



# Student Written Submission for the 2022 QAA Quality Enhancement Review

The Student Academic  
Experience at UWTSD

Dec 2021



UWTSD  
**Students'  
Union**



# Student **Written** Submission

**Note:** For the best experience interacting with this document, open hyperlinks in a separate tab.

## Introduction



Student  
**Written**  
Submission

### **Student Written Submission - Introduction**

<https://youtu.be/1e90HwRPdpl>

Every six years the University is required to undergo an institutional review - the Quality Enhancement Review (QER) - which is carried out by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The QAA is an independent organisation that carries out assessments on higher education (HE) provision in the UK. Such reviews inform the decisions and work of the UK's HE funders and regulators, such as the Higher Education Funding Council in Wales (HEFCW) - HE regulation is devolved to the four nations. The QER is specific to Welsh HE providers. Though some teaching is delivered at sites in England, UWTSD is rooted in Wales and all higher education courses are included in this review.

The student voice plays an important role in the review. UWTSD Students' Union (SU) provides the Student Written Submission (SWS) to give the review team an understanding of the student academic experience at UWTSD. This submission has been written so that anyone, anywhere can pick up this document and read it. As such we have taken the time to include a glossary of terms and definitions which will aid you in reading the Student Written Submission from UWTSD SU.

Through-out this document we have attempted to make it 'come alive' by embedding videos from our evidence base into the document and summaries from our SU Presidents. You will see everything from our Apprentice Review submission to a video educating students on academic misconduct which we developed in partnership with the University. We hope this is an interesting and informative read!

# Contents

## 05 — Chapter 1: Introduction

## 07 — Chapter 2: Preparation for the review

- 07 — 2.1 Statement of Authorship
- 07 — 2.2 How the Submission Was Produced
- 08 — 2.3 Data Sources and Evidence
- 11 — 2.4 Consultation on the Submission Itself

## 12 — Chapter 3: UWTSD Context

- 12 — 3.1 Students' Union
- 13 — 3.2 Student Experience
- 15 — 3.3 What is Partnership Like at UWTSD?
- 16 — 3.4 The Pandemic and the Impact Seen So Far
  - 17 — 3.4.1 Extenuating Circumstances
  - 17 — 3.4.2 Contingency Regulations
  - 18 — 3.4.3 Academic Safety Net

## 19 — Chapter 4: Recommendations from the Institutional Review 2015

- 20 — 2015 Recommendation 1
- 20 — 2015 Recommendation 2
- 21 — 2015 Recommendation 3
- 21 — 2015 Recommendation 4

## 22 — Chapter 5: Student engagement with Quality and Standards

- 22 — 5.1 Agreements, Regulatory Partnership, and Strategy Consultations
- 25 — 5.2 University Committees
- 26 — 5.3 Academic Quality Reports
- 27 — 5.4 Informal Approaches to Partnership
- 28 — 5.5 Apprentice Review
- 29 — 5.6 Collaborative Provision
- 30 — 5.7 Consultation on the University's Self-Evaluative Analysis & Change Report

## 31 — Chapter 6: Academic Standards and Learning Opportunities

- 31 — 6.1 Assessment and Feedback
- 38 — 6.2 Programme Design
- 39 — 6.3 Student Engagement
- 47 — 6.4 Student Cases: Academic Appeals & Complaints
- 50 — 6.5 Learning Resources
- 54 — 6.6 Enabling Achievement

## 59 — Chapter 7: Concluding Comments

## 61 — Chapter 8: Appendix

# Glossary of Terms

---

**Institute** - The University has four Institutes. All courses fall under one of the Institutes.

**IEH** - Institute of Education and Humanities.

**IMH** - Institute of Management and Health.

**NSS** - National Student Survey.

**PRES** - Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.

**PTES** - Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey.

**UKES** - United Kingdom Engagement Survey.

**WISA** - Wales Institute of Science and Art.

**IICL** - Institute of Inner-City Learning (Birmingham and London).

**WAPPAR** - Wales Academy for Professional Practice and Applied Research.

## Definitions

---

**Academic Office** - The University department responsible for the regulation and quality assurance of academic provision at UWTSD.

**AQH** - Academic Quality Handbook - A collection of policies and best practice guidance for academic delivery at UWTSD.

**AQR** - Academic Quality Report (see 5.3 for more details).

**Campus Council** - Student meetings held by the SU three times of year for each of the Carmarthen, Swansea and Lampeter campuses, where campus specific matters are discussed.

**Course Rep** - Student representatives who provide feedback to university staff at course/programme level (see 2.3 for more details).

**Graduate Attributes Modules** - Also sometimes referred to as Common Modules, Changemakers, and Graduate Employability and Resilience Studies (GEARS) Modules. These were introduced in 2020 to ensure that students leave UWTSD with key employment skills.

**HEFCW** - Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

**LLR** - Library and Learning Resources.

**LSR** - Lead Student Representative.

**PGR** - Postgraduate Research (includes Master of Research degrees and doctorates).

**PGT** - Postgraduates Taught (includes taught master degrees and PGCE).

**QAA** - Quality Assurance Agency.

**QER** - Quality Enhancement Review.

**Student Support** - The University's Student Services provide UWTSD students with information, support and guidance, including a counselling service, financial support, and study skills.

**Student Voice Reps** - Student representatives who provide feedback to university staff at Institute level (see 5.3 for more details).

**UG** - Undergraduate (levels 4-6).

**Union Council** - Student meetings held three times a year for the discussion and confirmation of SU policies, campaigns, and other work.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Welcome to the Student Written Submission!

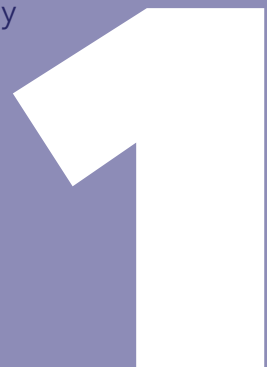
**Liam Powell**

Swansea Campus President  
2021/22 and Lead Student  
Representative



University of Wales Trinity Saint David has a unique demographic, it openly reaches out to communities to provide opportunities for higher education. Due to this work, the University is made up of around 70% mature students; this unique demographic comes with challenges such as engagement – many students are workers, carers or parents and therefore have more time constraints than the “traditional” 18-21 year-old student. That being said it also presents us with unique opportunities to provide a bespoke experience for our students.

The pandemic has brought with it many challenges, one of these challenges has been access to learning resources. Now, whilst there is still work to be done in this space, the University has shown a strong commitment to learning resources. We have seen an influx of spending in learning materials that will only serve to heighten the student experience. Communication to students around learning resources could be stronger, however there is an action plan on this to improve communications ensuring students are aware of the resources available to them. This action plan is worked on collaboratively between the University and Students’ Union, with the Students’ Union providing best practice examples for the University in engaging students.



This submission has been presented to the Campus Councils and distributed to all of our Student Voice Reps. We wanted to ensure, for transparency and in the spirit of collaboration, that they approved of what has been written in this submission. This was the case across the board.

As a whole, partnership with the University has been strong; the Sabbatical Officers of the Students' Union are regularly consulted on decisions and have a say in the implementation of policy. There have been gaps in this, however; some of the feedback received from students highlights university communication has some room for improvement.

Partnership between the University and the Students' Union is strong. It is strongest with senior officers of the University; there have been examples in which raising issues can be challenging, however once we have had a meeting with senior directorate, action follows quickly and issues are resolved. There is still work to be done in this space from both the Students' Union and the University to cascade partnership further, however, as it stands partnership is strongest at the top.

Kara, our Student Voice Co-ordinator at the Students' Union, has been a rock throughout this whole process, her support, guidance, and insight have been fundamental to the research conducted for this document. She has worked tirelessly to organise focus groups, collate data, and consult with myself throughout. I would like to sincerely thank her for all the hard work.

Previously I mentioned that the partnership with the University being strong; this is no more evident than the relationship between the Students' Union and the Academic Office. They have been helpful, supportive, and accessible, I would specifically like to thank Kyle (Director of Academic Experience), Mirjam (Associate Pro Vice Chancellor, Academic Experience) and Teleri (Head of Academic Office) for all the support and transparency they have shared with us.



**The 2021/22 UWTSD SU Presidents**

# Chapter 2: Preparation for the review

# 2

## 2.1 Statement of Authorship

Liam Powell, Swansea Campus President, is the author of this submission, giving direction and commentary to the data analysed by the Student Voice Co-ordinator. As an elected student representative, Liam has the democratic mandate to speak on behalf of students. After initial drafts, the headline information was shared with students through Campus Councils.

This submission was created through analysing a variety of data sources. The University has supported the creation of the submission through additional data and information requests. All this information has been brought together to present what the student academic experience is like at UWTSD.

## 2.2. How the Submission Was Produced

This submission is informed by a multitude of student feedback and satisfaction data collected between 2016 and 2021. Comparing data year-on-year helped identify trends, which were mapped against the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code. QAA guidance helped inform the areas of focus, with the final contents determined by the Lead Student Representative, and with the confirmation from students.

## 2.3. Data Sources and Evidence

Data for the submission comes from a variety of sources from national data sets, university committees, and the work of the SU in responding to student feedback as well as trends found by the University's case work.

National surveys enable annual comparisons to give a picture of what the student experience has been like at UWTSD since the last time the University was reviewed in 2015, which is particularly useful in evaluating the University during a pandemic where teaching and learning has been severely restricted nationally. Comparison of the University's results against the sector is also beneficial in identifying issues that are more specific to UWTSD, and giving context to satisfaction scores i.e., 80% satisfaction is very good when looking at the sector.

The National Student Survey (NSS) provides an insight into the experiences of undergraduate students. It is an annual survey for finalists, so captures undergraduates' overall satisfaction with the entirety of their course of study. NSS data has been reviewed between 2017 and 2020 to identify trends and areas for further investigation. Satisfaction percentages include students who answered survey questions with *mostly agree* or *definitely agree*. The UK Engagement Survey (UKES) is the equivalent survey for continuing undergraduate students i.e. levels 4 and 5 on a bachelors course, covering the same questions as the NSS.

The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) covers the experiences of students on taught postgraduate courses. The questions cover similar topics to the NSS but also consider the motivations, goals, and personal development of postgraduate students. Data from 2017 to 2021 has been reviewed and compared. A new section focusing on 'Support' was added for the 2021 survey and questions in the 'Resources and Services' section have been expanded to focus on on-campus and remote study resources individually. Like the NSS, satisfaction percentages include students who answered survey questions with *mostly agree* or *definitely agree*.

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) is a survey for students on research masters and doctoral courses, covering similar areas to the NSS and PTES but also taking into consideration the specific nature of postgraduate research courses, such as 'academic community' and 'professional development'. Changes were made to the survey in 2021 including the addition of a section specifically on student support for which a yearly comparison cannot be drawn. Some other changes separated out on-campus and online

experiences for a more detailed insight, but these areas can still be compared generally year-on-year. Again, satisfaction includes students who answered survey questions with *mostly agree* or *definitely agree*.

National data is supplemented with the results of the University's internally-run Pulse Survey (2020 and 2021), which covers students' views on their induction, course, community, wellbeing, student voice and skills development. The University's internally-run Resources Survey provides further insight regarding students' experiences of using the library, online resources, and IT services. In addition, the SU's Academic Quality Reports produced since 2016, have been valuable resources. More about these can be found in Chapter 5.3. Conversations with students in the day-to-day operations of an SU have also been drawn upon.

To support the extensive data analysis for this submission, several focus groups were held between during October 2021, both online and face-to-face. These focus groups were reliant on volunteers, who were mostly Course Reps, Student Voice Reps, or SU Crew members (student welcome and engagement volunteers). Volunteers included students on courses based in Carmarthen, Lampeter, London and Swansea. Efforts were taken to ensure that participants were on a variety of programmes to best reflect the wider student population. The subject areas covered included education, business, graphic design, international tourism, engineering, computing, ancient history, and environmental conservation. Undergraduate and postgraduate levels of study were represented.



**Figure 1** – **Left:** Focus group held with Swansea students on 27 October 2021. **Right:** Online focus group held with students from Swansea and Lampeter on 28 October 2021.

Further sources of information are referenced in this submission where useful, such as University documents and policies, and webpages.

The table below gives details of the data sources used in this submission and where they can be found within the document.

<b>Data source (including years)</b>	<b>Type of data collected</b>	<b>Sections data is used</b>
UWTSD SU Academic Quality Reports (AQR) 1-5 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021	Quantitative (satisfaction scores) and qualitative (student comments)	<b>3.4, 5.3, 6.1, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6</b>
National Student Survey (NSS) 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021	Quantitative (satisfaction scores) and qualitative (student comments)	<b>3.2, 4, 6.1, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6</b>
Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021	Quantitative (satisfaction scores) and qualitative (student comments)	<b>3.2, 4, 6.1, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6</b>
Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2017, 2019, 2021	Quantitative (satisfaction scores) and qualitative (student comments)	<b>4, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6</b>
UK Engagement Survey (UKES) 2017, 2019, 2020, 2021	Quantitative (satisfaction scores) and qualitative (student comments)	<b>3.2, 6.1, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6</b>
UWTSD Pulse Survey 2020, 2021	Quantitative (satisfaction scores)	<b>4, 6.6</b>
UWTSD Resources Survey 2020/21	Quantitative (satisfaction scores)	<b>6.5</b>
UWTSD Module Evaluations 2020/21	Quantitative (satisfaction scores) and qualitative (student comments)	<b>6.1</b>
SWS Focus Groups 26-28 October 2021	Qualitative (student comments)	<b>6.1, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6</b>
SWS Work Placement Feedback mini survey October 2021	Qualitative (student comments)	<b>6.6</b>
WAPPAR SU Induction Talk and Focus Group 6 October 2021	Qualitative (student comments)	<b>6.3</b>

### A note on numbers

All percentages in this report are given as integers (no decimal places) for clarity. Most satisfaction scores are given as the averages of the results from four to five years' worth of data, to give the general feeling of students since the last review, and identify trends.

