

3rd April 2013

Student Written Submission 2013

Foreword

The annual Student Written Submission has become a very valuable process for our Students' Union. It allows us to put to use all the data, information and stories we have collected from our students throughout the academic year and make the student voice heard. Whilst we firmly believe that our Sabbatical Officers and Senior Management Team have a strong working relationship with the University, the SWS provides a formal platform for furthering the voice of Cardiff University students.

This will be the last annual Student Written Submission before the University undertakes Institutional Review in March 2014, and we look forward to continuing the partnership between the University and Students' Union with the annual submission.

2012/13 has been a year of change for Cardiff University and we recognise that these changes are still in their infancy and that there are more to come. Whilst some people are scared of change, the Students' Union will always support change which has a positive impact on the student experience, both inside and outside of lecture theatres. What we do request is that whenever a decision is being made, the question '*How will this impact students?*' is asked proudly and prominently.

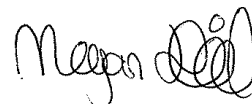
Finally, the Students' Union would like to thank the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Colin Riordan for his support of the Students' Union and the work we do, since his arrival in September 2012. We are grateful for his commitment to enhancing the student experience and look forward to building upon this positive start.



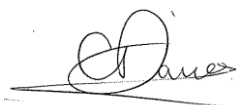
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Key Recommendations

Academic

1. After a successful trial in CLAWS, the rolling out of digital lecture capture to all schools will greatly improve student satisfaction and the student experience.
2. The University should publicly commit to ensuring all schools reschedule any lectures which are cancelled.
3. In striving to provide students with the best possible Teaching and Learning experience, the Students' Union would encourage the University to continue to identify the best possible Teaching and Learning CPPD opportunities for all current teaching/lecturing staff.

Services that Support Students

4. The University needs to continue its efforts to reduce waiting times for the Counselling service from three weeks; with a medium term target of one week.
5. The Students' Union looks forward to working with the University leadership in the Personal Tutoring Task and Finish Group to achieve the joint aspiration of improved Personal Tutoring. The first step of which should be providing all personal tutors with revised, improved and updated handbooks and training.
6. The University should undertake a review of the Student Warden system in halls of residences and consider whether they could be utilised better to support students.
7. In partnership with the University, the Students' Union would like to investigate potential opportunities for an out of hours pastoral support service for students.
8. A codified process and policy to assist staff to make every effort to support students at risk of dropping out is required to ensure students receive the best individualised advice from a Personal Tutor, Head of School, Student Support or ARC before formally withdrawing. Where possible, for monitoring purposes, SIMS should be able to identify those students who have received this support and guidance.

Library Facilities and Resources

9. Library fines are a necessary evil and budgeted valuable income. Culturally they should be treated as additional windfall funds which, at the end of each semester, students are given the opportunity to vote on how they are spent within the libraries.
10. The University and Students' Union continue to work together to improve the corporate social responsibility of the institution as a whole. To further this cause we would ask the

University to donate all library fines collected/paid during RAG week to RAG in recognition of the good work its members do.

11. The University should protect the 2012-13 budget for provision of books and e-book/journal subscriptions.

Student International Mobility

12. The University should challenge itself to meet the 17% of students working/studying abroad target of *The Way Forward*, **in every academic school**.

Equality of the Cardiff Offer

13. As the University continues its good work in improving Quality and Teaching and Learning, its commitment to schools should be to support them in reaching the NSS targets of *The Way Forward* so all students can enjoy the same quality student experience regardless of the school in which they study.

Sport

14. 2013 saw the launch of the Sports Strategy Working Group. This Cardiff Sports Partnership between Cardiff University Sport and the Athletic Union will shape the future of sport at Cardiff University.

