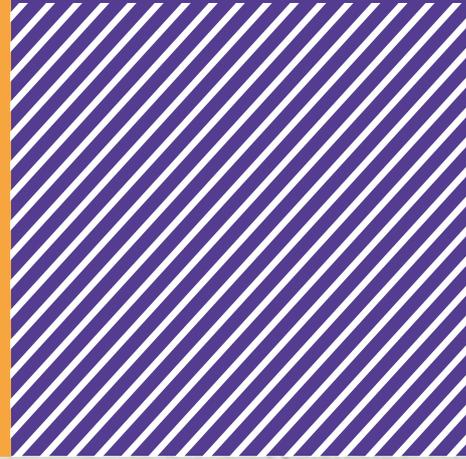




Prifysgolion
Cymru
Universities
Wales

A guide to higher
education in Wales

Student experience

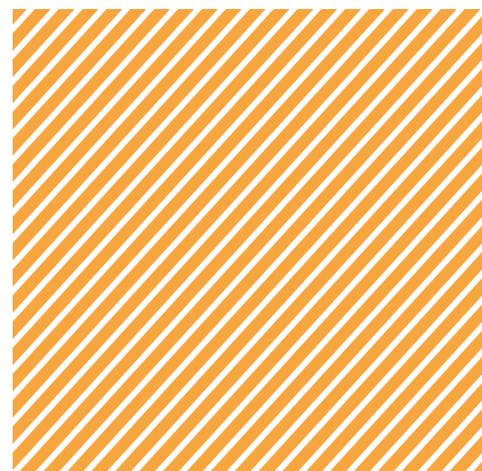


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Wales leads the way on student experience

The Welsh higher education sector consistently scores well against the UK average in the National Student Survey (NSS). In 2020-21 Wales scored above the UK average on learning and teaching, student experience and overall satisfaction.

Wales outperforms the rest of the UK in terms of retention rates. 93.9% of students in 2019-20 continued into their second year of study. Wales also performs the best in the UK for continuation of study for students from widening access backgrounds.

Graduates from Welsh universities have excellent prospects, with 94% of graduates securing employment or further study 15 months after leaving university.

Mental health and wellbeing

Every university has a dedicated mental health policy, and the sector as a whole has signed up to Universities UK's Stepchange framework, which outlines a 'whole university approach' to mental health and wellbeing – ensuring every aspect of university life takes into account the wellbeing of students and staff.

During the pandemic, universities used additional Welsh Government funding to develop innovative projects and solutions to enable students to continue to access mental health and wellbeing support.

The Cross-Party Group on Universities in the fifth Senedd considered student mental health, particularly during the pandemic. As a result, Universities Wales is working with the wider sector to develop a set of principles and recommendations for Welsh Government to consider in developing mental health and wellbeing policy for students in post-16 education.

Case Study

The Connect programme is a partnership between Swansea University, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, their respective Students' Unions and local colleges. It aims to reduce loneliness and isolation in students and build supportive communities through peer support, social prescribing and student and staff training.

Financial support

Wales offers students the most generous package of financial support in the UK.

Students on undergraduate, part-time, and postgraduate courses are entitled to maintenance loans and learning grants calculated based on household income and intensity of study.

Wales was the first country in Europe to introduce comparable living cost support across full and part-time undergraduate study.

Wales is also the only part of the UK that provides the equivalent of a living wage in student financial support. All universities in Wales also offer hardship funding that students can apply for if they need additional financial support.

Quality

A key part of the student experience is ensuring that the teaching and learning students receive is of good quality and helps them achieve their learning outcomes. There is a range of sector-wide mechanisms that are used to assure and enhance the quality of Welsh higher education.

All universities in Wales monitor student opinions internally through student feedback mechanisms. As well as this, the National Student Survey (NSS) provides detailed information for universities and the regulator to understand how students feel about their education and provides a means for the university to address student feedback. Wales has performed strongly in comparison to the rest of the UK in recent times.

Universities have well developed internal complaints processes and are subject to an external complaints procedure through the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Information on complaints in Wales is made public, with the latest report OIA report. In recent years, complaints in Wales have declined against a UK-wide upward trend.

All of these approaches are part of the regulatory and funding environment at the heart of which is the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

Wales is also the first nation in the UK to have all universities unilaterally sign-up to the QAA Academic Integrity Charter, demonstrating their commitment to fighting essay mills and other forms of academic misconduct.

Universities are committed to delivering a high-quality student experience and are always looking at ways to improve and enhance their offer.

As a sector, Welsh universities have jointly delivered projects such as the JISC learning and analytics project and a collaborative blended learning project to improve the experience of students across Wales.