in order to get the most enjoyment out of, and make the most constructive input to campus life. It is crucial that students feel confident that their input is valued and used, and that they make their input in the best environment for maximum effectiveness.

For both Student Voice Reps (SVRs) and Course Representatives, training takes the form of a ‘Basics – getting started’ session, tailored for the specific roles of each group, followed up by ‘bite-sized’ training sessions offered throughout the academic year on specific topics. The ‘Basics’ training for SVRs takes place by mid-October, immediately after their appointment and this is delivered by the SU Sabbatical Officers working in partnership with the Project Officer (Student Experience). The trainers attend NUS Wales ‘Train-the-Trainer’ sessions and make use of NUS materials. SVRs then participate in the Course Reps training which takes place at a slightly later date. Course reps training is campus-based as there are significant numbers of students involved and the SVRs and Course Reps use the opportunity to learn about the differences in their roles, to discuss communications, to learn how to make use of the student voice in the management of their courses e.g. curriculum and assessment design, and to network with each other.
Student Reps can identify topics for the ‘bite-size’ sessions for themselves. An example of this, a popular session, has been ‘Developing and Enhancing Emotional Intelligence’ in which students discuss how managing emotions well in themselves and in their relationships leads to greater self-awareness and self-confidence, better relationships and ultimately, higher academic achievement and a stronger position in the job market. Another example of how the self-identification of training needs works is that is has recently become apparent that ‘Organisational Skills’ would be a welcome bite-sized training topic for next academic year as some Reps, particularly freshers, can struggle with this. This short session will be delivered by a current SVR who has first rate organisational skills which he uses effectively in his role. The University is interested to see the effectiveness and interest levels in students-training-students and, if successful, will encourage more students with relevant skills to take on the role of Trainer.

It would be naïve to report that there is always smooth running of Course Reps training programmes. There are always Course Reps who cannot manage the training date, or they register for the role later in the term. It is a continual juggling exercise to put training dates in place at an early enough date, where it’s needed, but late enough to capture most reps. This is an issue which probably cannot be solved but the University makes adequate provision for those who miss training. This takes the shape of the Course Reps Handbook, one-to-one support from the SVRs and sabbatical officers and access to the Student Experience project Officer. The bite-sized sessions run through the year and are therefore available to late registering Reps.

**Linkages:** Following almost immediately after their initial training, the SVRs normally attend a briefing meeting with faculty ‘link’ colleagues. These are senior contacts in the faculty, such as the Chair of the faculty Board and/or the Head of Learning and Teaching or ‘Advice Shop’ colleagues. These initial sessions are vital to establish the SVRs in their role and equip them with enough knowledge and contacts on which to build throughout the year. The SVRs are able to access one-to-one advice at any time through the Students’ Union Sabbatical Officers, the Faculty named contacts and through a Project Officer based in the Vice Chancellor’s Office. This provides them with a highly reliable resource for any type or level of query which may arise and it is a very personal and constant support. In the best examples, the SVR team in a faculty has regular, normally monthly, meetings with a key, nominated member of staff and through this issues are raised and resolved very quickly.

**Communications:** It is clear to all student representatives that successful methods of communication are of singular importance to achieving success during the year. However, the University has learned that not imposing or recommending a single communications ‘vehicle’ is best. Experience has proved that it is more successful to leave the choice with the students. For example, one faculty has used the University’s virtual learning environment (BlackBoard) to set up a ‘community’ for representation and engagement. This works well as all students have access to each other within a secure environment, or Students’ Reps can filter which groups of students to reach e.g. only first year groups. Alternatively, Students’ Reps in other faculties have found that social media groups (Facebook) work very well as these can often have a familiar and welcome feel. SVRs are provided with lists of Course
Reps containing detail such as course, year, campus, and e-mail address. These lists, currently recording 421 course reps, are electronic and can therefore be filtered to target groups of reps as a need arises, for example, reaching all final year undergraduates to promote engagement with the National Student Survey. However, it should be noted that Students Reps will also use ‘low tech’ means of engaging with their student group; indeed some Reps feel that these methods still work best. This includes posters with photographs and contact details and ‘drop in’ times and locations. Communication works in a cycle in which views of students are taken forward - feedback or information is obtained - outcome reported back to students. There are always some Student Reps, possibly more frequently at course level, where there is little engagement and, to an extent, this is a fact of life. The University and other representatives can offer training, support and advice, but the representation schemes are robust enough to offer students a route around any Rep who is less than optimally effective. Neither does the University operate a one-rep-per-course system (any cohort group is welcome to select a number of reps) and this ensures there is always good coverage.

Experience has shown that good training, the right linkages and effective communications are the essential tools for tapping into the student voice. Without these there is often little or insignificant student input to management and governance at faculty or university level.

Case Study Category: Innovative methods of listening to the student voice.

Knowing students' views count: the perspective of a Student Voice Rep

Student Voice Representatives (SVRs) are one part of the student representation system at the University of Glamorgan. We work as one part of this system, along with primarily Course Representatives and the Sabbatical Officers in the Students’ Union. In respect of the issues we deal with, it would be easiest to explain us as the level between the Sabbatical Officers who attend the top level of governance meetings, and the Course Representatives who attend course-level meetings. However, as SVRs we often overlap with these other two ‘levels’; we regularly attend Course Representative meetings so that we are aware of any issues or examples of good practice that are occurring at course-level but we are also invited to Student Council meetings and University level meetings such as the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee so that we are aware of things at a University and Students’ Union level and are able to give our own input into issues discussed at these meetings.

Becoming an SVR isn’t an easy task; after filling out an application form that asks questions such as ‘What personal qualities do you consider you have that would make you a good SVR?’ and ‘How would you describe your communication skills?’ you then attend a group interview. That in itself may sound fairly easy, until you look at the number applying for the positions. Within each faculty there are only 4 undergraduate positions and 2 postgraduate. Along with the 2 Project SVRs (they do not belong to a faculty as such and have focuses different to the ‘regular’ SVRs – Welsh language
and Community and Citizenship) this means that there is a large number of students jostling it out for a relatively small (but rightly so) number of positions and the majority of these students are all as good as each other, making the hardest job the one of those who have to choose between them!

