

University of Wales AEIOU Student-Staff Handbook



Prifysgol Cymru
University of Wales

Achievement

Engagement

Include

Organise

Understand

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INTRODUCTION

The AEIOU Staff-Student Handbook has been developed by the University of Wales (hereafter the University or UW) for use by both students and staff at collaborative centres and other institutions involved in programmes leading to UW awards. The handbook is intended as a resource to be used by staff and students together in order to enhance learning, teaching, and engagement.

This handbook takes the view that a higher education experience goes much further than the attainment of a degree, but is a transformative life experience for all involved. Higher education study allows not only the mastery of a specific discipline, but provides the opportunity to develop a range of holistic skills and knowledge that equip an individual for a lifelong positive contribution to society in both a personal and professional capacity. Higher education institutions become the source of such transformations, and the classroom should not be the beginning and the end of the learners' journey.

Higher education delivered in the UK is enriched with a variety of activities and approaches which go beyond the education received in a classroom, creating a much broader education environment in which students become a part. Such experiences can sometimes be lost when undertaking study through arrangements such as validation or franchising.

The following handbook is designed to assist centres, staff, and students to develop practices and approaches which reflect, as far as possible, those used within UK universities. The adoption of the practices outlined within this handbook provides the opportunity for the development of an enriching environment for all involved.



How to use this handbook

This handbook should be used by both students and staff in a collaborative way to explore approaches to engaging with both academic and non-academic elements of higher education, which play such an important part in enriching the higher education experience in the UK. Staff and students should approach this resource together, exploring and challenging each other in a collegiate way over how and what enhancements may be made to current practices within their own institution.

Structure of this handbook

This handbook is separated into five distinctive areas, relating to the five vowels of the English Language – AEIOU. Each vowel relates to a specific subject which underpins the chapter:

A	Achieve	Developing approaches to allow achievement through enhancement in the classroom and personal study.
E	Engage	Engagement between students and staff, and the wider institution, including representation, committee involvement, and ensuring feedback.
I	Include	Developing a wider awareness of Equality and Diversity matters both in the classroom and across the institution.
O	Organise	Developing or becoming involved in a student organisation.
U	Understand	Understanding UK higher education and the University of Wales.



ACHIEVEMENT

Overview

Achievement, and more specifically academic achievement, can sometimes be difficult in transitions between levels of education. A change in learning approach is natural when transitioning from secondary and further education, and from further education to higher education study. However, this can be compounded further when the learning approach is unfamiliar, and has been imported from another country and educational system, as may be the case in the transnational education (TNE) context in which UW is engaged.

Such changes are primarily founded in the relationship between the student and teacher, as well as the way students are expected to study and think in their approach to their programme of study. The following section will look at three different areas related to these matters, which will help develop effective learning approaches:

- Classroom
- Personal Study
- Styles of Thinking.

There are a number of changes in responsibility and demands on students upon entering university education, particularly compared with a further education or school experience. Some of these are outlined below:

Independence	Timetables are less structured, with students being provided with the opportunity to use their time as desired to undertake study and/or extra-curricular activity.
Study	Students are expected to do a significant amount of independent reading in higher education study in contrast to anything that they have undertaken before.
Teaching	A significant aspect of teaching is undertaken in lectures, which are supported by seminars and tutorials. It is up to each student as to how they prepare for and engage with the mode of teaching.
Breadth and Depth	The breadth and depth of study at university is considerably wider than what students will have previously experienced. It will not be possible to read every book and article on your subject.
Assessment	Students will be confronted with longer and more complex assignments, projects and examinations than they may be used to, and be expected to develop an academic style to their work.
Achievement	The responsibility is on the student to undertake independent study and research to achieve their goals.

It is important for all students to understand the above points before embarking on higher education, as it will inform them of what is expected by their teachers. It is also important for teachers to clearly understand these points, and to ensure that the transition into studying higher education is supportive of all student backgrounds and experiences. Institutions should consider how they prepare students for these changes, and what actions they can take in order to minimise difficulties in coming to terms with changes. The following sections will look at aspects of these issues.

Classroom

Generally, there are five different methods through which modules are delivered in the UK. These may be termed 'Lectures', 'Seminars', 'Tutorials', 'Workshops', and 'Laboratories'. Each method requires something different from both teacher and student in preparation and engagement, and it is important that everyone knows what form the delivery method for each session will take, in order to allow students to make the best use of their preparation time.

Lectures

Lectures are the most common method through which modules are delivered. This form of teaching focuses upon a set topic from the syllabus, and is delivered by a teacher at the front of the classroom, sometimes with the use of audio-visual aids. Students are expected to listen closely to the lecture and take notes. A period for questions is usually reserved at the end of the session.

A lecture aims to provide an overview of key issues and topics to assist students with further study, it is not meant to be a comprehensive review of a subject. A teacher may present information not found in textbooks, and may or may not present their own views on the subject matter. Different teachers may maintain different approaches and different opinions on subjects, which can sometimes lead to a variation in material being used to cover the same topic.

Students are encouraged to take notes of lectures in order to make best use of the information provided, and to complement their own individual study. It is important to become familiar with the delivery structure of lectures, and where emphasis is placed on particular subject matter, as this may influence assessments later within the course. Students should seek to note key points, any references to articles or books, and any matters to follow-up after the lecture.

Notes should be reviewed after the lectures to ensure that they can be understood when they come to be used as revision notes for examinations. It is at this point, immediately after the lecture, where students should seek to clarify any points which they have misunderstood with other students or the teacher.

Seminars

Seminars are occasions for group discussions, and may focus on a specific area covered in a recent lecture. A seminar is usually led by a tutor, who will encourage active participation from students in discussion of the topic.

Seminars may sometimes be led by other students, who have prepared a short presentation on a topic or article, which elicits discussion across the wider group. It is the responsibility of all within the group to have prepared for the seminar by undertaking the required reading.

Students and teachers regularly find that seminars present the opportunity to explore topics in more depth, share ideas and approaches, gain insights that may not have previously been considered, and identify any misunderstandings on the subject.

It is important that the seminar environment encourages discussion and open exchange of ideas by all involved. It is therefore important to ensure that proper respect and encouragement is given to all participants to contribute.

Did you know?

The University of Wales is a bilingual institution, and conducts its business in both Welsh and English.

Tutorials

A tutorial focusses upon the needs of an individual or small group of learners, and is led by a tutor. Discussion will centre upon the understanding of the current topic of study, and provide an opportunity for all participants to question and discuss their own opinions and views. A tutorial may also seek to discuss recent student work, in order to evaluate recent assignments and discuss differences between approaches.

A tutorial can function like a seminar on a smaller scale, without the need for presentation. However, a tutorial also offers opportunities to engage in the exploration of ideas and opinions on subjects in a less formal environment. Preparation and participation are two important factors in tutorials for students. Effective tutorials make connections between lectures, seminars, and the discussion topics of the tutorials, and contribute to the development of critical thinking of students.

Workshop

A workshop provides the opportunity for students to use practical application of theory learnt in lectures. Workshops typically consist of a facilitator and a group of students who may be required to undertake a range of tasks to test and apply their learning. Such approaches develop teamwork between students towards a particular goal.

Workshops are highly collaborative activities, and the use of them is dependent upon the subject being studied. The activity usually requires team-work between groups of students, and focus on the development of key skills relating to communication, time management, compromise, and focus. It is important that staff monitor groups in how they are working together, and to ensure that all members of a team participate within the session. Where workshops are regularly used, it is important that new groups are formed for each new project in order to maximise the learning potential of the activity.

Did you know?

Ambitions for a university in Wales date back to the last Welsh Prince of Wales, Owain Glyndŵr, who had wished to create two universities in Wales in the fourteenth century. Wales had to wait another five hundred years until this vision was realised!

Laboratories

A laboratory session is primarily used in science-based disciplines to provide a platform which allows students to engage in practical elements of study. Such approaches not only rely on the ability of a student to engage with what has been taught through lectures and seminars, but also seeks to develop the skills of scientific method such as observation, measurement, and data analysis.

In order to get the most from laboratory sessions, students should prepare in advance by covering all assigned material, and seeking clarification where required. Some laboratory sessions may call upon students to work with dangerous materials, and it is important that students are fully aware of such hazards and are trained appropriately to ensure the safety of all involved.

Through undertaking experiments, students will gather a range of data, from which they will be expected to complete a report and analysis of outcomes. There are a variety of formats used to undertake this, and it is important that information is collected appropriately to ensure that they can be used for any subsequent larger projects within the programme of study.

