



Undeb Myfyrwyr Wreccsam  
**Wrexham Students' Union**


# **Quality Enhancement Review 2024**

## **Submission**

[www.wrexhamglyndwrsu.org.uk](http://www.wrexhamglyndwrsu.org.uk)

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# Introduction

Here at Wrexham Students' Union (WSU), it is our aim to give students a platform to speak and be heard, and to amplify the voice of all students across all aspects of university life. That is why, over the past 5 years, we have been laser-focused on improving student representation structures and systems, and engaging students with quality improvement processes.

In 2019, WSU undertook the Quality Students' Unions audit, an initiative developed by the National Union of Students (NUS) to assure the quality, standards, and overall effectiveness of students' unions. It focused on three areas: activities, outcomes and governance and leadership and management. We were delighted to have received an excellent accreditation for 'Representation and Campaigning'.


We made many enhancements through this process and are delighted to see a corresponding increase in SU-related results in the National Student Survey (NSS) since 2019. In 2023 and 2024, the SU was number one in Wales for two years for *effectively representing the views of students*. During this period, the University also reached number one in Wales for Student Voice. We are confident these successes are largely due to the effective partnership work between the SU and the University; especially our joint work to enhance the student voice structures and efficiently close the feedback loop.

We are delighted to publish this Student Written Submission, jointly written by the elected officers and staff at WSU. It will demonstrate the work undertaken to effectively represent students at Wrexham University and to identify future enhancements to improve the student experience.



# Methodology


In compiling this written submission, evidence used came from:

- Focus group – 20 students discussing Student Voice Forums (SVFs), October 2024
  - Interviews – 6 students
  - Feedback table – sent to four students
  - Unitu feedback
  - National Student Survey, 2019-2024
  - The Students' Voice Internal audit 2017 provided by RSM
  - SU committee meetings minutes, years 2019 – 2023
  - Annual University Estates Report (2021/2022)
  - Information Services Report 2022/2023
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# Student Voice Structures

The student voice system at the University has undergone significant development over the past five years. This includes the introduction of the award-winning online student feedback platforms Tell Glyn and Ask Glyn, and various changes to the Student Voice Forum (SVF) system.

While these changes were welcomed, the SU felt there was still more to be done, especially in terms of:


1. Closing the feedback loop: Tell Glyn and SVFs have difficulties in effectively closing the feedback loop and promoting positive developments/changes.
  2. Student Voice Forums: The current number of SVFs is challenging to manage, especially with reduced staff in the SU Student Administration team.
  3. Associate Dean oversight: It is difficult for Associate Deans to have the expected oversight of Student Voice, considering their large portfolios.
  4. Partners and online students: There is a need to strengthen engagement with students at partner institutions and to introduce a representative system for students studying online programmes.
  5. Electing Course Reps: The responsibility of holding course rep elections is challenging for programme teams, especially with the need to elect course reps twice per year.
  6. Digital Learning: The student voice system needs to adopt a more digital approach to align with the University's current digital learning approach.
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As a response to some of these concerns, the University and SU introduced the online feedback platform, Unitu. The platform, facilitated by the SU, enables students to raise issues, ask questions and submit ideas. The SU, course reps, and academic staff can engage with student feedback in real time. Academic staff can respond to comments and students can track the progress of issues raised. The platform also facilitates online course rep elections, thus relieving resource pressure from Programme Leaders and making the whole process more transparent and streamlined. Importantly, online-students and those studying at partner institutions can use the platform.

A full case study on Wrexham University and Unitu can be found [How Wrexham University and SU increased their Student Voice scores by 10 points - Unitu](#) with one student citing:

*"I think it's just going to keep evolving, hopefully, and growing as it has. I think it's a digital age and this is the future. I think it's just going to be an ongoing, useful tool".*

From the start of the 2024 academic term, students will be auto enrolled, easing the sign-up process and encouraging even greater use of the system.



## SU Advice Centre

The number of appeals cases doubled in 2024 compared to 2023. With only one full-time advisor and an increase in students needing to access the Advice Centre, there is a need for further investment in this area. Not only is this important for individual students, but the SU also uses Advice Centre reports as a useful tool to raise concerns or trends at Academic Board.

