

AQR3 Foreword

Now in its third year, the Annual Quality Report project has fast become one of our most significant pieces of work as a Students' Union. We continue to be impressed with the response we have received from the University to this ongoing project, and view it very much as one of the successful signs of our partnership.

Our previous themes, additional course costs and course organisation, have driven a great deal of work – which is captured below in chapter one, and broadly we are very pleased with the progress made to the recommendations. It is our role to never stop pushing for improvement, to advance the student experience, and it is in this spirit that we present the 2019 Annual Quality Report on the theme of student mental health.

This is a priority area for Trinity saint David Students' Union, so much so that the topic featured in all of the manifestos of our team of elected officers for the academic year 2019-20. We also recognise that this has been an area of strength for the University, with students consistently rating support services highly in national comparisons with services offered elsewhere (whatuni, for example). We would like the University to use this report to build on that strong base, and seek to respond to the ever-changing needs of our increasingly diverse student-body. We are proud to represent a student body that although has some of the highest rates of reported mental health illnesses and learning disabilities in Wales, are also part of a University that reaches out, empowers people, and provides access to education and to transformation.

This topic has never been timelier, with both an increase in public awareness surrounding this issue following high profile incidents at other universities, and a renewed focus from Welsh Government. The recent announcement of a £2 million pound investment into student well-being and mental health awareness, allocated via the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, is particularly to be welcomed. We have been impressed at the University's response to the call for bids, and the willingness of this institution to work in partnership with others for the benefit of our students and to help develop a welsh approach to student mental health.

We hope that this report helps to keep this issue in the forefront of minds as we work in the coming months to shape the UWTSD of the future,

We look forward to presenting this report to University Senate and Council in due course,

Yours,

Rob Simkins, Becky Ricketts, Josh Whale and Charlie Jones

TSDSU Sabbatical Team, 2018-19

AQR3 Chapter 1

We are pleased with the continuing work and progress to which our Academic Quality Reports have contributed. For ease of reference, we have created a table below detailing the Students Union's original AQR recommendations, the University's response and our current view on the recommendations and their implementation.

Specifically regarding AQR 1: Additional Costs, we appreciate that much work has been done and continues to be done relating to Additional Costs Statements across the University. Almost all courses now have an additional costs statement, and we hope to see the inclusion of these statements in fees pages more generally.

We are aware that considerable work is being done on the website, and that as courses transfer to the new format, additional costs statements are automatically included. This has dramatically increased the number of compliant courses and more details are in the table below. We have identified a number of areas where this information has not been published to date, namely the majority of [Taught Postgraduate](#) courses and [CertHE courses](#), for example. A recent academic representation case with a Coleg Sir Gar student highlighted that there is no reference to Additional Costs on the website for their Higher Education students. The HEFCW, QAA and CMA guidance is applicable to HE courses run in FE and our recommendation is that a similar approach is taken across the UWTSD Group for all Higher Education courses.

Finally on additional costs, we believe that now the PV2a forms are creating data on additional costs, the time is right to develop a process around the recommendation and response to AQR1.3b regarding an action plan:

Develop an action plan in concert with the Students' Union on how best to ensure the burden of these costs is most equitably shared.

We suggest the creation of a working group to examine the data and make recommendations.

The other main point we'd like to raise relating to AQR1 relates to the new bursary software. Much progress has been made in the new offering of bursaries and the new website is much more clear with regard to the available bursaries. In addition, feedback from students has always been consistently high on the level of service and professionalism of the staff in Student Services who deal with this area. However, new application and payment software has been an emergent issue this past academic year, with many students reporting delayed payments. There is an additional issue that a small, specialist, team within Student Services, administers this system. As a result, the system is reliant on the availability of key individuals. We are aware more work is being done in this area, but hope that the new system can be further improved so that its administration does not impact students' ability to study, or live without the fear of missing things like rent payments.

On AQR2: Course Organisation, we fed in a follow up report (Appendix 2) at the start of this academic year on issues relating to timetables and enrolment. We found that despite the work done, there were still some issues regarding the areas we had highlight, though we also felt that certain things were clearer and that the problems had reduced somewhat.

We appreciate the complexity of some of these issues, but a key thread in these issues related to communication, largely between professional services, academic departments and students. A case

study of this can be found in the table below, relating to the Cancelled, Postponed and Rescheduled Class Policy.

Another example of this issue is the SQ3 Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave Policy passed two years ago. Earlier this year it came to our attention that a number of students in a particular school had not gone through the correct process. When the issue was raised with University colleagues, neither the Programme Director nor a Senior Director felt that either of their teams were able to properly implement the policy. This policy had been in effect for some time, yet it had not previously been raised that there were practical difficulties with the policy, leading to students reaching a critical point without the support the University had previously outlined as necessary.

Concerns were also highlighted by the case of the second year MA Psychotherapeutic Practice students who faced a range of difficulties at the start of this academic year. This case highlighted the core issue of communication failures between departments, academics and students. The case is currently being considered under the University's Student Complaints process, but it seemed to the Students' Union that Registry had been aware of potential issues with the students' registration some weeks before the students themselves were alerted. It also emerged that students had been provided differing information related to the time the course would take, how many years of funding they'd receive, and how much the course would cost.

From our work and involvement in the University's Future Proofing Board, we know that the University recognises inter-department communication and co-operation as a key issue. Projects such as Student Hwb and the adoption of the Student Hierarchy of Needs as a central planning tool will work to challenge departmental silos. We raise the issues above as a reminder of some of the challenges and consequences associated with this wider communication problem but at the same time we are assured that the University recognises the importance of tackling this issue, which is cultural as much as structural.

AQR1: Progress

Original recommendation - AQR1.1a - The University should make adjustments to its promotional material making clear the general additional costs students will incur as part of their studies.

University response (May 2019) –

A significant amount of work has been done in this area (e.g. re welcome packs, UWTSD student app, development of fee pages, generic MA complaint cost statement, information available for individual programmes of study on the website, embedding of 'additional costs' within the required validation documentation for new programmes [using the HEFCW banding]). However, the University acknowledges that further work needs to be done.

