1. Quality Assurance at Aberystwyth

- ## 1.1 About the Handbook

1. The Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) provides an accessible source of the policies, regulations and procedures which support the management of academic standards and quality at Aberystwyth University. It is for use by university staff, external examiners, external reviewers and collaborative partners. The Handbook is published online but its individual sections can also be downloaded as a pdf and printed. It also contains a link to the University's Rules and Regulations and Examination Conventions.

2. Every member of staff has a responsibility to ensure that the reputation of Aberystwyth University is maintained and enhanced wherever possible, and that our quality assurance procedures remain rigorous and transparent.

3. Additional information and electronic copies of forms and templates (including forms for external examiners) can be downloaded from the relevant section of the AQH. As forms are updated regularly, they should always be accessed via the Handbook rather than saved and re-used from previous years.

- ## 1.2 Quality Assurance Systems

1. Aberystwyth University prides itself on the high standards of learning and teaching opportunities offered to its students. These are underpinned by effective quality assurance systems developed over many years and refined in light of the QAA frameworks and guidance. The University's quality assurance systems have four main roles:

(i) To ensure the currency, validity, standard and quality of our schemes of study, and that these are properly planned, delivered, modified, and monitored

(ii) To maintain the highest standards of academic quality and continuous enhancement, in compliance with the expectations outlined in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education

(iii) To enhance quality by promoting continual critical reflection, so that we are always seeking ways of improving the quality of the student experience that we offer

(iv) To underpin the strategic development of the schemes and academic disciplines that we offer.

2. The **UK Quality Code for Higher Education** gives all higher education providers a shared starting point for setting, describing and assuring the academic standards of their higher education awards and programmes and the quality of the learning opportunities they provide. It is the core reference point used in all QAA review activity: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code

3. **The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies** provide important reference points for higher education providers, assisting them in setting and maintaining academic standards. The frameworks are central to the Expectation in Chapter A1: The National Level of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education that degree-awarding bodies use external UK and European reference points to secure threshold academic standards across the higher education sector: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/the-existing-uk-quality-code/part-a-setting-and-maintaining-academic-standards

4. **Subject Benchmark Statements** are part of the Quality Code. They set out expectations about standards of degrees in a range of subject areas. They describe what gives a discipline its coherence and identity, and define what can be expected of a graduate in terms of the abilities and skills needed to develop understanding or competence in the subject: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements

5. QAA also provide a range of other guidance material, for example covering topics such as the award of academic credit, the equivalence of qualifications throughout the countries of the UK, and how contact hours and assessment contribute to the quality of your education.

- 1.3 Academic Committees

1. In accordance with Aberystwyth University's Supplementary Royal Charter the Senate is 'the academic authority of the University and shall be responsible to the Council for the academic functions of the University in teaching and research and the

regulation of the academic interests of the students'. The Senate's constitution, powers and functions are provided by Ordinances. Further details on the Senate's responsibilities, membership and decisions can be found on the relevant sub-pages.

2. Senate has overall responsibility for ensuring that the University adheres to the UK Quality Code, and delegates responsibility for individual sections to the following academic committees: Quality & Standards Committee, Education and Student Experience Committee, Welsh Medium Studies Committee and the Collaborative Provision Committee. The terms of reference and membership of these bodies are published online, together with a chart of academic committee structures: https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/governance/sub-committees/. Staff at Aberystwyth can also access terms of reference, templates for minutes and committee papers, and details of committee meetings through Academic Registry webpages.

- ### 1.4 University Officers with responsibility for Quality Assurance

1.The Vice-Chancellor is the chief academic and administrative officer of the University with responsibility for its overall performance, and is the Chair of Senate.

2. The Pro Vice-Chancellors, Learning & Teaching and Research, are key members of the University Executive Group and report to the Vice-Chancellor on their specific areas of responsibility.

3. Responsibility for the conduct of a Faculty is vested in the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor, who is accountable to Council, via the Vice-Chancellor. Faculties facilitate the organisation and academic work of the University.

The Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellors perform a crucial co-ordinating role between the departments operating within their respective spheres of interest. They are also empowered to take executive action on issues of concern, subject to reporting to their faculties, the faculty committee(s), Pro Vice-Chancellors Learning & Teaching and Research, and Vice-Chancellor as appropriate. The Faculty PVCs co-operate closely in their areas of responsibility and organise, via the Academic Registry, to discuss and make recommendations on items common to the faculties. In this they are greatly assisted by key Registry support staff. They also meet regularly to ensure that the

faculties deal with student issues in a consistent way. They are supported in their roles by Assistant Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellors, who have specific responsibilities for Learning & Teaching, Research, and Welsh Language provision.

Each academic department within a faculty has a Head with designated roles and responsibilities, which include oversight of academic programmes and structures. The Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor and Assistant Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellors are supported by a Faculty Manager and advised by an Executive Committee, which includes staff with responsibility for key areas such as Learning and Teaching and Quality Assurance and Enhancement. All faculties are required to have a Faculty-level committee which considers academic affairs. This is set out in [University Ordinances and Regulations](#).

Heads of Department are charged with the day-to-day management of the teaching and research within their departments within the guidelines established at University level, including the Academic Quality Handbook. Departments have designated Directors of Learning and Teaching and Directors of Research reporting to the Head of Department on these issues. Each department is required to hold departmental meetings involving all academic staff at least once a term to discuss academic issues. The functions of the meeting include:

(i) To serve as a medium of consultation with and provide advice to the Head of Department on the conduct of departmental affairs

(ii) In furtherance of the above to discuss the following:

- the nature and content of courses

- the allocation of teaching and other departmental duties

- the allocation of departmental funds and accommodation

- the use of secretarial, research and technical assistance.

As part of the above, they receive the reports from Departmental Learning and Teaching Committees, of formal programme monitoring undertaken in the department annually and also formally log in the reports of the departmental Staff-Student Consultative Committees which serve as a useful feedback mechanism between staff and students.

4. The Head of the Doctoral Academy is responsible for the provision of Researcher Development training within the University as a whole, and also has a co-ordinating role in the development of policy on postgraduate matters, the provision of facilities for postgraduates, and for monitoring the recruitment and academic progress of postgraduate students. The Head of the Doctoral Academy also approves nominations for external examiners on research degrees.

5. A number of senior Academic Registry staff are involved in the operation of Quality Assurance procedures reporting to the Head of Academic Registry. The Academic Registry also provides support at faculty level.

- [1.5 Levels of responsibility at University and Faculty level](#)

1. To reflect the structure of the University and recognise the role of the faculties in quality assurance and enhancement, some quality functions are delegated to faculties whilst others remain at University level.

University level processes

2. Responsibility for the following quality assurance processes and procedures is retained by the University's Senate, Quality & Standards Committee and other sub-committees:

(i) Development and approval of academic frameworks, regulations and procedure

(ii) Departmental Periodic review, including periodic revalidation of provision

(iii) Approval of new and major restructuring of schemes

(iv) Approval of External Examiner appointments.

Faculty level quality procedures

3. Responsibility for the following procedures and processes is delegated to faculties and exercised through faculty committees and procedures:

(i) Implementing policy and procedures for quality assurance and enhancement in schemes of study, including for their design, approval, monitoring and review

(ii) Consideration of Annual Monitoring of Taught Schemes

(iii) Scheme suspension, withdrawal, and changes to titles

(iv) Module approval (process overseen by the Quality & Standards Committee)

(v) Considering student feedback (through feedback processes and student representation)

(vi) Accreditation of schemes by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

- 1.6 Family and Personal and/or Professional Relationships

1. This policy applies to any personal and / or professional relationships that could, or be perceived to impact on the integrity of the working relationships within the University.

2. Where a student or applicant is:

(i) The sibling, parent, child or other family relation of a member of staff

or

(ii) The partner or is in a relationship with a member of staff.

Then the member of staff must play no part in the admission, supervision or assessment of that applicant/student. This is primarily to ensure impartiality in the treatment of the applicant/student, including the possibility that they would be assessed more strictly in order to emphasise the intention not to show favouritism. It is also to protect staff from accusations of favouritism and to avoid any perception of favouritism in third parties.