## 2.4. Consultation on the Submission Itself

In August 2021 our newly appointed Student Voice Reps were informed about the review during their induction, and 22 Course Reps attended a similar briefing in October. This session was recorded and distributed to all known Course Reps and SU Crew members.

Findings and highlights were presented to Campus Councils in November 2021 as a form of student consultation on the outcome of our data analysis and research. Furthermore, the LSR provided drafts to the other members of the Sabbatical Officer team, to receive comments and approval from the chief representatives across all campuses.



**SU Crew Student Volunteers**

# Chapter 3: UWTSD Context

# 3

## 3.1. Students' Union

UWTSD Students' Union (SU) exists to enhance the experience of students across UWTSD. It has paid staff members and four paid Sabbatical Officers – also known as Full-Time Officers and the Presidents. The Sabbatical Officers are location-based covering the three main sites in Wales and an over-arching 'Group President' responsible for all locations, who this year coincidentally is situated in London for the first time, providing a great opportunity to engage and support more of our members here.

The SU provides support for representation such as Course Reps (or sometimes referred to as Class Reps or Student Reps in IICL), Student Voice Reps, Part-Time Officers, and the aforementioned Sabbatical Officers. Students are provided with other ways to have their voices heard, including the Big Ideas platform on the SU website, feedback surveys, and focus groups. Our newly formed Liberation Networks provide a safe space for students to celebrate diversity and campaign for a more inclusive learning environment, and society. Pop-Up Unions – branded stalls run by the Presidents, SU staff, or student volunteers – are used to bring the SU into students' learning spaces and engage more students in campaigns and the SU generally. This proactive approach is key to being visible in all UWTSD locations.

Outside of representation the SU also provides sports clubs, societies, and activities (such as 'Give It a Go'; low cost and low commitment fun activities). These groups are a combination of location-based and cross-campus. The SU has a building on each main campus in Wales with the University providing office space in London. The SU also provides an independent, confidential advice service to support students through academic misconduct processes and complaints procedures. Our website is a hub of information, as a one-stop shop for students to find the most appropriate support for whatever they need to enhance their student experience.

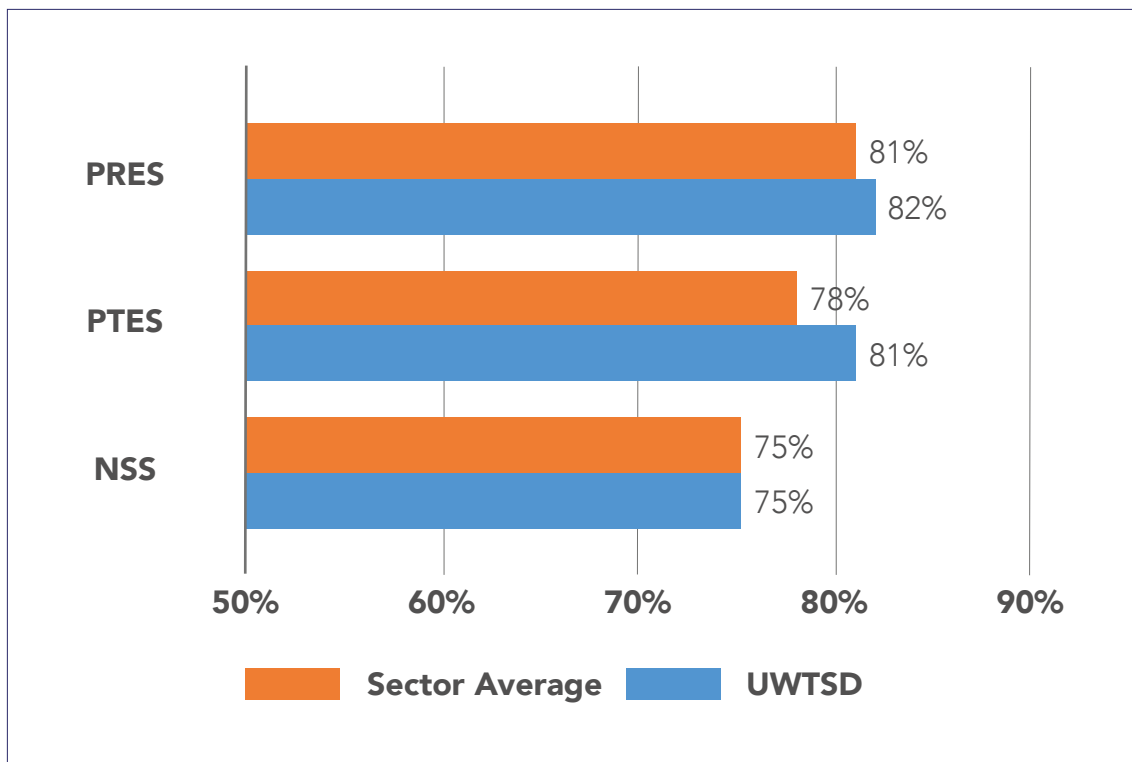


**Figure 2** - A slide from the SU induction talk given to students, illustrating the variety of work the SU does.

## 3.2. Student Experience

The UWTSD student body is distinctly diverse as a UK higher education institution, with 60%<sup>1</sup> of students at UWTSD aged 25 or over in comparison to the sector average of 31%. Course delivery sites span Wales and England providing teaching daytimes, evenings, and weekends, as well as online and distance offers. The breadth of study options and variety of teaching and learning facilities attracts people to study in varying stages of life and circumstance, with different values, interests, and goals. It is to the credit of UWTSD that higher education has been opened up in this way.

<sup>1</sup> [Equality and Diversity Report 2019/20 \[027\]](#)



**Figure 3** - Overall student satisfaction with course experience in 2021, comparing UWTSD to the UK sector average.

The University ranks well in national league tables and surveys, for example coming 4th in WhatUni's 'University of the Year' Student Choice Awards 2020<sup>2</sup> and 1st in Wales for Learning Community in the 2020 NSS<sup>3</sup>. In many areas the University matches if not exceeds the UK sector average student satisfaction, as shown by Figure 3. Comments from students in the NSS and UKES (various years) praise the small class sizes that courses tend to be taught in, which distinguishes UWTSD from many other higher education institutions.

"My small lecture sizes make the environment feel much more relaxed and open when it comes to discussions."

- Anthropology student, UKES 2021

Students are also very complimentary about the teaching and support of course staff, with numerous positive comments in student surveys on this topic.

<sup>2</sup> [www.whatuni.com/student-awards-winners/university-of-the-year/](http://www.whatuni.com/student-awards-winners/university-of-the-year/)

<sup>3</sup> [www.uwt.ac.uk/ratings-rankings/](http://www.uwt.ac.uk/ratings-rankings/)

"I have thoroughly enjoyed all aspects of studying at UWTSD, from having the opportunity to study in such an amazing location, to the relationships that I have been able to build with a highly motivated, supportive and talented team of Psychology lecturers. The support offered at the university is second to none; particularly, the dedicated study support team whose input has been invaluable within my degree experience."

- Psychology student, NSS 2020

It is feedback like this that demonstrates that the learning environment is just as important as course content to the student experience, and one of the many reasons why UWTSD has competitive student satisfaction.

### 3.3. What is Partnership Like at UWTSD?

There is a strong, constructive working relationship between the University and SU, underpinned by formal relationship agreements, but developed through proactive communication and transparency from both parties. Sabbatical Officers meet regularly with the University's senior management as well as members of the University's professional services from Student Services to Operations, and Library and Learning Resources (LLR) to the Academic Office.

Part-time student representatives meet with university staff at various levels to work together on enhancing the student experience, depending on their role e.g., Course Reps liaise with course/programme staff. Regular communication between the SU and University staff at all levels supports work to improve and enhance the student experience in all areas, including student wellbeing, opportunities, and academic quality. Partnership is both formal and informal, solving issues and promoting good practice without the necessity of committees, however committees will still receive updates on work undertaken. Input from the SU is actively sought by the University, as demonstrated by the involvement of SU Sabbatical Officers and staff in the University's preparation for the Quality Enhancement Review right from the beginning.

One example of this partnership in action is the development of a campaign to help students understand academic misconduct and how to avoid it. The SU and the University have worked closely together within the last year to produce the video DON'T DO IT, and to get it out to students.



#### **DON'T DO IT: Buying & Selling Essays**

[www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/articles/don-t-do-it-buying-selling-essays](http://www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/articles/don-t-do-it-buying-selling-essays)

### **3.4. The Pandemic and the Impact Seen So Far**

From 2020 the coronavirus pandemic impacted higher education globally. UWTSD took swift action in supporting students through this difficult time whilst simultaneously assuring and maintaining quality and standards, using sector guidance<sup>4</sup>. Training was delivered to university staff regarding new regulations and extenuating circumstances within this context. The SU worked with the University to mitigate the impact of the disruption caused to teaching and learning. That being said, the impact of the disruption and changes to teaching caused by the pandemic is frequently mentioned by finalist students in the NSS comment data from 2020 and 2021.

<sup>4</sup> 2020 Senate Annual Report to Council [113]

The Academic Quality Report 5 (2021) took a focus on blended and online course delivery and identified several areas of good practice but also where the University could develop its provision to support students. AQR 5 has an ongoing action plan<sup>5</sup> with several recommendations completed and all others 'ongoing'. The action plan is seen by a variety of committees and is updated regularly.

### 3.4.1 Extenuating Circumstances

The University changed its approach to extenuating circumstances submission during the pandemic. With fully online submission as well as support from Institutes, students were able to submit extenuating circumstances quickly and easily. With the pandemic being something of significant impact the University took the decision to reduce the level of requirement for evidence for extenuating circumstances submission. The number of extenuating circumstances submissions processed between 13 May 2020 and 12 May 2021 was 10,311, which were supported by the SU or the Academic Office. This is compared to 4,867 for the same period the year before. The support for students who needed additional time or other changes, was a considered approach to the pandemic.

### 3.4.2 Contingency Regulations

The University maintained quality and standards during the pandemic, whilst also being pragmatic and flexible in relation to academic regulations. From the beginning of the lockdowns, the University and SU spent a significant amount of time co-re-writing certain regulations in order to support students. A summary of these regulatory changes can be found in the below video.

**Note: Below is a video that will start around 4 minutes in and focuses on the launch of contingency regulations<sup>6</sup>.**

<sup>5</sup> AQR 2021 Recommendations Update, Senate papers, 22 September 2021 [297]

<sup>6</sup> SU Webpage entitled "Sabb Update" published 27 March 2020, available at: [www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/articles/sabb-update](http://www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/articles/sabb-update)



### Sabb Update March 2020

<https://youtu.be/judfC0BY9Y8?t=247>

## 3.4.3 Academic Safety Net

During the pandemic the University instigated a 'safety net' (no detriment) to support students. This safety net meant that students would not see a decrease in their grades based on the impact of the pandemic.

There are several things we're currently actively working on with the university:

- The union has worked with the university to secure rent rebates for those students in university halls of residence for the first 5 weeks of term!
- Clear and regular communication centrally from the university on what is happening and what the next steps are (we appreciate these will change quickly)
- Working with the university to create an additional "Safety Net" Policy which considers last year's policy and has a safety net for students in relation to their degrees
- Asking the university to create additional funding available for students impacted by COVID
- Writing to landlords and private halls to lobby them to significantly reduce or write off student rent, again supported by the university through pre-written letters.

**Figure 4** - SU Webpage entitled 'What is the SU Doing?', published 12 December 2021<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> [www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/articles/what-is-the-su-doing](http://www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/articles/what-is-the-su-doing)

# Chapter 4: Recommendations from the Institutional Review 2015

# 4

The QAA Quality Enhancement Review team made the following recommendations to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David from the review in 2015<sup>8</sup>.

## By December 2015:

1. Clarify the membership, attendance, remit and reporting requirements of each of the boards within the University's examination board structure (Expectations B6 and B7<sup>9</sup>).
2. Adopt a consistent approach to ensuring that all students are provided with clear grading criteria which enable them to understand what is required to achieve a particular grade (Expectation B6).
3. Ensure that assessment feedback is provided in line with university requirements (Expectation B6).
4. Strengthen the reporting arrangements for external examining to ensure more effective oversight of collaborative provision (Expectations B7 and B10).

<sup>8</sup> [www.uwtsd.ac.uk/academic-office/qaa-reviews/](http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/academic-office/qaa-reviews/)

<sup>9</sup> *Related expectations in the QAA UK Quality Code at the time*

## 2015 Recommendation 1

**Clarify the membership, attendance, remit and reporting requirements of each of the boards within the University's examination board structure.**

The regulations, terms of reference and membership for the University's examining boards are outlined in Chapter 6 of the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH), which is available on the University's website. As stated in Chapter 9, the arrangements for external examining for taught collaborative partner programmes concur, unless specific arrangements must be made for awards for external bodies. UWTSD's External Expertise Protocol references these too.

## 2015 Recommendation 2

**Adopt a consistent approach to ensuring that all students are provided with clear grading criteria which enable them to understand what is required to achieve a particular grade.**

The University's principles of assessment are outlined in Chapter 7 of AQH, which includes guidelines on word limits and marking. It is stated to taught students in their Programme of Study Handbook that assessment briefs containing marking criteria will be made available on Moodle. The Assessment Specification provides guidance on the level of skill and knowledge they should demonstrate in their work, and what they need to do to achieve specific grade boundaries. Generic criteria apply across all taught awards, including those delivered by collaborative partners<sup>10</sup>.

Student satisfaction data indicates that the majority of students feel that they understand what is required of them for the grades they are aiming for. In UWTSD's Pulse Survey 2020, 70% of students agreed that marking criteria for assessments had been made clear in advance. This area scored 77% in NSS 2021 and 84% in PTES 2021. Additionally, 89% of postgraduate research students in PRES 2021 agreed to some extent that they understood the required standard for their theses.

<sup>10</sup> Assessment Marking Criteria for Taught Awards (Levels 3-7) [069]

## 2015 Recommendation 3

**Ensure that assessment feedback is provided in line with university requirements.**

The University undertakes an audit of feedback each year. Institutes report to the Academic Standards Committee on the timeliness of assessment feedback with respect to the University standard.