Current SU response and update –

We note that there is no specific reference or statement of additional costs in the prospectus. We do note that mentions are made to "additional costs" in reference to financial support, but at present no statement on additional costs generally, and not in keeping with the HEFCW banding.

We acknowledge the work done with the student welcome packs, but feel that more can be done in making sure that students receive this information prior to student application, rather than after acceptance.

The following website pages would all benefit from a central additional course statement (or a relevant link):

<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/finance/tuition-fees/>

<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/student-finance/>

<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/postgraduate/postgraduate-fees/>

<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/student-life/>

Original recommendation - AQR1.1b - Additionally, the University should ensure that promotional material at programme level draws students' attention to any additional costs associated with academic-related activities. This should include mention of the need for specialist equipment, travel costs, or any costs from the general list that are likely to be higher than for the average student.

University Response (May 2019):

Significant progress has been made this year with far fewer programmes without an additional cost statement remaining. This has been assisted by the new website template. It is the aim that the remaining programmes are fully compliant by the start of the 2019/20 academic year.

Current SU response and update :

A few programmes remain without additional cost statements though we note that this is changing rapidly as programme are updated to the new website template. Most of these seem to be either non-degree or postgraduate programmes. However, courses like MSc Sustainable Construction now does have an additional costs statement despite not being in the new format.

A list can be found in Appendix 1.

We are really pleased to see both UWTSD London and UWTSD Birmingham including information on additional costs, but we would like to see Coleg Sir Gar add Additional Costs Statements for their HE courses to their site.

Furthermore, as the implementation of these recommendations and AQR1.3a below roles out, **we would also like to see more explicit usage of the HEFCW (Circular 07 of 2010) banding** of additional costs to make more clear to students what costs are mandatory, necessary and optional. Whilst the additional costs statements are now largely present, and are vastly improved, they could be improved further by adopting this guidance.

Original recommendation:

AQR1.1c That the University should specify and assess 'additional course costs' as part of the module development process, and that this should be included and discussed within the cycle of programme development and review.

University Response (May 2019):

This has been completed by embedding this within validation processes. Usage of the new PV2a narrative document will be audited this summer to ensure that it is fit for purpose and has been used correctly by programme teams. Faculties confirm to AQSC as part of validation processes that appropriate additional cost statements have been included.

Students' Union Response:

We support the University's general approach to this recommendation. The new PV2a Narrative Document for the validation process clearly outlines areas of costs that staff must consider. We do have questions about how this will then be used more usefully.

Once the information has been submitted, it would be helpful for the University to make clear how this information is being utilised by:

- a) ADQs/Programme Directors to update their marketing material/review their teaching approaches
- b) University Marketing in the wider marketing of the University
- c) Student Services in the provision of bursaries, and

d) Academic Quality Standards Committee in terms of the using the data to understand the picture of additional costs at UWTSD. The Committee has been very effective at ensuring that the information is present but we are keen that additional costs data is now used to understand this element of the student experience.

We believe that the list above could form the start of the action plan referenced in AQR1.3b below and we would welcome further consultation with the University, as well as further improving upon the work related to AQR1.2b.

Original recommendation:

AQR1.2a That the University investigates its current offering of bursaries and looks to increase and widen current offerings, especially by targeting students studying courses which carry particularly high associated costs.

University Response (May 2019):

Complete and new online application process in place. The University is aware of the software issues and a meeting has been set up to address the issues for the coming academic year.

Students' Union Response:

Whilst we welcome the new approach, we have received a significant number of incidents reporting issues with the new software and are aware that these that have been reported to the University. We understand a number of students were impacted by a number of issues with the new portal software and related to the availability of specialist support staff. We believe it is vital that systems and processes are constant and not reliant on individuals. We are aware that this has been recently acknowledged by senior leaders within the institution who are working through these issues.

Original recommendation:

AQR1.2b At this point, we would like to see the development of means tested bursaries designed specifically to support: Students studying Art programmes, Students studying Outdoor Education, and Placement Students.

University Response (May 2019):

Complete and new online application process in place

Students' Union Response:

We welcome the increases to the bursary pots and the new website pages explaining them. They are much clearer and accessible. However, we believe that once more information is available through the PV2a process, the targeting of bursaries can be improved upon further.

Original recommendation:

AQR1.3a Fully review the current associated costs of study faced by students, using the HEFCW categorisation.

University Response (May 2019):

Now part of validation process enabling review

Students' Union Response:

We support this method of meeting this target. As stated above, we would like more clarity on how the information gathered through the PV2a forms are going to be fully reviewed by relevant departments.

Original recommendation :

AQR1.3b Develop an action plan in concert with the Students' Union on how best to ensure the burden of these costs is most equitably shared.

University Response:

Following from above this can be completed

Students' Union Response:

As noted above in the response to AQR1.1c, we believe that now data is being produced via the PV2a forms, it is wise for the University and SU to develop a procedure for how this data is used. As stated above, we have a basic proposal, and look forward to a meeting to discuss further.

AQR2 Response

Original recommendation:

AQR2.1 The only sensible recommendation that we can make is to advise that the University seeks to use a different communication tool to e-mail for the transmission of the most important messages to students, i.e. the four areas we have highlighted above.

University Response (May 2019):

The Cancelled, Postponed and Rescheduled Class Policy was implemented and audited for APC in June 2019. It became clear that although it has been implemented widely (with positive feedback received) there are pockets where the policy is not yet embedded.

The review of a student coms policy is planned for 2019/20.

In addition, key developments planned for the new academic year (e.g. re student hubs) will also assist in addressing issues.

The new one page policy guides in relation to academic experience (as presented to APC in June 2019) are a key development.

Students' Union Response:

At a meeting with a Faculty TEF panel earlier this year, it was apparent that staff there were unaware of the current status of the Cancelled, Postponed and Rescheduled Class Policy. Staff stated that they were unable to send out texts and had assumed that it had gone into abeyance. This was chased centrally and subsequently followed up and we hope now that the Policy will be active across all Faculties.

We look forward to contributing to the review of the Student Communications policy and wholeheartedly welcome the creation of the student-friendly guides.