Other Approaches to Learning

A popular approach which has developed within the UK which also combines resources available online, which is termed as 'Blended Learning'. The blended learning approach integrates the more traditional forms of learning mentioned above with modern digital resources, which may enhance understanding of a subject. This may be through the availability of videos, pod-casts, or other online material, either through a dedicated platform or an identified list of resources. Such an approach can create a wider interactive approach to learning for students.

Preparation and Participation

Students should be aware that to get the best out of each form of teaching, they should have prepared beforehand by studying all the required material. This can be especially important in smaller sessions such as seminars and tutorials, where questions and discussions are actively required. However, students should also be prepared to answer questions in lectures if called upon, which equally requires students to be prepared for lectures.

Students should ensure that they do all required reading for teaching events in advance in order to allow time to understand and reflect on the materials. This also provides time to follow up on any key points which students feel have merit in exploring further. It is useful to make notes regularly while reading, particularly in preparation for seminars and tutorials where questions are actively encouraged.

While participation is not usually called for in lectures, it is of central importance in seminars, tutorials, and workshops. Students actively benefit from participation in these forms of learning, and it is important that the sessions provide a supportive platform through which everyone can contribute to.

As well as actively participating in appropriate forums, it is also important to develop strong listening skills, and to listen intelligently to discussions or lectures so that appropriate notes can be taken and/or questions can be asked where appropriate. Careful listening to how lectures are structured, and how arguments are presented, allows an insight into how their own assignments may be structured when they are required to write about a topic.

Personal Study

As outlined above, an important part of being a student is learning to be independent, and capable of undertaking self-directed study, while learning to organise workloads efficiently and effectively. The following section will look at the important aspects of becoming a responsible learner.

Organisation of Time

There can be many demands on time for students undertaking higher education study, and it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that they organise their time and activities methodically.

It is useful to maintain a planner – whether electronically or hard-copy – to keep track of daily schedules. This should contain not only class times and meetings, but also deadlines for coursework and examinations. It will also be helpful to include any activities that are not associated with studying to ensure that adequate time can be planned to fulfil all commitments that students have.

While using a planner, it will be useful for students to plan time to prepare assignments or essays, when research should take place, etc., to ensure that coursework is prepared to be submitted on the specified date. The same technique should also be used for revising in the run-up to examinations, to ensure that there is enough time to suitably prepare for examinations.

Prioritising

An important aspect of higher education study is learning to prioritise a number of commitments and tasks against each other. Priorities may be required to be adjusted on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, depending on the time of year and the variety of other commitments. It is important to be able to prioritise these tasks by identifying those things which are important and urgent, against those which may be neither important, nor urgent. The balance between these priorities may depend upon a variety of factors including, for example: weight of marks for each assessment, time until submission, responsibility for extra-curricular activities, etc.

It is important that at the end of each day or week to understand what priorities have increased in importance so that they can be focussed upon in the coming day or week. A list may help in identifying priorities for the next day or week of work to be undertaken in order to monitor progress.

Students may find it useful to break large tasks down into smaller sub-tasks which contribute to a larger whole, to make them manageable and digestible in the daily routine of study. By adopting this approach, the completion of an individual task will provide encouragement that progress is being made towards the completion of a larger, more complex requirement.

Consideration should finally be given to the routine for work. Many people find it helpful to complete particular tasks at a certain time of day. It is helpful for a student to understand when they are at their most alert, and when they are most productive. It is during these periods that time should be set aside to complete more complex or important tasks.

Learning Style

Each student is individual, and are best placed to understand their own needs and how they prefer to engage in learning. There are four styles of learning:

Visual	Learners who prefer to use images, maps, and graphics in order to organise and understand information.
Auditory	Learners who prefer to learn new content through listening and speaking such as through lectures and seminars.
Read and Write	Learners who prefer to learn through words, which may be done through reading and note-taking.
Kinesthetic	Learners who prefer to understand information through the experience of undertaking tasks.

It is important for a student to understand preferences for learning, and how it can be exploited to advantage success during study. There are also a variety of online tests available which allow individuals to identify their learning preferences. The Honey and Mumford self-test is of particular benefit to identify the preferences of learners, and how best they should approach learning. The four styles of learner identified are identified below, with a general overview of key characteristics:

Type	Preferred Activities	Undesirable Activities
Activist	Variety, change, new experiences, and excitement.	Observing, understanding theory, strict procedures.
Reflector	Undertaking research, time to think and consider information.	Unstructured approaches, undertaking superficial work.
Theorist	Understanding theory, undertaking methodical review of information.	Tasks without purpose and lack of structure.
Pragmatist	Making connections between theory and real-life activities or situations.	Learning information without any clear use or immediate application.

By identifying a preferred style of learning, students can identify how best to approach learning specific topics. It is also beneficial for teachers to understand the learning preferences of their students, in order to make the most impact from their time in the classroom.

Active Studying

Once a student has identified their preferred style of learning, they are able to embark upon active learning strategies, which will allow them to make the full use of their learning opportunities.

Key aspects of active learning include:

- Rewriting notes from lectures

It is important to write up notes from lectures as soon as possible, so that it is possible to make sense of what has been presented. While reviewing notes, it is worth considering the key points of the lecture. It may be helpful to devise a way of presenting the information, such as through diagrams, or flow charts, or however it makes sense to an individual's approach to learning.

- Keeping notes from reading

Reading forms a large part of your learning process, and it is important to make notes while reading to keep track of your thoughts and understanding of the topic. Students will want to ask specific questions, draw out the key points of the text, and note any differences or comparisons between authors' approaches. It may also find it useful to explore the resources which the author uses in order to develop a wider understanding of how they reached their conclusions.

- Reflecting on learning

Part of the learning process is to reflect on the information that you have been presented with. It is important to consider how and why specific theories or information are important to the module. It may be possible to draw out common themes which are emerging during study, and identify wider questions which can be considered in relation to that topic.

- Contextualising

As study continues, it will be necessary to consider how the information in one module connects with, or complements, the wider subject of study. The design of each course will allow a gradual development in understanding the subject, and it may become apparent that key concepts or skills which are learnt at the start of the course will also influence what is learnt at the end of the course. Ensure to consider how themes and topics interact with each other beyond the confines of an individual module.

Familiarisation with Resources

In order to support successful study, it is important that students become familiar with the resources available to them from the outset of the programme of study. Many institutions will ensure that a brief overview is given within the first week, through an induction course. However, it is important that students take time independently to understand the full range of learning resources available to them at the beginning of their course.

Key skills in becoming able to use study resources effectively include:

Navigation	Being familiar with the structure of the library, its layout, classification system, and stock.
Interrogation	Being able to use the catalogue effectively, how to search using a variety of search parameters, and how to quickly locate the resource.
Volition	Being able to make judgements and choose between useful sources and those which will not assist.
Recognition	Being able to recognise the core reference works of your discipline.

Alongside the navigation of a physical library, there will also be a range of material which is made available to students through online platforms such as the [University of Wales Online Library](#). Such resources contain a range of eBooks, eJournals, and databases which should be approached in the same way as using a physical library in order to make effective use of provision available.

As well as a library, there may also be many other resources available such as study skills workshops and seminars that may include academic writing skills, developing critical thinking, or guidance on revising for examinations. These resources should be taken full advantage of by students in order to maximise their understanding of what is required from higher education study.

Giving Good Feedback

Feedback, whether formal or informal, is an important aspect of the learning process. Students should normally expect to receive feedback on work no later than three weeks of submission of an assignment in order to be able to use the feedback effectively to identify where improvements can be made.

Feedback is an important part of the learning process, and it is important that teaching staff ensure that feedback is grounded in the principles of good feedback. The principles of good feedback are:

Did you know?

The foundation of the University took place at the same time as the developments of the National Museum of Wales and the National Library of Wales.

- i) Feedback facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning.
- ii) Feedback encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning.
- iii) Feedback helps clarify what good practice is (goals, criteria, and expected standards).
- iv) Feedback provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance.
- v) Feedback delivers high quality information to students about their learning.
- vi) Feedback encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem.
- vii) Feedback provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape their teaching.

UW has developed and published an [Assessment Handbook](#) which provides a comprehensive overview for staff on providing feedback for students.

Using Feedback

It is important for students to make use of the feedback which they receive from staff arising from any form of assessment. In University there are generally two forms of assessment – these are known as formative and summative. Formative assessment relates to work that does not contribute to the overall grade of the module, and seeks to inform the teacher of progress, and allows them to change any approaches which may assist in increasing student performance. Alternatively, summative assessment seeks to summarise the learning of a programme or module, and will contribute to the overall grade of the module. Both forms of assessment are often accompanied with feedback sheets or comments written on work.