## 2015 Recommendation 4

**Strengthen the reporting arrangements for external examining to ensure more effective oversight of collaborative provision.**

During the University's Academic Standards Committee: Annual Monitoring Meeting, the University takes a significant amount of time and energy to ensure that the appropriate reporting arrangements for external examiners is undertaken holistically, including collaborative partners. For example, an overview of external examiner reports delivered collaboratively is presented at this meeting<sup>11</sup>.

**The SU is satisfied that the University has adequately responded to these recommendations.**

<sup>11</sup> Collaborative Partners External Examiners overview report [178]

# Chapter 5: Student Engagement with Quality and Standards

# 5

## 5.1 Agreements, Regulatory Partnership, and Strategy Consultations

As per HEFCW regulation the University and SU have a Relationship Agreement and Student Charter. The SU also has a Code of Practice. Each year the SU Sabbatical Officers and Academic Office review the Relationship Agreement and Student Charter, reflecting on changes in practice (from the University's recent Race and Success Plan) to priorities for the forthcoming year (blended learning being just one).

Partnership extends beyond the written documentation; it is important to note that the SU and the University see partnership as an approach to work rather than just a stipulated requirement. This partnership comes in many forms from regular calls with senior staff in the University, to support for campaigns, and the development of Sabbatical Officers e.g., training the Presidents receive to help them with their roles on committees and panels. In relation to the training for panels, the Sabbatical Officers have shared their particular satisfaction with how the University supports them to be effective members of student case panels.




"I had never even heard of the term 'academic misconduct' before, but the training provided from the University was broken down in a very clear and simple way. It was extremely helpful!"

Becky Bush, Carmarthen Campus President 2021/22

The University also has a Fee and Access Plan which supports the University's overarching widening participation work. It is created, delivered, and monitored in partnership<sup>12</sup>. The working group has Sabbatical Officer representation to ensure that the SU can support co-delivery of the plan. The Fee and Access Plan is also an agenda item at Campus Councils for the University to update students on the plan but also gain valuable feedback. The Campus Council meetings also work as the opportunity for Part-Time Officers to communicate the Fee and Access Plan to students they represent.

Whenever there are opportunities for the SU to highlight the partnership between the University and SU they are taken up. Recently UWTSD SU was asked to present at the QAA Quality Matters Conference, for example.

**Undeb  
Myfyrwyr**  
PCYDDS

UWTSD  
**Students'  
Union**

# Prosiect Llais Myfyrwyr

## The Student Voice Project

@uwtsdunion • [www.uwtsdunion.co.uk](http://www.uwtsdunion.co.uk) • [union@uwtsd.ac.uk](mailto:union@uwtsd.ac.uk)

**Figure 5** - The title page of the presentation delivered by the SU at the 2021 NEXUS and QAA conferences.

<sup>12</sup> [Fee and Access Plan 2021/22 \[148\]](#)

From a strategic planning perspective, the SU is consulted from inception to publication of all university strategies. Whilst not necessarily a quality and standards focus this approach helps to display how the University (at many levels) considers the student voice over the last six months the SU has been consulted on:

- **Welsh Language Strategy**
- **Health and Wellbeing Strategy**
- **LLR Strategy**
- **Digital Strategy**
- **Race and Success Strategy**



**Figure 6** - Examples of some of the strategies and plans the SU has co-created with the University.

Additionally, the SU was a key member of the review of the Academic Quality Handbook; supporting over a 12-week period to enhance the handbook from a student perspective in terms of direction and in communication to students, with Chapter 12: Student-Facing Policies, being a particular highlight - ensuring that there is a place where students and staff can see and understand all policies that relate to the student academic experience.

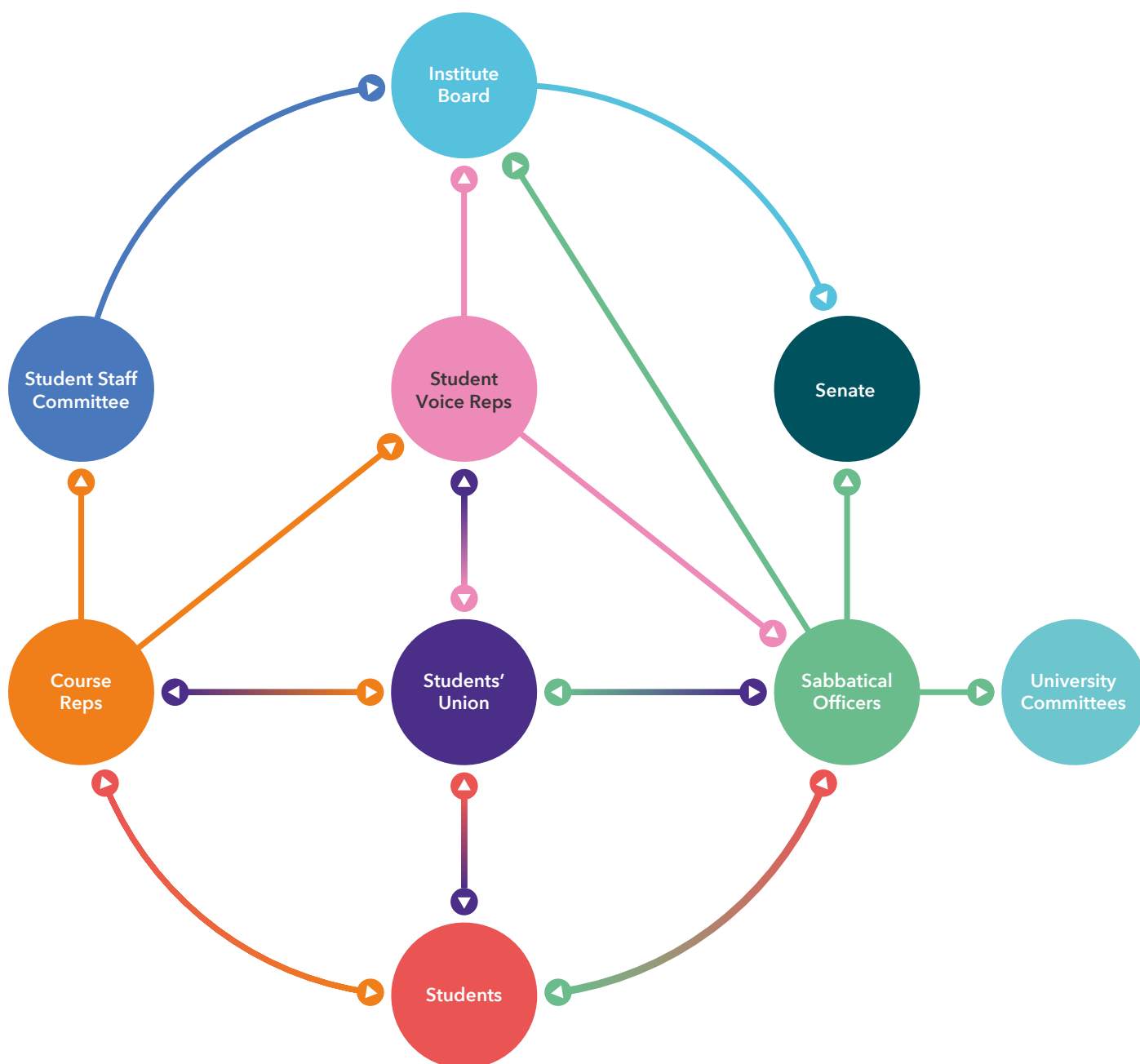


"I was pleased to know how much the University takes race and equality seriously whilst having a strategic plan to mitigate these issues with the support of the SU"

Vanessa Liverpool, SU Group President 2021/22

## 5.2 University Committees

Students are full partners in university committees. Course Reps attend Student Staff Committees, Student Voice Reps attend Institute Boards, and Full-time Officers attend Student Experience Committee, Academic Standards Committee, Senate, and other relevant working groups and committees where quality and standards are discussed. The structure and details of these committees is outlined in Chapter 2 of the Academic Quality Handbook.



**Figure 7** - The structure of student representation and university committees at UWTSD. Arrows indicate the directions of communication.

As this diagram explores the structure of representation is very much like a web, where there are inter-connections to ensure that all varieties of feedback can be actioned by either individuals, groups, or committees.

Students are represented on all major university committees<sup>13</sup>. Often the majority of agenda items for Student Experience Committee, Academic Standards Committee, and Senate have had SU consultation before publication.

## 5.3 Academic Quality Reports

Since the last review a significant amount of change has occurred within the SU and its partnership with the University. One of the major changes is the creation of the Academic Quality Report (AQR).

Each year the SU produces a research project which focuses on an element of the student experience. The University welcomes these reports and works with the SU to enact an action plan based upon the recommendations. Action from these recommendations is tracked in each subsequent report.



**Figure 8** - Cover of the Academic Quality Report 4: Parity of Experience, July 2020

<sup>13</sup> [Chapter 2 of the Academic Quality Handbook \[021\]](#)

## 5.4 Informal Approaches to Partnership

Partnership takes many forms. The SU and the University are lucky enough to have a strong partnership that goes beyond the written documents, like the Relationship Agreement. Throughout the course of a year the SU and university will make unscheduled Teams calls to work together to work on the student experience. From the beginning of the process of preparing for the Quality Enhancement Review, the SU and university have discussed how they can support each other to map evidence, share data, and genuinely be a mechanism of support as colleagues.

Additionally, the SU understands that for some university staff members, understanding the SU can be complex. To support colleagues the SU has undertaken a pilot this year with IICL staff to explain the 'how', 'what', and 'why' of the SU.

### What Are Our Values

1. We believe that education should be shaped by students.
2. We believe that a University experience is more than a degree.
3. We believe that University and Students' Union activities and services should be accessible to all.
4. We believe in challenging inequality.
5. We believe in student leadership.



**Figure 9** - A slide from the SU's presentation to IICL staff, detailing the values of the organisation.

## 5.5 Apprentice Review

In 2020 the University underwent a developmental QAA Apprentice Review. From the notification of the review the SU was consulted. With a regular working group established including partners across the University and the SU. As part of the review the SU worked with the Academic Office, Institutes, and Apprentice Unit to provide a high quality student submission. In collaboration the Academic Office, SU, and Apprentice Unit identified a Lead Apprentice. A variety of support was provided to said Lead Apprentice; with this support the SU was able to produce a video submission for the QAA review.

Said submission highlighted areas of enhancement for the University, who have taken onboard the feedback within and created an action plan.

<b>* Status update</b> – please provide a status update indicating the month/year of the update (MM/YYYY). Please also colour code the cell for the status update as follows:								
		Action completed						
		Action ongoing/on track for deadline						
		No progress made to date/currently behind schedule						
	Good Practice	Comment and/or action to be taken (if any)	Target date	Committee	Action by	Proposed outcomes	Report and evaluation	Status update
1	The flexibility of timetabling arrangements to meet the requirements of individual employers.	UWTSD continues to work with employers and Industry Liaison Groups to ensure that timetabling and academic programme delivery meets requirements as appropriate	Ongoing	WISA IMT and WISA Board	HAU and Academic Directors	Timetables reviewed every year with employer and Industry Liaison Groups	Recorded through minutes of meetings	This is an ongoing action that happens every academic year as part of the ongoing review process
2	The mapping of degree characteristics and standards to the programme areas to support the achievement of the apprentice.	UWTSD will continue to work with Apprenticeship framework developers, Trailblazer Groups as programmes are developed and mapped against the relevant standards. UWTSD will ensure that validation documentation asks programme developers to identify that the programme is for Apprenticeship provision and that mapping has been completed.	Ongoing	ASC	HAO HAU Institute ADQ's Academic Directors	Validation documentation is updated to include apprenticeships  Completed validations for apprenticeship provision identify that mapping has taken place	Validations recorded through ASC minutes	This is an ongoing action that happens through the validation process

**Figure 10** - The University's action plan resulting from the Apprentice Review.

UWTSD Students' Union and UWTSD are proud of the fact they are the first in Wales to submit something of this variety. With other institutions undergoing review at a similar time, and limited submissions being produced. The Apprentice Submission encapsulates the value that both the SU and the University put on student voice regardless of method of study.

# Apprentice Feedback

## Apprentice Video UWTSD

<https://youtu.be/5wYrdQpx-tw>

## 5.6 Collaborative Provision

Each December the University holds a conference for its collaborative partners. At each event the SU presents its current work and how said work can enhance partnership. The SU gave a presentation on the 'Student Hierarchy of Needs' at the 2019 conference, and at the 2021 conference delivered a session entitled 'UWTSD Students' Union: Providing support for collaborative partners and enabling the student voice'.










Conference Programme		
Day 2		
9.15-10.00	 <b>Why care matters</b> (Kate Tapper, Leadership and Team Coach, Facilitator and Writer)	
10.00-10.45	 <b>The student voice project</b> (Students' Union)	
11.00-11.45	 <b>Researching your own practice – making the familiar strange</b> (Prof. Annette Fillery-Travis, Head of WAPPAR, UWTSD)	
12.00-13.00	<b>Lunch</b>	
13.00-13.30	 <b>Navigating the new normal</b>	<b>What is a healthy diet - post Covid advice</b>
13.30-14.00	 <b>The art of giving</b> (This session is delivered bilingually)	<b>Dealing well with change</b> (This session is delivered in English)
14.15-15.00	 <b>Learning by Design: an introduction to the principles of effective asynchronous learning design and how they are being embedded at UWTSD</b>	<b>Meeting in the middle – engaging employers in degree apprenticeship development and delivery</b>
	<b>Navigating plurality while 'putting learners first': some practical observations</b>	
14.15-15.00	 <b>The student voice – where next?</b>	<b>What exactly is health and wellbeing in our curriculum?</b> (This session is delivered in Welsh)
15.15-16.00	 <b>Making effective use of digital tools in Microsoft Teams for formative assessment</b>	<b>Are you being served? - Is the traditional personal tutor system still relevant today, or is it time to develop a new approach?</b>
	<b>Harmonious Entrepreneurship for Resilient Communities</b>	
15.15-16.00	 <b>Supervising student research projects</b>	<b>Supporting Programme Managers – 'Change Agents' for learning and teaching</b>
16.00-16.30	<b>The Last Word - Student research and COVID: reflections from our students</b> (With Prof. Mirjam Plantinga Associate Pro Vice Chancellor and Dr. Ceri Phelps Academic Director, UWTSD)	

Figure 11 - NEXUS Plus Conference Programme 2021.

