

# Cardiff University Students' Union

## Undeb Myfyrwyr Prifysgol Caerdydd

### Speak Week Report 2016

#### Summaries of the Feedback Collated

The comments were collated and then organised into 14 categories (including miscellaneous) by thematic area. Some of these have been split down further in order to identify issues by department areas, for example Learning Resources is further split into Libraries, Computers, and Other Resources. 5013 comments were analysed to form this report, in comparison to last year's 1510. 70.6% of comments came from Undergraduates (3541 comments), 10.2% PGT (515 comments), 5.2% PGR (263 comments), with 0.3% only specifying 'Postgraduate' (20 comments), and 13.4% did not specify (674 comments). The college of Arts Humanities and Social Science students made up 40% of comments, 23% were made by the college of Biomedical and Life Sciences students and 13% by the college of Physical Sciences and Engineering students. A further 23% didn't specify.

Demographic in comparison to last year

	2015	2016	Change (in percentage points)
UG	83%	70.6%	-13%
PGT	8%	10.2%	+2%*
PGR	2%	5.2%	+3%*
Non-Specified	7%	13.4%	+6%

\*Note: with several students referring to themselves as 'Postgraduate' and not Taught or Research, the overall Postgraduate percentage is 15%, in comparison to last year's 10%, an increase of 10% (percentage points).

As noted previously, during the campaign there was an increased emphasis on positive comments. Students used the word 'Love' 36 times. Comments were generic about Cardiff University experience as a whole. The 300 positive comments were as simple as "I love the experience here at Cardiff" or "nothing to change, everything is great!".

Examples of the word 'Love' used within the comments...

*"All-in-all I just love the uni! Sad to be leaving. Don't think anything really needs to be changed. Just maintained"* – International Student, third year

*"I love the university because of the quality of teaching and the facilities provided. Especially the Student Union and the postgraduate hub!"* – MBA International Student

*"I love the university because it is in high quality of education and it has professional teachers - the uni can manage everything for students very well. Thank you!"* – PGT MSc



Examples of the 'Like' used within the comments...

*"I like speak week - it's fun"* – Not specified

*"I like that there is a 24 hour library - > this should definitely stay."* PGR international

*"I really like that my course has students from different pathways which makes it really interesting and multidisciplinary."* – Not specified

## 1. Learning and Teaching (461 Comments)

**1.1** The second largest selection of comments came from students around Learning and Teaching.

**1.2** There were 88 Comments relating to Lecture Capture, with students noting they would like lectures to be recorded and available via Learning Central. Several of the comments referenced those who are currently recording lectures and make them available as best practice. CUSU (Cardiff University Students' Union) is aware of the roll out lecture recording as a project by the University, however the comments received indicate that the roll-out is potentially slower than student expectation and better communicated. The Education Portfolio is working on this project and developments are happening.

Comments such as *"Implement lecture recording within the business school. It's not fair that other schools have this privilege and we don't, especially since as the business school is probably one of the wealthiest of the uni. Our attendance is already monitored by swiping in so it shouldn't be an issue."*

*"I would like lectures to be recorded as it's hard to copy all of the notes down."*

**1.3** Lecture handouts and slides received 27 Comments students being given handouts and their format were a key concern.

**1.4** Around Student Representation there were 21 Comments, these comments related to Staff Student Panels and their abilities. Students also noted that amendments to modules would also be something they would like more access to.

**1.5** Contact time attracted 30 comments, where the majority simply requested 'More' contact hours, only 2 comments were not about an increase in contact hours, they related directly to the University engaging more with Postgraduate Researchers, the other noted that academics blamed students who did attend lectures for poor attendance (or at least that is how the individual felt). Interestingly, there was only one reference to tuition fees in relation to contact time.

**1.6** Reading Week - 16 comments were raised around having a reading week in those schools that currently do not have a reading week. These comments noted being able to use the time to re-write notes from lectures, a week to 'catch up'

**1.7** Regarding quality of teaching, there were 289 specific references with numerous instances of 'Good teaching' (25 comments), however there were more comments relating to negative teaching quality (131). Words such as 'repetitive', 'boring' 'generic' and multiple references to 'PowerPoint'. This was noted within the Speak Week report last and continues to be a persistent issue.



**1.8** Other comments (133) related to more generic comments about learning and teaching; the removal of a 4<sup>th</sup> year project, less reading, and requests for better revision sessions and resources.

Negative comments around quality of teaching...