Feedback can be given in both a formal and informal context. Formal feedback is written in feedback forms and on work, and should indicate the overall grade awarded for the work. Alternatively, informal feedback may be received through discussion with groups or on an individual basis, indicate where improvements could be made in the structure and content of a submission.

Different teaching staff will use different phrases to sometimes express the same meaning, and it is important to understand this in order to identify any common themes which students need to identify to improve their work. The table below presents some common feedback themes, and what action can be taken to use it effectively:

Comment	Action
Unclear	The argument that is being made is unclear, and it may be necessary to ensure that the student understands the arguments being used.
Sp.	You need to ensure that you use the right spelling.
Gr.	You need to ensure that you use the right grammar.
Analysis?	You may have used a quotation or a source without properly analysing the information.
Evidence?	You need to use evidence to back up your assertions.
Be specific	You may not be clear in what you are suggesting, and may need to give an example.
Importance?	You may not have been clear in why you are using a particular set of information.

Weak argument	You may either be basing your argument on a weak set of information, or you may need to draw more from the information you are using in order to construct a stronger argument.
Conclusion?	You need to sum up your argument more clearly, and demonstrate your ability to critically engage with the information.
Example?	You need to use more information to illustrate the arguments you are making.

Styles of Thinking

A problem confronted by many when entering higher education for the first time is the way in which students are required to think about their learning. This is again compounded when undertaking study of a UK higher education programme through TNE arrangements.

Students undertaking UK programmes of study are required to think, read, and write critically about their subject. An important aspect of this is to critically evaluate information, and make judgements about what the information means, its reliability, and how it compares with information from other resources

The critical thinking approach can sometimes be a difficult concept to develop, particularly for students who come from cultures which may focus on Confucian or didactic approaches to learning. In such instances, education has focussed upon fact-based and literal education, where what may be read in a textbook is learnt and not questioned. It is also in such instances where the term 'research' means finding out everything about a subject and presenting the information. However, the UK system of critical thinking requires a more analytical and evaluative approach to information and knowledge, and the term 'research' implied both finding out and evaluating.

Much of the foundation of current approaches to critical thinking is founded in the 'Postmodernist' movement, which is a late 20th century concept predominantly used in European and North American education, which seeks to question the accepted principles and practices of previous generations. While this approach can sometimes be difficult for students who have previously been taught in a didactic educational system, and those which maintain strict hierarchies of respect, the postmodernist critical thinking approach is a centrally important skill in undertaking a UK higher education degree.

Being Evaluative

'Evaluation' is an important step towards being 'critical'. Evaluation is a process through which a judgement is made on how useful or important something is. Students are asked to evaluate when studying to consider how relevant (or irrelevant) an item of information is, considering its strengths and weaknesses. In order to make an evaluation, it is important to have an overview of the accuracy of the information, and how the information is contextualised by the author. An author's viewpoint may be influenced through what they are seeking to argue, and it is important to keep this in mind when evaluating information, particularly when comparing and contrasting the viewpoints of different authors. When evaluating information, it is important to ask the following questions:

What is the factual information being presented by the author?
What is the opinion of the author?
How can I know that this information is accurate?
What are the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments made by the author?

How does this argument compare with other arguments presented by authors working on similar topics/information?
What conclusions can I draw from this information?

Once you have considered the above questions, it may be helpful for you to consider the key points within the argument, and consider the implications of what it means to the topic you are studying.

To assist in making an evaluation of a topic, it is important to consider the literature which informs the particular area of study, and ensure to make comparisons, note differences of opinions, and draw your own conclusions. Through this, you will be able to make your own informed opinion, or evaluative judgement on the information.

Developing Evaluation Skills in the Classroom

Staff should be mindful of the opportunities which they have in developing student’s abilities in evaluating information. It is important that students are given the opportunity to learn and understand how to judge information, and differentiate between opinion and fact.

A typical method in approaching the development of evaluative skills is the use of two contrasting texts on one topic. Students should be given the opportunity to compare (identify similarities) and contrast (identify differences) between the two sets of information. A simple example may be to use the same news story from two different newspapers. Through such exercises, it is important that students have the opportunity to learn about the backgrounds of each text (e.g. the audience it was intended for), understand the different approaches being used by the authors (e.g. different theoretical approaches), and how to identify opinions and arguments.

Being Reflective

Another important aspect towards developing critical thinking is to develop skills in reflective reading. Programmes of study will expose students to a wide range of reading, which will require reflection and consideration in preparation for lectures and seminars. Reflective thinking is understanding the deeper meanings of the information presented within a text, and calls upon students to use their knowledge of the subject to inform how they will approach the text. Some questions which may be considered are:

What is the intended audience for this text?
What are the key ideas that the author is trying to express?
How do the ideas presented by the author reflect your own knowledge or experience?
Can you follow the arguments being made by the author?
Are the suggestions being made appropriate and relevant to the topic?
What is your evaluation of the information presented?
Could you apply the idea in another context, or to different subject matter you are familiar with?

By using such questions as above, students will be able to evaluate the effectiveness and validity of information, and begin to synthesise their own opinions on subject matters.

Developing Reflective Skills in the Classroom

Building on the development of evaluative skills, it is important for students to develop their own autonomous reflective skills. Students will have to evidence reflection in their assessments and what conclusions have been drawn from their own research. It is therefore important that students are given the opportunity to engage with contrasting approaches to subjects, and are provided with the skills to engage in independent research. An important skill which can be developed within the classroom is that of the ability to engage with theories and arguments by seeking to apply the arguments practically. Such approaches can be facilitated through group work, or by asking students to identify from their own experience whether arguments and opinions made by authors have practical applications.

Reflective journals connected with individual work or group work may also be encouraged for individual modules. In such instances, students should be asked to be reflective, rather than descriptive in their accounts. To assist this, teachers may ask students to focus on the following questions:

What have I learnt about my strengths and weaknesses?
What have I learnt about team work?
How would I look to do things differently if I had the opportunity to do it again?
How could I apply what I have learnt from this experience to use in a professional situations?

Barriers to Self-Reflection

There are a number of obstacles that can become barriers to self-reflection, and it is important for both students and staff that these are recognised as factors impeding progress. Such barriers may be internal to an individual, or external which are influenced by a range of factors beyond an individual's immediate control. An example of barriers may include:

Individual Barriers	External Barriers
Confidence	Expectation of others
Assumption of what is possible / not possible	Peer pressure
Lack of understanding	Learning environment
Lack of preparation	Personal circumstances
Negative experiences	Political / Cultural environment

It is important that both students and teachers are aware of such barriers, and that barriers will be different for each individual, and may change dependent upon differing situations. Failing to acknowledge such barriers will negatively impact upon the learning experience. It is important that both students and teachers work to minimise individual and potential barriers in the learning and reflective process.

Being Critical

Being academically critical is not quite the same as being critical in real life. Being critical in an academic sense relates to undertaking research of academic literature, contrasting different viewpoints relating to a central topic, analysing the validity of viewpoints and arguments, using the information to synthesise and evaluate the topic, and finally drawing your own conclusions

from the information. In developing these abilities, it will be important to draw upon the evaluative and reflective skills to develop your own balanced argument.

There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers in critical approaches to academic work, and it is important to keep this in mind when answering assessments. It is, however, important to avoid certain pitfalls including over-generalising or over-simplifying information. Maintaining a balanced argument is also an important feature of critical thinking, and it is crucial to avoid developing a bias towards one source simply in order to support your own feelings.

Developing Critical Approaches in the Classroom

Critical approaches draw upon the evaluative and reflective approaches discussed above, but rely on moving past the practical application of theories, and depend upon the analysis of the application, and the synthesis of the information.

Analysis seeks to show how a theory works, and what its subsequent implications may be for a specific topic. Synthesis, on the other hand, seeks to identify how a particular theory may be applied in a different situation, or how it may relate to another idea within the wider literature of the discipline.

In developing these skills within the classroom, it would be appropriate for staff to have a wider knowledge of the programme which they are teaching, for example, what is being taught in other modules. Such approaches may then be supported by encouraging students to make connections between different modules, and draw upon their wider reading. Such approaches may be encouraged through break-out sessions, where students are encouraged to work together in small groups to identify how and why a particular theory works (or doesn’t work!), and furthermore, identify a different scenario where the application of the theory may provide useful insight.

Did you know?

The motto of the University – ‘Gorau Awen Gwirionedd’ – means ‘The best inspiration is truth’

The word ‘plagiarism’ is derived from the Latin ‘plagiarius’ - which means kidnapper.