Once in position, the main aspect of a SVRs role is listening. ‘Listening’ works two ways; as SVRs we have to listen to the students we represent about any issues they have or indeed any good feedback they want to give as well. On the other side, we have to ensure we as SVRs are being listened too as well by staff and then in turn Course Reps – which we always are. If neither of these took place i.e. we didn’t listen to the students and the staff didn’t listen to us, we would be extremely ineffective as SVRs. We also have to listen to each other as we represent a large student body and we can’t all do everything. We each have the courses that we are ‘responsible’ for and the meetings that we have been delegated to attend to ensure fair representation of all students at every meeting we can go to. If we didn’t communicate between ourselves as SVRs we would essentially be living in our own little worlds, unable to make connections between them when similar problems are brought to our attention, nor would we be able to help others by sharing examples of good practice that we have come across in our ‘own little worlds’.

As SVRs we have many avenues open to us to be able to meet with students and listen to what they have to say. Primarily we work with the Course Reps, who in turn have their own ways of communicating with the students they represent, by having regular meetings with them usually once a fortnight or every 3 weeks. We also use social media and email to keep in contact in between meeting time and to feedback any information we have to the Course Reps. There’s also posters up displaying who the SVRs are for each faculty and we’re featured on the Students’ Union website so a lot of the time the students know who we are and will approach us if they feel the need too.

At the other end of the ‘listening spectrum’ there are again lots of avenues open to us to ensure that we are listened to by the right people. We attend School-level meetings with staff which are purely in place for us to make staff aware of any issues we’ve come across at a School level, as well as of course relaying any positive information we’ve heard as well. We also attend Faculty-level meetings such as Faculty Forum and Faculty Quality Assurance Committee. This enables us to take any bigger issues to the right people and to be able to play a part in getting them solved. It also means that we are able to contribute to any new procedures or ideas the Faculty are thinking of putting in place, giving them an opinion of them from the students’ perspective. The same applies for the University level meetings we are able to attend and Student Council.

As SVRs we feel we are listened too, and not only that but that students and staff alike value our opinions and suggestions. In meetings at Faculty and University level we have our own point on the agenda, and it is always at the top of the agenda, after the formalities. We are also asked to give our opinions on things that will affect the students at the University, for example Faculty mergers and restructuring. We are able to contact staff at any time via email if we need too and they are all more than happy to meet with us if needs be, outside of the organised meetings.
All in all, the student representation structure at the University of Glamorgan is effective, especially the role of the SVR. I would even go as far to say it’s probably one of the best!

Carys James, Final year student, Bachelor of Law with Criminology.

**Glyndŵr University**

**Case Study 1:**

**Students as Governors**

As a student centred university, Glyndŵr University strongly believes in ensuring that the Students’ Guild plays a full and constructive role in the governance and management of the University. Since the establishment of the University the Board of Governors has included the President of the Students’ Guild as a member. In order to strengthen further the contribution of the students the Board has invited a second representative to join the Board. At the same time the President of the Guild was invited to attend meetings of the University’s Executive.

These developments have two distinct advantages. First it allows the Board of Governors and the senior management of the University to have a greater understanding of the student mind and the level of importance of issues facing them. This insight was of particular use when the University decided on the rates of its full-time undergraduate tuition fees. The Students’ Guild, through its representation on the Board, made its position clear. Its concerns that a rate of £9,000 would disproportionately affect students from lower income families carried significant weight in the debate and led to the setting of variable rates at levels considerably lower than that of other universities in Wales.

The second advantage of having student representatives on the Board and senior management is that it allows the Students’ Guild to have a greater understanding of the overall strategies and priorities of the University. This includes contributing to the financial, marketing, recruitment and estates strategies.

Two of the biggest changes within Glyndŵr University over the past few years have been the decision to acquire a London campus and the decision to purchase the Racecourse football stadium. In both cases the student voice was clearly heard by the governors through the Guild representative on the Board. Having been involved in the decisions the Guild has worked hard to integrate the London campus into the University and has played a crucial role in the development of the campus facilities including the stadium.

The contribution of the student representatives is particularly helpful in interpreting the results of the annual National Student Survey and determining the University’s appropriate course of action. In particular this allowed the University to target more effectively those areas of learning resources which would benefit most from further investment.
One further example of how the student representatives have informed the Board is a training session organised and led by the Guild President and Vice-President for the Board members to test their knowledge and understanding of the issues facing students. In the style of the more traditional University Challenge the questions exposed some interesting gaps in the governors’ knowledge as well as demonstrating their strengths.

Case Study 2:
The Student Voice in Two Languages

All Senate committees contain student representatives who are able to ensure that the student voice is heard throughout the University’s academic decision making process. One committee which combines academic and operational responsibilities is the Welsh Medium and Language Committee. The Student Guild officer with responsibility for the language is a member of that committee.

This officer’s contributions to the committee are vital in the development of the Welsh language at Glyndŵr University. He or she is always on hand to highlight those areas where the University’s activities fall short of its obligations under the Welsh language scheme and to make suggestions on how the use of the language could be increased across the University.

Among the initiatives that have originated within the Guild was the creation of a Welsh speaking student community. Approximately 16% of the University’s total student population is Welsh speaking, yet there was little provision, either socially or academically, for them. The Guild established a communication forum for Welsh speaking students which acts as a focal point for that community. It is on hand to hear any student concerns, to offer suggestions or even just to socialise.

These links into the University’s Welsh speaking community proved very useful in the revision of the University’s Welsh language scheme and the Guild was able to push the University further than it might otherwise have done. Working Welsh badges are now used across the University by many Welsh speaking staff and students.

Welsh language events including lectures and recruitment activities are held and the University’s presence at the National Eisteddfod was transformed following the Guild’s contributions.

Never reluctant to voice the views of the University’s Welsh speaking students the Guild has made the language considerably more prominent than it had been and has given the Welsh speaking student community a prominent voice within Glyndŵr University.

Case Study 3:
The Student Council

Glyndŵr University’s commitment to being a student centred university dates back to 2001. Throughout this time it has sought constantly to enhance the
student voice and ensure its place at the centre of the University’s decision making process.