We request priority be given to the Athletic Union's three principles:

- Sport is run by students for students
Students are best placed to take leadership roles in providing sporting activity. It is this structure that maximises the opportunities for personal development.
- Sports Clubs "belong" to their members
The membership of a Sports Club is its rightful owner. It is those members who elect their leaders to manage their club on their behalf.
- Participative, Competitive and Performance sport are held in equal regard
Sport means different things to different people. Competition is important to many students, but should not be the sole indicator of success.

15. The University should, as agreed in July 2012, meet its own target for the installation of a new 3G pitch before the 2013/14 academic session.

Capital Expenditure

16. The University asked the Students' Union to carry out research as to how students would want to invest reserves to improve their campus. Whilst we recognise that assignment of funds cannot necessarily reflect the exact response, the Students' Union requests to be a continued major stakeholder in such decisions to ensure the results guide any investment.

University Representation

17. The University should, as set out in HEFCW guidelines, allow student representation at all levels of the University. As such the Students' Union requests a seat for the Students' Union President on University Executive Board for the academic session 2013/14, with 2014/15 arrangements to be reviewed in Summer 2014.

18. To continue to grow the partnership between the University and Students' Union as the institution undergoes significant changes, and to help us best represent students, the Students' Union requests that the University invites at least one member of the Students' Union Executive to sit on each College Board.

International Students

19. The Students' Union would urge the University to commit, as a minimum, to not raising tuition fees for international students for the duration of their course, and to make this promise clear in all published promotional material.

Academic

1.

One of the best things about Cardiff University is the diverse nature of its student body. But no matter what background students come from, they all have the same desire, for an outstanding education. Whilst all entrants must meet specific educational requirements, it is fair to say that students' performance at University can vary vastly for numerous reasons. Students are aware of the benefits CLAWS students reap from having their lectures recorded and it is something many, especially international and disabled students, have raised as something they would benefit from.

After a successful trial in CLAWS, the rolling out of digital lecture capture to all schools will greatly improve student satisfaction and the student experience.

E-Learning has yet to find its place in the day to day pedagogy of the HE sector, but few would deny that it is the future. Whilst the Students' Union recognises the concerns of lecturing staff over copyright of their material and attendance at lectures, we believe that without innovation, progress cannot be made. Cardiff University has already shown its hand with regards to e-learning through the commitment to Futurelearn, but it should not forget the students that it already has. Student satisfaction will increase from an institution wide roll out.

2.

February 2013 saw the first ever Cardiff University 'Speak Week'; a week long consultation of the student voice. Students were given the opportunity to have their voice heard in many different ways including completing surveys and writing postcards to the Vice-Chancellor. Much of what is written within this year's SWS has come about from the results of Speak Week; so these are the ideas, and desires from the students. One of the most prominent concerns raised by students was that lectures are sometimes cancelled, either in advance or on the day, but not always rescheduled.

The University should publicly commit to ensuring all schools reschedule any lectures which are cancelled.

At a time when annual NSS results become a real driver for change and an opportunity to celebrate, the university has a really easy opportunity to improve satisfaction amongst students across all schools by publicly committing to this request. It would show that their education is always the number one priority, especially when many still air concerns over contact hours. Contact hours are regularly raised in the SWS, but we feel that this commitment instead is a more realistic request compared to asking for more – although we would welcome both.

> The Students' Union recommends that the University informs students of cancellations and rescheduling via text message.

3.

We know that there are excellent educators within Cardiff University; and recognising and rewarding this at the annual Enriching Student Life Awards is always a highlight of the year for our partnership. Yet evidence from module evaluation forms suggests that the same high standard is not delivered by all staff and that some students are therefore not receiving an equal standard of teaching.

In striving to provide students with the best possible Teaching and Learning experience, the Students' Union would encourage the University to continue to identify the best possible Teaching and Learning CPPD opportunities for all current teaching/lecturing staff.

The Students' Union acknowledges that staff have limited free time to study and complete CPPD in Teaching and Learning, but we believe that there is a reason the first 4 questions on the NSS are about satisfaction with teaching standards, and completion of CPPD courses will improve results to reach the 90% target set in *The Way Forward*.