In the long term, we note that the JISC project we have been invited to engage with contains some potential ways of dealing with the wider issue of alerting students to essential updates, and are also pleased with the progress to date on the Student Hubs project

Original recommendation:

AQR2.2 That the implementation of the new Cancelled, Postponed and Rescheduled Class Policy is regularly monitored for effectiveness and consistency

University Response (May 2019):

Results from the annual audit came to APC in June 2019. Action will be taken re areas of non-compliance and work is planned in relation communication of all academic policies and processes.

Students' Union Response:

The Students' Union is looking forward to seeing the results of the planned actions which resulted from the annual audit.

Original recommendation:

AQR2.3 That the University commit to issuing accurate timetables to all students at least a week before teaching starts in each term, and that this commitment is added to the student charter, monitored and reported to the appropriate University committee.

University Response (May 2019):

Progress has been made during the 2018/19 academic year and personal timetables were received on enrolment in four faculties. The University is aware that there is more work to do in this area and it is expected that the move towards Institutes and student hubs will further help with this.

Follow up research at the start of the 2018/19 academic year still showed significant issues with the timetabling process, a fuller report on which was submitted to the University (included below as Appendix 2). This indicated problems remained in the timetable and enrolment systems. Relating to timetables, our research showed that 62% of students surveyed had received their timetables less than a week before term started. More than 25% of students reported timetables were still not finalised at the time of taking the survey (at least two weeks after the start of term).

We are aware more work went into the system before the second semester, though feedback from students continues to indicate problems, especially at the SA1 campus. Students at SA1 especially report lecturers updating students on new timetables in class. This remains a significant area of student dissatisfaction.

Original recommendations:

AQR2.4 That the University review the enrolment process (both for new and returning students) in order to ensure that the information is accurate and timely and that the process is effective and accessible.

AQR2.5 That the enrolment process should be designed around the student, not around the administrative unit structure of the University. Consideration should be given to providing additional seasonal resource to act as a central, proactive, point of contact to resolve enrolment issues

AQR2.6 For the University to monitor and capture issues with enrolment on an annual basis for the purposes of review and development

University Response (May 2019):

Progress has been and is being made (e.g. introduction of online DBS system, photograph upload improvements). Issues highlighted by student in relation to organisation and management are one of the key reasons for the major changes in structure adopted by the University for next academic year.

We are aware of, and welcome, the additional work done by the University prior to the start of the 2018/19 academic year on the area of enrolment. However the survey mentioned above (Appendix 2) indicates there are still problems with this area. 40% of respondents across the University indicated problems with the enrolment systems, and 20 of the 261 students who responded to our survey (which opened in week 2) stated that they had still not enrolled.

We are aware of some students still reporting that they were not fully enrolled at the start of the second semester. These issues ranged from documents being lost when they had sent them to the University and issues relating to communication and seeking support. Others reported that modules were missing so they were unable to finalise timetables.

Original recommendation:

AQR2.7 That the University completes the 2017-18 audit of 'VLE Base-line standards' and uses the information to enhance usage and engagement, solves access issues and identifies training and development needs.

University Response (May 2019):

Audit complete and reported to APC. Further work has been agreed. The University has committed to work with SU in this respect.

Students' Union Response:

We are looking forward to working with the University on course rep led audits of the standards.

Original recommendation:

AQR2.8 That the VLE Base-line standards should be promoted to, and accessible by, students in order to establish expectation.

University Response (May 2019):

The VLE baseline standards are included in the new learning and teaching hub which will be made available to all staff from July 2019. Communication about VLE baseline standards to students will be included in the overarching student focused work re academic experience.

Students' Union Response:

We will be very pleased to see these promoted to students and look forward to this being made explicit.

Original recommendation:

AQR2.9 That teaching staff are asked to sign up to these standards in a similar way as students are required to promise to engage and access the platform.

University Response (May 2019):

To revisit post completion of actions 2.7 & 2.8.

To our knowledge no progress has been made on this recommendation.

Original recommendation:

AQR2.10 Ensure that placement allocation and communication is accurate and timely.

University Response (May 2019):

The University is aware that there still are a number of issues and has recently set up a number of focus groups in a particular subject area to gain feedback from students and address issues more efficiently.

Some issues remain, and the SU has been assisting students with making their concerns known to Athrofa.

Athrofa's Quality Enhancement Committee have formed a Placements Working Group with SU representation and the SU has been assisting them with a series of focus groups with placement students on these issues to feedback their experiences.

APPENDIX 1

Programmes without Additional Costs Statement:

- The majority (although not all) of the University's Taught Post-Graduate courses:
<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/postgraduate/postgraduate-taught-courses/>
- CertHE courses
<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/cert-he/>
- Coleg Sir Gar HE Provision

APPENDIX 2 – Timetable and Enrolment Survey October 2018

Timetable and Enrolment Survey

Background

Between Monday 8th October and Friday 19th October, we promoted a survey seeking to gather feedback from students on their experience with enrolment and timetables at the start of this academic year. This is based on feedback received through Student Voice Inductions as well as other informal fees of feedback. To better understand student opinion of this area and to follow up our recommendations in our second AQR, and at the request of University, we launched a short survey.

Outcomes

We received 261 responses to the survey, spread across all core campuses as well as London and Cardiff, and all faculties were represented.

Total	261
Athrofa	88
FACE	41
FAD	25
FBM	44
FHPA	65

20 survey respondents indicated that they had yet to enrol. The reasons for this varied. The majority of students who responded when asked why, listed problems to do with documentation and registry. Some were technical issues of uploading documents, some reported documents being lost and needing to be uploaded again, as well as long wait times for documents that have been uploaded to be checked so enrolment can finish. Respondents also reported a lack of available support or guidance from staff they contacted.

Respondents were asked if they had had problems enrolling. Overall, just over 40% of respondents indicated that they had.

Faculty	% with problem enrolling
Athrofa	37
FACE	22

FAD	60
FBM	45
FHPA	46
Total	41

Respondents mirrored the statements above – many students stating that the problems seemed to stem from documents being lost or misplaced and not being able to contact staff or get responses from them on how to solve the problem. Others mentioned that they were unable to finish enrolment due to their modules not being listed so unable to finalise timetables.

