**Balancing study with sport is never an easy task, but for Sport Scholar Cathy Bastian, it all seems to be adding up.**

The University of Glamorgan’s Sport Scholarship programme was set up to allow students to excel in both their sporting and academic careers.

For 20-year-old Cathy, her aspirations of becoming a maths teacher are currently on hold as she attempts to pin down a place in the Wales netball senior side.

The Glamorgan student was selected as part of the travelling senior squad last August - an experience she believes has helped her in the long-term.

Speaking to The Phoenix, Cathy said: “A couple of us were selected to go with the senior squad in August. We didn’t get to play, but the experience was really good.

“Being in that environment to see how the seniors prepare for games was great and has certainly helped me.”

Despite not featuring for the senior side, the first year student has already picked up caps at three different age levels – though success has often been restricted to second place.

“I’ve played three matches in Netball Europe Open for the U-21 side and also have caps for the U-19s and U-17s as well.

“We place in silver a lot, with England always seeming to beat us.

“Though England are the top team in the UK and currently third in the world, so they are one of the best sides around.

“They’ve also just won a test series against Australia which shows their strength.”

Ironically, it is thanks to this recent success of Wales’ arch rivals England that is seeing the often sparse coverage of the sport slowly improving.

England picked up a series-whitewash win over a strong Australia side last month – their first ever series victory over the world number one ranked side.

Despite this win - which many claim is a defining moment for netball in Britain - it has still got some way to go before it receives similar coverage to the likes of football and rugby.

“It’s frustrating, because sport coverage is male dominant,” Cathy said.

“It’s certainly good that coverage is increasing at the moment, so the better England do in terms of winning competitions, hopefully the better the coverage in Britain for the sport as a whole.

“I hope the success of England can improve the coverage the sport receives here in Britain. It’s been over the news the last week or so which it never really has been before, so that is really good.

“The sport is certainly pushing to receive more coverage.”

Turning attention back to Cathy’s own personal achievements, the Sports Scholar student believes that travelling to the Cook Islands with Wales at the back-end of last year has provided her with some invaluable experience.

The tri test series on the South Pacific Island saw Wales record a victory over Scotland as well as comfortably beating the host nation.

Talking of the tournament, Cathy said: “We managed to win gold in the competition. It was between us, Cook Islands and Scotland, and it was a great experience to travel across the world.

“I certainly took a lot away from the tournament such as learning to be more calm and preparing more for games.

“I also learned the importance of focusing on the basics, rather than playing ‘flash’ netball.

“It’s also important to work as a team, rather than as individuals.”

Ahead of her side’s cup quarter-final clash against Newport, Cathy – who favours playing as a Wing Attack - doesn’t believe it’s difficult to adapt back to life at Glamorgan.

She believes that the squad strength and qualities of team Captain Collette Johnson help the netball 1st team to push on for honours.

“It’s not really hard to adapt back to Glamorgan because we’ve got a really good team here.

“Collette is someone I’ve always known. She’s a really good player and has been great to work with.

“It’s really good having her as captain because she has also been a part of the Wales set-up, so she knows all about the commitments.

“The standard is also very good here, and the season has gone well for me so far. We’ve got a chance to pick up a trophy this year and that would be really good.”

Turning attention towards the universities top of the range facilities, Cathy reckons that if she continues to train hard, a senior Wales call-up could be on the cards.

Though despite this, the sport is not yet a full-time profession – something the Welsh player hopes will change soon.

“The facilities here at Glamorgan are brilliant. I’ve got a Sports Scholarship, so I can use the gym when I’m in university which is really beneficial because it means I can manage my time more efficiently.

“If I continue to train hard and keep improving my game then I could hopefully go on and get a senior Wales cap.

“I would love netball to be a professional sport in terms of playing full-time, but I don’t think that will ever be the case.

“It’s not a full time sport in the UK, whereas in New Zealand and Australia it is.

“It’s strange that netball isn’t played at the Olympics. I’m not sure why exactly, but hopefully that changes one day, and I certainly hope to continue playing for many more years to come.”

Though looking ahead to the future, Cathy hopes to become a maths teacher – using netball to her advantage to gain some key skills and friends for life.

“Netball has certainly developed my confidence within myself, which is something I can use.

“I’ve also made some really good friends through playing the sport – there’s something about being part of a sports team that brings you closer together.

Cathy’s talents have certainly not gone unnoticed, Sports Participation Manager Emma Bradshaw said:“ Cathy’s experience and skill really enhances the team dynamics.

“When Cathy does play for Glamorgan it gives the team much more options and although she plays Centre, she is such a versatile player that she can slot in just about anywhere.

“She is a real asset to the Glamorgan 1st Team.”