July – September 2023

Case Details Matter Category	Case Details Count Number of Cases
Academic Appeal	32
Academic Integrity (Major)	13
Extenuating Circumstances	9
Student Issues	2
Suitability for Practice	1
Withdrawal	1
<b>Report Total</b>	<b>58</b>

July – September 2024

Case Details Matter Category	Case Details Count Number of Cases
Academic Appeal	65
Academic Integrity (Major)	12
Academic Integrity (Minor)	1
Complaint	2
Extenuating Circumstances	1
Suitability for Practice	3
Suspension	1
<b>Report Total</b>	<b>85</b>

## **Course Rep Elections**

In 2017, a recommendation from an internal audit from RSM suggested electing levels 5, 6 and postgraduate reps earlier in the year to reduce pressure on University and SU staff during a busy period, which would mean training them during the summer. Attempts were made between 2018-24 to implement this but with poor outcomes. Staff found it difficult to engage with students at the end of semester, and course reps informed us that this period was already stressful due to exams, placements and other summer plans. As such, all course rep elections will take place at the start of the academic year.

## **Student Voice Forum Structures**

A review of the SVF structure was undertaken in 2019/20 to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness. It uncovered that the programme area arrangement of SVFs resulted in there being more staff in the room than students, and this left some students reluctant to be candid, describing it as daunting. As a result, some SVFs were combined, for example, the Art School now holds multiple programme groupings for all academic years.

During the October 2024 focus group on SVFs, there was overwhelming support (17 out of 20) for the new structure, citing no changes were needed. Three students recommended having fewer, broader items and having more specific points such as timetabling, resource issues e.g. WiFi, Moodle and having a bilingual agenda. Another focus group will be taking place in November 2024 and the feedback will be used in the next review of SVFs.



Our adoption of Unitu has meant we can use the platform for the following functions:

- Informing students of their SVF dates
- Emailing a reminder to the attendees to leave their feedback in preparation for the SVF
- Offering a structure for reps to add feedback in a transparent and collaborative manner
- Developing a clear summary of points raised generated by AI, that can be used for guidance notes at SVFs
- Generating a collaborative way to close feedback in a transparent way
- Concluding outcomes of SVF actions

It must be noted that Unitu is a platform that can complement SVFs and not replace them. Although the platform has its advantages, students still need that face-to-face contact and SVFs provide another opportunity for students to feed back. A current issue that the SU is working on with Associate Deans is identifying key University staff to be responsible for their areas on Unitu and ensuring their responses are completed within a timely manner.

## Training

Since 2017, the SU has invested time in standardising the role of course reps by providing face-to-face training sessions delivered by the Sabbatical Officers. In 2019, the new Student Voice Coordinator initiated a series of training sessions over two weeks, achieving an average turnout of 50%. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the shift to online learning necessitated the delivery of training via an online platform called Oppia. In the following two years, training transitioned back to a mix of in-person and online formats. To further reduce barriers for the reps, training has now moved to Microsoft Teams, accompanied by a comprehensive training pack. This pack includes all the information the reps need, as well as an assessment and certification that they can use on their CVs. In 2024, we have developed a dedicated channel for representatives that offers a variety of resources, including presentations, handbooks, case studies and videos.

Year	Elected	Trained
2024/2025	180 to date	60 to date
2023/2024	180	73 mixed
2022/2023	192	55 mixed
2021/2022	170	120 Online
2020/2021	160	46 in person

## **Student Leaders Conference**

The Student Leaders Conference was introduced in February 2019 with an attendance of 40 course reps. The Vice Chancellor (VC) and Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) attended and discussed campus changes ahead of 2025. The Conference emphasised the availability of support for academic and personal issues, and the Academic Quality and Student Governance Team highlighted services such as harassment policy, anti-bullying policy and complaints procedure. The Conference also focused on the Student Evaluation Module Survey (SEMS) and included guest speakers from Advice, Advocacy, faculty representation, Go Wales, SU Vice President and SU President.


A session called 'YOUR FUTURE' took place on 24th February 2021, featuring multiple sessions covering various areas to help students broaden their skillset and gain insight into the world beyond university.