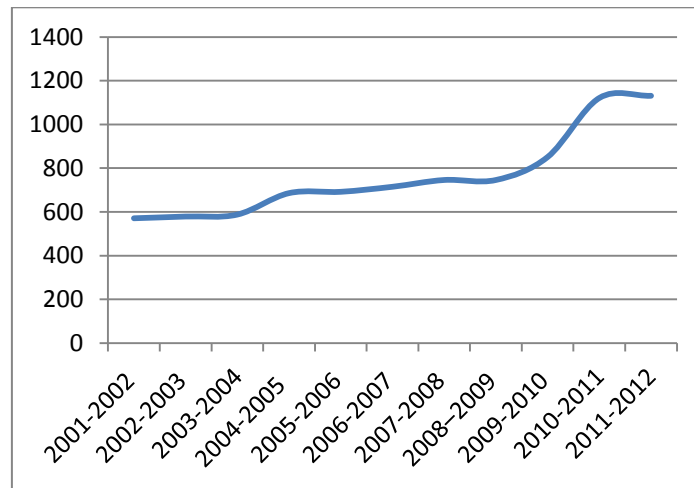
Services that Support Students

4.

Counselling is often forgotten as a service to support students, but our research shows that there is clearly a growing demand from students for this vital service. Students who have used the service sing its praises, however the problem is that demand significantly outstrips supply.

The University needs to continue its efforts to reduce waiting times for the Counselling service from three weeks; with a medium term target of one week.

As an institution the university should support all students, not for the purpose of retention, but because of the duty of care it has. The graph below shows a drastic increase in demand for the Counselling service since 2007:



Student feedback from waiting for the service is damning:

- 1. Too long a wait for an appointment. I stated on my form that I often felt suicidal and still had to wait over a month for an appointment. I found this very difficult. If I did not have a good support network I may have resorted to something drastic.*
- 2. Too long period between first and second meeting, I felt like I was just left to cope alone*
- 3. The only thing was, I had to wait 3 weeks before my first session, whilst at that moment I felt I needed it sooner.*

The statistics to support the positive impact of the Counselling service demonstrate just how important it is to students; and the Students' Union would like to reaffirm our stance that the University needs to invest in this vital service:

65% of clients who had been considering leaving the University prior to counselling declared that counselling helped them to stay.

77% declared that Counselling had helped them with their academic work.

95% declared that Counselling had improved their overall experience of University.

5.

For the third SWS running, the Personal Tutor System has again been flagged by students as still not being satisfactory. The Students' Union acknowledges that work has been done through the Senior Personal Tutor Network and that the establishment of the Personal Tutoring Task and Finish Group will make progress. However, the importance of Personal Tutoring cannot be underestimated to both the academic and pastoral support of students throughout their time at Cardiff University.

The Students' Union looks forward to working with the University leadership in the Personal Tutoring Task and Finish Group to achieve the joint aspiration of improved Personal Tutoring. The first step of which should be providing all personal tutors with revised, improved and updated handbooks and training.

Personal Tutoring has the potential to make a huge impact on Retention, Achievement and Success of Cardiff University students so should therefore be given very high priority. As in previous submissions, the Students' Union welcomes the opportunity to work alongside the university and the Senior Tutoring Network to help develop personal tutoring to better meet students' needs, but we would also recommend bringing in an external consultant to evaluate the current systems and processes. The Students' Union recognises that there is a cost associated with this, but no cost can be considered too high for such an important issue.

6.

The Students' Union has carried out research in to the support networks put in place for first year students arriving at other universities and the likes of Salford and Glamorgan make a real effort with their equivalents of Student Wardens.

The University should undertake a review of the Student Warden system in halls of residences and consider whether they could be utilised better to support students.

We recognise that Student Wardens do currently fulfil the job which they are required to, but we believe that they have an opportunity to make a much bigger impact on new students and be front line support and information providers. The Students' Union would like to work with various members of the University community to undertake a review of the current system and see if we can maximise its potential.