3. Members of staff must declare any such relationships to their line manager as soon as a potential conflict becomes apparent, so that arrangements can be made to ensure they are not involved in any activities where there is a conflict of interest. In this context, 'members of staff' includes anyone contracted to undertake teaching and related activities, including students with part- time contracts, and 'applicants/students' encompass all levels of study up to and including research students.

4. Members of staff may also consult the Management of Conflict of Interest in the Workplace Policy https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/policy-and-procedure/managingofconflict/

- [1.7 Monitoring and Review](#)

1. Quality & Standards Committee retains overall authority for reviewing the effectiveness of the University's quality assurance and enhancement processes as set out in the QAA Quality Code. Detailed consideration of these processes may be delegated to Senate sub-committees as appropriate. Academic Registry will publish a revised version of the AQH at the beginning of each academic session.

2. The Academic Registry welcomes comments on the content and presentation of this Handbook from all users as part of the continuing process of improvement and for the development of future versions. Any comments should be sent to: quality-assurance@aber.ac.uk

- [1.8 Academic Quality Handbook 2025/2026: Summary of Key Changes](#)

The following table provides a list of changes which have been made following the publication of the 2024/25 version of the AQH in September 2024.

Section	Change	Date
Part A and Part B	AQH updated to reflect revised committee and faculty structures	Sept 2025
2. Development and Review	Scheme approval process updated to reflect new committee structure (2.3-2.8) New section for approval of Online/Distance Learning and CPD provision (2.9)	April 2025
2. Development and Review	AMTS – AMTS1 and AMTS2 replaced with Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which now includes External Examiner Reports summary, and 2.10 updated accordingly.	Sept 2025
3. Assessment of Taught Schemes	Updated to reflect introduction of AberOnline 3.2. 7. Except where specified to the contrary, a Postgraduate Taught Master's dissertation or approved equivalent submission should not exceed 15,000 words. ***In the case of online schemes with 30 credit dissertations, or approved equivalent, the length shall not exceed 10,000 words***.	Q&SC May 2025
3. Assessment of Taught Schemes	3.8 Special Circumstances and Reasonable Adjustments Chapter updated to reflect new procedure and submission via student record.	Sept 2025

	27. Link to Reasonable Adjustment Policy updated: (https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/theuniversity/policies/studentsupport/Policy-on-reasonable-adjustments-to-examinations-(Nov%2724).pdf)	
3. Assessment of Taught Schemes	3.9 Coursework Extensions Updated to reflect central faculty extensions@aber.ac.uk submission point, and three-day response deadline	Sept 2025
4. Examination Conventions	4.8 BSc Nursing (Adult) and BSc Nursing (Mental Health) Amendment to resit arrangements to remove the restriction on the number of credits that could be resat in the supplementary assessment period for Nursing students, and clarification that the Professional Practice component is a pass/fail module, only has one re-sit opportunity and is not included in the classification of the award	Q&SC Feb 2025
4. Examination Conventions	4.10 Electrical and Electronic Engineering degree schemes (BEng/MEng) - new section	Q&SC May 2025
4. Examination Conventions	4.12 FdSc Veterinary Nursing: Rules for Progression Rules for progression updated to lift the restriction on the number of credits that could be re-sat in the supplementary assessment period (with immediate effect).	Q&SC May 2025

	Wording on the number of resit opportunities clarified. Reference to Special Circumstances Window of Opportunity removed (in line with decision taken during previous academic year).	
4. Examination Conventions	4.18 Wiping the Slate Clean – section removed as only relevant to students who commenced their studies at Aberystwyth University as a registered student BEFORE September 2016 and who entered Part Two BEFORE September 2017.	September 2025
5. External Examining	Minor changes to terminology	September 2025
6. Student Support & Representation	Updated to reflect introduction of AberOnline 6.5.6. Students are not normally permitted to withdraw outside of the teaching period. All withdrawal notifications made outside the teaching period will be considered and the date used as the withdrawal date may vary from that entered by the student. Withdrawal dates can only be registered up to 10 working days in advance or back dated by a maximum of 10 working days from completing the online withdrawal process. ***Students following Distance Learning, includin AberOnline, schemes should seek guidance from their department if they wish to withdraw temporarily or take a period of leave of absence.***	Q&SC May 2025
9. Learning and Teaching	Sections 9.3 and 9.7 updated to reflect review of Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior	Q&SC May