Putting a suitable structure in place to allow this involved the establishment of an infrastructure across the University at various levels to embed and formalise student representation. At the forefront of this structure were student representatives and the staff student consultative committees. In addition the President of the Students’ Guild was a member of both the Board of Governors and the University Senate, and students were represented on most of the Senate subcommittees.

Following an evaluation of the process, the student representation on the Board and Senate was doubled and the President was invited to join the University Executive.

This increased representation has proved valuable to the Students’ Guild as it has enabled students to have an input at various stages of the decision-making process.

However, the University recognised that there are limitations to that approach as the University committees by their nature deal with University business. The main forums for raising student concerns such as the SSCCs and the student representatives remained locally based.

It was generally recognised therefore that what was needed was a separate forum at a university-wide level, to be led by students.

The University’s Learning & Teaching Strategy and the Widening Access Strategy committed the University to establishing a Student Council to supplement and enhance the existing roles of the student representatives, and in September 2011 Senate approved the establishment of the Council which, chaired by the Students’ Guild President, reports to the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Subcommittee of Senate.

Members of the Council are drawn from existing student representatives. Their responsibilities differ from those of the ordinary student representatives as they provide a more senior, mentoring role. They also have a role in the recruitment of student representatives for individual programmes and are the focal point for communication with and between student representatives.

Since its formation the Student Council has taken an active role in a number of issues, most noticeably in guiding the University on the allocation of teaching resources.

Following the allocation of additional resources to the library a meeting took place between the Student Council and the Student Services Department to discuss the appropriate balance between physical books and electronic resources. These discussions allowed the University to address student concerns and allocate resources appropriately. It also provided students with renewed confidence in the representative system, which led to increased interest in the Council and its work.
The Student Council’s influence was also seen in resolving disputes over timetabling classes. Traditionally, lectures were not scheduled for Wednesday afternoons in order to allow students to represent the University in sporting events. However, when a number of lectures were scheduled for that time some of the students affected took the issue up with the Student Council. Detailed discussions between the Council and the School for Undergraduate Studies resulted in an immediate resolution to the dispute for the students concerned through the rescheduling of their lectures and a more long-term strengthening of the protocols for safeguarding Wednesday afternoons.

Case Study 4:
Use of technology

All universities make extensive use of technology and the social media in communicating with students. Facebook, Twitter, Skype and virtual learning environments all play a full role in creating and maintaining the community of learning centred around the University.

The challenge faced by universities has been to keep up with the latest technological advances and adapt them to meet as yet unidentified student needs. In some cases this is led by the university, in others by the student body itself.

One example of a student based development is the creation of a separate Freshers’ Facebook page to supplement the University’s and Students’ Guild’s own pages. The advantage of this page was that it was seen as being truly student focused and proved an important tool not only for new students but also for applicants who wanted a taste of student life.

Less corporate in its style the Freshers’ page was used by students to highlight issues of concern to students themselves. One particular example of how this works dealt with problems arising with some private student accommodation. The University and Guild were able to pick up on this issue which had not been identified through the more traditional routes and resolved the issue quickly.

With a large rural constituency and a significant number of mature students, Glyndŵr University is aware of the problems often faced in travelling into the various campuses. As a result it has made extensive use of Moodle and Skype in providing students with the opportunity to access material remotely.

Text messages remain an important communication tool and as a result of student demands the University has retained the use of SMS despite the introduction of other forms of communication such as Moodle.

Case Study 5:
Enhancing the Students’ Guild Facilities

One of the most significant decisions taken by Glyndŵr University, or its predecessors, in their 125 year history was to purchase the Racecourse Football Stadium in 2011. Not only did this secure the future of the world’s
The oldest working international football stadium, itself an act of social responsibility, but it also provided the University with an excellent opportunity to enhance the student experience.

The Students’ Guild was an active member of the decision making process through the membership of the Guild President on the University’s Board of Governors.

The main objective of the Students Guild was to ensure that the stadium became a focal point for a range of student activities and helped build links between the University and the student body.

During the course of 2012, this objective became a reality with the Students’ Guild actively involved in and leading the development of a new bar and social space for students within the stadium. Students were asked what type of facilities and services they would like to see in the new space and these elements were then included within the refurbishment plans.

The new facility was officially opened in September 2012, since when feedback has praised the enhancement of the student experience. With an ongoing schedule of events planned the venue is set to go from strength to strength.

At the same time the Students’ Guild also campaigned to have new office space. A suitable location was identified and the President and officers moved into their new offices in the library building which has proved to be more accessible and has led to many more students making use of the support, advice and guidance that the Guild can offer as well as greater engagement and interest from across the student body generally.

Case Study 6

The Student Voice in Action

The changing nature of the relationship between the University and its students has changed considerably over the years. As a result the student voice has now become an integral part of the University as the wishes of students are incorporated into all aspects of the University’s operations. This can only work, however, as long as the students continue to express their views honestly and the University responds to their comments. Confidence by the students that their views are being listened to has, therefore, to feature heavily in the relations between the University and its student body.

At Glyndŵr University the students have been encouraged to continue to provide feedback by emphasising the positive impact previous feedback has had. At the heart of this was the University’s “You Said We Did” campaign, which aimed to show how feedback obtained through such forums as the NSS, module feedback and the staff student consultative councils has succeeded in informing and in many cases leading developments across the University.

The campaign used a combination of posters, flyers, the social media and virtual learning environment to reach students. It showed how their comments led to the University investing considerably in IT and library services,
demonstrating the various schemes that exist to help students obtain graduate level employment, and the role played by the students in major capital investments across the University's campuses.

Through demonstrating that student feedback produces real tangible results the University hopes not only to ensure that the student experience is enhanced but also that future generations of students continue to contribute towards the building of the University. The success of the campaign demonstrates that the University truly is a student centred university.

The Open University in Wales

1. Ways in which the student voice feeds into the governing body

There are two student members on the University Council:

- The President of the Open University Students' Association (ex officio);
- A student member appointed by the Open University Students’ Association.

Student members of Council benefit from a bespoke induction programme focusing on the role and responsibilities of Council members.