The University's NEXUS Learning and Teaching Framework<sup>14</sup> creates a direction for not only the development of academics (at any stage in their career) but provides a space for best practice to be shared, including the annual Nexus Conference.

For the last few years, the SU has presented at the annual Nexus Conference. The presentations have focused on 'The New Normal'; a presentation on how the University and SU will work together in a blended experience, and the 'Student Voice Project', which opened discussions on developing the academic representation system.

## **5.7 Consultation on the University's Self-Evaluative Analysis & Change Report**

The consultation on the University's self-evaluation held in November 2021 was referred to by the Carmarthen Campus President as "Fun", because of the way in which the partnership working is delivered. Sabbatical Officers were able to ask questions on particular terms used within the self-evaluation and ask the University to clarify its position on certain chapters of the document.

<sup>14</sup> [Chapter 3 \(3.9\) of the Academic Quality Handbook \[262\]](#)

# Chapter 6: Academic Standards and Learning Opportunities



<https://youtu.be/xkhTZkeJoDI>

## 6.1 Assessment and Feedback

Students at UWTSD are generally positive with how they are assessed on their course and the feedback provided to them about their work, with an average satisfaction of about 80% for undergraduate<sup>15</sup> and postgraduate taught<sup>16</sup> students in this area. This came across strongly in our focus groups with students, despite the diversity of courses and locations of the students we spoke to. However, some areas of dissatisfaction and inconsistency have been identified including Graduate Attributes Module assignments, fairness of marking, and course assignment structure. Information about external examiners and how to access external examiner reports is included in the Programme of Study Handbook<sup>17</sup> for students' information.

<sup>15</sup> NSS 'assessment and feedback' section average across 2017-2021

<sup>16</sup> PTES 'assessment and feedback' section average across 2017-2021


<sup>17</sup> [Undergraduate Programme of Study Handbook](#) [196]

A range of assessment methods are used at UWTSD, depending on the course. Humanities students are predominantly assessed via essays, coursework, and presentations, whilst students in the sciences gain credits through technical reports and some examinations. An example of an innovative assessment method, relayed to us by one of our Student Voice Reps, is from the level 5 Early Years Education and Care module on safeguarding<sup>18</sup>. Students are asked to work in groups to deliver a mock child protection conference. Each student takes on a different role at the event e.g., a social worker, so they have to get into the mindset of someone in that position, as well as working together to produce a professional looking conference.

The diversity of programmes offered at UWTSD results in a myriad of assessment methods. Students are positive about having a range of assessment methods, particularly not having a high reliance on examinations for grades. This was expressed by students in our focus groups, in NSS student comments for various subject areas, and showcased in a student story shared by the University on social media in August 2021<sup>19</sup>.

"The focus on practical assignments over essays/ examinations allows students to apply concepts and skills learned in lectures."

- Applied Computing student, NSS 2020.



**University of Wales Trinity Saint David**  
 16 August · 🌐

**NEWS: Mature Student graduates with an Applied Psychology Degree**

Genna Bowen was 31 years old when she joined UWTSD as a mature student. Prior to applying at UWTSD Genna was a teaching assistant with Pembrokeshire County Council for several years. Her experiences sparked her interest in children and adolescent mental health and development.

Genna decided to study at UWTSD Carmarthen because it was local and would enable her to have more time to study and to take care of her family. Her decision to apply for the BSc Applied Psychology course was influenced by her desire to become a clinical psychologist, specifically within the field of child and adolescent mental health.

Genna said: "The course teaches both the theory and practical application of methods used within real-world settings, which I felt would be far more beneficial than a more theoretically focused course."

Genna particularly enjoyed studying biological and cognitive psychology as well as the developmental psychology modules. Genna added that the assignments varied, meaning each student had an opportunity to use their strengths to evidence what they'd learned. The course was not all about exams or essays which appealed to her.

**Figure 12** - A student story published on UWTSD's Facebook page in August 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Assessment undertaken in April 2021

<sup>19</sup> [UWTSD Facebook page](#), 10:26 16 August 2021

All the students we spoke to in our focus groups agreed that the way they are assessed on subject-specific knowledge and skills is fair and relevant to their course content and learning outcomes, and no other student feedback would indicate anything to the contrary generally. However, students are less satisfied regarding the assessment of Graduate Attributes Modules. These modules were introduced in 2020 to support students with the increased reliance on technology for teaching and in the workplace; to help prepare students for life after graduation. Nearly all undergraduate students regardless of level and subject of study were required to undertake these modules in 2020/21 – some courses were an exception due to course requirements of external bodies e.g., for teaching.

Dissatisfaction with the assessment of Graduate Attributes Modules came up in our focus groups. This concurs with negative student comments in UKES 2021, module feedback data for Changemakers in 2020/21<sup>20</sup>, and the extensive consultation the SU has done with the student body since the modules were first introduced in 2020, in which students have questioned the relevance of the modules to the course they signed up for, and raised issues with course content being removed to the detriment of their development within their subject area<sup>21</sup>.

One example given in a focus group<sup>22</sup> of how students are assessed in the Graduate Attributes Modules is through participation in an online forum. Students gain marks for the quantity of comments they leave rather than for the content of them, which results in there being no difference between a student commenting “yes” and posting a paragraph of carefully considered text. In our focus groups the students for whom this is relevant questioned the effectiveness of such assessment for their course learning objectives. Noticeably, satisfaction for assessment and feedback in the 2021 NSS survey dropped to 76% down from a consistent 81% for 2018, 2019 and 2020 – this academic year being the first with Graduate Attributes Modules. It is clear that students for the most part believe that their assessments are appropriate, but this good practice needs to be replicated when it comes to Graduate Attributes Modules for greater student satisfaction. We acknowledge that the University is listening to and acting on student feedback on these modules, demonstrated by the Roundtable we held in April 2021 with senior university staff<sup>23</sup>, and the changes that have already been made to assignments. The SU continues to provide student feedback to the University through the committee structure as well as the particular programme development board.

<sup>20</sup> “What could be improved about the course?” comments and general satisfaction scores from IEH, IMH and WISA students who completed the Changemaker module evaluations in 2020/21

<sup>21</sup> [www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/articles/university-answers-roundtable-questions](http://www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/articles/university-answers-roundtable-questions)

<sup>22</sup> Focus group held on 27 October 2021 in Swansea

<sup>23</sup> [www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/articles/graduate-attributes-module-roundtable](http://www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/articles/graduate-attributes-module-roundtable)

Comments from NSS data suggest that assessments can be unevenly spread out and not well planned, resulting in tight time pressures particularly near the end of the course's academic year. The Academic Quality Report 3 highlighted time pressures due to block teaching on the Lampeter campus as a source for poor mental wellbeing among students, which is mirrored by NSS comments on block teaching<sup>24</sup>. This issue was also raised frequently by PGT education students in PTES 2020 and 2021.

"In [the] first semester, [I was] only given one assignment to do and in [the] second semester too many assignments due in at once haven't been any good preparation for exams."

Institute of Management and Health  
student (Carmarthen), NSS 2020

"The first assignment seemed very early, then there was a large gap. The last three assignments feel too close together therefore it was difficult to concentrate on one."

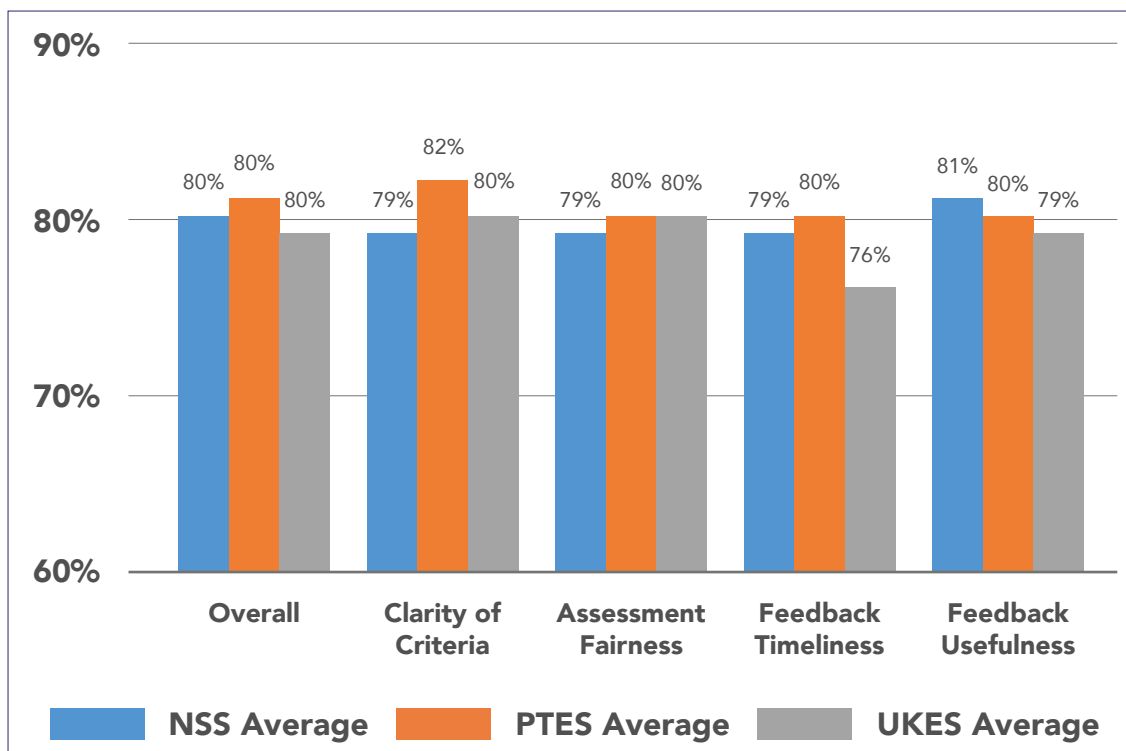
PGCE Primary QTS student, PTES 2021

"Block teaching has had a significant impact on the way that assessments are viewed in Lampeter, but overall I am satisfied with its implementation."

James Barrow, Lampeter  
Campus President 2021/22



<sup>24</sup> Humanities student comments, NSS 2020



**Figure 13** - The average satisfaction for assessment and feedback for UWTSD from NSS, PTES and UKES<sup>25</sup> results between 2017 and 2021

As Figure 13 shows, when it comes to assessment feedback the majority of undergraduate and postgraduate taught students are satisfied with the timeliness and usefulness of the feedback they receive<sup>26</sup>. Further, postgraduate research students have 91% satisfaction on average with the feedback their supervisor provides them with<sup>27</sup>. But there are issues of parity when comparing satisfaction across different subject areas, with Building scoring 49% on average and Childhood and Education scoring 90% satisfaction<sup>28</sup> (undergraduate level). In NSS comment data, some students raise the issue of feedback being given too late for it to be taken onboard for their next assignment:

**"We do not always get our previous feedback and marks back before we submit our next assignment."**

Education student, NSS 2018

<sup>25</sup> UKES scores for 2018 unavailable for this section

<sup>26</sup> NSS question 10 "feedback on my work has been timely" average across 2017-2021, and PTES question 6.3 "feedback on my work has been prompt" average across 2017-2020

<sup>27</sup> PRES question 2.3 "my supervisor/s provide feedback that helps me direct my research activities"

<sup>28</sup> NSS question 10 averages across 2017-2020, broken down by subject line

"The scheduling of assignment submission dates and feedback postdate could be arranged better in order to utilise the feedback. Assignment feedback was not always published before the hand-in date of the next assignment resulting in mistakes that could have been rectified repeatedly resulting in loss of marks for both assignments."

Institute of Management and Health  
(Carmarthen) finalist, NSS 2020

Additionally, inconsistencies in marking are reported:

"Some individual modules stand out as being easier to achieve higher marks than others. This was due to the fact that the marking of code was not consistent across the modules. For example, what tutor A deems as acceptable, may not be acceptable for tutor B in their module."