7.

Alongside Speak Week and Officer engagement with students, the Students' Union has also carried out more specific research into students on placement. One of the most startling results was the lack of awareness that students on placement had that they were still entitled to use University support services. However, placement students are often working 9-5 and are therefore unable to make use of support services at a time when some need them most.

In partnership with the University, the Students' Union would like to investigate potential opportunities for an out of hours pastoral support service for students.

It is however not just students on placement that would benefit from out of hours support. It is often raised that outside of office hours the University offers no professional support to students and whilst the Students' Union appreciates immensely the gift in kind for the facilities it provides for our Nightline service, we would welcome an investigation in to additional support mechanisms.

8.

A student withdrawing from University is always disappointing because every student has something to contribute to the wider student body, and University can be their platform to become who they want to be. In some circumstances, leaving University is the best option for students, however as the decision is such a big one, we believe the University should do everything it possibly can to ensure that the option being taken – whichever it is – is the best one for the individual.

A codified process and policy to assist staff to make every effort to support students at risk of dropping out is required to ensure students receive the best individualised advice from a Personal Tutor, Head of School, Student Support or ARC before formally withdrawing. Where possible, for monitoring purposes, SIMS should be able to identify those students who have received this support and guidance.

The University has policies and procedures for nearly everything that can happen at University and currently students can withdraw simply by visiting SIMS. However, the Students' Union would like to work with the University to develop a policy and procedure where the University and Students' Union work in partnership to afford all possible support in our power, at the students' convenience. Not to try and talk them out of it but instead to offer them support throughout what is often a difficult time.

Library Facilities and Resources

9.

The Students' Union became concerned about the situation surrounding library fines after receiving complaints over the past few years. Cardiff Student Media launched an investigation surrounding the nature of university fines and the university's spending on books and journals. Through this, they were told:

"We would advise that the fines income is retained within the overall Information Services budget and used for a range of purposes within Information Services. It contributes to the overall costs of IT and Library services, including staffing, investment in IT and Library services etc. The income for lost books is used to provide replacement copies of those books."

Library fines are a necessary evil and budgeted valuable income. Culturally they should be treated as additional windfall funds which, at the end of each semester, students are given the opportunity to vote on how they are spent within the libraries.

The Students' Union acknowledges that fines are used as a deterrent from students keeping hold of resources for longer than permitted, but the fines themselves should only be used to invest in more resources such that students do not need to unfairly extend their loans in future.

The Students' Union would like to work with the university in 2013/14 in a partnership campaign about returning loaned items on time.

10.

One of the many great things Cardiff students do is raise money for charity. Every November Cardiff RAG (Raise and Give) dedicate a whole week to raising money for charities close to home and far away.

The University and Students' Union continue to work together to improve the corporate social responsibility of the institution as a whole. To further this cause we would ask the University to donate all library fines collected/paid during RAG week to RAG in recognition of the good work its members do.

The Students' Union believe that the University should make this gesture to show support and recognition for all the voluntary and charity work that its students do every year and can consider it a contribution to its corporate social responsibility.

11.

The Students' Union welcomed the increase in budget allocated for the provision of books, e-books and journals for 2011/12. In every survey we carry out and during Speak Week, one of the most common complaints is lack of resources, particularly core texts.

The University should protect the 2012-13 budget for provision of books, e-book and journal subscriptions.

We recognise that in challenging times that some areas of the University spending need to be cut, but we ask that the budget for this provision be protected.

Student International Mobility

12.

Each year the Students' Union runs its own Student Satisfaction Survey. Within this we ask questions ranging from academic issues through to what entertainment they most enjoy. At the end of each survey we ask three big questions, one of which is: *How confident are you of getting a job after graduation?*

Responses are always mixed and these variations are often course based. The Students' Union will continue to help students become who they want to be and employability is a major aspect of this.

