13th Annual Learning and Teaching Conference

Innovative Pathways to Empowering Learners: Adapting, Engaging, and Thriving

Contents

Thank you from the Conference Organisers

Welcome to our 13th Annual Learning and Teaching Conference. On behalf of the organisers, we'd firstly like to thank Dr Neil Currant for joining us as this year's keynote speaker. I know that we will all benefit from Dr Currant's expertise and insights into compassionate assessment design.

We're also grateful to our other external speakers: Professor John Traxler, Beth Brooks, Professor Lee Elliot Major, Pan Wales Group, and Kate Lindsay from Higher Education Partners.

These events wouldn't be possible without the generosity of our colleagues who share and showcase their best practice with us. The breadth of sessions (in topics and representatives from across the University) demonstrate the excellent learning and teaching experiences available to our students.

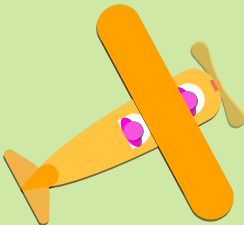Thank you to the Steering Committee for providing the focus for this year's conference and ideas for valuable topics alongside Ian Munton and John Harrington from Student Services. Thank you to Dr Keziah Garratt-Smithson and Kate Wright for their help in organising the conference.

Thank you to Professor Anwen Jones for supporting this event. We hope that you have a great 3 days and enjoy the conference programme.

Dr Jim Woolley

Day 1 - Tuesday 8ᵗʰ July

Time	Session	Location
09:15-09.30	**Welcome** Anwen Jones	Online
09.30-10.15	'South-West Social Mobility Commission: University-led Tutoring Service' Lee Elliot Major & Beth Brooks	Online
10.15-11.00	'Working smarter with schools: A reflection on how universities can work more effectively with secondary schools' Scott Tompsett	Online
11.00-11.30	**Break**	
11.30-12.15	'Pan Wales Group' Annette Edwards & colleagues from the Pan Wales Groups	Online
12.15-13.15	**Lunch**	Online
13.15-14.00	'Community building in asynchronous online learning' Sarah Watson-Jones & IBERS Distance Learning Team	Online
14.00-14.30	**Break**	
14.30-15.00	'The Ethics Engine: Libraries Driving Responsible AI' Academic Engagement Team	Online
15.00-15.30	'Assessing AI risk in assignment setting' Bernie Tiddeman	Online
15.30-16.00	'AI in HE: Reflections on Possibilities, Problems and racticalities ' John Traxler	Online
15.30-16.00	'Generative AI - where are we now and what's next?' Nia Ellis & Jim Woolley	Online

Day 2 - Wednesday 9th July

Time	Session	Location
09:15-09.45	**Welcome and Aberystwyth University Context**	A6, Llandinam
09:45-10.45	'Keynote: Compassionate Assessment' Neil Currant	A6, Llandinam
10.45-11.15	**Break**	
11.15-12.15	'Keynote: Workshop' Neil Currant	B23, Llandinam
12.15-13.15	**Lunch**	
13.15-13.45	'How can we support learners with Dyslexia? An exploration of the lived experiences of undergraduate students with Dyslexia' Lili Dabin Love & Valerie Todd	A6, Llandinam
13.45-14.15	'I think, Therefore I Procrastinate: The Paradox of Self-Regulated Learning' Naomi Sollis & Valerie Todd	A6, Llandinam
14.15-14.45	**Break**	
14.45-15.30	'Exploring why students misuse AI and assessment design to encourage AI literacy' Megan Talbot	B23, Llandinam
15.30-16.00	'Exploring key concepts in International Politics through the medium of LEGO' Anwen Elias	B23, Llandinam
16.00-16.15	'Aspire Reading Lists: what's new for 2025-2026' Joy Cadwallader	B23, Llandinam

Day 3 - Thursday 10th July

Time	Session	Location
09:15-09.30	**Welcome**	**A6, Llandinam**
09.30-10.15	'Supporting Students - HEP' Kate Lindsay, Callum Smith & John Harrington	**A6, Llandinam**
10.15-10.45	**Break**	
10.45-11.30	'Academic Roundtable' Bernie Tiddeman, Trefor Aspden & Aloysius Igboekwu	**A6, Llandinam**
11.30-12.00	'Who Broke the Ice, and What Came Crawling Out?' Bruce Wight	**A6, Llandinam**
12.00-13.00	**Lunch**	
13.00-13.30	'Cynllunio Cwricwlwm Cynhwysol: cyfieithu a'i botensial (Designing an inclusive Curriculum: translation and its potential)' Mandi Morse & Cathryn Charnel-White	**B23, Llandinam**
13.30-14.00	'Visualizing Mathematical Modelling: Using Online Graphical Calculators' John Gough	**B23, Llandinam**
14.00-14.30	'Celebrating the Teaching for Postgraduates at Aberystwyth University (TPAU)' Annette Edwards & Ian Archer	**B23, Llandinam**

'Working smarter with schools: A reflection on how universities can work more effectively with secondary schools'

Here we present data from the evaluation of the Trio Sci Cymru, schools science outreach project. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, and an innovative centre-staging art-based research method, partner universities (Aberystwyth, Bangor and Cardiff) identified potential barriers to working effectively with secondary schools.