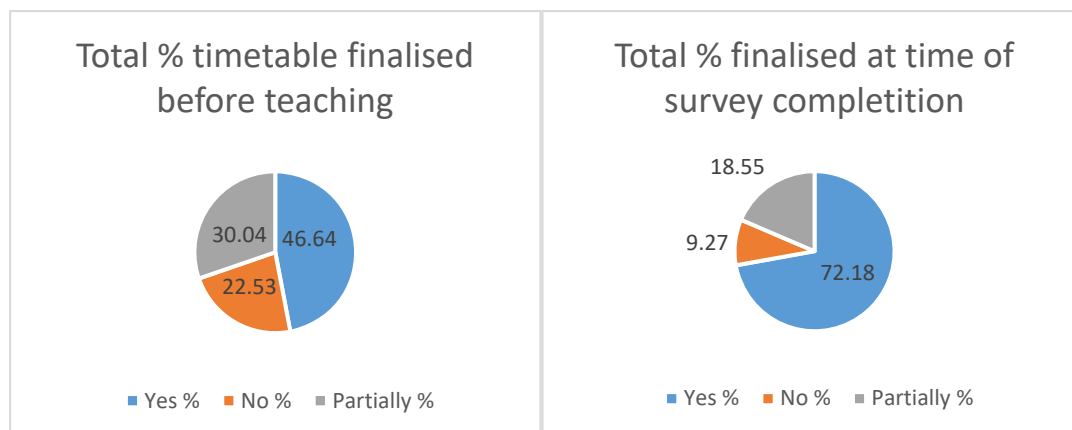
Respondents were then asked about when they had received their timetables. They were asked if they had received their timetables more than a month before teaching started, less than a month before teaching started, less than a week before teaching started, less than two days before teaching started or after teaching had started.

Our AQR recommendation was that all students should have their timetables at least a week before teaching started, a recommendation accepted by University Senate. We have collated the results of the survey and the table below shows the percentage of respondents by Faculty who received their timetables less than a week before teaching started

Faculty	Less than a week before teaching (%)
Athrofa	48
FACE	90
FAD	68
FBM	55
FHPA	60
Total	62

With more than 50% of students across the University stating that they had received their timetable less than a week before teaching, there still seem to be considerable issues with students receiving their timetables. Students referred to a variety of issues such as module lists not being up-to-date meaning that they could not finalise their enrolment and get their timetables.

Respondents were then asked if their timetables had been finalised. We know from informal feedback from students that there are often changes made to timetables after they are released, so further questions were asked whether respondents had had their timetables finalised before teaching and at that point of answering the survey.



Less than half of respondents had had their timetable finalised by the time teaching had started – this increased to nearly 75% by the time respondents completed the survey (roughly 1 – 3 weeks after teaching started). In terms of a Faculty break down, the table below shows the percentages.

Faculty	Finalised before teaching (%)			Finalised now (%)		
	Yes	Partially	No	Yes	Partially	No
Athrofa	49	28	21	69	17	12
FACE	24	37	39	73	17	10
FAD	53	32	12	88	4	4
FBM	57	16	14	73	14	2
FHPA	43	34	22	55	26	11
Total	47	30	23	69	18	9

Comments regarding these questions highlighted a range of opinions. Many respondents stated that they had found it very difficult to get details when problems had arisen. From the comments, it seems that most problems were usually relating to seemingly the technical side of the timetabling process, however these may well be related to information not being uploaded to the system.

Students also referred to the frustrations of having changes and the delays in timetables causing problems.

“Conflicting information, no response from lecturers by email”

Year 3, Tourism and Hospitality

“Information regarding when and where to find the information. [Told to look at] Moodle but not necessarily where in Moodle. A little assistance would be valuable rather than the assumption that you can sign into Moodle.”

Year 1, FHPA Lampeter

“We were sent a timetable on 19/9/18 but it has since been changed in Moodle and we have never been sent an email advising us of the change. I need to work to support myself at University as a mature student. Having set working times with my employer when the first timetable arrived I now find myself missing workshops as the timetable has changed! What if you had children to care for and make arrangements? It’s a very difficult situation to be put on every semester.”

Year 2, Fine and Media Arts

“Our timetable (for 6 weeks only) was given to us on enrolment day, then changed within the first week. Now we’ve had personal tutor lectures cancelled and I expect they’ll be changing our timetable again soon because of this. Online timetable is still non-existent”

Year 1, Teacher Education

AQR 3 Chapter 2

Mental Health and the UWTSD Student Experience

Introduction

Mental health has been a growing area of concern for students, universities and wider society for a number of years. UWTSD has always been proud of the services and support they offer and making sure as many students as possible can access them. However, there is always more that can be done, and we are launching our third Academic Quality Report to look at this area and make recommendations on what can be done to improve the academic experience for students.

A significant amount of research has been published in the last three years on mental health in students and young people. A 2016 YouGov poll showed 27% of students reporting a mental health problem. Of these, the most commonly reported issues were depression (77%) and anxiety (74%). More concerning, another report showed that only half of those students who had a mental health problem had informed their university of this. The research has also shown that 63% reported stress and anxiety levels serious enough that it affected their day-to-day lives, and 77% reported a fear of failure – 1 in 5 of these saying that it was very prevalent in their day to day lives. More than 70% reported the main cause, unsurprisingly, as academic work.

We know there are problems. Disclosure is a barrier for a variety of reasons, including: stigma of disclosure; access to services; language; knowledge of the available support structures; fear of the consequences of disclosure.

We know that there is a growing body of evidence, such as the WonkHE/UKTrendence Research report on student loneliness, that a vital and underlying aspect of mental health is providing students with the opportunities to socialise, be open about their feelings and to feel a part of their community. We also know that stress and anxiety levels are rising, and that unchecked, can develop into more serious mental health problems. This mirrors the 2018 GuildHE report on Wellbeing in Higher Education and the HEA project on retention, What Works from 2012, which demonstrates a clear link between attainment and retention and a sense of belonging.

We want to make sure that our students are aware of the study support, the counselling services, and other options that are open to them. We also want to use this report to explore what more can be done to help and support our students.

University is so much more than a degree and part of the core university experience is developing key inter and intra-personal skills for lifelong learning, skills such as resilience. We believe that all of us at UWTSD, students and staff alike, have the right to study and work in ways that are inclusive and accommodating of their individual needs.