In the absence of a conference in 2022, the Student Leaders Conference resumed in February 2023 with a focus on Grit and Resilience in Education, Library & Learning Skills, Academic Support and Interview Skills.

In 2024, the SU introduced a new feature on its website, which enabled students to browse through paid and voluntary roles within the University and SU. One intended outcome is that this will encourage more students to take part in democratic and quality enhancement processes.

## **Marketing and Communications**

While the SU and University co-ordinate in terms of our messaging to students and using each other's platforms, we feel there is potential for us to do this strategically and with greater congruence. By working together as partners, we can reach more students with informative, relevant content and those messages will have a stronger and more consistent impact across both University and SU communication channels.



## Students at Partner Institutions


Strengthened engagement with students at partner institutions has been a long-term goal of the SU. Historical barriers that have hindered the development of this include:

- No dedicated staff member within the SU. This has meant no representation at Academic Partnership Committees, lack of communication with partner institution staff and no direct link between the SU and academic partners.
- SU senior management turnover (3 CEOs over the last 5 years) has resulted in any spare capacity being redirected to coverage and inductions. Equally, staff changes in the Partnerships Office have resulted in patchy communications between teams.
- Lack of SU resources has meant the SU has not been able to physically visit many partners, develop dedicated resources such as handbooks and training programmes, nor develop a dedicated webpage on the SU site.

In 2022, with the support of additional funding from the University, the SU was able to dedicate a permanent staff member to this area. Over the following 12 months, this post began strengthening relationships with partner institutions:

- Initial introductory meeting took place to establish relationships
- The process of understanding what is needed for student voice in each location, as we know it is not one-size-fits-all and we need to adapt our structures and approaches. For example, Degree Apprenticeship students were not in favour of having specific course reps dedicated to feedback. As such, through working with our partner institutions, we developed a system whereby the whole cohort attends a forum once per semester
- Course rep elections took place for all courses in partner institutions (September/October 2023)

Adapting systems to suit the needs of students meant that we achieved successful course rep elections or alternative systems in 13 different locations, which is an increase on previous years. Unitu has been introduced to all our partner institutions and training sessions have been offered to all.




In October 2023, the SU was invited to attend the Partnerships Conference hosted by the University which was useful to network with staff and better understand what engagement looks like all over the world. After the conference, the SU worked closely with one partner institution, The Bloomsbury Institute, to better understand the main issue affecting their students. This was the cost of living, with some students being unable to purchase food and essential goods. As a result, the SU introduced the 'Help Yourself' campaign across the London campus, which helps students access free food and healthcare products. With help from staff at Bloomsbury, the campaign has been running in London for eight months.

Each year, the SU celebrates staff and student achievements at their annual awards ceremony and wanted to celebrate the achievements of staff and students at partner institutions. Nominations were accepted for 'Student of The Year' and 'Lecturer of the Year'. The Student of the Year winner came from Deespark College in Malaysia, who was overwhelmed by the award earlier this year. They subsequently offered us an interview to talk about the award and their studies in Malaysia.

The Lecturer of the Year winner for academic partners of Wrexham University has recently retired from Neath Port Talbot Group of Colleges. We would like to share a segment of the winner's nomination:


"Throughout his time at the College, this staff member has profoundly impacted the lives of countless students. His ability to cultivate an engaging and inclusive learning environment is truly commendable. He goes above and beyond to ensure that every student feels valued and supported in their academic journey. In summary, this person exemplifies the qualities of an outstanding lecturer. His unwavering dedication to student success, innovative teaching methods and genuine passion for his subject makes him a truly deserving candidate for the 'Lecturer of the Year' award."

NPTC have invited WSU to their graduation ceremony in November 2024 to formally present the award to the winner. Historically, engagement between the SU and this partner has not been strong and it is hoped this will strengthen our long-term relationship with them.



The SU Advice Centre offers academic advice to all students including those from partner institutions and has steadily increased engagement year-on-year from 2020. We welcome the fact that the University continuously encourages these students to seek support from the SU Advice Centre. Contact details for the Advice Centre are included on all University progression emails and letters from the Quality Team concerning matters such as Academic Integrity or Suitability for Practice. The Advice Centre is also included in the new handbook for students at partnership institutions and so there is an expectation for numbers to continually increase.