Cautions on Plagiarism

A key issue in academic practices for staff and students is the management of plagiarism. For the University of Wales, examples of plagiarism include:

- Buying essays from websites and handing them in as your own work.
- Copying essays or articles from the web and presenting them as your own.
- Copying sections from books, journals, dissertations, websites, etc. into your own work without providing a reference for the material.
- Quoting someone else’s work without putting the words inside quotation marks.
- Incorrectly referencing material.
- Copying sentences with some words changed without providing reference.

The concept of plagiarism can sometimes be difficult to understand for students from outside the UK. In certain cultures, the extensive use of an author’s text without appropriate referencing may be seen as honouring a scholar, while in the UK, this would be heavily frowned upon.

Most instances of plagiarism can be easily avoided by careful and accurate citation of the material used. Many programmes of study use the Harvard citation method, which is favoured in many disciplines such as business and the sciences. Alongside the use of citations within text, it is also important to maintain an up-to-date bibliography of all sources which you draw upon in the preparation of any assessment.

The University makes available the use of the text detection software, *Turnitin*, for centres to use, and has policies set out in the [Taught Degrees Handbook](#) for its use for assessment. Staff will also find the [Assessment Handbook](#) useful in guidance of the management of plagiarism.



ENGAGEMENT

Overview

Engagement, particularly the engagement between students and the institution at which they are studying is an important feature within the UK higher education system. In recent years, students have become regarded as central stakeholders within the management of institutions at which they are studying. This change is sometimes difficult to comprehend for both staff and students, particularly in overseas institutions, which are sometimes influenced by the educational traditions and political contexts of the region. The following section looks to explore models of engagement which can be adopted across institutions, as well as guides for those who become involved in engagement.

The following section will look at:

- Forms of Engagement
- Student and Institutional Partnership
- Committee Work
- Representing
- Feedback.

Forms of Engagement

Student engagement is identified by the QAA as covering two broad areas:

- Improving the motivation of students to engage in learning and learn independently.
- The participation of students in quality enhancement and quality assurance processes, resulting in the improvement of their educational experience.

The following section focusses on the second element, and the ways in which this is facilitated between individual students, the wider student body, and the institution at large. Institutions may seek to address these points by:

- Providing support to the student body to elect a representative which will contribute to the governance of the institution.
- Develop training to ensure that students are aware of, and understand quality assurance mechanisms which can influence their learning experience.
- Have processes through which all students can use to provide feedback on their experience of studying towards a degree.

It is important that both staff and students see engagement as a partnership between equals, where a mature, open, honest, and transparent environment is engendered across the institution. A core part of achieving these aspects is ensuring that there are clear channels of communication, and appropriate forums for staff and students to interact in both a formal and informal manner to provide feedback.

Formal Engagement

Aspects of formal engagement between staff and students are those which create an auditable evidence trail of interaction between partners. These may include, but is not limited to:

- Committee meetings
- Student feedback forums

- Feedback forms.

Such examples provide evidence that the opinions of students are taken into consideration, and in the subsequent collective decisions taken to address requests from students. Students should be invited to comment on not only their learning environment, and the facilities and services available to them, but should also have an opportunity to discuss academic challenges and strategic directions of the institution. While such mechanisms work particularly well for large institutions, it is also important for those with smaller communities of learners to ensure that there are effective structures in place to engage students.

Informal Engagement

Informal engagement refers to the ways in which students meet with staff to discuss thoughts and opinions in a less formal manner. Examples of informal engagement may include:

- Maintaining open door policies of staff and managers
- Having a 'discussion café' for students and staff to meet.

Such events or opportunities offer a more conducive atmosphere for some students to provide feedback, where they may not feel confident in doing so in wider, or more structured forums. Discussions may arise which naturally lead onto elements being drawn into more formal forums for wider discussion and action, or may lead to action being taken without formal mechanisms being required.

Why are both necessary?

While it has been noted above that the size of institutions can sometimes influence the engagement styles utilised in everyday operations, it is important to ensure that both informal and formal mechanisms are maintained. Both forms of engagement complement each other in the way that they function, with informal mechanisms developing the basis and confidence within the wider community for more formal exchanges of viewpoints between staff and students.

The division between formal and informal may also assist in maintaining appropriate channels for communication between staff and students. For instance, the informal route may be more concerned with engaging with individual students, while the formal level seeks to engage a wider group of students, or the wider student body within the institutional community.

Student and Institutional Partnership

In recent years, the UK has changed its perception of how a university views and interacts with a student. Such changes have been shaped by a variety of stakeholders and national policy directives, which have changed the student as a passive learner, attending a lecture through to a customer, a partner, and now as one of the main stakeholders within the life of the institution.

The development of a student and institutional partnership is an important part in the maturity of an institution, as it evidences the acknowledgement by the institution of the importance of the students within the life of the institution's community. Such partnerships result in:

- The ability of the institution to respond to the needs of a changing population of students.
- The raising of awareness of the mutual roles and responsibilities of staff, students, and the institution.

- The development and promotion of constructive communication channels which support dialogue between the student body and the institution.
- The creation of a platform through which students, staff, and the wider institution work towards shared goals.
- The development of good practices.

It is important for all institutions to recognise the benefit which comes in developing partnerships with students, and to be mindful of how students can contribute to both the academic and wider developments within an institution.

Institutions should seek to identify how best they can begin to engage with students through their current governance structures, and create a framework through which this can be developed and enhanced over an agreed period.

The inclusion of students within the formal management and decision making processes of the institution should be encouraged through a number of mechanisms. Institutions should support transparent processes through which student representatives can be elected by the student body, through making resources available for elections to take place at the beginning or end of each academic year.

Students as Representatives

Student representatives play an important role in ensuring that the collective voice of the student community is represented to an institution. The following section will outline what a student representative is, and how they work.

What student representatives do (and what they don't)

Student representatives undertake three different roles for the wider student community. These are:

a) Identifying issues

Student representatives play an important role through speaking with classmates about their studies. Student representatives should be approachable, and should seek to make themselves prominent within the student community so that they are easily contactable.

b) Working towards addressing issues

Student representatives raise the issues which have been identified by the student community with the institutional management through a variety of means, including meetings with senior management, and/or attending committees to represent the student community. These points of contact are important fora through which issues can be discussed, and actions agreed to address the matters that you have raised.

c) Facilitating communication

Once student representatives have had the opportunity to raise the issues of the student community with staff at an institution, it is important that they find ways of communicating the results back to the student body. It is also important to ensure that student representatives highlight the agreed outcomes of meetings, and what the next steps will be by the collective institution to address the matters which have been raised.

Keeping all this in mind, student representatives can sometimes have their role misinterpreted by both staff and students, and it is important that those elected to be student representatives know

the limits of their responsibilities. In particular, student representatives should not become involved in:

a) Other student’s personal problems

Student representatives are not trained to professionally support and manage individual personal problems. Each institution should have clearly defined services to support students with such issues.

b) Other student’s academic difficulties

Student representatives should not become involved in the academic issues of individual students. Student representatives are required to represent the view of the student community.

c) Individual student’s complaints

Student representatives maintain a distance from individual complaints against the institution. Student representatives are required to represent the views of the collective student body.

Did you know?
The University has had a member of the British Royal family as its Chancellor since 1895.

Why be a student representative?

While it may seem at first a daunting task to represent the views of a student community, or to speak to the most senior staff of an institution, it is important to remember the ways in which individuals benefit as an individual from being a student representative.

Student representative positions in the UK are highly sought after, and are seen by employers as being of benefit to the development of skills for the workplace. Such skills include:

- Communication skills

Part of the role will require representatives to present in committees or group meetings, write reports, emails, and speak publically. Representatives will learn the importance of putting views across concisely and effectively to a variety of audiences. Finally, representatives will also learn the importance of listening to a wide variety of viewpoints from within the institution’s community.

- Organisation skills

A crucial aspect of the work of a student representative will be balancing responsibilities against academic work. Representatives will want to show commitment to both the student body and their own studies.

- Increased confidence

The meetings which representatives are involved in allows them to develop confidence in speaking with groups of students, as well as developing abilities to speak with senior staff at an institution.

- Networking skills

Institutions may sometimes be bureaucratic in the way that they work, and representatives will need to learn to build a network of contacts in order to raise issues within the right level of governance. Developing a network will be extremely helpful for student representatives in learning how to develop business relationships in the future.