Findings

As well as a wide-ranging literature review on the subject, we surveyed students on their experiences with mental health, how it impacts on their studies, their perception of the services available to them, and what they believe can be done to improve things. We avoided directly asking students about their specific mental health issues, as there is already a large body of research on this, as well as internal statistics held by the University. It is important to note that as with all self-

selecting surveys, respondents are more likely to resonate with the survey topic and thus are likely show a higher incidence rate than the general student body.

Demographics

We received 201 responses from students, across Lampeter (49), Swansea (87), Carmarthen (58), London (3) and Birmingham (4) campuses. 142 respondents identified as female, 52 as male, 1 as non-binary and 6 respondents did not answer the question. Whilst we are happy to draw conclusions based on this sample size we are also keen to continue the research to wider the pool of respondents. We are aware that the size of this year's survey may have put students off from responding and we are happy for the University to proceed cautiously with the recommendations contained within.

Ninety-three respondents were between 18 and 21, forty-nine between 22 and 25, twenty-seven between 26 and 35, twenty-four between 36 and 50 and eight over 50.

In terms of caring responsibilities, one hundred and forty eight reported no caring responsibilities, thirty-one had children under the age of 18, nine were the carers for disabled people, five the carers for someone over 65 and seven as secondary carers. One person did not respond.

There were a range of sexualities – fifty-four people did not define as straight, with one hundred and forty-three people identifying as straight, and four people not answering the question. The sexualities ranged across a spectrum, with thirteen identifying as gay or lesbian, thirty-two as bisexual, five as pansexual or queer and two people identifying as asexual.

There was less diversity in terms of ethnicity – one hundred and eighty-two respondents were white, eleven reported as mixed race, four as Asian/Asian British, two as Black/Black British, one as Middle Eastern and one person did not answer the question. The survey was offered in Welsh and English, though responses were received only in English.

There were sixty respondents from the Faculty of Humanities and Performing Arts (FHPA), seventeen from Faculty of Architecture, Computing and Engineering (FACE), nineteen from Faculty of Business and Management (FBM), fifty from Yr Athrofa and fifty-three from the Faculty of Art and Design (FAD). We are aware that the overall results may be skewed by this pattern of responses given that they are weighted heavily in the favour of one Faculty, this may be that the topic particularly resonates with students studying a particular type of course or on a particular campus. This is certainly an area which merits further research.

Outcomes

Students were first asked if they had currently or previously had problems with their mental health. Forty-five stated that they had serious mental health problems, seventy-five reported fairly serious problems, forty-one responded that they had mental health problems that were not serious, and thirty-nine stated that they had no mental health problems.

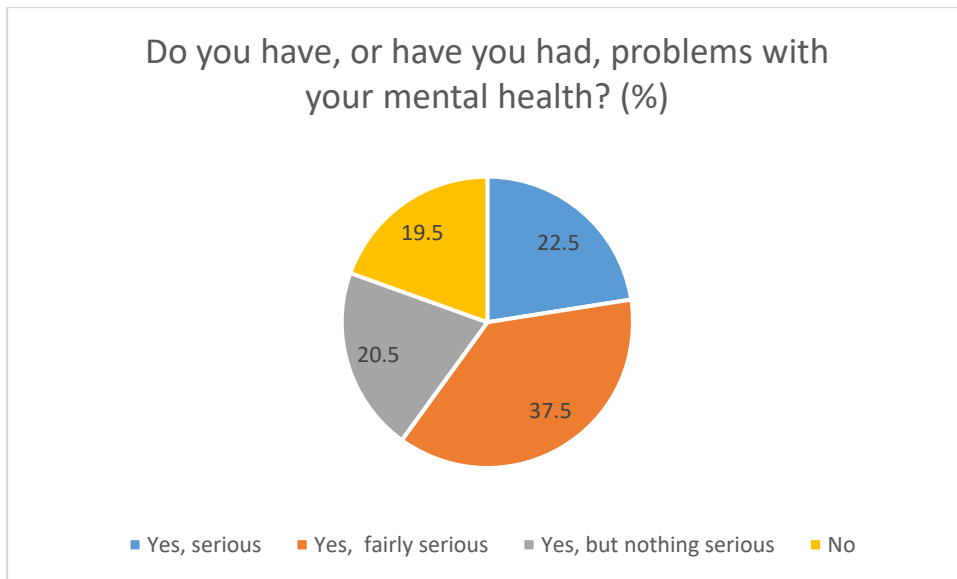


Figure 1 - % of students reporting mental health problems by seriousness

Over 80% of students reported some form of problems with their mental health, however it is important to contextualise this. The question deliberately gave different options of the intensity of the mental health problems experienced. We believe that these numbers are roughly in line with the above figures from the YouGov survey – 27% reporting a mental health problem, 63% reporting stress levels that impacted them on a day-to-day basis and 77% reporting fear of failure.

There were differences between the campuses as well. Carmarthen students reported lower incidences of serious and fairly-serious mental health problems, Lampeter reported higher levels of serious problems and Swansea reported higher levels of serious and fairly serious problems. Three of the four Birmingham students reported fairly-serious problems, and one reported none. One London student reported fairly serious problems with the other two reporting not serious problems.

The table below shows the percentage of students on the three main campuses reporting serious and fairly-serious mental health problems and the difference between those scores and the total score.

%	Total respondents	Serious (+/- Total)	Fairly Serious
Carmarthen	29	19.0 (-3.5)	36.2 (-1.3)
Lampeter	24	25.0 (+2.5)	35.4 (-2.1)
Swansea	43.5	25.3 (+2.8)	37.9 (+0.4)
Total	100	22.5	37.5

Figure 2 - % of students reporting MH problems by seriousness/campus

Nearly 72% of FAD students reported serious or fairly-serious mental health problems against the University-wide rate of 60%. FHPA students similarly reported a much higher rate of serious mental health problems.

Conversely, 50% of Athrofa students reported either no mental health problems or not serious problems, against a University-wide comparison of just under 40%. FACE students didn't really respond in high enough numbers to draw any conclusions, and FBM students showed a higher likelihood of reporting fairly serious or not serious MH problems, with much lower levels of serious and no problems.