Along with building relationships with partner institutions, the SU has strengthened relationships with the University's Academic Partnerships Office Team. Indeed, they have been pivotal to some of the SU's achievements to date. There are monthly meetings to discuss partnerships and new systems the University has in place to monitor and support each institution, and an SU staff member attends the Academic Partnerships Committee four times per year. Both these developments have been useful to gather up-to-date information and to work collaboratively. The networks built over the past year have been evident with visits not only to UK institutions, but globally, when our President travelled to Singapore with University staff to visit The School of Hospitality & Resort Management (SHRM). This is the first time a member of the SU has been able to visit an overseas partner, and it was a fantastic opportunity to engage with these students and run a series of focus groups on their experiences and opinions. While on campus, the President hosted a focus group with 12 students, all of whom were studying either the Masters in Business Administration or Undergraduate Degree in Business Management through Wrexham University. We feel that future opportunities to visit more campuses, with investment from the University would have a positive impact on increasing student engagement and strengthening relationships with academic partners.



### General feedback included:

- They confirmed they had been introduced to Unitu and know to use it
- They stated how they felt they could go directly to their lecturer with feedback, which we thought was a sign of trusted relationships between learners and staff
- Staff at SHRM aim to host six student life events per year for students studying at the college as well as circulating a quarterly newsletter to keep students updated with relevant information
- Individual cohorts have excursions to places of relevance to their chosen degree programme
- Students welcomed these initiatives and felt they were beneficial to their learning and overall student experience
- Students felt they understood the Course Rep system and Student Voice Forums. (The academic link between SHRM and Wrexham University noted that the minutes from each SVF are sent to the University's Partnerships Office. It was suggested that going forwards, student feedback from SVFs also gets sent to the SU so that they have more oversight and can act on any feedback where needed. This is something that will be implemented moving forwards.)

During the 23/24 academic year we received feedback from partner staff at Bloomsbury and Hong Kong Institute of Technology (HKIT) and learnt that the current training available for students at partner institutions was not always relevant. To further enhance our training and resources available for partner students we designed a new 'Students at Partners Handbook' which is available on our website: [Partners @ Glyndŵr Students' Union](#) and also sent to all elected Course Reps. We felt this would be more beneficial to students as they could refer to it throughout their studies rather than a one-off online training session at the beginning of their studies. The handbook will be reviewed and updated annually.

# Learning Resources

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During COVID-19, the SU operated more reactively, than proactively, due to the unexpected national lockdown in early 2020. Nevertheless, the SU worked with the University to support students during the uncertain times. For example, the Vice President and President established the Student Advisory Group which enabled students to feed back to the SU about the specific struggles facing students. Additionally, students had the opportunity to voice their views to local MPs and MSs to help inform decisions made in both Parliament and the Senedd.

While 2020/21 was an extraordinary time, the NSS highlighted themes from students on learning resources, which remained constant before, during, and after the pandemic. For example, students from the Faculty of Art, Science, and Technology reported limited contact with academic staff, inadequate availability of academic books in the library, and poor Wi-Fi connectivity. In the Faculty of Social Life Sciences, students expressed concerns about poor Wi-Fi connectivity, unreliable online resources, staff shortages, and a lack of communication between academic staff and students. Additionally, students described difficulties accessing academic journals and resources both online and in the library, a lack of budget-friendly options in the canteen and a feeling of insufficient support from academic staff.


Wi-Fi has been a continuous issue for students and the University has raised this in their Annual Quality Report to the Board of Governors in 2022 and 2023. The University made significant investment in new networks in 2024, which is discussed in one of the accompanying videos to this submission.

In response to these concerns, it was recommended that Personal Tutors use Moodle to arrange tutorial slots to encourage engagement and that all students are offered the opportunity to meet. To facilitate this, the tutorial scheduler was added to all programme leaders' pages, and staff received guidance. Following these implementations, 100% of students were offered a personal tutorial during 2019.