The Council naturally has a close relationship with the University Senate where there are six student members appointed by the Open University Students’ Association (OUSA). The student representatives on Senate are, in turn, supported in their role by the OUSA Senate Reference Group. The OUSA Senate Reference Group features representatives largely drawn from the Regional and National Committees and meets before each Senate.

The purpose of the OUSA Senate Reference Group is to act in an advisory capacity to the student members of Senate and in particular, to ensure that the student members of Senate have the benefit of a face to face forum in which they are able to draw on the diversity of circumstances, views and opinions of students as allowed for by OUSA within its representative structures.

2. How the student voice is captured throughout different elements of the student experience?

The diverse student body of the Open University is represented through a national and regional committee structure which is linked to the University’s Central Consultative Committee.

National and Regional committees meet three times a year and provide opportunity for information sharing and consultation. Student representatives can express their views and raise questions with key staff in their respective nation/region for action as appropriate. Through representation on the University’s Central Consultative Committee, regional and national student representatives also have a voice in key matters facing the University as a whole.

The terms of reference for the Central Consultative Committee are as follows:
1. To discuss and where appropriate to make recommendations to the relevant University body or officer upon any matters concerning the University which are of interest to registered students, or to associate lecturers.

2. To act on behalf of the General Assembly in all such ways as the Council shall determine and to comment upon any matters referred to it by other bodies within the University.

As noted in the terms of reference, the Central Consultative Committee currently represents the interests of the student body and the University’s Associate Lecturers. Where students are concerned, the Committee includes in its membership one registered student put forward by the student representatives from each of the thirteen National and Regional Committees. As such, any particular issues that are raised at regional and national level through the student representatives can be fed into the University’s main central consultative forum.

In addition the Committee has a place for one student from Continental Europe to be appointed by the student members of the North Region Committee.

OUSA representatives on the Central Consultative Committee are as follows:

- The President of the Open University Students’ Association (ex officio);
- One Vice-President of the Open University Students’ Association (OUSA) appointed by the Open University Students’ Association;
- The student member of Council, appointed by the Open University Students’ Association.

The Committee is also attended by the General Manager of the Open University Students’ Association

The Central Consultative Committee meets four times a year and reports to the University’s General Assembly although it can also report directly to Senate or other University committees as appropriate.

3. Innovative methods of listening to the student voice

OUSA provides a range of training packages, including online resources, to ensure student members on University committees (whether these be central, regional/national or Faculty committees) are appropriately supported in their representative roles.

Regional and National Committees provide for locally agreed opportunities for students to contribute in different ways. For instance, the Open University in Wales Committee rotates the chair on an annual basis between an OUSA representative, an Associate Lecturer representative and the National Director. Chairing the Committee gives the OUSA representative, and by extension the overall student contribution to the Committee, parity of esteem. It also serves to provide the OUSA representative with a significant opportunity for developing transferable skills (including organisation of meetings, chairing and managing the contributions of various constituencies).
The University’s Institute of Educational Technology (IET) oversees internal surveys of Open University students as well as the analysis of external student data such as that provided by the National Student Survey.

In addition to surveys conducted by IET, the student voice is regularly captured on a Faculty, regional or national basis by specific studies. As an example, a member of Student Services staff in the Wales office currently holds an individual HEA Teaching Development Grant which involves establishing focus groups to better understand the early learning experiences of students from Communities First areas.

The University has established processes to ensure that individual students or groups of students are not expected to respond to an unreasonable number of surveys in any given time period. All surveys and other projects involving students need to receive approval from the Student Research Project Panel before proceeding.

4. Closing the feedback loop

The student member of Council, appointed by the Open University Students’ Association, also sits on the Central Consultative Committee (described in more detail in case study 2 above), along with the OUSA President who is also a standing member of Council. This ensures that the communication loop between Council and the consultative structure of the University is closed. The student representatives from the thirteen nations and regions are able to cascade feedback from the Central Consultative Committee to their respective National and Regional Committees.

5. Other

The current development of a new Student Charter provides a useful illustration of the ways in which the student voice contributes to governance processes within the University.

The development of the Charter was led by a working group which included the Open University Students’ Association President and the student member of Council. At all stages of the Charter’s development, these representatives liaised with OUSA Central Executive Committee to ensure that there was a strong student input throughout the iterative process.

Once an initial draft of the new Student Charter had been agreed, students across the University had a range of opportunities to comment on the document and suggest amendments. OUSA’s Central Executive Committee provided a collective response to the draft Charter and the Charter was also consulted upon by all thirteen Regional and National committees. Student members of these committees played an active part in this consultation and their views informed the feedback which was provided to the central working group.

The impact of the student contribution to the development of the Charter within the University has been significant. It has led to recognition at major University committees, including Senate, of the benefits of collaborative
working and raised the profile of the wider student engagement agenda throughout the University. There is already evidence of this leading to change in practice in a range of contexts. For example, the Learning, Teaching and Student Support Committee is now placing greater emphasis on the student contribution to work overseen by the Committee.

Swansea University

1. Ways in which the student voice feeds into the Council of Swansea University.

Membership of the Governing Body
There are two student members of the Council, the University’s governing body. The student members – who are full-time officers of the Students’ Union - are full members, have access to all papers and are able to express their views on all matters under consideration.

Pre-Council meeting Briefing Sessions
Prior to the July meeting of Council each year, the incoming Students’ Union full time Officers are invited to make a full presentation to the Council on their plans for their year in office.

Impact
This early engagement with University Council has helped to foster strong links between Council and the Students’ Union full time officers and to improve the awareness of the University’s governing body of the work of the full time officers.

Membership of the Senate
All seven of the officers of the Students’ Union are members of the Senate, the senior academic body within the University which advises the Council on all academic matters.

Student Affairs Committee
The remit of this Council committee is to promote communication and feedback between the University and Council with the general student population and the Students’ Union. This committee is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor responsible for Student Experience and Academic Quality Enhancement and, of its fourteen members, seven are full-time officers of the Students’ Union and two are lay members of Council.