Typical responsibilities of a student representative

Below indicates what duties a typical student representative may be expected to undertake within the UK. It is likely that these duties would be similar to those that student representatives would expect to undertake any of the University's collaborative centres:

Role Description for a Student Representative

- Undertake training for representing the student community.
- Attendance at Student Forum meetings.
- Attendance at Faculty/Department meetings.
- Meeting with senior management.
- Liaison between students and staff.
- Meeting with groups of students as requested.
- Raising the concerns of students with identified faculty or departmental staff.
- Sharing feedback from meetings with students.
- To attend formal institutional events when requested.

Committee Work

Committees are one of the most important aspects of management of a higher education institution. Both the academic governance (concerned with quality assurance and maintaining academic standards) and corporate governance (concerned with business, finance, and operations) are the main mechanisms through which institutions can engage with students. It is, therefore, important that students understand the working of committees.

Institutions must ensure that their work is transparent (meaning that their work and actions can be easily scrutinised by others), and is understood by students in order to ensure maintaining confidence in the way that they work to address all aspects of institutional life.

Becoming involved in committee work

Committee work becomes a central means through which a student representative undertakes their work in representing the views of the wider student body. In order to do this effectively, student representatives will need to familiarise themselves with the committee structure of their institution. Staff should be able to provide a diagram of the committee structure as a starting point for student representatives. However, there are many more aspects which a student representative should be able to review before their first meeting, including:

- Membership

Membership defines who is a formal member of the committee. The committee will have a designated 'Chair' who is usually the highest officer of the committee, and is responsible for presiding over the meeting. The Chair may also be able to act on behalf of the committee outside the time when the committee is sitting.

Alongside the Chair, there should be a secretary, who will usually be 'in attendance', which means that they are there as observers and are responsible for taking a record of the meeting. Committee secretaries are also responsible for collating and distributing documents prior to the meeting.

Other members for the committee will be appointed to the role as part of their job (sometimes referred to as *ex officio*), as a nomination from another committee, as an external, or through some form of election.

- Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference (sometimes referred to as ToR) indicate the work and powers of a committee. The ToR describe how often the committee meets, as well as what role it takes within the wider governance, what it is responsible for, and what actions it is able to take in fulfilling its work.

- Committee Minutes

The committee minutes are the main record of the work of the committee. There are a variety of forms in which minutes are recorded. The important aspect of minutes is that they record the decisions of the committee.

- Committee Papers

The committee papers contain the business of the committee. Papers will contain reports for discussion related to the business of the committee, as well as contain recommendations. Papers are presented by those who have authored them, and committee members are required to discuss points pertinent to their viewpoint. It is important to prepare for the meeting by reading the papers in advance of the meeting, and seeking clarification from colleagues on the committee before the meeting takes place so that you are able to contribute to the meeting effectively.

- Agenda

The agenda is the mechanism which guides the course of the meeting. It indicates what matters will be discussed in the meeting and in what order. While some committees may have a set agenda which is the same for each meeting, others may have variable agendas to suit the needs of the group at that time.

What to do at a committee

There are a variety of things to keep in mind when you are a member of a committee. The following lists can be helpful to those who have not previously attended at committee:

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be on time • Introduce yourself to the committee at the first meeting • Prepare by reading the papers for the meeting • Be positive and constructive in your contribution • Be concise and clear when speaking • Ask questions if you do not understand • Make notes • Maintain eye contact • Consider how decisions will affect the students you represent • Support fellow representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be late • Interrupt people • Be aggressive • Feel the need to speak on each item • Forget you are there representing others • Discuss unnecessary points • Be intimidated by anyone • Take things personally

Communication and Feedback

The main aspect of representing fellow students is maintaining clear communication lines with them throughout your appointment. Student representatives are an important aspect of the communication channel between the institution and the student body, where you act as the conduit for feedforward (from the student body to the institution) and feedback (from the institution to the student body). There are a variety of methods open to student representatives to support and facilitate this, and institutions should give clear consideration as to how best to support student representatives in this role.

Forms of communication

The following section contains some ideas in how student representatives may maintain communication with the student population:

- Arrange to speak at the end of lectures to increase your profile to classes.
- Arrange to have 'office hours' where you are available to meet with individuals and groups of students to discuss matters.
- Maintain a noticeboard for you and students to contribute to.
- Email the students which you represent.
- Create a social media group which allows you and the student community to exchange communication and messages.
- Develop and use online surveys to gather opinions.
- Ask for help from teaching and administrative staff to pass messages onto students.

While considering all of the above, by far the most effective way of communicating with the students you represent is to meet with them face-to-face.

Types of Questions to Ask

It can sometimes be difficult to engage in conversation which allows fellow students to provide an effective overview of their experience. Here are a few example questions that representatives may use:

Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel we have enough computing and library facilities at the institution? • Do the facilities meet your expectations? • Can you access all resources when you need them? • Do you have access to all the resources you need to complete the work required?
Assessment and Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you clear of what is required for you to succeed in a specific assignment or module? • Do you have enough time to prepare for assessments? • How long does it take to receive feedback on your work? • How useful or constructive is the feedback that you receive on your work? • Do you have the opportunity to meet with individual tutors to discuss your progress?
Academic Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know what forms of academic support are available to you? • Did you have an induction? Was the information useful? • Have you accessed any skills training available to you to enhance your ability to achieve?
Achievement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know what you need to do in order to pass through to the next year of study? • How well informed do you feel of how you are progressing?

Personal and Professional Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel encouraged to develop your skills and experience for future employment? • What resources do you know of that are available for you to take advantage of in relation to developing employability skills? • Do you know about the options available to you following completion of your studies for further study or employment? • Do you feel your course is providing you with the skills you need for your future academic or professional career?
Quality Assurance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel that the institution takes your opinions seriously? • What improvements have been made in light of your recent feedback to the institution? • How does your experience compare with your original expectations? • How do you feel the institution compares with others? • Do you feel that your experience is of an acceptable standard?

Closing the Feedback Loop

As well as ensuring that students are supported to facilitate communication across the wider student body, it is also important to ensure that institutions also maintain clear communication channels. From an institutional perspective, the communication strategy is not only concerned with engaging the student body, but is also an important part for ensuring that members of staff at all levels are kept informed of developments and actions being taken.

It is important that institutions ensure that feedback is presented formally, and is available through a variety of mediums. Examples of such can be:

- ‘Town hall’ meetings

These events provide the opportunity for all staff and students to gather together in order to hear from senior management of the institution on the matters of general interest and various initiatives and actions being taken. This provides the opportunity for the whole institution to join together as a community and to be provided with news and feedback.

- Emails

Emails are valuable tools in being used to communicate information to the whole institution. However, senior management must be sure that the community is not bombarded with information, as individuals can easily disengage from generic ‘round robins’ communications.

- Magazines and Newsletters

Magazines provide an opportunity to celebrate the work across the institution, and provides an engaging platform through which the community can contribute to on an individual and collective level. Such platforms allow institutions to show not only the actions that they are taking, but may also follow up with evidence to show impact of actions which have been taken.

- ‘You Said - We Did’

This is a simple way of highlighting to everyone how the institution is responding to feedback. Through the use of two columns – ‘You said’ and ‘We did’ – an institution can show how it is responding to feedback publically.

- Online forums

Online forums provide the opportunity for all members of the community to view current developments. However, it is important to remember that online forums can sometimes be difficult to navigate, which may reduce the amount of people who engage in the forum.

Actions taken by institutions to ensure that the feedback loop is closed provide greater transparency for the wider community. Furthermore, highlighting actions taken by the institution provides the opportunity for individuals to see the benefits of giving feedback, thus making them feel valued partners in the institution. Finally, both students and staff are more likely to give feedback in the future if they can see that their constructive comments are valued by the institution.



INCLUDE

Overview

An important attribute of higher education is equality and diversity, which is an important aspect of UK law, which champions the equality, diversity, and human rights of all. These principles are important in shaping the approaches undertaken within the classroom and across institutions. Procedures aligned with equality and diversity are developed in order to support achievement for both staff and students, and are therefore important features within higher education in the UK.

The following section will look at:

- Equality and Diversity
- Inclusivity in the Classroom
- Inclusivity Across the Institution

Equality and Diversity

Defining Equality and Diversity

The concept of equality and diversity are of central importance to all universities within the UK, as they act to promote a fair and just society. All staff and students are bound by equality and diversity practices in UK universities, but what does that mean?

In 2010, the UK Equality Act set out a single framework for preventing discrimination and promoting equality for nine 'protected characteristics':

- Disability

Disability may refer to a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

- Race

Race refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship), ethnic, or national origins.

- Gender

This refers whether an individual is male or female.

- Age

Age refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 21 years old) or a range of ages (e.g. 18-35 years old).

- Gender reassignment

The process of transitioning from one gender to another.

- Sexual orientation

Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex, or both sexes.