Members of the SU, such as the President and Vice President sit on numerous University committees and boards to represent the student body and offer feedback from the student perspective, especially on these areas of concern. For example, in 2019, the President took the below feedback to the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (January meeting):

"There have been some issues around student access to timetables and it was suggested that there may be a requirement for training/more student guidance"

Following this feedback, the University reviewed the timetabling issues and made improvements to the guidance they issued at the time.





In 2021, a **Digital Strategy** was established to carry the University forwards to 2025 and to give benchmarks and guidance on what the University's digital future could look like. This strategy was created through a combination of student feedback and aspirations for the Campus 2025 Developments.

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The table below outlines what the strategy achieved relating to learning resources in 2021-2023:

Accessible and Flexible Learning
<p>2021/22:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refurbishment of classrooms in B corridor, Courtroom, the Business Simulation Suite and the Huddle Room.</li> <li>• Study spaces including the B Hive, the Gallery and the Study.</li> <li>• Continue using Microsoft Teams for tutorials, lectures, and workshops to complement on-campus learning, with all sessions recorded and uploaded to Moodle. This enables students with responsibilities, like parents or carers, to access learning materials when unable to attend in person.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students studying WGU online courses can choose the format of each lecture – either having lectures provided in a written or video format.</li> <li>• Downloadable content from the Virtual Learning Environment in different formats including electronic braille, audio, immersive reader and other options through the Blackboard Ally tool.</li> </ul> <p>2022/23:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refurbishment of the labs in C corridor</li> <li>• New nursing classrooms, lab and learning resources space at the St. Asaph Campus</li> <li>• Upgrade to Moodle 4, improving the use experience via a personalised dashboard</li> <li>• Providing advice on authentic assessment for the re-validation of MBA programmes within the North Wales Management School Portfolio</li> </ul>

## Accessible Digital Learning Skills & Learning Support

2021/22:

- The Learning Skills Team delivered a total of 1181 sessions to 4025 students, representing a 26% increase on the previous academic year
- Further workshops and seminars were offered to students, with 168 attending at least one of the weekly "Wednesday Workshops". In addition, 300 students attended an induction session hosted by the Library and Learning Resources Team and a further 50 attended the Dissertation Half-Day Workshop
- Improvements were made to The Tech Zone – building on the self-service Appointment Booker and instead offering a daily drop-in service staffed by one member from IT Services and another from Digital Learning.

2022/23:

- Training academics how to use the Blackboard Ally Report on their modules to improve accessibility of the content
- Training admin staff on how to make their policies and procedures accessible for all

Developing accessible handbooks and assessment templates for academic staff

## Baseline Digital Skills Embedded for All Programmes of Study

2021/22:

- A question was added to the Digital Experience Insights Survey asking students what employability skills they will be expecting to need for future employment. This informed the University's review of the curriculum design
- Personal Tutor agendas were reviewed to include reflection questions on employability skills

2022/23:

- Trialled Data Driven Acquisition (DDA) meant the library could offer a larger number of eBooks as they would only be paying for those used for longer than five minutes
- Implementation of Lean Library, enabling content and resources to be accessible whenever and wherever our users need them
- Clinical Key for Physiotherapy on behalf of the Faculty of Social and Life Sciences. This provides books, images and digital media content for our Allied Health provisions
- Increasing the range of available eBooks by 35%

In 2023, the University was subscribed to JISC Digital Experience Insights Survey (DEIS) which allowed the University to ask students about their experience of using technology while studying. The survey took place twice in 2023, once in October and again in December. The response rate was 13%. ([Found here – page 18](#))

Question	WU data 21/22	WU data 22/23	UK Sector data 22/23
Supported to use own devices	62%	64%	61%
Support access to online platforms/services off site	71%	73%	71%
Engaging and motivating online learning materials	46%	60%	49%
Online learning resources are accessible to you	78%	81%	78%
Provided guidance about digital skills needed for course	53%	62%	54%
Provided an assessment of digital skills and training needs	37%	45%	36%



From the data in the table above, it is clear to see that impressive improvements have been made in all areas, most significantly in online learning materials. It is also evident that the University was noticeably above sector average in all areas which shows the investments being made are having a positive impact on student satisfaction.