Impact
The Committee has provided a number of opportunities for students not just to comment and contribute towards University policy but also to identify and lead new policy. For example, in response to a campaign led by the Students’ Union, the University through the Student Affairs Committee, agreed to remove the use of Saturdays from the May/June examination timetable each session. Additionally the Students’ Union Welfare Officer led an initiative and chaired a working group to develop a new University/Students’ Union Policy
on Illegal Drugs and Alcohol. The working group reported to the Student Affairs Committee and the new student led policy was adopted by both the University and the Students’ Union.

The Student Affairs Committee, at its last meeting, approved a University and Students’ Union agreed statement on the length of the teaching day.

The third annual report of the activities of the Student Affairs Committee was submitted to Council in October 2012. The report summarises the key issues considered by the Committee, highlights the work of each of the Students’ Union full-time officers and in particular examples of partnership working between the University and the Students’ Union.

**Joint Meetings of the Student Affairs Committee and the Learning & Teaching Committee**

This joint meeting, which was held for the first time in 2012, discusses annual reports from the Students’ Union full-time officers, the comprehensive institutional action plans in response to issues raised in the National Student Survey and other external and internal surveys. It also approved proposals to enhance student representation and engagement.

**Impact**

(See Sections 2 and 4 below)

**Trustee Links**

One of the lay members of the University Council also serves as a trustee of the Students’ Union, facilitating linkages and discussions of key issues. A member of University staff also Chairs the Students’ Union Remuneration Committee.

**Impact**

These linkages have fostered a closer working relationship between University Council, the Students’ Union Trustees and the Students’ Union full time officers. For example, two of the trustees (including a member of University Council) are providing a dedicated session at the Students’ Union full time officers training day to be held in June 2013 to explain to the full time officers elect their role as Charitable Trustees.

**Students’ Union Full Time Officers’ Training Day**

As well as a range of University managers, members of Council attend and participate in this annual training event. The event, which is held in June each year, is intended to provide the incoming Students’ Union full time officers with training, information, formal and informal engagement opportunities. The training day is planned in partnership between the University’s Academic Registry, Student Services department and the President of the Students’ Union.

**Impact**

Feedback received from the Students’ Union full time officers from the previous year’s event is used to inform the planning for the following year’s event. The training day is now in its seventh year and feedback has consistently shown the event to be invaluable in informing the full time officers...
of their role, University structures and processes and moreover identifying, at an early stage, opportunities for partnership working towards the achievement of shared goals. The training programme has evolved over time and now includes the attendance by the current as well as Students’ Union full time officers elect to better facilitate a handover approach.

A report of the annual training day containing an action plan is produced each year and submitted to the Student Affairs Committee and the University’s Professional Services Management Team to facilitate opportunities for partnership working which last session included, for example:

- Raising awareness of Unfair Practice and academic integrity;
- Introducing a new Student Representation System at Subject and College level;
- Enhancing learning resources;
- Promoting student’s involvement in curriculum design and delivery;
- Improve liaison with the International College Wales Swansea.

**Liaison Meetings**

The Students’ Union full-time officers meet twice each term with the University’s Senior Management team (the Vice-Chancellor, Chief Operating Officer, Pro-Vice-Chancellors and Director of Finance) to discuss and progress key issues: the President of the Students’ Union chairs these meetings. There are also termly meetings of the Students’ Union full time officers and the Heads of Administrative Departments.

**Impact**

These meetings have enabled the Students’ Union to engage with the University’s Senior Managers to discuss important issues on a regular basis together and have the opportunity to take stock of progress upon opportunities for partnership working identified at the training day.

2. **How the Student Voice is captured throughout different elements of the student experience**

**General Principle**

Swansea University and Swansea University Students’ Union work in partnership to support the capture of high quality feedback on the Swansea student experience. The focus of students as partners has seen the enhancement of the student voice through representation, participation and engagement.

The Swansea Student Charter provides that the University will:

- Ensure student representation through the full time officers;
- Provide opportunities for students to give feedback on their programme of study and experience at Swansea University;
- Work in partnership with the Students’ Union to ensure strong student representation within decision making bodies so that students are appropriately informed, listened to and provided with feedback;
- Demonstrate its commitment to the principles of WISE and the role of students as partners.

**Impact**

The Student Charter has been extremely well received by students, staff and externally. The commitments within this section have laid the foundations for a strong system of student representation and ensuring that the student voice is heard at Swansea.

**The Survey Period**

The Student Affairs Committee oversees survey activity and the Joint University and Students’ Union Surveys Operational Group ensures that this activity is planned and promoted to ensure the highest possible levels of student engagement.

Each year, the University invites every student to have their say on the Swansea student experience by completing one of the student experience surveys during the period running throughout February – April. Non final year undergraduate students are invited to complete the Swansea Student Experience Survey (SES). Final year undergraduate students are invited to complete the National Student Survey (NSS). Taught Postgraduate students are invited to complete the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research students the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). This year, the University and Students’ Union adopted the ‘My Uni’ branding in order to successfully promote the survey period amongst students. It is recognised that promotion of surveys is often best achieved through students on a peer to peer basis.

**Impact**

The University and the Students’ Union have worked in partnership to ensure strong engagement in the annual student surveys. The Students’ Union College and Subject student representatives have played a key role in the promotion of surveys to students and the University has surpasses the NSS completion rate of 70% achieved in 2012 to achieve a final rate of 71.5% whilst ensuring improved responses in the PTES, PRES and SES surveys.

**Student Module Evaluation**

A pilot of a new Student Module Evaluation System using the Evasys software package was undertaken in January/February 2012 prior to its roll out across all Colleges in between February – July 2012. The system provides for a whole institution system of student module evaluation in order to improve consistency in module evaluation across each College. The system also facilitates the identification of cross institutional issues. Moreover, the system provides far more consistent and robust management data for the evaluation of teaching. A standard evaluation form enables students to complete five questions regarding their lecturer on a Likert scale followed a further twelve questions on the module overall. In addition there are three free text areas for students to add further information and a final question to rate the percentage of their attendance at lectures. The University has adopted the use of three of the questions as performance indicators for academic staff to be included in their annual performance enabling (appraisal) review.
One of the major considerations in purchasing the Evasys package was its ability to support both paper and electronic module evaluation forms. After some initial low response rates in the completion of electronic forms, completion rates increased dramatically during the full roll out of the system and now average approximately 48%. Evasys have confirmed that this is a very high response rate in comparison with other institutions. A revised target response rate has now been set at 50%.