%	Total respondents	Serious (+/-)	Fairly Serious (+/-)	Not serious (+/-)	None (+/-)
Athrofa	25.1	14.0	36.0	22.0	28.0
FACE	8.5	17.6	17.6	29.4	35.3
FAD	26.6	28.3	43.4	20.8	7.5
FBM	9.5	10.5	57.9	21.1	10.5
FHPA	30.2	30.0	33.3	16.7	20.0
Total		22.6	37.7	20.6	19.1

Figure 3 - % of students reporting MH problems by seriousness/Faculty

In terms of who students are reporting their mental health problems to, just under 50% report issues to at least one member of University staff, 34% report to someone outside of University, and nearly 20% don't tell anyone.

	%
Tell at least someone in Uni	47.8
Tell externals only	33.5
Tell no-one	18.6

Figure 4 – Number of mentions by respondents to “What University services are you aware of?”

Students are more likely to approach their GP or an external mental health worker than a specified personal tutor or lecturer or a member of staff in Student Services member, but are more likely to have talked to a combination of University staff overall. This suggests that whilst students aren't necessarily being forthcoming about mental health problems they are facing, they are at least more likely to tell both academic and support staff about their issues, which is positive.

The main reasons students give for not approaching anyone are often to do with shame and embarrassment.

“I go to my friends, I sometimes think I should go to seek help from the Uni, but I never do. And as it's only like 20% of the time I feel like it, I don't bother. Also there usually isn't a reason that I feel down, so I feel stupid because there are people with real problems. At one point I went to sign up for counselling but the wait time was so long.”

Male, Carmarthen, 18-21

“Was too afraid of being seen as weak and attention seeking also worried of being judged and someone using it against me.”

Female, Swansea, 18-21

“I didn't tell my lecturers or anybody for a long time because I saw the way they treated others who were open with their disabilities/problem”

Female, Lampeter, 18-21

Others reported concern that as they had no diagnosis, they wouldn't be able to access services. Others were put off by the amount of information they were asked to hand over to make an appointment. One student reported that they had previously had access to mental health support through CAMHS¹ but that had ended now they were over 18. Ultimately, we found that a lack of information about the disclosure process, coupled with a fear of judgment was preventing people from coming forward.

Respondents were then asked about relevant services offered by the University. Respondents were given a free-text box in which to put as many responses as they liked. 178 respondents answered the question, with 27 of those stating they were unaware of any services. The remaining 151 respondents gave 193 responses between them.

Counselling and mental health advisors were the most common responses, mentioned 121 times. 19 respondents were aware of Student Services generally, with 14 more being aware of pastoral and social support such as SOCOM and mindfulness workshops. Personal tutors and other academic staff were mentioned 14 times, and Big White Wall received 7 mentions.

	Count
Counselling/Mental Health Advisor	121
Don't know/none	27
Student Services (named)	19
Pastoral/social support through Uni (e.g. SOCOM, Wellbeing, Mindfulness)	14
Academic Staff/Personal Tutors	10
Academic support through Uni (e.g. SSL, Study Skills)	8
Students' Union	7
Big White Wall	7
DSA	4
Extended deadlines, compensatory measures, etc.	3

Figure 5 – Number of mentions by respondents to “What University services are you aware of?”

¹ Child and adolescent mental health services

Taken with the data above in figure 4, this suggests that students are more aware than not of at least some form of offer from the University. As a rough estimate, taking 121 mentions from 178 respondents, it would suggest around 70% of students are aware, but again, this is a self-selecting survey. Overall though, the detail of the feedback suggests that there is a challenge in terms of raising awareness of available support and prompting openness around mental health conversations.

Some of the comments received made clear that there is some miscommunication occurring about accessing services, and some shortfall in the provision at times to suit some groups of students.

“I am aware that the university has a counselling service but I believe this to be in the Carmarthen campus not Swansea. The mindfulness course offered does not fit in with the secondary PGCE workload as weekday evenings are spent working late. A Saturday or Sunday session would be much more helpful.”

Female, Swansea, 26-35

“Not really sure, I know counselling is available but when I went to a session after building myself up to going, I was told that my condition was “more complex” than depression or anxiety and then I couldn’t be helped. (I have Borderline Personality Disorder, recently diagnosed)”

Female, Swansea, 18-21

The issue around promotion is reinforced by the responses to the following question on how the University can improve their current offer. Again, respondents were provided an open access field in which to write their comments, and 130 respondents gave relevant answers (excluding “don’t knows” etc.).

Just over 50% of respondents suggested either increasing the promotion of the services available, or making the promotion of these services more accessible (i.e. clearer ways of accessing the services), with nearly 20% stating more staff were needed, feedback often provided alongside a request to increase the number of sessions available.

	%
More promotion of the services/more accessible promotion of the services	50.8
More staff available	19.2
Improve processes (e.g. referrals, reporting, DSA, academic issues)	16.9
More sessions open to students	16.9
Wellbeing and mindfulness classes/wider promotion on MH issues/tips on dealing with MH issues	15.4
More focus on pre-arrival/induction engagement	10.8
Better signposting from academics	8.5
Positive comments	4.6

Figure 6 – recommendations on improving services

“Student services could be improved, they were aware of my mental health problems before I began studying but it took months to be able to get them to speak to me. Numerous emails and telephone calls and contact was only made after the students’ union got involved.”

Female, Swansea, 36-50

“Advertise more across the campus and make any procedures absolutely clear cut and easy to understand. Provide a 24/7 telephone line for emergencies so that students don't get turned away when reporting an incident or desperately in need of help themselves. Have all staff in student services trained to understand and help instead of some (a rare few, most are fantastic) acting as if it's no big deal.”

Female, Lampeter, 22-25

“Being able to access the full mental health support I am entitled to through DSA. I get 1 hour a week but have been awarded 2 hours support. When support through DSA falls I can't access the counselling services as fully booked obviously. As someone who has recently come out of Cefn Coed Hospital (3 months ago) it has been a struggle not being able to get extra support leaving me suicidal. I have been left in class to struggle with my head of department ignoring the issue whilst being fully aware of the circumstances.”

