

# Bangor to rights

**A** STUDENT at Bangor University, who complained about a teaching assistant asking her on a date after she had taken part in his sex-related research, was shocked to discover that her complaint had been forwarded around the department, along with a memo questioning whether she was any good at her work.

The psychology student, who asked not to be named, had volunteered to take part in a study within the department that involved a questionnaire about sexual matters. She wrote to her department's ethics committee, complaining that she was then contacted by the post-grad carrying out the research and asked out on a date. Given that the researcher was also a teaching assistant for a class she was taking, she considered the approach doubly inappropriate.

The student also complained about the department's lax approach to confidentiality, following a separate psychometric testing exercise that students had taken part in. The results were shared with their classmates, but were supposed to be fully anonymised. However, because ages and gender were still attached to the data, it was extremely easy to identify individual mature students.

When she sent her complaints to the department earlier this month, suggesting that she no longer felt comfortable to carry on studying at Bangor, the initial response was to forward her complaints to other staff asking: "Is [she] a strong student who is taking a brave stand or a weak student who is jumping before flunking?" She was copied in on this forwarded email, presumably by mistake.

She later received an email from department head Prof Oliver Turnbull, thanking her for raising the issues, but claiming that they were "less clear-cut than you suggest". However rather than asking to see, for instance, the correspondence with the teaching assistant, Prof Turnbull's message airily concludes: "I think it has been fruitful for us to consider the teaching and research practice issues that you have raised – and we will now be better informed about these in the future."

A spokesperson for Bangor told the *Eye* that the university took complaints "very seriously" and that this case had been "thoroughly investigated" but it could not discuss the case with the media. "Teaching staff are required to disclose to the university if they enter into a relationship with a student," they added.