	Learning Policy in response to QAA Publication: Achieving credit transfer at scale: An analysis of UK university policies.	2025
Regulations for Modular Initial Degrees	Electrical and Electronic Engineering degree schemes (BEng/MEng) Paragraphs 22b (link to bespoke Examination Conventions), 30 (credit transfer) and 34 (exit awards) updated following introduction of bespoke Examination Conventions for Electrical and Electronic Engineering degree schemes (BEng/MEng).	Q&SC May 2025
Regulations for Modular Taught Postgraduate Award	Updated to reflect introduction of AberOnline 9. Unless specified to the contrary in Regulation 21, below, the taught modules shall consist of 120 credits approved by the University. Candidates may also be required to complete a period, or periods, of professional training or practical experience. The dissertation element, or approved equivalent (see Regulation 21 below) will be worth 60 credits. ***In the case of some online schemes, taught modules may consist of 150 credits approved by the University and the dissertation element, or approved equivalent, will be worth 30 credits***. Separate arrangements for the MRes are described in Regulation 22 below. 13. The dissertation, or approved alternative (see Regulation 21 below) shall embody the methods and results of a research project. Its length shall not exceed 15,000 words (or 30,000 words for candidatures for the degree of MRes). ***In the case of online schemes with 30 credit dissertations, or approved equivalent, the length shall not exceed 10,000 words.***	Q&SC May 2025

21. The ~~60 credit~~ independent study module may take the form of a dissertation but may also be approved in other formats which satisfy the degree scheme learning outcomes in the view of the Scheme Approval Panel. For example, schemes in Creative and Performing Arts may entail an artefact, score, portfolio of original works, performance or exhibition, accompanied by a written commentary placing it in its academic context together with any other items which may be required (e.g. a catalogue or audio or visual recording). Other approved examples include submission of two reports and/or assessed presentations based on the dissertation topic.

Appendix

Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas

2. Candidates may also register for Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas on a full-time, part-time or distance learning basis, ***where this is available***. These may either be derived from existing named Master's awards and carry the same title, or they may be approved as free-standing, separately named awards.

3. The dissertation or approved equivalent from a Master's programme must not form the whole of a Certificate or part of a Diploma. Where the Certificate or Diploma carries the same title as a Master's award and is based on modules available as part of the Master's scheme, ***the scheme structure should specify which modules must be taken and in which order.***

Regulations for the Award of the Degree of PhD (by Published Works)	Application 5. A prospective candidate for the Degree of PhD (by Published Works) shall identify the most appropriate Department of the University for registration and shall submit an application to the PG Admissions Office stating the subject with which their contribution to scholarship appears to be most nearly connected and specifying the published work or works on which their claim to the degree is based. In assessing the application, the Department shall draw upon staff with relevant subject expertise, including the candidate's prospective advisor, to consider the works submitted in order to decide whether or not there is a prima facie case to support the referral of the works for examination, prior to admission. ***In approaching this decision, departments must be convinced, inter alia, that the material presented can be assessed (e.g. that there is a full video record for performance artworks) and that, in the case of materials jointly authored, the precise contribution of the candidate can be determined. Such issues must be considered in full prior to admission and any applications that raise concerns around viability of materials such grounds*** ***must be referred to the Head of the Graduate School for a final decision on admission.***	Q&SC May 2025
Regulations for Senior Doctoral Degrees	Regulations withdrawn	Q&SC May 2025
Standing Order 22	Regulations withdrawn	Q&SC May 2025

Regulations for Approval of Qualifications and/or Relevant Experience for Admission to Higher Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates of Aberystwyth University	Section reviewed and revised June 2025 to ensure currency following removal from AQH of the Admissions Policies and Terms and Conditions to the Admissions webpages.	Q&SC May 2025
Regulation on Unacceptable Academic Practice	Chapter updated following annual review of process, and penalty table updated to reflect educational rather than punitive approach for first/lower case cases. Chapter currently being reviewed by TRACE representative and will be published shortly.	TBC

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