In addition to digital improvements, there have been several improvements made to the physical estate of the University.

#### **2021-2022 developments include:**

- Phase 1 of the Health and Education Innovation Quarter (HEIQ) development was completed
- St. Asaph Health and Education Innovation Quarter
- Mirroring of spaces across the Plas Coch and St. Asaph campuses to ensure parity across sites

#### **2022-2023 developments:**

- Phase 2A of the HEIQ project completed
- Specialist environments for professional courses
- Ty Dysgu (Learning House)
  - The University purchased a 3-bedroom detached house situated in the new development adjacent to the Plas Coch Campus. This house provides a space for a wide range of simulated practical scenarios that students studying in subject areas such as Allied Health, Policing, Criminology, Applied Science and The Built Environment may experience when transitioning to their chosen career fields.
- Renovations on the Regent Street Campus including:
  - Screen Printing Studio
  - MA Studio
  - Shed Space (dedicated space for students and alumni to use to build their independent artistic businesses)
- Hockey and Multigame Pitch Refurbishment
- The School (Centre for Education and Professional Learning)
  - After receiving feedback from students and discussing with colleagues from the Primary Education Team, a plan was created to reinvent the former Techniquet Glyndwr building to create a simulated school environment for students. The building now consists of 2 primary classrooms and is adjacent to the Science Garden.

In 2023, the Vice President joined the Academic Development Team (Assessment and Feedback branch) as a student representative to endorse the proposal for authentic assessments – ensuring that the University assessments are measuring students' ability to apply their learning to real-world context. This work led to a review of the assessment policy. Within this review, the Vice President also successfully suggested an amendment to the Short Extension and Extenuating Circumstances evidence criteria. As a result, students are no longer required to produce evidence to request a short extension to their assignment deadlines. This aims to remove any barriers to students surrounding additional support they may require at an already stressful time. The Vice President contributed to the development and redesign of the Wrexham Skills Framework – a portfolio tool which helps students collate evidence of skills they have gained while studying at Wrexham and partaking in additional activities such as societies, sports and volunteering. This portfolio can be used to showcase these transferable skills when applying for jobs or further education study.

As a response to feedback from students, Glyn's Bar & Lounge, located in the SU building, is now open in term time as a study space as well as a social space. The SU hopes this will be a solution for students wanting to study in a group outside of the noise restrictions of the library and food/drink restrictions of dedicated study areas within the University such as The Study and The B Hive.

Savvy Students is a campaign which aims to provide students with top tips and 'how-to' videos on making the most of their university experience and becoming 'Confidently Independent' while studying here. Videos include [tips from alumni on academic assignments](#), [how to foster an inclusive community \(Takeover from our HR department\)](#), [study tips](#) and [how to look after your mental health](#).

Beyond the Books is a campaign focusing on students' mental health beyond the academic side of students' lives. Within this campaign there will be events hosted and workshops to promote better student wellbeing. The events which have already been hosted have been well-received by students and staff, with one comment stating '*this event is great for mental health*'.

8.



# Conclusion

The strengthened partnership between the SU and University over the past five years demonstrates a collaborative approach to enhancing the student experience. Together, we have adapted quickly and effectively during the unforeseen pandemic through the Active Learning Framework, and significant investment has been made in the digital infrastructure and learning resources on all campuses. Student Voice mechanisms have been enhanced and adapted to ensure that the feedback loop is being closed, with work still to be done on ensuring that feedback is responded to in a timely manner. Students have recognised this within the NSS and the excellent results year-on-year demonstrate this.

It is evident within the submission that challenges along the way include the multiple changes in senior management within the University and the SU. The SU has identified four key areas for development.

These are:

- Further investment in SU services to reflect the increase in student population, the different demographics/modes/locations of students, and the various corresponding needs
- Further opportunities provided by the University to visit the campuses of academic partners
- Developing a clear structure with the University's Marketing and Communications Team so that content from the SU is shared and embedded in University communications.
- Ensuring that University staff are responding to feedback on Unitu in a timely manner, identifying key people to have responsibility of the platform within their area.

We are proud to represent the students of Wrexham University, and look forward to being a partner in the development of this important institution for years to come.