**Impact**

A number of changes to module design and delivery have been made following the outcomes of the new module evaluation process. For example, in respect of College of Engineering, Module EGA317 (Product Design) taught off-campus at Swansea Metropolitan University, students commented that more product design should be taught at the Singleton Campus. Following discussions, staff at Swansea Metropolitan University have come to the Singleton campus to teach much of this material. Student representatives have commented favourably upon this improvement. Similarly in respect of Module EGA326 (Chemical Engineering Design project) some concerns were expressed regarding the general organization of this module. In the Staff-Student Committee Meeting on 22nd April 2013 the Chemical Eng Reps noted that this year this module was now much better organized.

**Student Arrivals**

It was recognised that the University did not systematically capture the voice of new students once they had arrived at the University. Accordingly, in 2012, all new students were invited to complete an arrivals survey six weeks into the academic session. The survey invites students to reflect upon their application and admissions experience, enrolment and induction activities and their early Swansea student experience, including personal tutoring arrangements. The outcomes of the survey shall be used to inform the University’s arrangements governing student admissions, student support and student retention strategies.

**Impact**

An analysis of the outcomes of this survey has been produced and shall be submitted to the next meeting of the University’s Student Affairs Committee.

**Student Representation**

The Students’ Union in partnership with the University has introduced a completely refreshed system of student representation at both College and Subject level. The system has been benchmarked against the HEA’s course representation benchmarking tool and Chapter B5 of the QAA’s UK Quality Code: Student Engagement.

**Impact**

This has resulted in the election of approximately 250 subject representatives and a further 12 College Representatives comprising of Undergraduate, Taught Postgraduate and Postgraduate Research representatives from each of the University’s six Colleges. The College representatives are supported by a small bursary payment by the University in recognition of the importance of their role in co-ordinating subject representatives and contributing towards
quality assurance and enhancement activities. Student representatives are able to bring the student voice to meeting of College Student Staff Consultative Committees and College Learning and Teaching Committees. Feedback to their peers is facilitated through the introduction of new College Forums across each of the six Colleges. This approach was warmly endorsed by the University’s Student Affairs and Learning and Teaching Committees.

In November 2012, the subject representatives received training which included sessions provided by representatives of the QAA, NUS Wales and WISE. The Students’ Union has also provided training to the College representatives and a series of regular informal briefing and discussions have been initiated between the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience), Deputy Academic Registrar and the College representatives. Opportunities for further enhancements emerge from these meetings which will lead, in June 2013, to the provision of joint University/Students’ Union training for College representatives. The College representatives have become members of the University’s three Academic Boards (Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught and Research) and are members of College Learning and Teaching Committees whilst subject representatives are members of Boards of Studies within Colleges and Student/Staff Consultative Committees. College Forums led by the Students’ Union Education Officer have been held with the College and Subject Representatives across all Colleges. College representatives are also members of University Periodic Review and other quality assurance and enhancement activities.

Professional Services

The University’s Professional Services Departments comprise of the University’s administrative departments, namely:

- Academic Registry;
- Information Services and Systems;
- Student Services;
- Planning and Strategic Projects Unit;
- Governance Services;
- Finance;
- Marketing;
- Human Resources;
- Research and Innovation.

Each department makes regular use of surveys and other feedback mechanisms. The outcomes are used to make enhancements to service delivery. Student Focus Groups provide detailed feedback on aspects of the student experience and/or are used as a consultative mechanism in respect of proposed changes to service delivery.

Impact

The University’s Professional Services Departments are committed to providing service excellence to students, staff and other stakeholders. In March 2013, the Academic Registry, Information Systems and Services and Student Services departments were awarded the Cabinet Office Customer Service Excellence Standard following a joint application and rigorous assessment process including assessor engagement with students, student
representatives, the Students’ Union, academic staff and other internal and external stakeholders. The Joint application represents a first in Wales.

3. Innovative methods of listening to the student voice

The University and the Students’ Union have recently developed joint proposals for strengthening the student voice upon University and College level committees. The introduction of these proposals has seen:

- An increase in student representation upon a number of University and College level Committees;
- Refreshing the role of Student Staff Consultative Committees;
- The introduction of provision for a ‘student window’ upon a number of University Committees;
- The introduction of College Forums.

Impact

The strengthening of student representation has seen an increase in the number of student representatives appointed to University decision making bodies. The introduction of the College and Subject representative system has allowed for a greater spread of student representatives on University Committees in addition to representation provided by the Students’ Union full time officers. The University has also taken this opportunity to refresh and strengthen the role of its Student Staff Consultative Committees within each College. College representatives have now been appointed as members of University Periodic Review panels and are actively participating in other Quality Assurance and Enhancement activities.

The Student Window

It was recognised that effective student representation may be enhanced through the presence and engagement of student representatives as full members of University and College Committees, and/or by attending Committees during a dedicated ‘student window’ during which items of interest to students may be considered in full and at an early point in the meeting. Student representatives may submit items to be discussed during the student window to the Chair and Committee Secretary in advance of the production of the agenda for the meeting in order that such items may be included on the agenda for the student window. The Student Window was not intended to reduce student representation on any Committees in which students are already members.

Impact

Students are now active members of the Learning and Teaching Committee within each College and the student window has enabled student presence across a broader range of the University’s decision making bodies.

The College Forum

Following consultation with Chairs of College Learning and Teaching Committees and in support of the new arrangements for Subject and College Student Representatives, it was agreed that Student Representatives Forums be established. The Forums are intended to be student led and facilitated by
the College Representatives and the Students’ Union Education Officer. Whilst the College Forums shall be student led, it is often helpful for appropriate College staff, such as Directors of Student Experience, Chairs of Student/Staff Consultative Committees to be present. The purpose of the College Student Forums is to:

- Provide an opportunity for all Subject and College Student Representatives to meet to consider matters for discussion at Student/Staff Committees, College Learning and Teaching Committees and other meetings as may be appropriate;
- To feedback upon matters of generic interest discussed at previous meetings of Student/Staff Committees;
- Provide opportunities for feedback, engagement and networking amongst Subject and College representatives;
- To share and promote good practice;
- Provide a basis for informed feedback from the Subject and College Representatives to the student body.