*"PHD students are Good at teaching - they are often enthusiastic and can relate to the learning style of students. I think more could lecture, if possible."*

*"Wish some lecturers would learn how to use technology, after several hours of my lectures being interrupted because of lack of knowledge of how to use equipment."*

*"I feel sometimes lectures depend too heavily on their powerpoints and don't engage enough with students there have also been lots of technical issues with my course especially when our lecturers are held in the museum."*

Positive comments around quality of teaching...

*"\*name removed\* teaching methods are really good. She varies her style of delivery and its very effective across the board with students."*

*"get \*name removed\* to train lecturers."*

*"Introduction of new teaching system "Active Learning" is appreciated"*

## **2. Feedback and Assessment (222 Comments)**

**2.1** CUSU does note that the installation of exam feedback will take time to be sufficiently implemented, furthermore CUSU commends the work of the Academic Feedback Project team who are working to ensure that feedback is more affective and returned within the appropriate window. Noting the installation of exam feedback within policy there were 71 comments in relation to requests for exam feedback, however not just on actual exams but also mock examination to ensure that students can progress.

**2.2** Aside from exam feedback, there were also comments surround assignment feedback. The 43 comments on assignment feedback focused on not receiving feedback in a timely way and also further noting students not knowing the specific date when they would be receiving said feedback. Out of the 43 comments, there was only 1 comment being positive

**2.3** There were 108 comments relating to 'general' comments about feedback, this is where students have noted issues around assessment bunching.

Some comments around feedback and assessment can be found below.

The positive comment...

*"Satisfied with coursework feedback that lectures provide. Chance to improve and avoid mistakes"*

*"Improved feedback - routine provision of written comments as well as just grades ( a qualitative numerical 'comment' about a specific part of the task e.g. written communication isn't especially helpful"*

*"essay feedback is short and feedback is really helpful to get my weaknesses."*



*“results/feedback is rarely back within the 4 week limit and when they are released it is often just a grade/percentage - on written feedback”*

### 3. Student Support (253 Comments)

**3.1** Personal Tutors/Doctorial Supervisors featured heavily, with 75 comments directly relating to personal tutors. Requests for personal tutors to be more available and to assist with personal development, as well as submission of extenuating circumstances. Increased time with personal tutors was also noted and better organisation of the meetings themselves.

*“I wish my tutor was more bothered about my well-being and how I was getting on with my course”*

*“I would like to increased time with a personal tutor - a two minute meeting once a term is not really sufficient”*

Out of the 75 comments, only 4 were positive.

*“My supervisor is who is on regular contact which I appreciate massively”*

*“always had good meetings with personal tutor”*

**3.2** Finances (74 Comments) these comments were related to the funding of support, some references to tuition fees. The struggles of student finance and budgeting were noted.

**3.3** ‘Generic Student Support’ 104 comments – these were more comments around counselling, support during induction and student safety. Requests for more information and advertising of advice around finding accommodation. This is a service that the students’ union advice centre does provide, it can be inferred that there is to be more promotion of this particular service. There was little additional information provided, just that ‘more’ support was requested. Some instances of support asked for information around assessments and how to plan for them.

### 4. Organisation and Management (Timetables, Communication and Information) (509 Comments)

**4.1** 143 comments noted structure as a concern; the comments were very mixed, with several comments being positive and several being negative (there were considerably more negative comments). Some simply stated “better organisation” with no further explanation, others requested longer office hours.

*“there doesn't seem to be any 'joining up' between undergraduate a post-graduate services. It all seems to be a little 'separate'.”*

*“The process of selecting modules should be clearer.”*

*“structure of the course needs to be more organised & beneficial.”*

Note: A lot of these comments came from Modern Languages or those studying Joint Honours

*“German department is very good - lots of options for single & joint honour students and brilliant support. The year abroad was well supported from staff”*



*“there really needs to be more consideration for joint honours students - particularly those across different schools. On return from my year abroad, MLANG were good in welcoming us back with talks and refreshers, but ENCAP were not at all and this made it tough.”*

*“there should be better integration of students on joint masters programmes who would not have had the introductory stuff in the fall. I am from the planet europe programme and it was v hectic in first week”*

**4.2** there were 57 comments that focused on Assessment and Feedback, around how they are communicated to students. The issues surrounded when students would receive feedback, and also the bunching of assessments.