- Religion and belief

This usually refers to religions and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect life choices or the way life is lived for it to be included in the definition.

- Pregnancy and maternity

Pregnancy refers to the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the context of employment.

- Marriage and civil partnership

Within the UK, and in many other countries across the world, marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman, but now includes marriage between same-sex couples. In some countries, including the UK, same-sex couples can also have their relationship legally recognised as ‘civil partnerships’. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples.

Diversity concerns the acceptance and respect of people. Diversity refers to the understanding that each individual is unique, and that we all have individual differences. Diversity is also a set of approaches which concern:

- Understanding and appreciating interdependence of humanity, cultures, and the natural environment.
- Practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from our own.
- Recognising that diversity includes not only ways of being, but also ways of knowing.
- Understanding that discrimination creates and sustains inequality between individuals.
- Seeking to eradicate all forms of discrimination.

It is important for institutions to develop and maintain environments which are safe, positive, and nurturing for staff and students.

What does this mean for Institutions?

The University of Wales maintains its own Strategic Equity Plan, which outlines the commitments of the University towards equality and diversity across its organisation. Equality and diversity issues are of central importance to the operation of both the University of Wales, and all other universities within the UK, as well as being important for businesses and public bodies.

All institutions should seek to ensure that they have a core set of values concerning equality and diversity which inform their day-to-day operations, even if it is not required by local laws. An example may be the development of a code of conduct or respect designed to ensure that everyone – both staff and students – are treated with dignity and respect. A set of principles informing such values is outlined below:

- All people are treated with dignity and respect.
- All people are empowered to challenge inequality.
- The institution will take steps to positively respond to and address highlighted instances of inequality.

- The institution values the diversity of its community, and recognises the differences between individuals gives strength to the community.
- No person should be excluded or discriminated against on individual characteristics or circumstances such as age; disability; gender or gender identity; relationship status; pregnancy, maternity or paternity; political opinion; religion or belief; race, colour, caste, nationality, ethnic or national origin; socio-economic background; or sexual orientation.
- All people respect the rights of individuals, including their rights to hold different views or beliefs.
- That the institution will not allow differences between individuals to be manifested in a way that is hostile or degrading to others.
- That the institution expects all individual members of the community, and those who come into contact with it will respect and uphold these principles.

It is important that all staff and students share in the development and upholding of such principles across the institution. The following sections will look at how these may be practically translated within the classroom and across the wider institution.

Inclusivity in the Classroom

It is important that staff and students embrace the concepts of an institution's equality and diversity values. It is further important that these principles are supported through practice, which may be undertaken through a variety of actions, particularly in relation to supporting students with disabilities, such as:

- Distributing handouts at the start of a module for all

This gives students the opportunity to gather their thoughts and ideas about the subject material prior to the lecture being delivered. This is also an important step in ensuring that students with disabilities have an appropriate amount of time to familiarise themselves with information prior to the class.

- Displaying PowerPoint in a different way

The colours and fonts used within PowerPoint can sometimes affect the way in which students read the information presented. For students with specific learning difficulties, the contrast between the background colour and text colour, or the font type can sometimes render PowerPoint information unreadable. It is therefore important that staff remain sensitive to how information is represented in presentations and other learning materials.

- Ensuring availability of course materials at the start of the module

Again, this allows the appropriate time for students of differing abilities to access information and become familiar with it prior to the module's conclusion.

- Making lecture notes available

While staff are sometimes cautious about making lecture notes available to students, it is good practice to ensure that the main points of a lecture, as well as any follow-up points which may be useful further reading are made available to students at the conclusion of a lecture.

- Reviewing the forms of assessment that are used

There are many forms of assessment that can be used to support student achievement, which move beyond more traditional essay-type questions. Staff are encouraged to make use of the [University of Wales Assessment Handbook](#) in order to identify a variety of assessments methods that can be drawn upon to support student achievement.

- Being sensitive to the learning styles of individuals

Staff may find it useful to be familiar with the various different learning styles of students, in order to ensure students get the maximum out of contact hours with teaching staff. This may be built upon through developing time within lectures to convey material through multiple ways (e.g. through diagrams, discussion, and multimedia), through encouraging group discussion, or the use of formative assessment exercises.

- Using accessible language

It is sometimes easy for staff to fall into using subject related jargon and acronyms. However, it is important that staff undertake time at the beginning of each module to discuss in clear and unambiguous language the content and learning objectives of the module, so that everyone is clear of what to expect.

The above suggestions are further supported through the 'Achievement' chapter of this handbook, as well as the [University of Wales Assessment Handbook](#).

Inclusivity Across the Institution

While inclusivity within the classroom can sometimes be quite specific, and dependent on an individual member of staff to support delivery, inclusivity across the institution is the responsibility of all individuals within the community.

Some steps that can be taken as an institution can be:

- Ensuring accessibility for all

Institutions should be mindful of the physical infrastructure of their buildings, and how accessible they are for all members of current and future staff and students. All buildings should be equipped to support less able individuals to move around freely in both day-to-day and emergency situations.

- The development of a student support services

Student support services can be a one-stop-shop for students to address both academic and pastoral issues. These operations may be part of a wider centralised operation within the institution, and can be an important point of contact and support for students to discuss matters.

- Availability of assistive software or hardware at designated points

Resources such as screen magnifiers, screen reading, speech recognition, text-to-speech software should be made available for use by students and staff in order to support any disability which inhibits their opportunity for achievement.

- Clear signposting to support networks

It is important that students have a full overview of the support available to them, and that there is sufficient signposting within easily accessible resources which identify what support mechanisms are available for students and how they can be accessed. It is also important that institutions ensure that staff independent to the everyday teaching routine can act as a contact point for students to discuss a range of issues which they may face.

It is important that a dialogue is maintained across the institutional community (both students and staff), to ensure that needs can be highlighted and supported wherever possible. This reinforces the need to ensure that there are appropriate forums for such matters to be discussed and addressed together.



ORGANISE

Overview

An extra benefit of studying for a degree in the UK is the opportunity to become involved in a variety of extra-curricular activity, which allows students to develop and use skills which can enhance their experience and employability. Universities in the UK support a variety of student organisations to allow students to contribute to the life of their institution, their local community, or the wider world. The following section looks at the forms of student organised activity, and also identifies the main aspects of how a student organisation may be formed.

The following section will look at:

- The Benefits of Student Organisations
- Forming Student Organisations
- Supporting Student Organisations.

The Benefits of Student Organisations

Student organisations are an important part of an academic community, adding to its vibrancy and diverse campus life. Student organisations maximise the student experience, create opportunities for students to develop skills and opportunities, learn valuable extracurricular skills, and have the opportunity to show the wider institution in a positive light to the wider community of where it is based.

There are a variety of types of student organisations which include:

Type of Organisation	Example of Work
Academic	Develops opportunities for students to discuss matters relating to the academic subject which they are studying.
Artistic	Provides the opportunity for students to engage in acting or music making.
Charitable	Raising money to support charitable causes on both a local and international level.
Debating	Provides the opportunity for students to debate on a variety of subjects and develop their debating skills.
Entrepreneurial	Draws together like-minded individuals to set up their own businesses.
Social	Meeting to discuss particular forms of popular entertainment such as television series or books.
Media	Students working together in order to coordinate campus magazines, radio programmes, or video blogs.
Sporting	Students create teams to pursue a variety of sporting pursuits, offering the opportunity to play against other teams.
Volunteering	Contributing time to a charitable cause for the local community.

Student organisations also provide platforms which support the developments of student's personal growth, and may also contribute to skills which compliment or enhance those developed in the classroom.

It is important that institutions encourage students to take the lead in organising their own organisations and societies. While help may be offered by individual staff at the initial stages, student should be encouraged to lead the way in any subsequent developments.

Forming Student Organisations

Setting up a new society can be a rewarding task. Universities in the UK may have hundreds of different societies, with support from student unions and other designated individuals to start new societies. However, these resources may not always be available for those overseas so here are a few questions to ask before you begin:

- What will the society do?

It is important to define what a society will set out to do, whether it will seek to achieve a particular goal, or set out to facilitate specific activities. How often will you meet? Be clear over what you think a society should achieve and use this information to generate other people's interest.

- Are there many people at my institution interested in this topic to be a member?

For a society to make any contribution to the wider campus life, it is necessary to have a base of members who are enthusiastic in contributing to the intentions of the society. A strong starting point would be having a group of 20-30 students interested in being members.

- Will the institution support me in creating a society?