Applied Computing finalist, NSS 2018

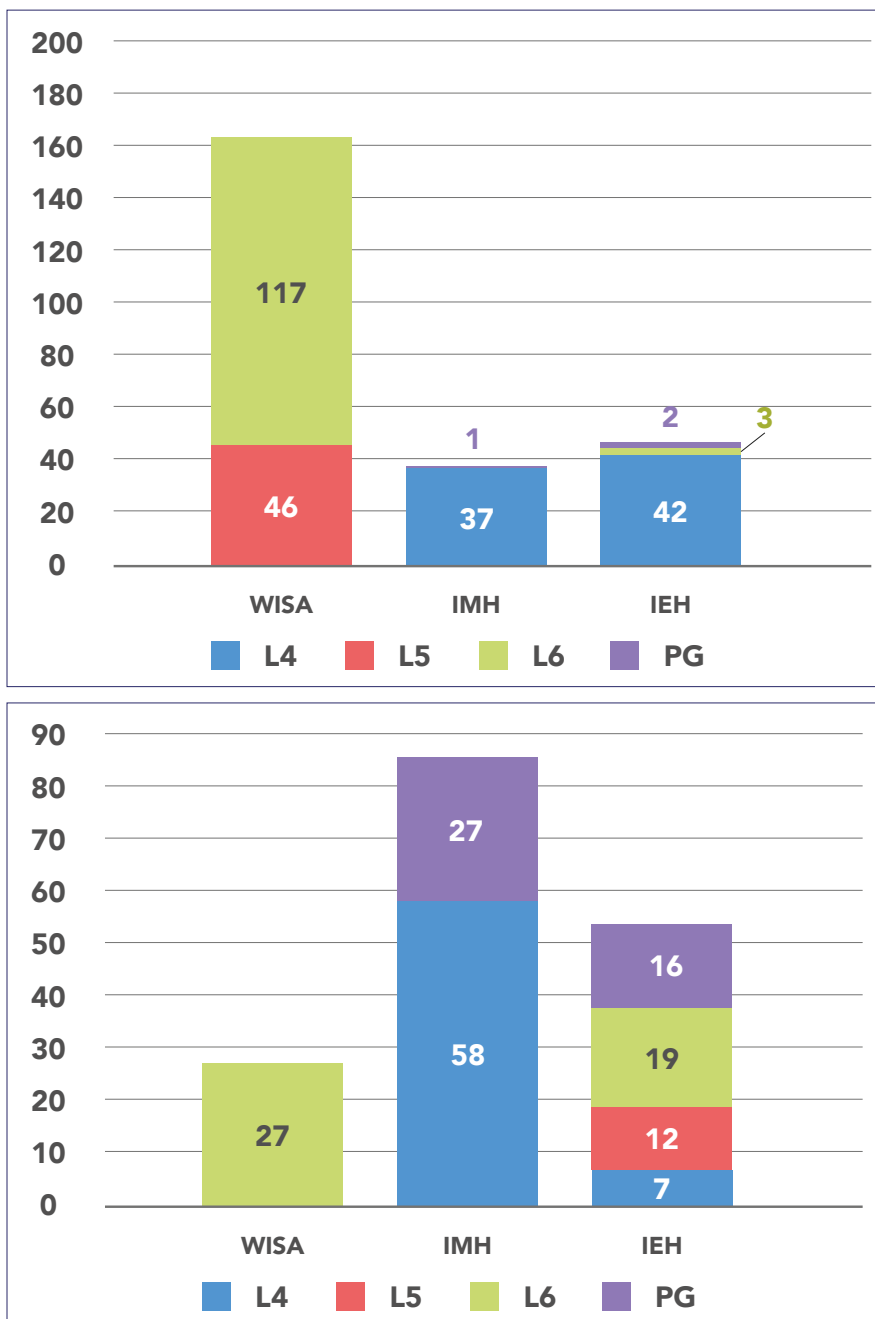
"I have often found marking between lecturers has differed depending on who marks [it]."

Early Years Education and  
Care finalist, NSS 2021

Again, good practice should be replicated across the board for parity of experience.

Information about academic misconduct and plagiarism can be found in the Programme of Study Handbook, along with tips on how to avoid it, and is covered in student inductions. The University provides InfoSkills sessions to students on referencing, with their academic liaison librarian, which students should attend in their first term. However, the uptake on these varies across the Institutes, as shown by Figure 14. The Graduate Attributes Modules at level 4 also cover referencing and preventing plagiarism, and the SU's Don't Do It campaign (see 3.4) has supported educating students on this

topic. Essay buying services were noted as particular concern in the University's Annual Report on Student Cases 2020, which is also a trend across the UK HE sector<sup>29</sup>. The Institute of Inner-City Learning (IICL) has the highest numbers of academic misconduct cases, with 60% of cases in 2019/20 by coming solely from the London campus (and 18% from Birmingham)<sup>30</sup>, so this campaign has been targeted at students here. Since the campaign began, we have already seen a positive impact on academic misconduct numbers. IICL has reported to us a 50% reduction in cases in Birmingham so far this year, which is testament to the work being done in this area.



**Figure 14** - The number of students who attended a referencing session in 2019/20 (top) and 2020/21 (bottom) broken down by institute (pre introduction of IICL).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> [www.wonkhe.com/blogs-sus/su-officers-are-waging-war-against-essay-mills/](http://www.wonkhe.com/blogs-sus/su-officers-are-waging-war-against-essay-mills/)

<sup>30</sup> Academic Integrity Report 2020/21 [125]

<sup>31</sup> Data from UWTSD Academic Services

## 6.2 Programme Design

The process for programme design is outlined in Chapter 4 of the Academic Quality Handbook<sup>32</sup>. As stated in 3.2 of the chapter, it is an expectation that students are consulted as part of the programme validation process (the step after a programme has been approved from a business perspective by the University). The University's Programme Validation Narrative document<sup>33</sup> confirms student engagement as an integral part of the process and requires the impact of student consultation on the design and validation the new programme to be recorded. This promotes students as partners in the process. The document also provokes thought regarding the inclusivity of the programme. Sabbatical Officers, or other student representatives, may be invited to participate in the validation process and provide the student perspective. Student Voice Reps are also involved in the process when validation is brought to the relevant Institute Board, as outlined in the committee's Terms of Reference.

Final validation for programmes is undertaken through Senate and Academic Standards Committee, with Sabbatical Officers as members of these committees. Students are also part of the final approval of programmes.

An example of this process in action is the development of the Graduate Attributes Modules, as introduced previously in this submission. These modules were proposed at University Senate in May 2020 and were then created by a project group. Said project group included Sabbatical Officers, Student Voice Reps, and other students, to respond to the created content and methods of assessment. Other stakeholders and people with beneficial insights provided feedback too, such as employers and former students, given the objectives of the modules to increase students' employability. From there the Programme Development Board (a university working group) developed the modules, and students were informed about the introduction of the modules in September 2020. Development of these modules has been continuous, in response to student feedback, facilitated by the SU.

<sup>32</sup> [Chapter 4 of the Academic Quality Handbook](#) [221]

<sup>33</sup> Programme Validation/Revalidation Narrative Document [224]

## 6.3 Student Engagement



<https://youtu.be/ZyeMQeCORVg>

UWTSD has a Student Charter, as required by HEFCW<sup>34</sup>, which sets out the mutual expectations of the University, SU, and students, and how student engagement and representation should be facilitated. This is available to view on the University's website<sup>35</sup> and students are made aware of it in the induction process, however, every student we spoke to in our focus groups – and in our consultation with our Part-Time Officers – was unfamiliar with the Charter. This sets a precedent for a theme of a lack of awareness across the student body of the academic representation structure, and issues with communication between students and higher levels of the University. Questions relating to the student voice on national surveys including NSS, PTES and PRES, score some of the lowest satisfaction levels out of all the questions students are asked, though this is consistent with the UK sector at large.

<sup>34</sup> [www.hefcw.ac.uk/en/our-responsibilities/students/](http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/en/our-responsibilities/students/)

<sup>35</sup> [Student Charter](#) [246]



**Figure 15** - The academic representation structure at UWTSD. The arrows show that communication goes in both directions. Numbers of students and Course Reps are approximate.

There are student representative positions at all levels within the University. Every student should have a Course Rep<sup>36</sup> or an agreed process for representation, to collate feedback from the cohort to present to course staff both informally and formally<sup>37</sup>. At programme level, the usual platform for formal academic representation is the Student Staff Committee, which is attended by Course Reps. Where possible, Course Reps are elected democratically by their peers. An equivalent means of facilitating students to have a say in their course experience may be put in place, if deemed appropriate and approved by the SU and relevant Institute Board, for non-traditional programmes of study such as micro-credentials (short courses).



**Video: Course & Class Reps recruitment video (2017)**

<https://youtu.be/yy-FVUZCT7E>

<sup>36</sup> [www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/course reps](http://www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/course reps)

<sup>37</sup> Chapter 5 of the Academic Quality Handbook [293]

For issues and projects Institute-wide, the Student Voice Reps<sup>38</sup> are the voice for the students in their Institutes and campuses, and the SU Presidents represent students at the highest levels, including attending University Senate. These positions exist to enable students to be involved in quality assurance and enhancement, and course development at all levels<sup>39</sup>. Formal meetings are minuted, allowing for action on student feedback to be tracked. Student feedback can also come via other methods such as national and institutional surveys, and the SU's annual Academic Quality Report (AQR), in which recommendations to the University are made and progress tracked<sup>40</sup>. Survey data is used by the University in programme monitoring and the annual review process<sup>41</sup>, with reports<sup>42</sup> produced across disciplines or Institutes to highlight areas of work needed to improve student satisfaction. These action plans are not something students would necessarily be aware of, however.

The academic representation system is a mechanism through which students can give feedback on their programme. In theory there should be about 400 Course Reps (or the equivalent) to ensure that students across the University are represented at programme level. The elections of Course Reps are facilitated by academic staff, but support is provided to these students by the SU's Student Voice team, including the provision of training and development events.

In early November 2021 less than one half of Course Reps were known to the SU and 77 had received the essential training for the role, despite many cohorts having commenced their academic year in mid-late September 2021. This is a reoccurring issue year on year but there has been progress as a result of increased communication with university staff on the matter, in particular working with the Heads of the Institutes, which has been aided by a growth in size of the Student Voice team at the SU (from one to three staff) within the last year. By mid-November 2021 the SU had the details of over 300 Course Reps. Sometimes the issue is down to a reluctance from students to put themselves forwards for the role, as demonstrated in a focus group with WAPPAR students<sup>43</sup>, in which participants agreed the role was beneficial to have but that they would not have the capacity to take it on. There have also been reports of the topic of Course Reps not being mentioned at all or communicated well to students, as mentioned by a student in one of our focus groups<sup>44</sup>:

<sup>38</sup> [www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/student-voice-reps](http://www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/student-voice-reps)

<sup>39</sup> Chapters 3 and 5 of the University's [Academic Quality Handbook](#) [262, 293]

<sup>40</sup> *An Academic Quality Report is not being produced in 2021/22 due to this written submission for the QAA Quality Enhancement Review largely covering the purpose*

<sup>41</sup> [Chapter 4 \(4.6\) of the Academic Quality Handbook](#) [221]

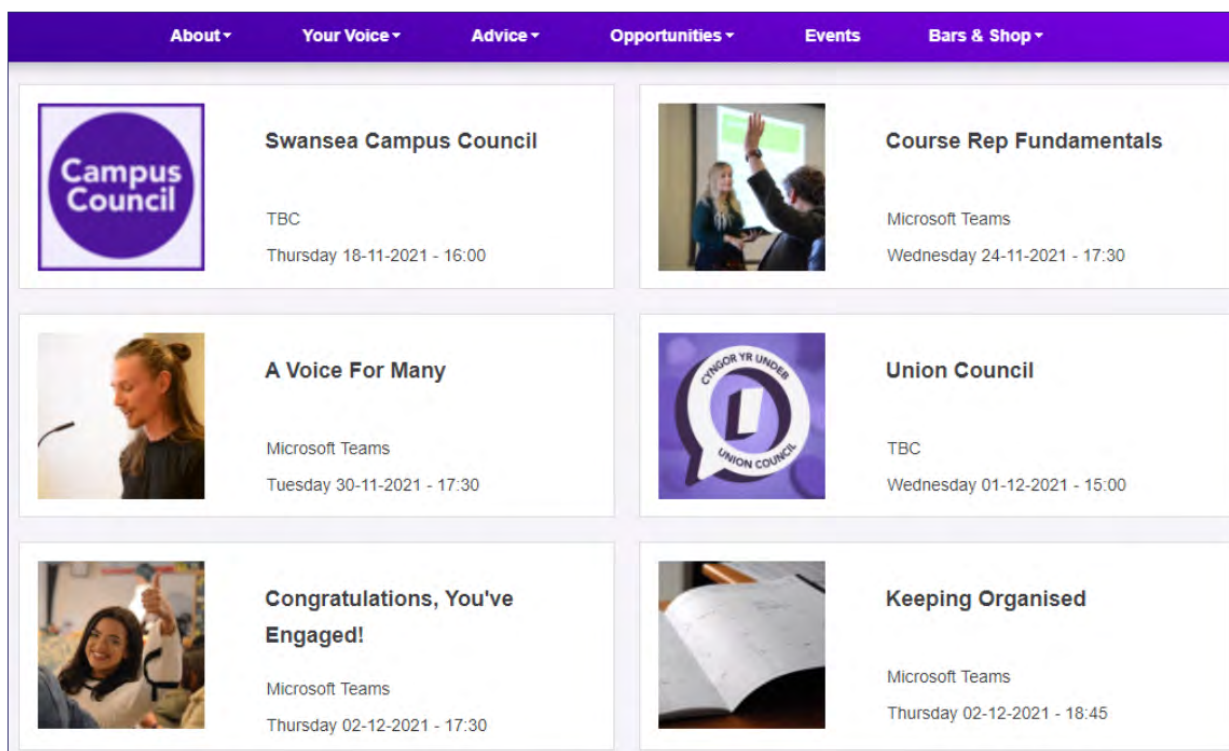
<sup>42</sup> University written reports and action plans in response to NSS, PTES and PRES results

<sup>43</sup> Focus group on support from the SU and representation with four WAPPAR students, held online on 6 October 2021

<sup>44</sup> Online focus group 28 October 2021

"...I was discussing something with a few of my other fellow students last week...and none of us knew who the class reps were to give feedback to. And I don't feel that that was really communicated to us properly. I don't even know if we have any class reps in computing."