These include time and resource issues faced by schools, alongside the need for workshop opportunities to be engaging, yet aligned to the core curriculum.
The research also identified a wealth of opportunities for more effective outreach which both benefits secondary schools and university partnerships, the lessons from which are being implemented by the Department of Life Sciences in developing new outreach activities.

Scott Tompsett

Day 1 - 08/07/2025 (Online)

'Pan Wales Group'

These Pan Wales Groups are a collaborative network that brings together institutions across Wales to enhance bilingual education and professional development. By strengthening of cross-institutional partnerships, the group aims to foster innovation and excellence in teaching and learning. The advantages of working across institutions is that we can pool their knowledge and resources, benefiting from diverse perspectives and specialized skills. Collaborative efforts ensure that bilingual programs are robust, inclusive, and tailored to meet the needs of a bilingual community.

Working together increases the chances of achieving prestigious accolades such as the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS), Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE), and Principal Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (PFHEA). Cross-institutional initiatives provide opportunities for staff to engage in continuous professional development as well as an opportunity to talk to staff from different institutions to build a community.
Each Pan Wales Group has an Advance HE Connect group. If you are interested in being part of their aspiring NTFS, CATE, or PFHEA, please contact me (aee@aber.ac.uk). We also hope that members from different institutions within the Pan Wales Group will be able to attend and contribute to these initiatives.

Join the Pan Wales Group to be part of a dynamic network dedicated to advancing bilingual education and achieving academic excellence through collaboration. Please note that the Pan Wales Group is open only to those who submit a request to join.

**Annette Edwards & colleagues from the
Pan Wales Groups**

Day 1 - 08/07/2025 (Online)

'Community building in asynchronous online learning'

The benefits to learning and teaching that can be gained through interpersonal interactions and community building are widely acknowledged but so are the challenges of doing this in asynchronous online learning.
The IBERS Distance Learning team, who deliver online part-time post-graduate courses, have been grappling with these challenges for over a decade. Practice quickly showed us that an element of assessment was the most effective way to incentivise student-student interaction, and, for some time, we relied on assessed discussion forums to achieve this. While there are definite merits to these forums, student feedback on this assessment type was always mixed, and we weren't sure they were really helping us to meet our aim of building community.

To get a clearer picture, we used data from student feedback and interviews to assess their perceptions of and views on the role, benefits and drawbacks of these forums. As a result of our findings (Kipling et al., 2022) and, accelerated by a more recent change from three to two assessments per module, we have trialled a range of assignment types, still making some use of Blackboard's discussion boards, designed to encourage student-student interaction.
Our latest module questionnaire responses suggest that these may be getting closer to achieving our aim with a higher proportion of students agreeing that the interactive assessment helped them to feel connected to other students. We would like to share our experience and some examples of what seems to be working well now.

Sarah Watson-Jones & IBERS Distance Learning Team

Day 1 - 08/07/2025 (Online)

'The Ethics Engine: Libraries Driving Responsible AI'

Since students began using AI at Aberystwyth University, librarians here have been receiving enquiries about the authenticity of both AI outputs from students and assignment bibliographies from those staff marking them. Discover how this and other activities have driven the development of a range of advice and support for students in the ethical use of AI for their studies, case studies around the deployment of these resources and the growing role of librarians in promoting the responsible use of AI in higher education.

Academic Engagement Team

'Assessing AI risk in assignment setting'

When it comes to GenAI, prevention is better than cure! Not all assignments are created equal, or not at equal risk of avoiding the required learning outcomes by use of AI. Approaches such as the AI Risk Measurement Scale (ARMS) have been proposed to evaluate the GenAI risk associated with assessed coursework.

The suggested strategies can also help to prevent other forms of unfair academic practice and encourage more authentic assessments. By applying these at the assignment design stage, the risk can be reduced, leading to better outcomes for both staff and students. In this talk we will look at suggested approaches, and how they can be integrated into the Aberystwyth assessment processes.

Bernie Tiddeman

'AI in HE: Reflections on Possibilities, Problems and Practicalities'

Artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education is now pervasive, and ubiquitous but perhaps often unnoticed. AI, specifically the kinds of intelligent chatbots exemplified by chapGPT accessing the raw power of Large Language Models, the underlying AI technology, such as OpenAI, can however be problematic.

Large Language Models can 'hallucinate', providing plausible but fictitious information, furthermore, they require considerable skill in drafting queries that give the precise answer required, the so-called engineering of 'prompts', and lastly they could provide responses that are dangerous, hurtful or harmful.