It is important to discuss your ideas with your institution, and ensure that they are in support of the organisation that you are proposing. It is important to remember that by developing an organisation within the institution, you begin to contribute to a wider operation in the life of the academic community, so it is important to have support from staff at the outset.

Did you know?
The first graduate of the University of Wales was female.

What's needed to form a society?

Once the main questions have been answered above, it is important that students recognised that a society or organisation needs to maintain a group of people who are responsible for the running of the group. In the UK, student organisations are regularly led by a group of three 'Executive' committee members:

- Chairperson

The Chairperson is the leader of the organisation, and is responsible for setting the goals and objectives, managing the wider team, and overseeing all activities of the society.

- Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for ensuring that the society runs smoothly, and organises various aspects of operations. The Secretary organises meetings, booking spaces for events, taking minutes or a record of all meetings, and communicating with all members.

- Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for managing any funds (such as membership fees where necessary) of the organisation. Treasurers are crucial to ensuring that the organisation has the appropriate resources to operate.

Alongside the Executive committee, there are also other officer roles which should be developed to ensuring the smooth running of the organisation. Examples of these roles may include:

- Communications and Publicity Officer

The Communications and Publicity Officer is responsible for ensuring that the organisation is publicised. Publicity and communications are important in ensuring that events are publicised and that the organisation has the opportunity to recruit more members.

- Social Secretary

The Social Secretary is usually responsible for organising events. This role is particularly important in ensuring that there are stimulating events which will continually engage the members.

Alongside this core membership of the organisation, there is also a core document that should be drafted, which articulates the constitution of the society. This document should make clear:

- The name of the organisation.
- The mission of the organisation.
- The officers of the organisation, including their roles and responsibilities.
- The requirement of how often a general meeting of the organisation should be held, and what proportion of the membership needs to be present for the meeting to allow decisions to be made (also known as quoracy).
- How frequently the organisation should seek to put on events for its members.
- Any rules or regulations which it is required to abide by such as local laws or requirements of associated bodies.
- Any membership fees.

This document should form part of the first meeting for all members for discussion, and that all members agree to it in order to go forward in making the organisational operational and an official contributor to campus life.

Supporting Student Organisations

It is important that institutions recognise the benefits which student organisations can contribute to the wider life of the community, and encourage students to form groups to pursue both academic and recreational activities. Such activities do sometimes need the support of the wider institution, such as providing an appropriate meeting place, office stationary to get started, or the direction of a member of staff at the beginning to guide and encourage students to take on the challenges.

Institutions should seek to appoint individuals who assist student groups in setting up, who may be able to advise on the right way of setting up a student organisation within the institution, and who to apply to for use of institutional resources for meetings.

Staff should be open and encouraging to students who wish to form groups. It is important that staff also recognise the benefits that organisations bring to the wider institution, and how they can also sometimes benefit specific departments, such as an entrepreneurial organisation within a business department. Staff should be able to call upon their own networks to provide students with access to speakers or sponsors to support the development of individual student organisations, which will subsequently contribute to the wider institutional profile.



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UNIVERSITY OF WALES
UNIVERSITY REGISTRY

UNDERSTAND

Overview

The final section looks at understanding the UK higher education sector, and the University of Wales. This presents an overview of how higher education is structured and operated in the UK, as well as an insight into the way in which the University of Wales works, and works with you and your collaborative centre.

The following section will look at:

- UK Higher Education
- The University of Wales
- How the University of Wales Works
- How the University of Wales works with You
- How the University of Wales works with your Collaborative Centre.

UK Higher Education

The UK university sector is wide and diverse, including around 150 universities across the British Isles. During 2015/16, there were over two million students studying at UK universities.

All universities within the UK follow the same form of qualifications structure:

<i>UK qualification</i>	<i>EHEA cycle</i>	<i>UK credits</i>	<i>ECTS credits</i>
Doctoral Degrees	3 rd Cycle	Not credit -rated	
Master's Degrees Postgraduate Diplomas Postgraduate Certificates	2 nd Cycle	180	90 – 120
Bachelor's Degrees with Honours Bachelor's Degrees Graduate Diplomas Graduate Certificates	1 st Cycle	360	180 – 240
Foundation Degrees Higher National Diplomas	Short Cycle leading to 1 st Cycle	240	120
Higher National Certificates		120	

This structure defines the forms of qualifications which students are able to study within the UK, with students entering at Higher National Certificates, Foundation Degrees, and Bachelor's Degrees, all the way through to Doctoral Degrees. Subjects are varied, and may sometimes

depend on the type of university which a student studies at – i.e. it is not normally possible to do a medical degree at a university which specialises in business degrees. The content of subjects may also vary between institutions, making the curriculum unique to each institution, reflecting the diversity across the sector.

Qualifications for taught programmes are defined through reference to 'Credits', which are defined as an award made to a learner in recognition of the achievement of designated learning outcomes at a specified credit level. The amount of credit attributed is based upon an estimation of the learning time, which would take the average learner to achieve the learning outcomes specified. One credit equates to ten notional hours of student learning, which includes contact time, direct and independent study, and assessment. On this basis, a full-time Honours student would accumulate 120 credits within a 1200-hour academic year, and a full-time Masters student 180 credits within an 1800-hour academic year.

The quality and standards of higher education in the UK are overseen by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), which is an independent body which checks the standards and quality of education. The QAA conducts external peer review of all higher education institutions in the UK on a regular basis. The QAA also publishes a *Quality Code*, which provides expectations which universities are required to meet in their provision to ensure that standards and quality assurance is maintained.

Did you know?

Quality assurance is a system to review educational programmes to ensure that acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and operations are maintained.

The University of Wales

The University of Wales was founded by Royal Charter in 1893, and has a long and proud history, playing an important role in the development of higher education in Wales. Its establishment is regarded as one of the most important political and social developments of the nineteenth century. The citizens of Wales, through the generosity of ordinary men and women, campaigned for the right for University education in their own country. The establishment of this new national university signified an important commitment to the people of Wales.

The foundation of the University drew together three constituent colleges based at Aberystwyth, Bangor, and Cardiff. As a federal university, the University was responsible for examining students, while the constituent colleges were responsible for the delivery of teaching. By the middle of the twentieth century, the University had expanded to include many of the institutions established in Wales to deliver higher education.

The purpose of the University has sought to:

- Work energetically to maintain the University of Wales degree and the University of Wales brand as global exemplars of excellence and quality.
- Support and promote Welsh Higher Education (HE) and contribute positively and significantly to the brand image and brand value of Welsh HE and of Wales as a whole.
- Work in collaboration and in partnership with other Welsh university institutions and with others in Wales, supporting and facilitating strategic initiatives in Welsh HE.
- Interact with the rest of the world, through collaborative academic provision and through other intellectual and cultural linkages and partnerships – taking the best of Wales to the world and bringing the best of the world to Wales.

- Act as a catalyst for, and promoting opportunity in, innovation, research, and the economy.
- Use its position at the heart of the nation's academic, intellectual, and cultural life to develop, support, and promote initiatives in these fields; and
- Build upon its past and present successes to establish a sustainable institution that enriches the national life of Wales.

Over the years, the federal University underwent a series of structural changes to allow its constituent colleges more autonomy. Following a review instituted by the newly established Government of Wales in 2001, recommendations were made that each University and higher education institute in Wales should seek its own degree awarding powers. This recommendation had major implications for the University of Wales, seeing all institutions moving to gain their own taught, and in many cases, research degree awarding powers. As a result, the original federal structure, which was at the heart of the University, was no longer required, and the former constituent colleges left the University of Wales structure over a period of time.

By 2004, all the original University Colleges had broken away from the University of Wales. Under the leadership of the Pro-Chancellor, Lord Wigley of Caernarfon, the University restructured itself into an autonomous institution, and for the first time in its history, sought to define a role for itself alongside all the other academic institutions in Wales.

The University appointed a Vice-Chancellor to lead the strategic development of the institution, and put in place a team of academic staff and senior officers to contribute to new activities in support of the University's mission. During this time, the University continued to accredit degrees and awards for several academic institutions in Wales, validate programmes of study delivered by institutions at home and overseas, and continued the University's record in supporting a range of important cultural and heritage services for Wales.

Did you know?

The University of Wales was the first university in the UK to appoint a female professor.

By 2010, in addition to students following studies in Wales, the University had over 22,000 students registered on University of Wales validated courses in over 130 institutions in the UK and overseas.

Following events in preceding years, in 2011, the University's governing body (Council) undertook a strategic review of business and core activities of the University of Wales, culminating in an announcement that the University would merge with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, and Swansea Metropolitan University. The merger between Swansea Metropolitan University and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David became effective from 1st August, 2013, creating the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. This historic decision supports the Welsh Government policy for the restructuring of the higher education sector in Wales and, most importantly, allows the University of Wales to continue its mission and commitment to support the academic, cultural, and economic life of Wales as part of the enlarged post-merger university.