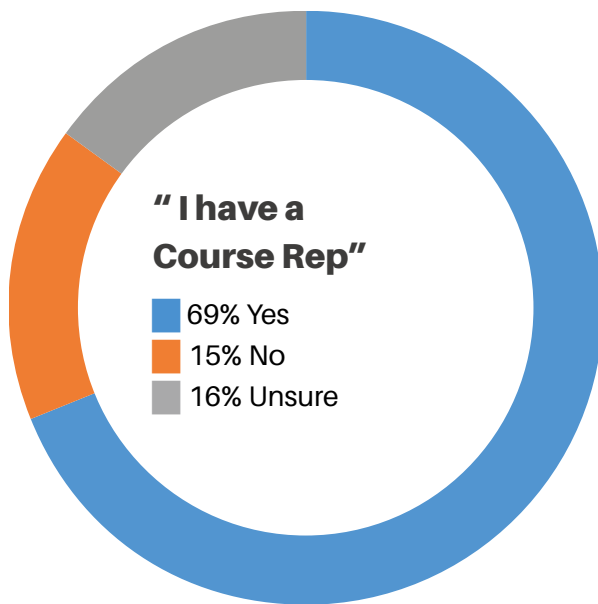
MSc Software Engineering student



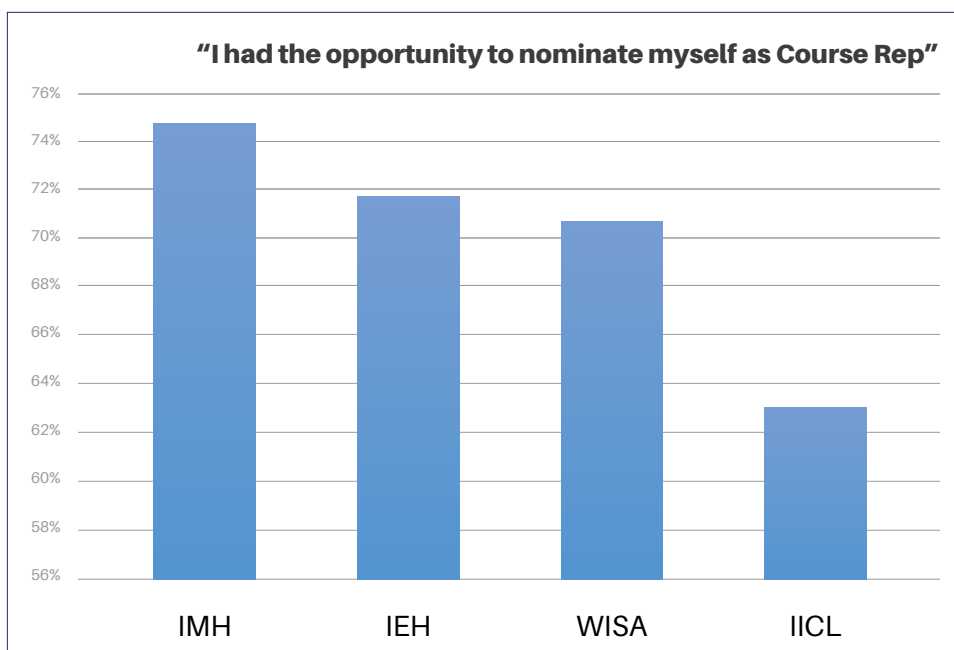
**Figure 16** - Training provided by the SU for Course Reps, including the mandatory session 'Course Rep Fundamentals' and optional sessions 'A Voice for Many', 'Congratulations, You've Engaged!', and 'Keeping Organised'.

In AQR 4 (see Figure 17 and Figure 18), 15% of students told us that they did not have a Course Rep and 16% were unsure. Some students said that they were not given the opportunity to become one. This is not in keeping with the University's Student Charter: "all students have access to a recognised formal channel through which they can communicate any feedback regarding their student experience at UWTSD."<sup>45</sup> AQR 4 highlighted a disparity across the Institutes, though it must be noted that a difference in terminology of such representatives within the Institute of Inner-City Learning may have affected the results. Nevertheless, this touches on the matter of how inconsistencies in language and communication across the University can lead to differences in experience for students based at different sites.

<sup>45</sup> Chapter 5 (5.8) of the Academic Quality Handbook [293]



**Figure 17** - The percentages of students who agreed that they had a Course Rep or not, or were unsure, from AQR 4.



**Figure 18** - The percentages of students across the four Institutes who agreed that they had the opportunity to nominate themselves as a Course Rep, from AQR 4

For courses with Course Reps there are still issues that may affect the effectiveness of representation. Some academic staff have reported issues with untrained Course Reps misunderstanding the purpose of their role at meetings<sup>46</sup>, resulting in discussions that are not constructive for the benefit of students or staff. SU records<sup>47</sup> show that despite essential training being mandatory not all Course Reps have attended in the past. Besides the potential implications of this on the feedback loop, Course Reps may also not know to access support and guidance from the SU or to keep Student Voice Reps informed of issues that students are raising, which can be problematic for ensuring that students are having their voices heard at all levels within the University. SU training has

<sup>46</sup> Feedback survey of academic staff about their understanding of the student representative system, conducted in May/June 2021

<sup>47</sup> SU Course Rep records 2019/20

been revamped this year for Course Reps and Student Voice Reps, however, with additional sessions that focus on building the necessary skills and awareness representatives need to help them to succeed. These new sessions are fully interactive, designed using training best practice methods, and have received good feedback from students. The development offer for representatives will continue to be developed, informed by student feedback.

"[It] was put together and communicated really well. Looking forward to being involved"

Student comment about Course Rep Fundamentals <sup>48</sup>

At Institute level there is an issue of papers for Institute Boards being sent out last minute (just a day or a few days in advance) so that inevitably Student Voice Reps are unable to properly read through the lengthy documents - which include external examiner reports and Student Staff Committee minutes - enough to approach them critically and participate fully in discussions, or identify areas of concern or interest for students. This matter has been raised with Institute Boards and senior university staff recently. It is important that student representatives on all formal committees are supported and facilitated to fulfil their duties, for the benefit of all stakeholders. Work is required within the University's Institutes to ensure that student representatives have access to resources in a timely manner. This is something which is pro-actively being worked on through the University's Academic Planning Team and the respective Institute Principle Admin Officers and Senior Leadership Teams.

The multitude of issues briefly outlined here have an impact on the effectiveness of student representation at UWTSD. The SU works collaboratively with staff on all levels to address these issues, including raising awareness among the student body of academic representation. Between August and October 2021 about 70 SU induction talks were given to communicate key information about the representative structure to new and returning students. These inductions were a mixture of online, face-to-face and hybrid, with the most successful engagement wise being face-to-face<sup>49</sup>. Such sessions are essential for increasing knowledge of representation structures but not all courses take up this offer yet, and when they do attendance for stand-alone online sessions can be poor. Consequently, SU presence at welcome events and on campus is important to reach as many students as possible. Sessions have also been

<sup>48</sup> Feedback for Course Rep training session on 15 October 2021

<sup>49</sup> Engagement is tracked through participation on the Mentimeter presentation

introduced specifically for staff to increase understanding of the representation structure and how they can support it, and encourage students to participate, as well as increasing working relationships between the SU and course/programme level staff. These have been trialled initially with staff from the Institute of Inner-City Learning. Additionally, we have begun work to review the academic representation system to ensure that it is effective.

Given how engaged many of our focus group participants are in university life (mostly being student leaders), it is likely that this unfamiliarity with the Student Charter and representation structure would reflect the student body at large. This emphasises the importance of work by the University and the SU to ensure that students are aware of important information and of the student representation structures that exist.

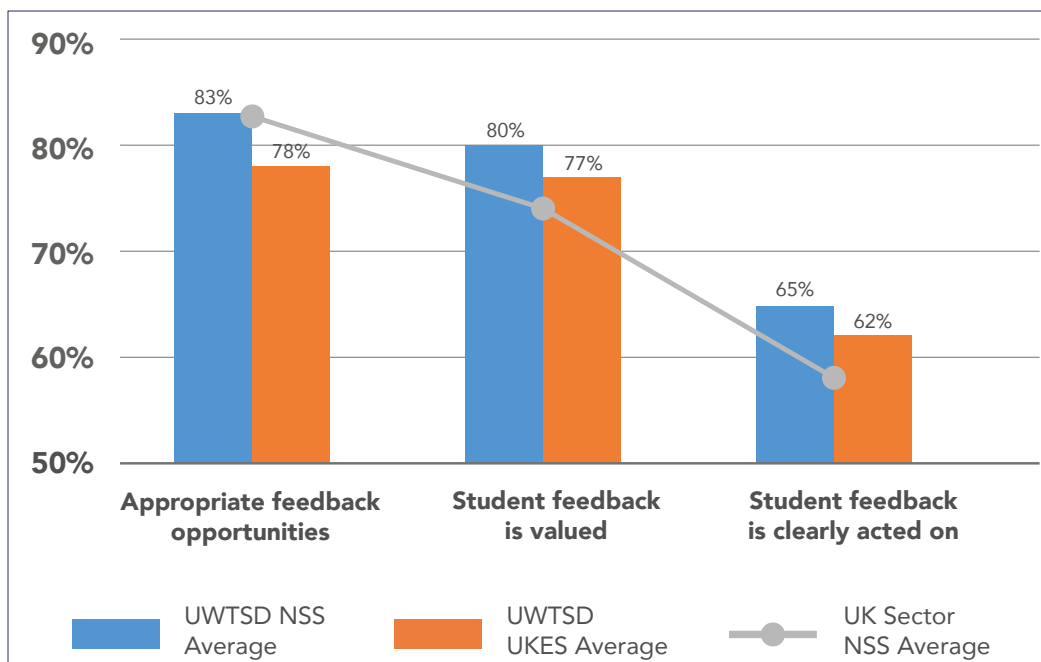
The majority of students do feel that they have the opportunity to give feedback on their lectures and learning experience: 83%<sup>50</sup> of finalist undergraduate students and an average feel they are given the right opportunities to provide feedback, while 78%<sup>51</sup> of non-finalist undergraduates and 74%<sup>52</sup> of post graduate taught students feel the same. As Figure 19 illustrates, this compares well to the UK sector average. Module evaluation surveys are sent out to students by the University, inviting students to provide specific feedback on the modules they undertake, and Student Staff Committee meetings provide a forum for student feedback and development of action in response. Undergraduates remain positive about how much they feel staff value their feedback but as Figure 19 shows, this drops when it comes to students knowing how their feedback has been acted on. 62%<sup>53</sup> of postgraduate research students are positive about how the University values and responds to research students' feedback, which is consistent with the UK sector (60% satisfaction) but does demonstrate a less positive experience to that of taught students. These figures can be raised by ensuring that the feedback loop is fully closed i.e., communicating progress and changes effectively back to students.

<sup>50</sup> Average satisfaction for question 23 of the NSS, 2017-2021

<sup>51</sup> Average satisfaction for question 30.1 of UKES, 2017-2021 (excluding 2018)

<sup>52</sup> Average satisfaction for question 4.5 of PTES, 2017-2021

<sup>53</sup> Average satisfaction for question 10.1 of PRES, 2017-2021



**Figure 19** - The average undergraduate student satisfaction for student feedback between 2017 and 2021, comparing UWTSD to the UK Sector - data from NSS and UKES.

In student comment data and our focus groups a trend came across, that whilst students feel that lecturers are very supportive and do what they can to improve things for those they teach, they also feel that it is harder to be heard at a higher level within the University when this is necessary, mostly regarding the time responses to students take.

Students are kept informed of changes or improvements to their courses in various ways depending on the change. At programme level updates are given in emails and on Moodle. In recent years the University has used a traffic lights system to help demonstrate progress on projects/actions, such as in committee meeting papers - green meaning action completed and amber in progress. The student rep system supports getting the word out to students, though that is not its primary purpose. In AQR 2<sup>54</sup> communication about course changes was highlighted as an area for improvement, being an area that tended to score lower satisfaction in NSS than other areas. It was apparent in student feedback that a reliance on e-mail by the University to communicate with students was an issue, with time-important information like lecture changes being lost among a large volume of communications. Consequently, the SU recommended that an alternative to email be used for such notices. As a result, the University developed Student Hwb and the Hwb app, which were introduced in August 2019. Earlier this year student feedback on the platforms was collected via a survey and focus groups, to inform its continue development. This is an excellent example of how the University has acted in response to students' views and continues to monitor the solution.

<sup>54</sup> [Academic Quality Report 2, 2018 \[051\]](#)

## 6.4 Student Cases: Academic Appeals & Complaints



<https://youtu.be/MQqfUYqEi3s>

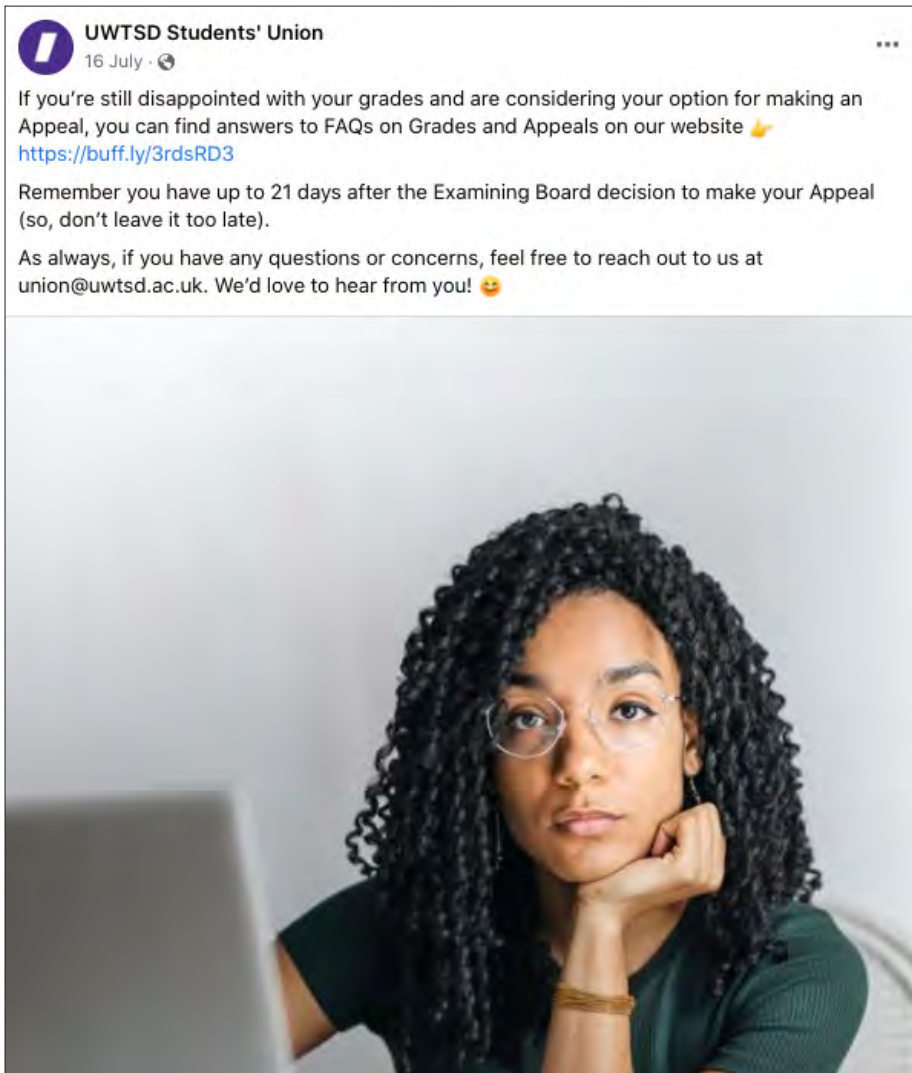
Should students find themselves in a situation where they need to make a complaint about their course, or appeal a decision made in relation to their academic progress, they can access information about these procedures on the University's website<sup>55</sup>. Students are directed here in their Programme of Study Handbook and are made aware that the SU can support students with these processes in SU Induction talks. It is extremely beneficial for students to contact the SU's Advice team before submitting a complaint or appeal, so that they have expert support from an early stage. The outcome can be influenced by the strength and quality of evidence and awareness of university policies, which an individual student may be very unfamiliar with.