The University should challenge itself to meet the 17% of students working/studying abroad target of the *The Way Forward*, **in every academic school**.

We really value this ambition and welcome this as the centre piece of *The Way Forward*. We are really excited about the new leadership of the university setting itself challenging targets for the benefit of its students.

In January 2013 we contributed to the Modern Foreign Languages consultation organised by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience and Academic Standards, and we hope our comments and recommendations were well received. In a world changing through globalisation, the addition of learning a MFL alongside a degree will unquestionably assist Cardiff graduates to compete.

To further enhance the reputation of the University and what it has to offer, the 17% target should be publicised in all undergraduate recruitment publicity material so that potential students are aware that at Cardiff University they will be offered more than just a degree.

Equality of the Cardiff Offer

13.

The University can be proud of the results it has achieved in the National Student Survey; they show that students recognise the good work the University does. However there is evidently still room for improvement across many areas. The Students' Union welcomes the medium term goals for NSS scores as set out in *The Way Forward* and look forward to working with the University to make these a reality.

As the University continues its good work in improving Quality and Teaching and Learning, its commitment to schools must be to support them in reaching the NSS targets **of The Way Forward** so all students can enjoy the same quality student experience regardless of the school in which they study.

The Students' Union appreciates its involvement in the development of school NSS Action Plans and will offer its continued support in striving to offer excellent learning opportunities in every school at Cardiff University.

Sport

14.

This year has confronted us with some challenges with our sports clubs at Cardiff University. Our resolve however remains strong. We thank the University for working with the Students' Union on a new Sports Strategy and working group. Sport at Cardiff means a lot to those who take part so the Students' Union has a responsibility to look after all our members who work so hard to represent the University at competitions across the UK.

2013 saw the launch of the Sports Strategy Working Group. This Cardiff Sports Partnership between Cardiff University Sport and the Athletic Union will shape the future of sport at Cardiff University.

We request priority be given to the Athletic Union's three principles:

The University should commit to the Athletic Union's three principles:

- Sport is run by students for students
Students are best placed to take leadership roles in providing sporting activity. It is this structure that maximises the opportunities for personal development.
- Sports Clubs "belong" to their members
The membership of a Sports Club is its rightful owner. It is those members who elect their leaders to manage their club on their behalf.
- Participative, Competitive and Performance sport are held in equal regard
Sport means different things to different people. Competition is important to many students. but should not be the sole indicator of success.

We therefore ask the University to commit to and endorse the Athletic Union's three principles in the Sports Strategy. These principles are designed to promote inclusiveness and awareness of why we do what we do. Students running sports clubs is brilliant CPPD and many students will use it to add to their CVs. Students build strong alumni relations through sports clubs so the opportunity for them to run their own clubs is important to ensure that those vital relationships are maintained.

15.

Cardiff University sports clubs continue to punch above their weight in BUCS competitions every academic year. However there are two things which have a negative impact on our contribution to sporting fixtures: capacity and the weather. The Students' Union recognises that the University does not have enough influence to change the weather, but it can contribute through the provision of suitable facilities.

The University should, as agreed in July 2012, meet its own target for the installation of a new 3G pitch before the 2013/14 academic session.

Students were delighted to hear the news that the development was proceeding because it will allow more teams to uphold the good name of Cardiff University by completing more of their fixtures. The agreement was seen as a statement of intent by the University in promoting sport as an extra-curricular activity and the Students' Union appreciates its continued support to the sports partnership.

Capital Expenditure

16.

We welcomed the opportunity to run the capital expenditure research on behalf of the University in December 2012 and January 2013. Students really engaged with the process with 10% responding:

The University asked the Students' Union to carry out research as to how students would want to invest reserves to improve their campus. Whilst we recognise that assignment of funds cannot necessarily reflect the exact response, the Students' Union requests to be a continued major stakeholder in such decisions to ensure the results guide any investment.

