

Aberystwyth University Learning and Teaching Strategy 2012-2017

This is an *update* which builds on and refreshes the relevant sections of the Strategic Plan and the previous Joint Strategy.

Learning and Teaching is central to Aberystwyth's Strategic Plan and its mission to continue to be an internationally competitive teaching and research University which addresses global challenges and is responsive to the needs of the local community, of Wales and of the wider world. The operational document which delivers this strategy is the **Student Success Plan**.

To deliver this mission Aberystwyth University aims to:

1. Provide students with learning opportunities underpinned by strong scholarship, which are of the highest quality and offer a distinctive environment for study.
2. Respond to the changing needs of society for skilled, educated and employable graduates.
3. Produce high quality research which is internationally acknowledged, responding to intellectual, cultural, social and economic needs.
4. Work in partnership to serve the community, the UK, Europe and the wider world.
5. Play a full part in the social, cultural and economic development of Wales, including support for the Welsh language.

The Learning and Teaching Strategy responds to some key underpinning values as articulated in Aims 1 & 3 of the Strategic Plan 2012-2017: Creating Opportunities and Teaching that Inspires. The operational details which underpin the learning and teaching strategy are contained in the Student Success Plan, which is reviewed annually.

Creating Opportunities

'Creating Opportunities' focuses on breaking down barriers to access, supporting students and staff to succeed and grow, embedding employability across our curriculum and promoting experiences that allow our students to test and develop their skills, valuing people and maximising their potential, reflecting social responsibility in all we do.

The Aberystwyth student experience develops a passion for academic enquiry, learning and personal development. Our students live and learn in a safe and beautiful setting with access to cutting-edge resources and a National Library on their doorstep. They work with interested academics that bring research alive in the learning environment. We aim to produce graduates who thrive on intellectual rigour, critical thinking and creativity. We encourage and enable our students to work in teams to find cross-disciplinary solutions to global challenges and to develop wide-ranging perceptions and perspectives.

We believe that anyone who has the capacity to benefit from a university education should be enabled to do so. Our innovative approach to widening access includes projects aimed at raising school leaver aspirations, the flagship of which is our Summer University. Through this we offer a residential intensive Higher Education experience to students at risk of underperforming to encourage them to recognise their own potential. Excellence in student support requires agility and openness to respond to individual needs, and we work creatively to ensure an excellent support structure for all students which improves retention and student satisfaction rates and holds true to our belief that every student counts. We are committed to ensuring that Aberystwyth is a welcoming space for staff and students of all backgrounds and we work with a range of organisations, including Stonewall, the Buttle Trust UK, Athena SWAN and the Welsh language Commissioner to promote diversity and equal opportunity for all staff and students.

A priority is ensuring the best possible employment opportunities for our graduates. We work to ensure that all students have the opportunity to put the skills they develop whilst at Aberystwyth to use in their future career. We will further embed employability across the curriculum, expanding our graduate traineeships programme, and promoting work placements, employer-led events and other opportunities for practical experience. Collaborating with business and our alumni allows our students to apply the skills learned in their courses in a real world context. Our aim is to improve the employability of our graduates so that the proportion of Aberystwyth graduates who enter graduate-level employment exceeds the national average. For example: the percentage of Aberystwyth University full-time first degree leavers (i.e. full time undergraduate when they were studying at Aberystwyth), who are in work or further study or both, has risen from 85.5% (12/13 statistics) to 91.4% in the Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education Survey 2013/14. Aberystwyth University has improved well above the national trend (1% rise) with a 6 percentage point increase. In addition, the proportion of employed Aberystwyth University graduates gaining graduate-level employment has risen at an even greater rate – 9 percentage points up over the last year.

We are also fully committed to the continuing professional development of all our staff. We believe that research, teaching and leadership are complementary skillsets and that in order to achieve excellence, a modern university must sustain quality in each. During the next five years we will work to ensure that our performance development and promotion processes enable staff to advance their skills and ensure that excellence in all areas is identified and appropriately rewarded. We aim to employ the best talent available, identify potential leaders across the academic and professional services and nurture excellence, invest in professional training and support innovative ways for colleagues to share best practice.

Strategic Implementation Targets for 2012-2017

1. Working in partnership with our students to ensure that the support packages we offer (including our bursary provision) respond to changing student needs.
2. Embedding employability across the curriculum and building links with employers and alumni to achieve a step change in the employability of Aber graduates.

3. Developing our staff performance and promotion processes and expanding training opportunities for staff in the area of Learning and Teaching.
4. Establishing ways of recording and recognising curricular and extra-curricular activities and engaging fully with national programmes which recognise the contribution of students in activities which serve the community.
5. Identifying and supporting opportunities to enhance student wellbeing.