70%<sup>56</sup> of appeal-related casework for the SU Advice Service results from a notification from the Academic Office, which happens after a student has commenced an appeal process and indicated on the form that they would like the SU to be informed. This demonstrates that only a minority of students come directly to the SU for advice before starting an appeal. In contrast, only 16% of complaint-related cases came via this route, illustrating that students are far less likely to submit

<sup>55</sup> [www.uwtsd.ac.uk/academic-office/procedures-for-academic-appeals-complaints-and-other-student-cases/](http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/academic-office/procedures-for-academic-appeals-complaints-and-other-student-cases/)

<sup>56</sup> SU Advice Service Report 2020/21 [298]

a complaint off their own back without union support. This stark difference in numbers may be due to the appeals process being promoted far more readily than the complaints procedure. Besides the sources previously mentioned, information about appeals is posted on MyTSD (student portal) following each release of results, and communication from Hwb provides students with reminders after Examining Boards have taken place. Both processes are explained on the SU website and we run social media campaigns about the right to appeal, at appropriate times of the year such as the 2021 summer release of results.



**Figure 20** - A Facebook post on the SU's page highlighting the appeals process.

Sometimes students can find it difficult to understand the outcome of their appeal/complaint due to the detailed nature of an Outcome Letter. For example, one student who received support from the SU Advice Service believed that their appeal had been unsuccessful and consequently applied for a review of the outcome, despite the appeal actually

having been successful; this was raised at a Student Case Review meeting. The Academic Quality Handbook does lay out what is and is not possible in an appeal, but the SU Advice team have supported students who have been disappointed by the outcome of their appeal due to having hopes of an outcome that is beyond the possibilities of the process. Students can request a review of an outcome. In 2020 the percentages of case reviews requested were 13% for appeals, 3% for academic misconduct, and 16% for complaints<sup>57</sup>. This shows that the vast majority of students accepted their appeal or complaint outcome.

The standard timescale for appeals and complaints is 28 days and 40 days respectively, which is well within the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's (OIA) recommended 90 days. However, sometimes there can be issues with these timescales, such as for students in Birmingham and London - which have three entry points each year with a trimester academic calendar - where if they appeal successfully against a withdrawal decision, they cannot re-enrol until the following trimester. Because Examining Boards and appeal timelines often fall after the start of the following trimester, this might mean that a student either incurs a Student Finance overpayment or might not receive a Student Finance payment for a very long period (or even both). This is an issue given that the Institute of Inner-City Learning is a key part of the University's Widening Access agenda. It has been raised in a Student Case Review meeting and comes up frequently in Student Financial Support Fund panels. We will continue to work with the University to ensure that students are aware of the SU's Advice service so that they are best supported throughout such processes.

<sup>57</sup> Annual Report on Student Cases 2020 [109]

## 6.5 Learning Resources

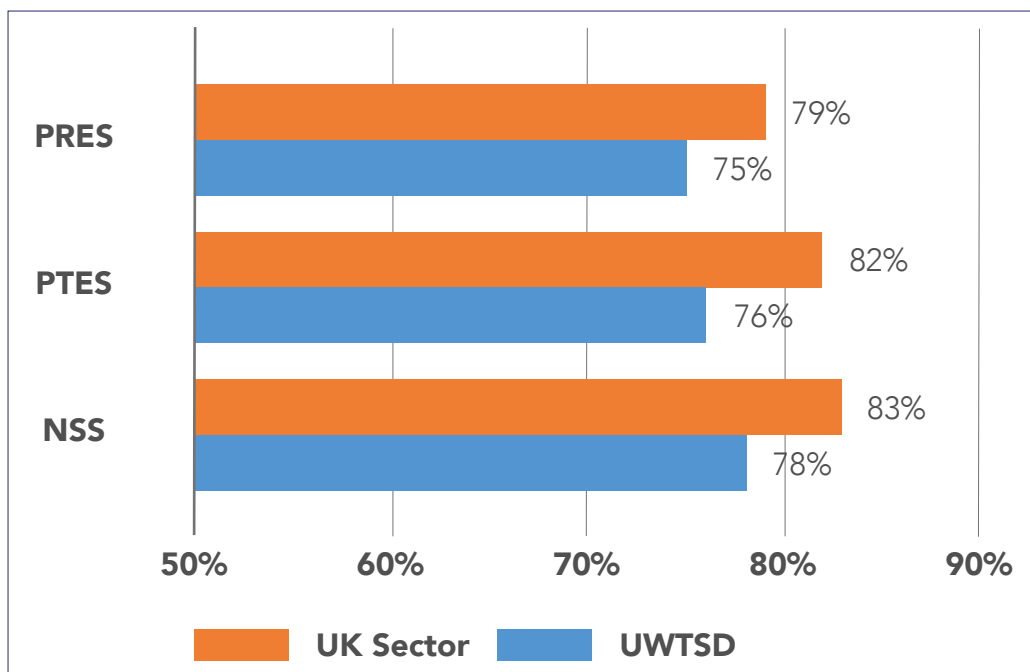


[https://youtu.be/\\_2UCJUwhOw4](https://youtu.be/_2UCJUwhOw4)

Teaching at UWTSD is spread across six towns/cities in Wales and England, and within these there can be multiple sites of delivery<sup>58</sup>. Further, courses are delivered in other areas, such as outreach development centres and with collaborative partners (colleges). Some students spend all or almost their time learning at a distance too. Consequently, there is a challenge to ensure parity in access to library resources and teaching and learning facilities for all students. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a further challenge to this, especially for students who require access to equipment and facilities for their work e.g., engineering students needing access to labs. Internationally institutions have been forced quickly to rethink how higher education is delivered with restrictions of social distancing and lockdowns, making quality online provision a priority. UWTSD has been investing in resources to mitigate this, such as remote access software and setting up hybrid teaching rooms. For example, £25,000 has been spent on Music Tech software for remote access, and a significant amount on Adobe student at home licences<sup>59</sup>. Given our findings of the experiences of UWTSD students when it comes to learning resources, this is a positive, but access to physical resources remains important too.

<sup>58</sup> [www.uwtsd.ac.uk/campuses/](http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/campuses/)

<sup>59</sup> Figures shared with the SU by the Director of Digital Services



**Figure 21** - Average student satisfaction for learning resources in NSS, PTES and PRES between 2017 and 2021, comparing UWTSD to the UK Sector.

As Figure 21 shows, UWTSD performs lower than the UK Sector average in student satisfaction surveys for learning resources – the relevant questions asked concern access to IT, specialist software, equipment, workspaces, and library resources both physical and online. Given the impact of lockdowns in the UK to access on-campus facilities, it is perhaps not surprising that for the 2021 surveys satisfaction the student satisfaction in this area significantly dropped, with a score for UWTSD of 63% in the NSS in 2021 compared to 83% in 2020, and 59% in PTES 2021 compared to 79% in 2020. But year-on-year, UWTSD scores lower than the UK sector average in this area, highlighting room for improvement regardless of the pandemic.

In the University's Resources Survey 2020/21, 76% of students had a positive opinion about the University's library. The most reoccurring comments asked for the provision of more books online (21%) and offline (15%). 65% said that the availability of online books and journals was good (35%) or excellent (30%), but 8% wanted access to more journals/articles. Numerous comments from postgraduate research students in PRES 2021 identify library/reading resources as being the top area that could be improved, particularly access to online journals and books, and the ability to put in more requests for books on Need More<sup>60</sup> for distance learners. The University has recently invested substantially (£350,000) in digital library resources, supported by a grant from HEFCW, including access to e-books and visual content<sup>61</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> [www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/need-more/](http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/need-more/)

<sup>61</sup> Information shared with the SU by the Academic Office

The Academic Quality Report (AQR) 4 in 2020, raised issues of the accessibility of learning resources and facilities due to the diversity of course delivery sites and teaching schedules. These issues included library opening times, availability of InfoSkills sessions, and lack of quiet study areas. Courses delivered at outreach development centres are particularly lacking in basic facilities to support learning, such as IT facilities<sup>62</sup>, which given the intent behind these centres is to widen access to higher education, is an area of development. The accessibility of facilities for students with disabilities needs to be highlighted too. Access to physical library resources scored particularly poorly for postgraduate research students with disabilities in 2021 with just 27% satisfaction - 40% lower than non-disabled postgraduate research students<sup>63</sup>.

This is supplemented by concerns from students of the closure of the Griffith Library in Swansea, with its resources being relocated to the SA1 site approximately a twenty minutes' walk away. The library facilities at SA1 are far newer; purpose built with UWTSD students of today in mind. But there has been dissatisfaction among art and media students<sup>64</sup> about this decision generally, in particular, the issue of accessibility for students with disabilities has been raised with the SU and the University<sup>65</sup> by undergraduate finalists. The SU and the University have worked together to create a proxy borrowing service so that physical resources can be transported between sites upon request. This system is predominately for students who have additional needs rather for any and all students. Where the library space was previously, the University has responded by including students in the look and feel of a newly designed learning space.

In 2021, online provision is more important than it ever has been. 92% of students in the Resources Survey 2020/21 said that the quality of digital teaching and learning was fine (19%) or good (72%), and 93% said that access to essential digital services such as e-books and online course materials, was fine (18%) or good (75%). Satisfaction with digital services was lowest in Lampeter and highest in Birmingham and London, but generally these figures are very positive.

Moodle - the online learning management system the University uses - is a frequent area of dissatisfaction, however. AQR 2 highlighted issues with Moodle such as broken links and missing or unclear information. In this report only 35% of students were consistently satisfied with Moodle. In the 2020/21 Resources Survey, 92 students provided comments on how to improve Moodle. Comments mention that Moodle is not useful for some students as there is not much on there for them:

<sup>62</sup> [Academic Quality Report 4, 2020](#) [051]

<sup>63</sup> UWTSD results for question 4.3 of PRES 2021

<sup>64</sup> Student comments from NSS 2020 and UKES 2020

<sup>65</sup> Focus group held on 27 October 2021 in Swansea

"Most of the time our tutors don't bother with it so not worth looking at other than for module brief."

"Reading lists for my modules so far have not been on Moodle."

While other students give examples of useful resources:

"For one of my modules (Coexistent Perspectives - MA Contemporary Dialogues) we have a digital handbook on Moodle with hyperlinks to each Teams lecture and seminar. This has been really useful and easy to follow, it would be great if all module handbooks could be set up like this."

**Of note:** the University's Reading List project, as reported within the 'A Year in Numbers'<sup>66</sup> report from LLR has had a lot of success of the course of the last year. With more reading lists than ever being available for students, as of November 2021 49% of modules have online reading lists. With Performing Arts achieving 100% of reading lists available. The Institute of Education and Humanities achieved 45% of modules having an online reading list, with the Institute of Management and Health at 41% of modules, Welsh Institute of Science and Art at 52%, and Institute of Inner-City Learning at 88%.

The data regarding Moodle and reading lists demonstrates some disparity in experience across programmes, as well as some examples of good practice. In AQR 2 the SU recommended that the University complete its 2017/18 audit of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) base-line standards, and to promote these standards to students. UWTSd released the Digital Teaching and Learning Standards in 2020/21, though these do not appear to have been linked yet from the Student Charter as mentioned in AQR 4<sup>67</sup>. Also, we have had many recent reports from students that their lectures are not being recorded despite the University's Lecture Recording Policy<sup>68</sup> that states that all timetabled classes should be recorded. This issue was brought up in our focus groups with Carmarthen and London students and is something that Course Reps and Student Voice Reps have brought to our attention relatively often recently. However, the policy is new, and we have been working to communicate information about it to students, such as via a blog and accompanying video on our website<sup>69</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> LLR A Year in Numbers Report 2020/21 [142]

<sup>67</sup> At time of writing (December 2021)

<sup>68</sup> [Lecture Recording Policy](#) [299]

<sup>69</sup> SU Lecture Capture blog [300]

## 6.6 Enabling Achievement



<https://youtu.be/UTouOBZBPjM>

UWTSD strives to open up further and higher education opportunities to people from all backgrounds<sup>70</sup>. The value of inclusivity is important to the student body, as demonstrated by the manifestos of students who have run for representative roles<sup>71</sup>, but continual work is needed to ensure that all students have the support and tools they need to achieve. This may include specific learning and skills support for individual students or clear and accurate information for the whole student body. One such example of the work being done in this area is the Race Equality Plan 2021-24, which lays out what action the University will take to promote a diverse and inclusive academic community.