During the process where UW will transform with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, the University has taken steps to safeguard the cultural assets which it has been guardian of for the nation of Wales through the development of The Wales Pledge (Adduned Cymru in Welsh).

The University is proud to have been able to have continued the tradition of providing the opportunity for communities across the world to access higher education where they may not have previously had the opportunity. This has created a richly diverse and vibrant international

community of graduates who contribute to, and lead, their local and wider global communities at all levels.

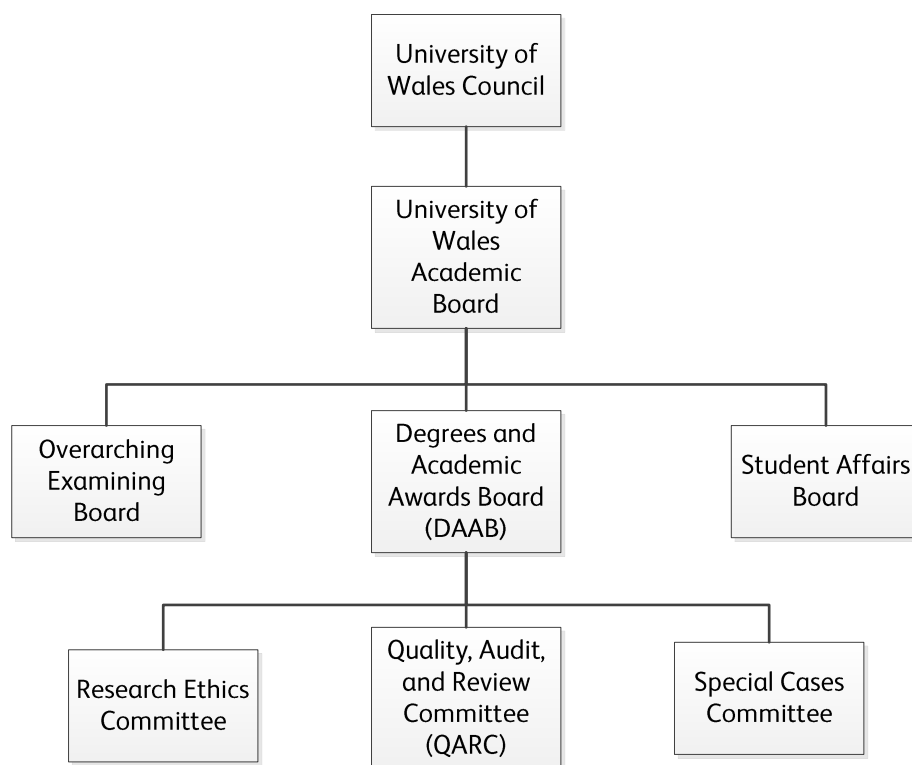
The University of Wales graduate community is an international diaspora with common, unifying attributes which are part of the University of Wales education which they have received, regardless of the locality and institution at which they studied. These attributes are:

- Locally focussed, globally minded;
- An effective and responsible contributor to the working environment;
- A global citizen.

These attributes are founded within the history and values of the University, as well as having formed part of the development of each UW validated programme. They are traits which all UW graduates share, and reflects the way in which a UW graduate is both a contributor to their own community, and the wider international community.

How the University of Wales Works

Like all universities in the UK, the University of Wales has a central structure of academic governance, which is responsible for all academic business. This is split into four distinct levels:



University of Wales Council: This is the supreme governing body of the University, with responsibility for overseeing the way the University carries out its work. In particular, it has responsibility for strategic aims and objectives of the University, and ensuring its financial health.

University of Wales Academic Board: This is the principal academic body of the University, which provides advice to the Vice-Chancellor on the strategic direction of the University’s academic activities, and maintains responsibility for all academic matters of the University.

Overarching Examining Board: This is the board through which all recommendations for awards arising from student achievement is received.

Degrees and Academic Awards Board: This board is responsible for the oversight and monitoring of the quality and standards of programmes leading to University awards.

Student Affairs Board: The board maintains oversight of the overall student experience and support for the whole student population. This is one of the most important forums for the voices of students to be heard by the University.

Research Ethics Committee: The committee is responsible for oversight of matters of ethics for research degrees, and reviews where necessary proposals for research which have ethical implications.

Quality, Audit, and Review Committee: This committee is responsible for overseeing the academic functions of audit and review, while also responsible for reviewing reports from a variety of academic activity such as examination boards, periodic reviews, and enhancement activity undertaken by UW officers.

Special Cases Committee: This committee is responsible for considering and resolving all special cases arising from examinations and assessments, and non-compliance with the Universities regulations.

As a royally chartered UK degree awarding authority, the UW Registry, based at the heart of Cardiff's civic centre, acts as the central administrative operation of the University. It is from the Registry that the University undertakes all operations in maintaining the quality and standards of its awards, through to the issuing of degree certificates for successful graduates.

Did you know?

The University of Wales Registry was established in Cardiff in 1904. It is based in the civic centre of the Welsh capitol. Prior to this, it was based in the Brecon Beacons.

How the University of Wales Works with You

While the main relationship for students is with the collaborative centre which delivers the programmes of study, UW also offers a variety of avenues through which students can, and are encouraged to engage with it.

Student Affairs Board

Student Affairs Board is one of the main channel through which the student voice is heard by UW. The University has a number of methods in ensuring that representatives of the student community are present at the event. The University uses video links, as well as occasionally holding boards in regions, which students are able to travel to the meeting to contribute to the event. The University will inform collaborative centres of any events being held within a region in order to ensure that students are made aware of the opportunity to engage with the University.

Student Engagement Officer

As well as each member of staff of the University being required to help engage with students, it also employs a Student Engagement Officer. The Student Engagement Officer is responsible for leading the engagement of the university with its students; organising and developing events to engage with students; implementing the annual student survey, and reporting to the committees of the University the actions being undertaken to engage students.

Moderators

The Moderators play a key role in the student experience through their visits to collaborative centres, meeting with students, and reporting back to the University their findings. Moderators also play a key role in developing staff at collaborative centres through leading enhancement sessions on teaching approaches, as well as aspects of quality assurance. All students should be provided with the opportunity to meet their Moderator during their studies, and they should discuss with staff at the centre when the next available opportunity will be.

How the University of Wales works with your Collaborative Centre

The University maintains an agreement with collaborative centres for the validated programmes which have been approved to be offered. The validation process is, however, only the start of a long process of work between the UW and the collaborative centre to ensure that programmes are not only maintained, but enhanced for all students undertaking study. The University undertakes this responsibility through a variety of mechanisms including:

Moderator

As well as taking a lead role in meeting with students at collaborative centres, Moderators also play an important part of working with collaborative centres. Moderators lead enhancement sessions for staff, maintain oversight of quality assurance within centres, and also chair examination boards and Joint Boards of Study. Moderators work closely with centres to ensure that the quality of experience for students studying is maintained at all times.

External Examiner

External examiners are responsible for ensuring the standards of the work considered by examination boards are comparable with those standards within the UK. External examiners are academic staff from other universities within the UK, and are appointed by UW in order to examine student work at examination boards to confirm that the assessments and the answers given are appropriate for the level of study, test all the intended learning outcomes, and are comparable with those of a similar programme delivered in the UK. It is rare that a student will meet with an external examiner.

Quality Assurance Processes

In order to ensure that centres maintain provision in line with the expectations of UK programmes, UW requires all collaborative centres to comply in agreed quality assurance activities. These include annual monitoring, periodic review, submission of draft assessment, responding to external examiner and moderator reports, and engaging in forums such as the Joint Boards of Study. UW also provides support to centres through the running of an annual quality and administration conference, which has more recently moved to be delivered online through the University's website, and can be accessed by anyone.

Further Support

The University of Wales offers a variety of resources to support both students and staff in undertaking studies.

The University has developed a range of handbooks to support students and staff in academic pursuits. These are available on the University's website www.wales.ac.uk. The website also provides a range of information for staff and students, as well as offering the Online Library Portal of the University.

The University continually seeks to support its students and collaborative centres and welcomes contact from all. Should you wish to contact the University, please do so through:

University of Wales University Registry King Edward VII Avenue Cardiff CF10 3NS	Tel: +44 (0)2920 376 999 Email: registryhelpdesk@wales.ac.uk
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RESOURCES

The following section provides a list of resources used in the preparation of this document, as well as resources that may be useful for further information.

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