Teaching that Inspires

‘Teaching that inspires’ focuses on enhancing our recognised world-class student experience through investment in quality infrastructure and an excellent portfolio which emphasises employability and lifelong skills, equipping our students for future success.

An Aberystwyth education is founded on innovative, creative teaching, delivered by primarily research active staff. We aspire to challenge and inspire students from diverse backgrounds and cultures to reach their full potential. We seek to nurture confidence, independence, academic rigour, a global outlook and a lifelong passion for learning. We are prepared to invest to ensure a world-class student experience for all who choose to study at Aberystwyth.

We believe in the value of teaching a broad portfolio, which addresses the grand challenges facing society and the environment, enabling students from different disciplines to learn from one another and share best practice in methodology. We aim to be agile and responsive to gaps in provision and the needs and priorities of employers. Aberystwyth University will maintain high educational standards while working to simplify and streamline its academic regulations. Over the period to 2015 we have been reviewing and refreshing our portfolio to ensure that we attract high quality students from around the world, providing our graduates with skills which will equip them for their future careers. We are developing opportunities for flexible learning and distance learning and investing in technologies which support the provision of more of our courses through non-traditional routes. We support the Welsh Government agenda for Education for Sustainable Development and are committed to having this fully embedded across our curriculum.

Quality teaching demands a quality environment. A high level aim for us since 2012 has been to invest in a campus-wide programme of work to upgrade and enhance our learning spaces. The first phase of this work, the rebuilding of all our centrally timetabled teaching spaces will have been completed by the autumn of 2015. This investment provides a modern, flexible learning environment, in line with current teaching methodologies and responsive to student needs. We are also investing in our information and communications technology and will promote the effective integration of technology into learning in line with the University Learning and Teaching enhancement agenda.

From 2013, we expect that all new teaching staff will achieve Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA) status within 3 years of commencing employment at the University. Existing staff will be able to work towards an appropriate fellowship status

via our own HEA-accredited programme. We aim for the majority of all teaching staff on full time contracts to achieve FHEA status by 2017 and part-time staff to have started on this journey. We will reward teaching excellence via our academic promotion system and work in partnership with our Students' Union to celebrate excellence in student support across our whole community.

We will continue to work in close strategic partnership with Bangor University, sharing best practice and enhancing our learning environment.

We are also aware of our special responsibility for furthering Welsh-medium education and we are proud to have a branch of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol established at Aberystwyth. We will work closely with the Coleg to enrich our Welsh medium provision. More broadly, the presence of the Coleg will assist in the propagation of the cultural life of Wales which our students and staff, wherever they come from, find such an attractive and distinctive element of the Aberystwyth Experience.

Strategic Implementation Targets for 2012 – 2017

1. Delivering growth through an inclusive curriculum (both undergraduate and postgraduate) which attracts high quality students from Wales, the UK and from across the world, embeds employability, addresses global issues and delivers skills for life.
2. Recognising and rewarding Teaching Excellence – we will continue to embed a promotion system which recognises the value of teaching excellence and leadership and we will encourage and support the student led teaching awards in partnership with the Students' Union.
3. Continuing work on a campus-wide programme of investment in our learning spaces to deliver a high quality, distinctive environment for study.
4. Investing in technology to enhance learning and respond to the individual needs of students and to overcome geographical and time barriers to access for learners and employers.
5. Ensuring that the University plays a prominent part in the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's Academic Plan, and embed the work of the University's branch of the Coleg, enabling it to play a full part in the development of Welsh Medium provision.
6. We are ensuring that our portfolio is efficient, fit for purpose and meets demand, and developing programmes that meet the demands of industry and provide flexible professional training courses as well as interdisciplinary study.

Themes

The themes that underpin the Learning & Teaching Strategy are grouped under 3 headings:

- 1. Enriching the Student Experience**
- 2. Graduate Skills and Employability**
- 3. Widening Access**

Enriching the Student Experience

- Degree Classification and Achievement
- Research Informed Teaching
- Individualisation of the curriculum
- Welsh-medium provision and support
- The Enhancement Agenda
- Technology Enhanced Learning
- Formative feedback and innovative assessment tools
- Student Participation in quality and enhancement
- Student Satisfaction
- Accessing the student voice ('You said; We did' and 'Tell Us Now' campaigns)
- Retention
- Learner Support
- Provision of public information on courses and costing