**Impact**

College Forums have provided a new opportunity for the College and Subject representatives to meet with the Students’ Union Education Officer and discuss issues raised by students in each of the Colleges. These discussions then form much of the agenda for meetings of Student Staff Committees across each College.

**Social Media**

The Students’ Union full time Education Officer has a large student following on his Twitter account and he blogs extensively. Accordingly, he accesses rapid student feedback on every aspect of the student experience. The Education Officer brings issues to the attention of senior officers as they arise and is able to work in partnership to resolve many issues extremely rapidly. Once resolved, the Education Officer will inform students of University responses to issues they have raised through the use of social media and without, in many instances, recourse to more formal structures.

**Impact**

Social Media has been used extensively to provide rapid response to student feedback. For example, following student feedback on Twitter regarding access to the University’s Blackboard system during Christmas time, the University was able to take rapid action to resolve this problem and promote the outcomes via Twitter. Similarly, the University’s has, in partnership with the Students’ Union Education Officer, used Twitter and blogs to reaffirm the University’s on-going commitment not to schedule examinations during Saturdays during the May/June examination period.

A Twitter feed was also used to receive feedback from subject representatives during the course of their training event.

**Other Mechanisms**
A number of Professional Services Departments have adopted the use of students to act as 'mystery shoppers' in conjunction with the Students' Union. Students are invited to contact the department in person, via email and via telephone and provide detailed comments on the quality of the service they have received.

Impact

The outcomes of feedback have been used to influence service delivery and to promote more shared working between administrative providers in order to reduce the number of cross departmental student referrals. This was a feature of the Customer Service Excellence submission.

4. Closing the feedback loop

The University and Students' Union are committed to working in partnership to ensure that students are informed of the outcomes of their feedback upon academic provision and their Swansea student experience. This includes:

Survey Outcomes (NSS/PTES/PRES/SES)

The outcomes of all of the major institutional surveys are shared at first instance with Students' Union full time officers. A Joint meeting of the Student Affairs and Learning and Teaching Committees is held in order to consider the outcomes of these surveys and to approve the Student Experience Action Plan resultant from the survey outcomes. The outcomes are shared with each of the University's six Colleges which are required to develop their own action plans in consultation with their student representatives. These action plans are then submitted for the approval of the University's Learning and Teaching Committee.

The University ensures that the outcomes of all surveys and other feedback taken by its academic and professional service departments are disseminated and published widely.

Impact

Some of the key institutional outcomes agreed in partnership with the Students' Union officers have included:

- Enhancements to the University's Personal Tutoring arrangements;
- The introduction of a new Assessment and Feedback Policy;
- Investment in library and learning resources;
- New Blackboard minimum standards.

Module Evaluation

A summary of module evaluation is made available to students alongside College action plans in order that to demonstrate to students that their feedback and is valued and acted upon.

Impact

See examples in Section 2.

Feedback from Focus Groups
Students attending meeting of Focus Groups for consultation and feedback purposes are informed of the outcomes of their feedback and comments.

**Impact**

Focus Groups were, for example, convened for consultation on the Swansea Student Charter and members of these groups were informed of how their comments had influenced not only the final Charter but also the most effective means to present, publicise and disseminate the Charter. A focus group was used to inform the current review of the Student Charter. Additionally, these groups are used to support the current Curriculum Review process and enhancement of the University’s Professional Services.

**Did You Know initiative**

A consistent finding across all surveys was that whilst students were generally satisfied that they were given adequate opportunities to provide feedback, they did not, in all cases, know that their feedback was acted upon. As such, the University, in partnership with the Students’ Union have launched a ‘Did You Know’ initiative. The initiative aims to more effectively inform students not only of action taken as a result of the outcomes of the various student feedback mechanisms but also of enhancements to the student experience more generally. Various ‘Did You Know’ headlines have been developed including, for example, key outcomes under the themes of ‘Learning and Teaching’, ‘Assessment’, ‘Academic Support’ etc. The University is in the process of building a central website which will host this information and we will be using the student newsletter, Facebook and Twitter along with the student computer login message of the day in order to convey this information to students. The University is also exploring the use of infographics through which we intend to be able to communicate to students much of the data arising from surveys.

**Impact**

‘Did You Know’ information has been displayed prominently in hording and posters across the campus to promote greater awareness of action taken in response to student feedback. Further work shall be undertaken to house this information using the media described (above).

**Student Communications Officer**

The University created a new post of Student Communications Officer in September 2012 to improve, target and deliver effective student communications, improve the language used in student communications, streamline student communication and ensure that content is timely and in an appropriate format to meet student needs. The Student Communications Officer is responsible for developing and implementing a suitable framework and communications plan and for seeking feedback from students on the effectiveness of that framework.

The Student Communications Officer helps ensure effective promotion and engagement with student feedback mechanisms across the institution including the NSS, PTES, PRES and the SES.

**Impact**
The Student Communications Officer has developed a regular high quality communication e-newsletter to students (and thereby reduce the number of emails sent to students) and will further develop institutional feedback channels for students. Evaluation of the effectiveness of this newsletter shall be undertaken in conjunction with students.

**University of Wales Trinity Saint David**

**Category 1 “ways in which the student voice feeds into the governing body”**

Detailed results of the National Student Survey are analysed by faculties and schools and this is fed back to all staff during Staff Development Week (SDW) to focus on key learning points. The Students’ Union presidents and SU sabbatical officers are invited to participate in SDW to provide feedback on the National Student Survey findings and to benefit from the various training opportunities made available to staff. It is important to note that two or more governors routinely attend these events and provide feedback to other members of Council. The PRES & PTES surveys also enable the University to analyse the feedback collected on the experiences of research and taught postgraduate students.

The Student Charter and Relationship Agreement were considered in detail by Council, and the final documents were only approved following endorsement by the student representative on the Council.

At the Council’s AGM, consideration of the Students’ Union accounts and annual statement are standing agenda items. The Finance Committee should normally receive regular progress reports as part of the Council’s stewardship of the Union (although this has not happened routinely over the last twelve months given the focus on various mergers).