Female, Swansea, 36-50

In terms of what students believe should be offered, there were 93 responses. Over 50% believed that more attention should be paid to improving the current offer, a third of responses wanted to see some form of support group system set up, or tutorials developed on dealing with mental health problems. A further 20% saw more alternative therapies, support and activities such as mindfulness and yoga being made available as desirable. 18% suggested some form of drop-in system for students – largely for people who were looking for something a bit more than signposting and a bit less than counselling sessions.

	%
Improve current offering	51.6
MH Support Group/Tutorials on dealing with MH issues	33.3
Alternative therapies/support/activities (e.g. yoga, mindfulness)	20.4
Drop in sessions	18.3
24/7 phone/text support/app	8.6
Better screening/referrals for serious MH issues	6.5
Quiet room	4.3

Figure 7 – suggestions on improving current offer

The comments went into more depth on what students believed would be best. Some of the things students wanted to see improved weren't limited to mental health provision but to other services and process which were identified as causing considerable stress, examples such as childcare, and support around finance and timetabling were provided. Other students felt a more holistic approach that looked at the student as a whole person, rather than just as a student, would be beneficial.

"Timetables to be given in good time to alleviate the stress of having to find specialist childcare for a disabled child. Even better if care facilities could be provided for older children or disabled on site."

Female, Carmarthen, 26-35

"Socialising groups to help with loneliness run by the University itself not by societies and within 9-5 hours."

Female, Lampeter, 22-25

"Drop in centres that are always present. I feel low mood / high moods are something a person has no control over. When you feel low, that's when you need a drop in centre."

Female, Birmingham, 36-50

"The university should offer more 'prevention' rather than 'cure' initiatives. There is a wealth of literature to suggest that physical exercise and exposure to the natural environment offer restorative health benefits. In addition to this, releasing time commitments to students as early as possible to allow them to plan in time away from their studies (for example to work to supplement their income, to plan any care commitments, to volunteer), many of which are proven to offer beneficial effects on mental health."

Male, Carmarthen, 22-25

Respondents were then asked if they believed the University promoted a positive work/life balance and if the University recognised the challenges students face. Slightly more students see the University as being sympathetic to the issues students face. This is arguably quite low, and the comments paint a further mixed picture. As a specific aside, 26 of the 49 students from the Lampeter campus explicitly referenced block teaching as a cause for concern, and 5 others referred to general high pressures of work.

%	Does the University promote a positive work/life balance?	Does the University recognise the challenges faced by students?
Yes	57.3	55.6
No	42.7	44.4

Figure 8 – University promotes work/life balance & University recognises challenges students face

“Between a kid and classes I don't have much time to think for myself at all. If it was easier to get childcare it would make things a lot easier”

Female, Carmarthen, 18-21

“For the most part yes, but for students who need support and extensions the university should work to ensure they actually get that, not say they will and let the students know the day of the regular deadline they likely don't have an extension on it.”

Female, Swansea, 18-21

“It encourages work through block but the toll on my mental health has made me contemplate dropping out here and there and have a good few meltdowns.”

Female, Lampeter, 18-21

A large number of students reported that they felt there was a gap between the experience students have with their mental health, and the messaging they receive from lecturers and the University. One student simply stated, “I am exhausted”.

“Have had no extra support from lectures when I have missed class for mental health reasons. Some have even sent me away and refuse extra help because of low attendance, even though they know my situation.”

Male, Swansea, 18-21

“I think that they make adequate provisions, however it's almost a standard across the board response. This means that some students will not be provided for enough while some students will be more than catered for. There needs to be some fine tuning of how support is delivered, on a case-to-case basis. There also needs to be some liaison between tutors and mental health staff especially if the student is struggling to cope with work etc. (understand this is confidentiality so needs students approval - however some tutors are just completely blind that some of their students are struggling to such a degree)”

Lampeter, 22-25

Respondents were then asked if they felt they had enough opportunities to take socialise with other students, to take part in physical and extra-curricular activities and if there are any barriers to taking part in these activities. Figure 9 shows the results below for the three South Wales campuses and shows the ‘positive’ responses – i.e. yes, there are opportunities to socialise/take part in physical or extra-curricular activities and no, there are no barriers.

	Socialise? (Yes %)	Physical/extracurricular? (Yes %)	Barriers? (% No)
Carmarthen	64.9	70.2	40.4
Lampeter	60.4	79.2	58.3
Swansea	63.2	40.2	50.6

Figure 9 – Enough opportunities to socialise, take part in physical/extracurricular activities and barriers to participation

In terms of socialising, there was a fairly consistent response. Between 60% and 65% of respondents felt that there were enough opportunities to socialise with other students. When asked for comments, one common thread was the need for more non-alcohol based events. They can be broadly split into three different areas based on campus though. Lampeter students most often referred to block teaching as an issue. In Carmarthen, the difficulties of living off campus and developing a social life were most often expressed. Swansea respondents discussed more the difficulties they perceived now existed in making friends through accommodation. With far less UWTSD controlled accommodation, respondents highlighted the difficulties with encouraging socialisation between students.

“Ease our work load so we can actually get out and about and talk to people. I spend half my life in my room doing work and feeling lonely and still feel I am not doing enough. All the sports societies are dying because people no longer have time to take out of their weeks to devote time to them.”

Female, Lampeter, 18-21

“Living off campus it’s very difficult to meet people from other courses, or even get to know everyone on your own course if in separate teaching groups.”

Male, Carmarthen, 26-35

“I’m a social person who lived in halls and attended Freshers so was lucky to have a lot for friends but so many people slip through the net.”

Female, Swansea, 22-25

In terms of access to physical activity and extracurricular activities, Swansea’s far lower score of just over 40% can be explained by the lack of facilities for sports or physical activity. The open responses to these backed up these numbers, with most Swansea respondents discussing this, Lampeter respondents discussing the lack of time available to take part in extracurricular activities, and Carmarthen students spoke about the lack of non-competitive sports and the issue of timetabling.

"It appals me that there is no sports hall on campus in any of the Swansea UWTSD campuses. Physical exercise is a major part of maintaining a good work life balance and the current facilities for the sports teams are terrible."