Broad area	% spend on broad area	Specific	% times specific appeared in top 5	Specific rank
Academic facilities	35%	Lecture theatres	46%	1
		Provision of books and journals	45%	2
		Computer rooms	43%	3
		Individual learning space	41%	4
		Seminar and teaching rooms	37%	5
		Social learning space	32%	6
		Labs	23%	7
Sport facilities	17%	Swimming pool	26%	1
		Health/fitness centre	21%	2
		Multiuse indoor sports halls	16%	3
		Outdoor synthetic pitches	10%	4
		Outdoor grass pitches	9%	5
Halls of Residence and University accommodation	16%	Standard of University owned accommodation	36%	1
		Choice of University owned accommodation	15%	2
Social and common room style areas	12%	Eateries around campus	16%	=1
		Common rooms	16%	=1
		Students' Union building	15%	3
		Free tablet/phone with University software	6%	4
		Graduate Centre	3%	5
Student support and careers buildings	9%	Careers service areas	5%	=1
		Student support service areas	5%	=1
		Health centre areas	3%	3
		Advice and Representation Centre area in the SU	2%	4
Societies performance and practice space	9%	Practice space with mirrors	7%	1
		Theatre	6%	2
Prayer and worship facilities across campus	3%	Multi-faith prayer facilities across campus	2%	1
		Multi-faith centre centrally on each campus	1%	2

University Representation

17.

One of the many reasons why the partnership between the University and Students' Union continues to be strong is the level of respect for the work both do. Officers and staff from both work closely everyday for the same cause; and whilst sometimes our approaches are different our final goal, providing the best possible experience for students at Cardiff University remains the same.

The Students' Union fully expects the QAA to recognise the relationship between the University and the Students' Union as a positive aspect of the Cardiff experience in the 2014 Institutional Review. In the HEFCW publication *Guidance on good practice in funding of effective, democratic student unions, and student representation* it states: **"Student voice: the partners will work collaboratively to recognise the student voice through a range of methods, to ensure that students are partners at every level of the institution."**

The University should, as set out in HEFCW guidelines, allow student representation at all levels of the University. As such the Students' Union requests a seat for the Students' Union President on University Executive Board for the academic session 2013/14, with 2014/15 arrangements to be reviewed in Summer 2014.

Cardiff University students put a lot of faith in the sabbatical officers of the Students' Union and we therefore make the above request as their voice. Our relationship, even on contentious issues is based on honesty and transparency, and the Students' Union President having a seat on UEB would signify to our members that the University continues to take them seriously.

18.

The Students' Union has welcomed the introduction of the college structure to Cardiff University and will continue to support it as it is further rolled out. However, knowledge of its introduction amongst our members ranges from having significant concerns at the lack of student consultation, through to not even knowing it was happening. As the implementation of the college structure becomes more evident and imposing, we expect further concerns to be aired from members on matters such as each college having its own budget.

To continue to grow the partnership between the University and Students' Union as the institution undergoes significant changes, and to help us best represent students, the Students' Union requests that the University invites **at least** one member of the Students' Union Executive to sit on each College Board.

This request is made to ensure that we are able to best represent and inform our members of the changes that are happening and are about to happen. As with all committees, having student representation on them should never be an afterthought and we believe we have and are willing to play a major role to support the university in this transition.

19.

Cardiff University is a world leading institution so it is no surprise that students are attracted from all over the world to study here. International students bring new cultures, ideas and enthusiasm to Cardiff University and it is undeniably a much stronger institution because of this and the Students' Union will always work in partnership with the University to support its aim of attracting the best young talent and supporting them when they are here. For many international students, their only interaction with Cardiff University before enrolling is via online material so we must therefore make every effort to ensure that the information is fair, accurate and complete.

<p>The Students' Union would urge the University to commit, as a minimum, to not raising tuition fees for international students for the duration of their course, and to make this promise clear in all published promotional material.</p>
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A commitment such as this would be something for Cardiff University to be proud of and would separate it from competitors.