The Council holds several away-day events during the academic year in order to review and refine the strategic plan of the institution. The Council student representative attends all of these events and provides an invaluable source of information to governors as they consider the student experience from a strategic planning perspective.

Given the extensive organisational change agenda that has effectively dominated strategic planning during the last two to three years, Council took the view that it was important to ensure that they receive feedback on day-to-day issues, as appropriate from a governance perspective. Accordingly, in September 2011, Council established a “Continuity Review Group” which was given a roaming remit to consider and report back on university matters outside the merger planning progress. Engaging with student representatives in this manner provided a valuable insight into the wider student experience.

**Category 2 “how the student voice is captured throughout different elements of the student experience.”**
UW Trinity Saint David considers its close partnership with the student body of vital importance and constantly seeks to ensure that the student voice is heard and acted upon at all levels within the institution. The University and Students’ Union recognise the importance of student representation at all levels of the University to strengthen this partnership. Current arrangements include:

- Student representation within programme monitoring and review processes;
- The annual election of student representatives for each Programme of Study with representatives for each year group and, where appropriate, for part-time students. Student representatives attend termly meetings of Staff-Student Committees which operate at School level and provide a reliable source of student feedback regarding the learning experience and for addressing specific concerns;
- Student representatives also attend Faculty boards;
- A Student Forum consisting of the Deans, a Students’ Union representative and ten Student Representatives from each Faculty, which meets termly and provides an opportunity for students to raise issues and helps focus attention on matters that need to be addressed. This is a new initiative in place since last year (2011/12) in response to student representation;
- The Student Welfare Committee, a forum to identify and facilitate an institutional response to any welfare issues or concerns;
- Two student representatives nominated by the student body to attend Council meetings.

It should be noted that weekly meetings are also held between the PVC (Academic), Provosts of the Carmarthen and Lampeter Campuses, Head of the Marketing and Communications Unit and representatives from the Students’ Union in order to discuss and consider a range of issues, many of which are directly linked to the ‘student experience’. The Provosts also arrange regular Open Door meetings for students who wish to bring to the attention of the University any matters of concern that relate to their experience as students at the institution. Students are also represented at validation events, revalidation events, quinquennial reviews as well as annual reviews.

Additional engagement with students is organised when needed: for example, open sessions by the Estates manager and by the LRC manager have been held in the Students’ Union re the re-organisation of the library.

The University has recently undertaken a project sponsored by the Higher Education Academy, “Students as Partners”, in order to promote and improve the course representation system. The student voice is central to this and the team is jointly managed by a representative from the University and from the Students’ Union.

In addition to Staff Development Week and training events offered to governors and student representatives, the University supports the attendance of student representatives at specific training events in London organised by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education for student governors.
Category 3 “innovative methods of listening to the student voice.”

In May 2011 UW Trinity Saint David Students’ Union submitted a proposal to the Senior Management Team(SMT) and Senate of the University entitled “The Student Union Review of Student Representation at the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David”. The proposal was approved and the University agreed to fund a three-year Student Representation Project, demonstrating its firm commitment to supporting student representation. This funding enabled the hiring of a new Students’ Union member of staff - the Student Representative Co-ordinator (SRC).

The SRC is based in the Students’ Union and works with students, student representatives, the Students’ Union and the University. For the academic year 2011-12 (first year of project) it was decided that the SRC would observe and support the student representation system to ensure that the “student voice” was effective in the governance and management of the University. Any insights into how the representation system could be improved would be taken up in the second year of the project (2012-13).

In January 2012 the Student Representation Co-ordinator was the official Election Administrator for the Students’ Union elections. This election was a great success with a record student voter turnout.

As a result of the increased emphasis on improving student representation at all levels of the institution, the Students’ Union has employed a new member of staff, the Communications Officer. The role of this new officer will not only be to actively promote the Students’ Union and all its events, but also to assist in maintaining a beneficial level of student engagement in all areas of student life.

Category 4 “closing the feedback loop”

The University has many ways in which it can communicate & engage with students on matters of governance and the decision making process.

On entry to the University students are presented with a Student Survival Guide. This Survival Guide sets out how students are represented in the University’s academic structure and committees, and contains guidelines for student representatives and details how students can become involved in the management of their programmes.

A Student Bulletin is regularly published on the University webpages, keeping students in touch with improvements being made to facilities and services, opportunities for publishing papers in the Journal of Undergraduate Research as well as in the online literary journal where staff and students work together on its production, opportunities for studying abroad, competitions, news and events.

As a result of student feedback to the University, the institution also has a thriving presence on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter and new methods of e-learning are being trialled and tested by different student groups.
Results from surveys, including those from Freshers’ week, annual programme questionnaires, annual review processes, and the National Student Survey, are all discussed and disseminated as a matter of routine. Summary reports are produced on all the issues arising from these surveys and action plans are then produced to address major concerns. These action plans are then presented to both Senate and Council so that they can be assimilated into future strategic and operational planning initiatives.

UW Trinity Saint David is putting sustainability at the heart of the new University’s strategic vision and governance arrangements for the new University reflects this clear commitment to sustainable development. The Institute of Sustainable Practice, Innovation and Resource Effectiveness (INSPIRE), is a key component of this mission.

Through INSPIRE, the University is piloting an innovative online student engagement system.

“VocalEyes” is a web-based program that allows students and staff to submit, comment on, and rate ideas for improving the University’s environmental sustainability credentials. Ideas submitted through the site will be reviewed on a termly basis and a summary will be submitted to Senior Management for consideration and action.

Category 5 “Other”

As part of the merger between UW Trinity Saint David and Swansea Metropolitan University both Students’ Unions have come together to agree a revised Constitution. Both student bodies were keen to preserve the unique cultural identities of each campus community which is reflected in the new constitution which now allows for Union “Sections” on each campus. This was approved by Council in December 2012. In addition, the Constitution of the new Council of the transformed UW Trinity Saint David now includes a University student sabbatical officer from each of the two founding institutions. Furthermore, the University has established a London campus and the Students’ Union is working closely with officers in order to explore and identify a way forward for offering international students based in London an equivalent experience to their Welsh contemporaries.