Female, Swansea, 18-21

"ALL the sports clubs are dying. No one has the time to be a part of them and it's not surprising. The university rugby club is dying and a good amount of that is our rubbish grounds - they could at least draw the lines, cut the grass or get rid of the moles."

Female, Lampeter, 18-21

"Timetable issues such as Wednesday lectures going beyond mid-day, and timetables changing regularly mean you cannot dedicate set time to clubs."

Male, Carmarthen, 26-35

Perhaps the best summation of the respondents came from this comment from a Carmarthen student.

"This is probably one part of the university which has actually become poorer since I started. The university needs to work closer with students to increase opportunities. Playing sport, taking part in society activities and student-led activity have a huge array of benefits, not least on mental health (via a range of methods and reasons) but also on employability and transferrable skills."

Male, Carmarthen, 22-25

Finally, students were asked what they would find most beneficial to their mental health. The responses mirrored much of what was said above. From Lampeter students, the pressures of block teaching were mentioned repeatedly, though the impact of studies on mental health and the impact of mental health on studying were raised on every campus. These students most commonly referred to difficulties in finding a middle ground between becoming part of a complicated process and being ignored – for many respondents mental health issues were transient and were seeking some short-term, anonymous support rather than something more formal. Many were worried about approaching staff and feeling judged, in part because they had seen other students treated badly.

"Training for staff. Sometimes I can't get out of bed and people think I'm lazy. Sometimes I appear not to care because I'm too afraid to show real emotion. It would be nice for staff to not excuse the behaviour, but understand that I DO want to be here but some days it's just harder to cope and hard to communicate. I don't want to talk about my mental health issues I just want them to see the elephant in the room and understand a little. If there's training for that that would be great."

Female, Carmarthen, 22-25

“If lecturers and faculty were more understanding of how mental health affects your work life and how when people have bad episodes relating to deadlines and or presentations they are not penalised for acting poorly because of these issues”

Female, Lampeter, 18-21

Other respondents alluded to this – the difficulty of securing even a short extension at particular times or finding it difficult to access support.

“Not having to push to get help, but rather be guided towards it. It's a chore for anyone to try and get help, some people just can't do that because of their mental health.”

Male, Swansea, 22-25

This comment highlights the importance of communication and training. Signposting is a process that doesn't just involve passing on information, but encouraging people to access as well as making the process as simple as possible. We are aware that the forthcoming student-friendly guides to policies and processes may ease this issue in the near future.

Outcomes

The findings of our survey, combined with additional research, highlight that there are two different issues that need to be addressed with the issue of student mental health and academic experience.

Firstly, those students who come to University with a mental health condition, or when one manifests during their time at University.

Secondly, students whose academic experience impacts their mental health.

The first group can broadly be defined as those with long-term/permanent conditions where the issues are largely to do with both improving the speed and access to support when starting, encouraging disclosure and reviewing some of the links between support staff, academic staff and regulations, as well as reviewing training programmes for staff.

The second group is a much wider group, and is those whose studies and student life takes a toll on their mental health. This group is where the most common issues are stress and anxiety, though these are also found in the first group. Rolling out more wellbeing initiatives and informal support, reviewing the current offer of extra-curricular activities – and prioritising them as worthwhile - and facilities as well as running projects on raising awareness of what is currently offered would be beneficial. Whilst this is arguably where most of the issues are of a lower risk, the danger is in the potential that if students could move from being in the second group to the first group if the issues aren't dealt with appropriately and early.

The IPPR report, *Not By Degrees*², also highlighted this differentiation with a model (adopted from earlier work by Student Minds) that distinguishes between mental health and wellbeing. Students can experience high levels of wellbeing whilst simultaneously enduring a long term mental illness – they may well be managing through various forms of treatment with only brief periods where it impacts their work. Alternatively, there are students with usually very positive mental health but are going through a period of low levels of happiness or high levels of stress.

The research broadly matches the work from Student Minds³ on the main challenges facing students and staff on mental health, which listed “fear of being judged”, “stress” and “finding the confidence to tell people” as the three main challenges. All of the top ten included some aspect either of stress, anxiety or loneliness and a fear of being judged. These are all consistent with the findings from this survey.

Our Recommendations :

1. The University continues to roll out mental health first aid training for front-line staff and works with the Students’ Union to identify staff for future waves of training. The Students’ Union would particularly like to see the mental health training form part of Personal Tutor training.
2. The Students’ Union sees the personal tutor system as integral to early identification of issues and an effective way for students to easily accessing specialist support services. The SU believe that all students should have a personal tutor, and should have a meeting with their personal tutor within the first month of their studies.
3. Early disclosure of mental health problems is paramount, the University should improve the publicity surrounding disclosure and detailing the support available. This should be prioritised prior to entry but additionally flagged consistently throughout
4. The link between academic institutes, student hubs and professional services is integral to supporting positive student mental health and to ensure suitable referral and support structures are in place. The development of mechanisms to track and flag support across the institution is viewed as important as these may be too reliant on individuals at present.
5. The widening of PASS or the creation of a mental health peer buddy scheme might be considered. The Students’ Union would be interested in working with the University on a project of this nature.

² https://www.ippr.org/files/2017-09/1504645674_not-by-degrees-170905.pdf - Page 8

³ Student Minds, *Grand Challenges*,
https://www.studentminds.org.uk/uploads/3/7/8/4/3784584/grand_challenges_report_for_public.pdf – Page

6. That time be built into each student's schedule to allow for activity to promote their health and well-being, this could include volunteering, part-time work, childcare, student-led activities or individual academic research. These activities should be celebrated and the time investment presented as important.
7. For the University and the Students' Union to further explore the specific mental health needs of students from liberation backgrounds and protected characteristics.
8. To review the current academic regulations, policies and procedures to judge whether they are fit-for-purpose in terms of mental health. We are encouraged by the work already underway on processes such as fitness to practice and fitness to study to speed them up and made more student friendly.

Reviewing the assessment turn-around times to ensure that they are relevant for each cohort is also important – students on block teaching (for example) are already on their next assessment before they have their feedback from their last piece of work (under the 20 day feedback model) – this would also be important for students studying in Birmingham and London.