**4.3** General University and school specific communication received 65 comments. The timeliness of the communications in relation to room bookings and events were noted within these comments. Responses to emails from departments were a key comment, the timeframe in which the university responded to queries was not considered fast enough, nor clear enough.

**4.4** Surrounding timetabling there were 108 comments relating to spacing in between lectures, the allocation of a lunch time, or simply students wishing to have their timetable in a way that suits their individual lifestyle. An additional 66 comments related to daily timings and day length.

**4.5** there were comments relating to 19 Online resources, and 9 comments on attendance monitoring (students not wishing to have their attendance monitored and the best ways to attendance monitor being through student card).

**4.6** IT issues (88 Comments) centred specifically around improving the university Wifi across the university, as Eduroam was referred to as ‘unreliable’ and other comments referred to faster log-ins on computers.

## **5. Learning Resources (Libraries, Computers, online Resources and Printing) (451 Comments)**

**5.1** 45 comments related directly to 24 hour libraries and study spaces praising the current ASSL and requesting that other libraries follow suit, further there was only 1 other comment this was negative about a 24 hour space referencing sustainability and power requirements. The ASSL becoming 24 Hours due to the partnership work of the students’ union and the university is the reason for the increased demand of other spaces. 22 comments linked to library opening hours and the hope of extending the current hours of those that are not 24 hours.

**5.2** 42 comments were request for quicker and more computers within libraries and across the university. 12 comments pertained to a request for more resources (non-books) i.e. bones in the case of Medics.

**5.3** Relating to eBooks and Journals there were 17 were requests for an increase provision for both.

**5.4** Fines and the amount at which they are charged received 23 comments. The 23 comments requested that fines either be removed, or significantly reduced. There were also suggestions that the library offer additional warning before a charge is occurs.



**5.5** 4 comments about libraries being crowded, which was echoed with 21 comments requesting larger study spaces within libraries themselves. That the current areas have a high demand and a high usage.

**5.6** Around the loan system there were 22 comments, these individuals were unhappy with the current loan system and would like the system to be amended to instead be a longer loan period and an increased publicity around the automatic renewal system.

**5.7** 47 comments surrounding requests for more books that are discipline specific. There were numerous comments stating

**5.8** 37 other relating to requests for locker spaces, consistent policy across all libraries and comments around comfort of seats.

**5.9** additional comments; 8 relating to plugs within libraries, 2 positive comments generally about libraries being well stocked, 4 comments around temperature

**5.10** A particular component of the student experience sub-committee is focusing on a printing project, calculating how much a student will spend on printing during their university career. This project is timely as there were 142 comments requesting free printing (There 1 additional comment around printing was positive and noted the department provide printing)

**5.11** There was 1 comment referred to how support library staff were “I am on the nursing degree, I feel we have very good support and appreciate to have library onsite for anything we need. The staff here are also very helpful”

## **6. Careers and Employability (122 Comments)**

**6.1** Placements and Studying Aboard received 79 Comments these had particular reference to transportation, the organisation of placements i.e. when students were told about their placement and also the engagement with the university whilst on placement. Information, guidance and support whilst on placement were the key themes of these comments.

**6.2** The 55 comments around the careers and employability services focused around ‘More’, there is a want for more promotion of the service as well as additional careers fairs that are specific to the discipline. Several comments indicated that students would like longer and more careers appointments. There was also a call for more help in finding internships and international opportunities.

## **7. Demographic Specific Comments (116 Comments)**

**7.1** Postgraduate Students (52 Comments) these comments are centered around the want for more social and sporting activity for the postgraduate community which will be investigated by the students’ union separately. There were two comments around postgraduate funding that are found below.

*“Lack of scholarships for PG students - since I won't be awarded with CV master excellence bursary. I've been struggling to get by. Although I receive plenty of advice from Money/Finance support & PG recruitment office & I've been working part-time - I simply struggle to finish the course”*

*“The number one thing that will radically improve my quality of life as a PGR would be an increase in the amount of funding and maintenance grants for PGRs. I currently live below the*



*poverty line, with a severe health problem and sub-standard rented accommodation just to study here.”*

**7.2 International Students (36 Comments)** Multiple comments focused on providing social events for integration with home students and even the suggestion for integrated halls. Several mentions by International Students was relating to English being a second language and the struggle of being able to communicate. One of the comments that stood out related to who to contact and support available when there is an emergency in the country of origin of international students:

*“They should have at least 1 country specific officer to speak to. E.g. During Chennai floods in December, I was unable to get in touch with my family back home and no as such support was provided by Uni either.”*

### **7.3 Heath Park Students (27 Comments)**

**7.3.1** Regarding Heath Park there were 4 comments relating to integration of Heath students and the wider university, 7 comments related directly to the students’ union (one specifically about Speak Week!), 7 comments were about the social spaces or water fountains at the Heath and a want for expansion of said areas, 1 comment relating to placements, 2 comments were about travel and parking, one comment was a request for a gym, 2 comments were simply about how nice the Heath is, 1 comment relating to resources and the need for more computers and a further comment about sexual health .