UWTSD's Equality and Diversity Report 2019-20 reports that 16% of students declared a disability that year, which has been a consistent proportion of the student body for the four years previous. The most common condition reported is a specific learning difficulty, with mental health conditions being the second most common. Whilst a breakdown of degree outcomes shows that students with disabilities outperform those without a disability, this does not necessarily mean that students do not face barriers. In the 2021 NSS, students with disabilities other than learning disabilities, were noticeably less satisfied than other students in most areas. Some

<sup>70</sup> [www.uwtsd.ac.uk/mission/](http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/mission/)

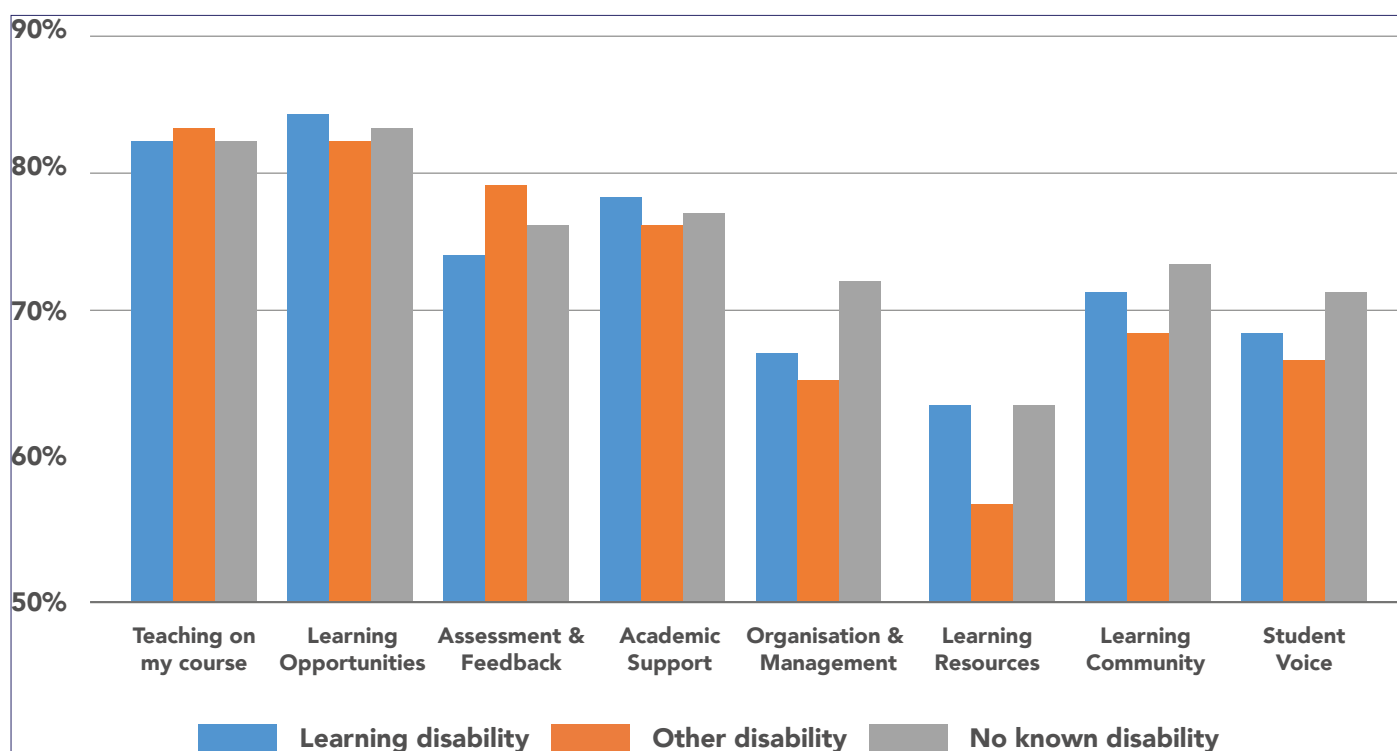
<sup>71</sup> [www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/candidates/rebecca-palmer](http://www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/candidates/rebecca-palmer), [www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/candidates/iskander-abd-al-kerim](http://www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/candidates/iskander-abd-al-kerim)

postgraduate taught students with disabilities raised issues in PTES, that made it harder for them to learn. This included hearing difficulties during online classes, and suggestions for presenting information in classes in different ways to make it more accessible.

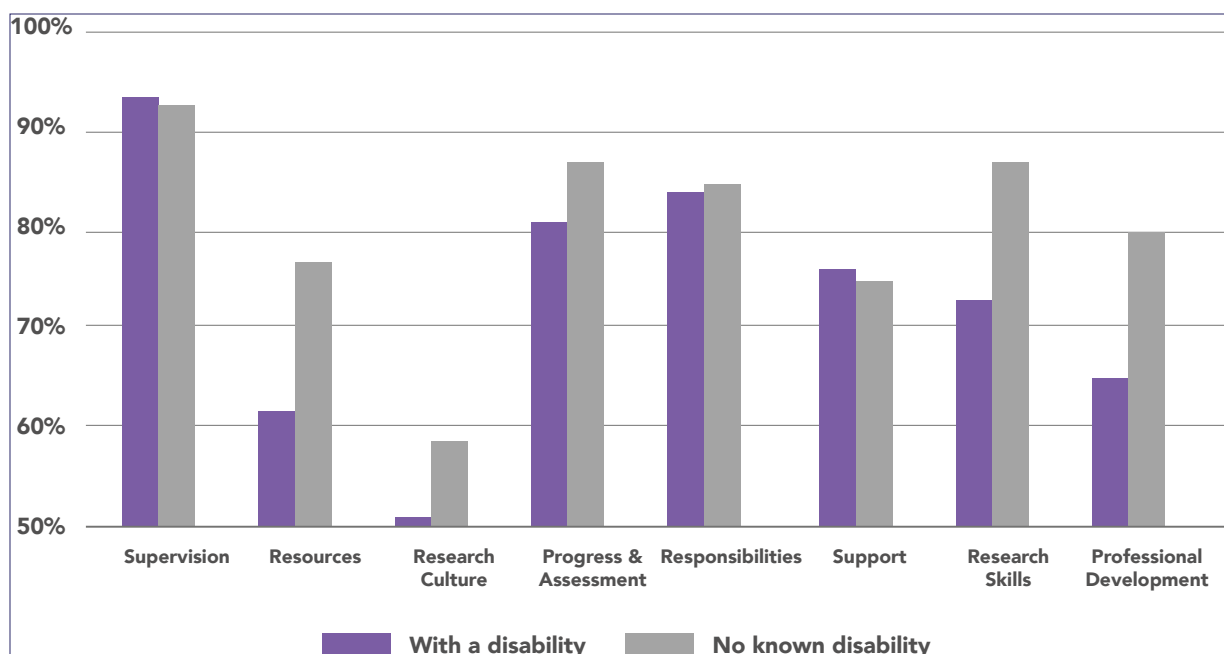
"I have a disability; namely bad hearing and I wear hearing aids. The sound quality on most of the online lectures is poor, especially when they are simply recordings of classroom sessions, and the speaker moves away from the microphone on the lectern."

Latin student, PTES 2021

In PRES 2021, postgraduate research students with a disability were significantly less satisfied than students without a disability in relation to resources, skills, and professional development, but did have high praise when it comes to supervision.



**Figure 22** - A breakdown of student satisfaction in the 2021 NSS for students with and without known disabilities, distinguishing between learning disabilities and other disabilities.



**Figure 23** - A breakdown of student satisfaction in the 2021 PRES for students with and without known disabilities.

For international students there are a whole host of additional things to consider before commencing study at UWTSD, including differences in teaching, grading structure, and culture. The University provides pre-arrival support and information for new international students, and this year began holding online events in addition to enhance students' induction pre-arrival. On arrival students are usually welcomed with events and an academic orientation, which includes how UK degrees work, the credit system, and the marking system. Due to COVID-19 the welcome international students would normally receive when arriving in the UK was pared back, which may have fed into feelings of isolation that some international students have expressed in interactions with the SU recently (October 2021). International postgraduate research students report to being 11%<sup>72</sup> less satisfied than home PGR students regarding the induction they had, and a Swansea based international MSc student that we spoke to recently said that he had not had much of an induction at all.

Some comments from international postgraduate research students in PRES 2021 mentioned that language support is the top area in which their experience could be improved. English language support is provided by the University with a dedicated centre based in Swansea<sup>73</sup>, including a 10 week course for new students. International students on courses based elsewhere in Wales are supported online, and those based in Birmingham and London are supported by campus specific staff. This support is essential for supporting international students with English as a second (or more) language to succeed in their studies in the UK.

<sup>72</sup> Average satisfaction score for question 8.1 in PRES, between 2017 and 2021.

<sup>73</sup> [www.uwtsd.ac.uk/international/student-life/english-language-support/](http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/international/student-life/english-language-support/)

Being well-informed about course structure and expectations is important for all students to succeed in their studies. Communication and dissemination of information is a reoccurring topic in student feedback across the board, with numerous comments in student survey data on the subject<sup>74</sup>. It is often brought up as an issue by students who work, or who have caring responsibilities to balance with their studies.

"Term-time dates are released too late which puts students who are working in a difficult situation."

Management and Leadership Skills for the Workplace (London) student, NSS 2021

The University's 2020 Pulse Survey revealed that only 59% of students had received key course information (including access to Moodle) in advance of commencing their course, though this improved to 73% in 2021. Further, AQR 1 found that promotional materials for UWTSD courses only mentioned some of the additional costs that would be involved, and that the expectations of these costs for a new student were lower than the reality. Recommendations were made to make it clearer to potential students what extra financial costs would be involved in completing a specific course. This was actioned by the University and the SU determined the recommendation had been met in AQR 4.

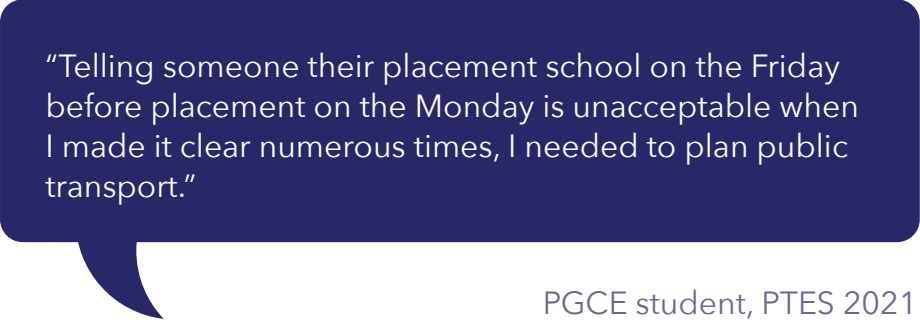
Communication is particularly an issue for programmes that incorporate work-based learning opportunities. These opportunities are integral for preparing students for professional practice. Such programmes include education, health, and hotel management. Whilst placements stand out in student feedback for Teacher Education courses as being the most enjoyable part of the course, in AQR 2 some issues with placements were identified. Predominantly these issues related to placement allocation and communication with students, and the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check process required for students to undertake placements<sup>75</sup>. 53% of surveyed students for the report felt they had not received enough information before their placement, though during their placement they became more satisfied with support and communication. The University resolved to hold focus groups with students to investigate the issues and in April 2020<sup>76</sup> the SU was told that the relevant chapter of the Academic Quality Handbook would be reviewed. However, students on education-based courses such as PGCE and BA Primary Education with QTS, are still voicing the same issues with placement details being relayed last minute and

<sup>74</sup> NSS student comments 2017-21

<sup>75</sup> [Academic Quality Report 2, 2018](#) [051]

<sup>76</sup> [Academic Quality Report 4, 2020](#) [051]

communication in general being an area that needs improving – communication has been a frequent topic in PTES comments for 2019-2021.



"Telling someone their placement school on the Friday before placement on the Monday is unacceptable when I made it clear numerous times, I needed to plan public transport."

PGCE student, PTES 2021

For education students there is structured support in place pre-placement, during and after. In our Work Placement Feedback survey<sup>77</sup> sent out to relevant Course Reps in October 2021, students told us that they have personal and professional tutors, and mentors during their placement, though there was mixed feeling as to how supported individuals felt. All students agreed that their placement was relevant to their course and career goals.

<sup>77</sup> Work Placement Feedback survey, October 2021

# Chapter 7: Concluding Comments



## The 2021/22 UWTSD SU Presidents

Students are generally positive about assessments and feedback, but good practice in relating assignments to course learning objectives needs to be replicated in Graduate Attributes Modules. The spacing and timescales of assignments can be an issue for students and there are inconsistencies across courses when it comes to the timeliness and usefulness of assessment feedback. We have seen the University respond constructively to student feedback regarding Graduate Attributes Modules and it remains an area of focus for the Sabbatical Officer team.

The University is supportive of student representation and actively welcomes feedback from students but a lack of awareness among the study body is a barrier to students engaging in academic quality monitoring and enhancement processes, which includes the representation structure. Whilst a good majority of students feel they have the opportunity to give feedback, fewer students agree that they can see how it has been acted on. This is a work in progress for the University and us (the SU), who are working together to close the feedback

loop and increase communication about such opportunities to students, as well as improving the experience of students who undertake academic representation roles through training and support.

Students tend to be aware that they have the right to appeal their grades but are less aware, or less confident with going down the complaints process. We will continue to work with the University to ensure that students are aware of the SU's Advice service, such as increasing the number of students who receive an SU induction talk.

The pandemic impacted on students' ability to access physical resources like IT facilities and study spaces, but data shows that students had concerns about accessibility before national lockdowns and that it remains an area for improvement. Students are positive about online provision but issues with Moodle are frequently raised in feedback. The University released the Digital Teaching and Learning Standards in 2020/21, which should support work in this area.

Information and tailored support are important to enable students to achieve academically. International students are supported with an induction to UK higher education and an English Language programme, where this is relevant. Students with disabilities highlight ways that lectures could be made more inclusive for them, including consideration of those with hearing difficulties for online classes. Poor or lacking communication is a topic that has recurred in student feedback, including information on additional course costs which the SU has worked with the University on improving. Communication is a big issue for students who undertake placements, though the overall placement experience is thought of very positively by most education students. We will work with our Part-Time Officers, Course Reps and Student Voice Reps to continue work to ensure all students have the support they need to achieve.

This completed submission has been produced to be shared with the study body on our website, with links from social media and other communication channels. Besides supporting the University's Quality Enhancement Review this report will support our work generally to improve and enhance the student experience, continuing to work in partnership with the University.

# Chapter 8: Appendix

# 8

## Links

### **Academic Quality Reports:**

[www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/publications](http://www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/publications)

### **Academic Representation:**

[www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/academic-representation](http://www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/academic-representation)

### **SU Advice Service:**

[www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/advice](http://www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/advice)