



# Quality Enhancement Review of Bangor University

## Outcome Report

May 2018

### Contents

<b>About the Quality Enhancement Review method .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>About this review .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>About Bangor University.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Judgements about Bangor University.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Commendations.....	4
Affirmations.....	4
Recommendations .....	4
<b>Further information.....</b>	<b>5</b>

*This report is published in both English and Welsh.*

## About the Quality Enhancement Review method

The QAA website explains the method for [Quality Enhancement Review \(QER\)](#) and has links to the QER handbook and other informative documents.<sup>1</sup> You can also find more information about the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#).<sup>2</sup>

### About this review

This is the Outcome Report of the QER conducted by QAA at Bangor University. The review took place as follows: First Team Visit on 23 April 2018 and Review Visit on 21-24 May 2018. The review was conducted by a team of four reviewers:

- Professor John Baldock
- Claire Blanchard
- Professor John Feather
- Rhys Jenkins (student reviewer).

QAA reviews are evidence-based processes. Review judgements result from the documents review teams see, the meetings they hold, and drawing upon their experience as peer reviewers and student reviewers.

In this report, the QER team makes judgements on:

- the requirements of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) Part 1 for internal quality assurance
- the relevant baseline regulatory requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

It is possible for the overarching judgement to be expressed in three levels which indicate whether the provider 'meets these requirements', 'meets them with conditions', or 'does not meet requirements'. More detail on these categories is provided in the QER Handbook.

The overarching judgement for this report can be found on page 4, followed by any commendations, affirmations and recommendations.

A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review.<sup>3</sup> The Technical Report sets out the team's findings under each heading in the QER method.

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<sup>1</sup> About QER: [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/quality-enhancement-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/quality-enhancement-review).

<sup>2</sup> About QAA: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>3</sup> Technical Report: [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/Bangor-University](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/Bangor-University)

## About Bangor University

The University was founded in 1884 as the University College of North Wales, which went on to become a founding member of the federal University of Wales in 1893. The University was granted taught and research degree awarding powers in 2007 and has awarded Bangor University degrees since 2009.

Bangor University's mission is to be a 'strong, confident institution recognised regionally, nationally and internationally as a centre of excellence for its varied portfolio of teaching and research, and for the unique, multicultural, inclusive experience it provides for its staff and students'.

Its Strategic Plan 2015-20 has four principle priorities:

- an excellent education and student experience
- enhancing research success
- an international university for the region
- Welsh language, culture and civic engagement.

The University has approximately 9,500 full-time students and 1,600 part-time students. The number of full-time students has increased in the last five years; the number of part-time students has been in decline in-line with national trends. The University employs 2,122 staff, 1,250 on a full-time basis.

The University is currently reconfiguring its college and school structure from 22 schools across five colleges to 13 schools across three colleges. The new structure will be in place in August 2018.

The University has made some other key changes since its last QAA review in 2012. It has introduced online module evaluations across all taught programmes, and established a Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, a Student Engagement Unit, and a Study Skills Centre. It has developed and implemented the Bangor Employability Award to recognise the extracurricular skills gained by students and which encompasses the Higher Education Achievement Report. Since 2014, the University has collaborated with Aberystwyth University to offer the Aber-Bangor HEA fellowship scheme. 2016 saw the opening of the Pontio arts and innovation centre, and in 2017 the University received a Gold award in the Teaching Excellence Framework for its undergraduate provision.

The University collaborates with a number of other bodies and awarding organisations to offer joint degrees, Doctoral Training Partnerships, franchised and validated programmes, joint and dual awards, an embedded college, articulation arrangements, placements, and study abroad opportunities. It offers higher education at other campuses, principally in Wrexham and at Bangor College China, the latter in partnership with the Central South University of Forestry and Technology.

The University lists several key partners including the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, MDIS in Singapore and Uzbekistan, the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance, the University of Bologna, and Oxford International Education Group.

The University's response to recommendations from its QAA review in 2012 were evaluated by QAA in a Mid-process Student-focused Engagement in June 2015. In response to previous advisable recommendations from QAA, the University has reviewed the constitutions, accountability and operation of its groups and committees to secure the oversight of academic provision by Senate which receives minutes from a range of task

groups including those covering learning, teaching, and quality assurance. It has reviewed the academic effectiveness of revalidation events at which a large number and/or diverse range of programmes were originally considered. In response, it adjusted revalidation events so they focus only on a limited number of courses, distinguishing between them. The University uses validation and revalidation events to ensure that all programmes are aligned with relevant subject benchmarks. It has arrangements to ensure that consistently accurate information is given in student handbooks. Finally, it has secured the accuracy and currency of information for prospective students throughout the University's website by identifying information owners, engaging them in the annual monitoring of the information for which they are responsible, overseen by an Information Oversight Group (IOG). Additionally, the IOG monitors information on an ongoing basis and conducts spot checks.

In response to desirable recommendations from its QAA review in 2012, the University has ensured further reflection on external examiners' reports at school and college levels by requiring them to be evaluated by school and college boards. It expedited the adoption of its requirements for consistency of assessment practice by issuing guidance for staff and reviewing progression arrangements. As noted in this report, it has further responded with the implementation of a new Assessment Framework. The University developed and disseminated criteria for the definition of scholarship, building on recently agreed promotion pathways for teaching staff, and revised its human resources policies and procedures accordingly. It reviewed arrangements for meetings of school and college committees to enhance student engagement with them and issued new guidance to schools and colleges. Finally, the University has introduced systematic evaluation of its academic support provision by using several external audits; advice and support services use that Matrix quality framework involving an external review.

## Judgements about Bangor University

Based on the information presented, the review team judges that:

- Bangor University **meets** the requirements of the ESG Part 1 for internal quality assurance.
- Bangor University **meets** the relevant baseline regulatory requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

This is a positive judgement, which means the University has robust arrangements for securing academic standards, managing academic quality and for enhancing the quality of the student experience.

## Commendations

The QER identified several commendations, which are summarised below.

- The systematic collection and use of student engagement and performance data to inform and enhance student support and academic progress.
- The extensive, and culturally valued partnership with students, which permeates all facets of university life.
- The deeply embedded bilingualism in all aspects of university life which positively impacts on student experience.

## Affirmations

The QER identified several affirmations, which are summarised below.

- Implementation of the Assessment Framework to ensure the consistency of assessment across the University.
- The steps being taken to address the deficiencies in the provision at MDIS Tashkent.
- The development of the Doctoral School to support a distinct and consistent PGR experience across all schools.

## Recommendations

The QER makes no recommendations.

## Statement on enhancement

The University's approach to enhancing the student learning experience is effective, student-led and student-focused. The University provided ample examples of enhancement at university, college, school and programme-level.

## Further information

A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review. The Technical Report sets out the team's findings under each heading in the QER method.

This review and its findings relate to the provider as a whole and do not supply information about individual programmes of study or subjects. For further information about those, contact the University or visit the [Bangor University website](#).

Further information about QAA and QER can be found on the [QAA website](#).

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