*“...being expected to drive 20 hours a week and not getting travel expenses in very difficult, both mentally and financially.”*

## **8. Catering and Commercial outlets (475 Comments)**

**8.1** The largest number of comments about catering and commercial outlets was around the price of food. 143 comments noted the current price and a request for significantly reduced costs, or the inclusion of more ‘Meal deals’

**8.2** The other comments related to provision of free hot water, microwaves, vending machines, the variety of food on campus, and other topics. These will be fed into the University’s catering review group to assist in their decision making.

## **9. Sports, including Gyms (80 Comments)**

**9.1** 34 Comments referenced the expansion or simply ‘bigger’ gym facilitates, 1 comment related to the accessibility of the gym requesting for it to be 24 hour access, 27 comments around funding for sports team or requesting free membership for the gym, 3 specific comments were about IMG, 1 comment was positive, 1 comment was about a specific sports team, 9 comments related to the request of a swimming pool. 4 comments were related towards the timing of academic activity interfering with access to the gym.

## **10. University Residences (101 Comments)**

25 comments relate to cost, and how the value for money could be substantially better

4 comments relating to information provided

38 comments linking directly to maintenance issues that students are having with university residences



Only 4 negative comments were received about University residences, however they were quite striking.

*"I find my accommodation (Taly North) the worst part of my uni experience."*

There were 2 positive comments

12 comments relating to social or recreational activity

13 comments about transportation from university residences to the students' union/university

3 comments describing student support issues

## **11. Transport (96 Comments)**

**11.1** Transport relates to public transport used across Cardiff by Students. Comments range from safer transportation from 'Club nights' to cheaper bus fares. It is of note that a large number of comments noted transportation from University Halls of residence to the students' union. Furthermore, multiple comments related to transport for placements. Requests for free bus passes or subsidised travel also occurred, there was also a reference to the Cardiff Met bus passes.

**11.2** The financial implications of bus services were noted throughout, these made up the majority of comments, other comments focused on transport to-and-from accommodation.

*"Cut a deal with parking people - placement at UHW for students that don't live in Cardiff is a nightmare (£105 minimum for a 7 week placement here - fair chunk of student loan)"*

There were also comments around more integration between the two campuses via transportation (buses and shuttle buses).

3 comments came as suggestions for having more bike shelters or the ability to rent bikes from the university or students' union.

53 comments surrounding buses.

21 comments around parking

3 comments about pedestrianisation around certain areas including a foot bridge. The other 16 comments were around suggestions such as more 'Walk home schemes' or 'taxi discount'.

## **12. Buildings, Facilities and Maintenance 521 Comments**

**12.1** There were 37 comments asked for 'more' study spaces across the university, this was also echoed in comments around libraries. There is a want for flexible and social learning spaces.

**12.2** There were 25 Comments around increasing other areas to be 24 hour access - the success of the ASSL opening 24 hours and the Students' Union being open for 24 hours has meant students would not like other areas to be open continuous. Bute library and the Bio-Science building were mentioned multiple.

**12.3** 22 Comments related to toilets and cleanliness and the need for improvement in this specific area.



**12.4** There were 58 Comments relating to water fountains across the university, requested in multiple locations and buildings.

**12.5** 'Other' (379) comments related to temperatures in lecture theatres, requests for additional bike shelters, as well as comments on décor of university buildings. More seating within the Heath Hub (particularly IV Lounge) was also within this selection of comments. There were also particular rooms mentioned that required maintenance or repair.

### **13. Value for Money - 71 Comments**

**13.1** comments around transparency of tuition fees and several comments around free education were noted. Several comments also noted the difference between international student fees and home student fees.

### **14. Miscellaneous (319 Comments)**

**14.1** A significant number of comments were difficult to break down into any specific section and therefore were classed as 'Miscellaneous'. These range from liberation, faith, study skills, Welsh Language provision, socialising and environmental concerns.