Graduate Skills and Employability

- Acquisition of skills
- Aber-Forward
- Work-based Learning
- Study Abroad and International opportunity
- Industry partnerships
- Global citizenship

Widening Access

- Inclusivity and equality
- Widening Participation
- Recognition of prior learning experience
- Curriculum design
- Flexibility of Learning
- Regional/Local Provision
- Collaboration between FE and HE

Implementation

1. Institutes and departments are responsible for implementing the Learning and Teaching Strategy on an operational level (Student Success Plan) and are evaluated through internal and central review and planning processes, triangulated with the messages we receive from external surveys such as the NSS.
2. Each Institute has a senior academic, typically entitled Director of Learning and Teaching, responsible for implementing the strategy through the Institute Management Team and the Institute Learning and Teaching Committee which includes representatives from all departments.
3. Institutes may choose to develop their own complementary Learning and Teaching Strategies which speak to their disciplinary subject areas.
4. The delivery of the strategy is monitored by the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee and then forwarded to the Academic Board.
5. The Academic Board reviews the progress of the Strategy on an annual basis and reviews targets and aims as necessary/appropriate. These are incorporated in the annual revision of the Student Success Plan.
6. The University supports enhancement through the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Fund for specific projects, the Aber Academy and the annual Learning and Teaching Conference.
7. The Centre for Welsh Language Services promotes the use of Welsh and supports the University in operating bilingually. Our work includes supporting academic departments to develop Welsh medium projects, providing a translation service, offering a comprehensive support service for staff and students through the medium of Welsh and ensuring that the requirements of the University's [Welsh Language Scheme](#) (PDF) are implemented.
8. The Centre supports academic departments in developing modules, courses and projects to ensure that students have a choice of provision and resources when studying through the medium of Welsh. The academic departments have a wide range of Welsh medium modules and degree schemes. Students may decide to study every module through the medium of Welsh in some departments or pick and choose Welsh medium and English medium modules so that they may study bilingually in other departments. Students who have learnt Welsh can take advantage of the available Welsh medium modules too as there is plenty of support available to use academic terms in both languages. A reception is held for new Welsh speaking students during Freshers' Week to let them know which modules are available and to provide an opportunity for them to meet the staff who teach through the medium of Welsh.
9. Continuing Professional Development (CDP) is supported through the work of the Centre for the Development of Staff and Academic Practice through a range of internal and external courses and training including HEA accreditation.
10. The University recognises and rewards teaching excellence through its promotions procedures and its student-led Teaching Awards.

11. The Student Learning Support Centre offers a range of courses and services across the University for enhancing students' study experience. These courses further the development of good academic practices through the use of critical techniques in: academic writing; communicating in seminars; working with lectures; revision and exams; information management. The Centre also offers research training in collaboration with the Graduate School.
12. The Careers Service is available to all undergraduate and postgraduate students of Aberystwyth University. It offers a range of education, information, and guidance services to help you make effective decisions about your education, skills development and career management.
13. The Centre for Widening Participation and Social Inclusion at Aberystwyth University has a long standing commitment to widening access to groups of people who have traditionally been under-represented in Higher Education. Courses and programmes support people of all ages from primary school to adult in the community.
14. The University works closely with the officers of the Students' Union who are represented on key committees for Learning and Teaching. The Union's mission is to engage with, represent, support and develop our students in order to enhance their time at university and enable them to achieve their full potential as Aber graduates.

Targets 2012-2017:

By 2017 we will:

- Exceed on an annual basis our Higher Education Statistics Agency Performance Indicator benchmarks for participation of under-represented groups in Higher Education.
- Achieve graduate level employability at least 5% above the national average.
- Secure and maintain accreditation of our Postgraduate Certificate of Teaching in Higher Education programme for staff new to teaching, demonstrating that our skills development for new teaching staff is of the highest quality.
- Launch an Aberystwyth scheme for graduate traineeships and deliver at least 40 opportunities over five years.
- Increase opportunities for employer and alumni visits by 10% annually.
- Improve on our performance in the National Student Survey to be a top university in the UK for student satisfaction.
- Achieve a 20% uplift on the number of students undertaking some element of their course through the medium of Welsh.
- Develop excellence in teaching so that at least 60% of our full time teaching staff have an accredited teaching qualification.
- Ensure that all our core lecture sessions are supported by online teaching resources and delivered in teaching spaces refurbished to world class standards.
- Introduce at least 10 new postgraduate programmes each year.
- Revise our undergraduate portfolio and develop programmes such as Hospitality Management, Bio-Veterinary Science, Creative and Liberal Arts.
- Encourage each Institute will deliver at least one programme by e-learning/distance learning.