These are all consequences of the underlying technology, which indiscriminately harvests and recycles the world's digital resources, good or bad, right or wrong, nice or nasty. There are also aspects of colonialistic exploitation, environmental damage and threats to minority languages and cultures. In higher education they raise concerns about plagiarism, reported as endemic, and questions about originality, creativity and the nature of intellectual property. There seems however little progress on curricula that might equip graduates for futures of pervasive AI or the critical AI literacy that might shape this. Emerging regulatory frameworks seem muddled and not always helpful.

This presentation looks at these generalised criticisms of educational AI and then explores current attempts to make it safer ethically and richer pedagogically. It will report on current technical developments and trajectories and on recent informal research with university learning technology professionals. The author leads research for Avallain, a global edtech company, working on these issues.

John Traxler

'How can we support learners with dyslexia? An exploration of the lived experiences of undergraduate students with dyslexia'

This study explores the lived experiences of undergraduate students with dyslexia. Previous research suggests that students with dyslexia face multiple barriers to learning, with these students having to work harder to achieve similar outcomes to students without dyslexia. However, recognition of the condition, targeted support, and teaching staff understanding the perspective of the student with dyslexia may create a more equitable learning environment.

The social model of disability posits that people are not disabled by their differences but rather by the societal barriers they encounter. Therefore, to understand factors that help to overcome barriers and facilitate a successful educational experience for students with dyslexia, this study explored the lived experience of undergraduate students with dyslexia.
Seven undergraduate students with a diagnosis of dyslexia were recruited via student support services. Students participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews, with the narrative transcribed verbatim and the data analysed using Thematic Analysis.

Findings point to students feeling disabled by dyslexia in all educational settings, the importance of early intervention, and the impact of the supportive university environment, which increases confidence in help-seeking behaviour.
It is evident that without individualised support, many learners with dyslexia face academic disadvantage. This experience begins early in their education, and delays in diagnosis leaves students to struggle on without adequate support. The supportive university environment, which increases confidence in help-seeking behaviour, creates a virtuous circle whereby students who experience effective support are more likely to continue to engage with support services.
This session will discuss the main barriers to learning experienced by students with dyslexia, and propose strategies and good practice that could be implemented to support students with or without learning difficulties.
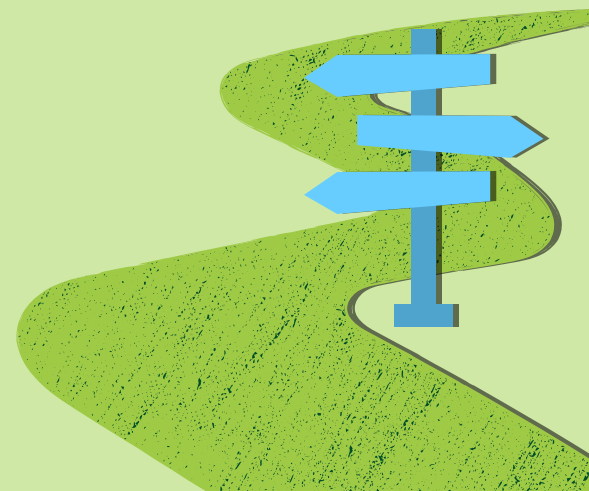
Lili Dabin-Love & Valerie Todd

'I Think, Therefore I Procrastinate: The Paradox of Self-Regulated Learning'

Self-regulated learning (SRL) is a foundational concept in modern education, it emphasises a student's ability to set goals, monitor progress and adjust strategies to optimise learning outcomes (Zimmerman, 1990). SRL incorporates three components: cognition, metacognition and motivation (Winne, 2017), which contribute to academic success, in-depth engagement and improved problem-solving skills. By fostering autonomy and resilience, SRL enables individuals to take control of their learning, thus promoting short-term academic achievement as well as long-term mastery (Omari, 2024). Despite the advantages of SRL, there are several barriers that hinder the effective implementation of SRL in higher education.

Whilst SRL has been studied using quantitative methods, which identifies that some students struggle to self-regulate their learning, there is a lack of qualitative evidence that explores why this is so from the perspective of the students. This study explored the challenges that university students face in adopting SRL mechanisms, identifying key obstacles such as environmental influence, personal habits, personality traits and instructional practices.

Using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), this study examined the subjective experiences of university students, with an aim of providing deeper insights into the barriers of SRL. Findings highlighted economic status, emotional well-being, motivation levels, procrastination tendencies and accessibility issues as key barriers. By addressing these challenges to SRL implementation, educators can develop more efficient teaching strategies, and policies, to support SRL, ultimately enhancing students' academic performance, and overall well-being. This research contributes to the growing discourse on how SRL can be better integrated into higher education to foster independent, successful learners.

Naomi Sollis & Valerie Todd

'Exploring why students misuse AI and assessment design to encourage AI literacy'

A discussion of findings from the past two years of AI authenticity panel hearings in the law and criminology department and what we can learn about when and why students misuse AI, as well as a review of the use of assessments to encourage positive uses of AI and AI literacy.

Megan Talbot
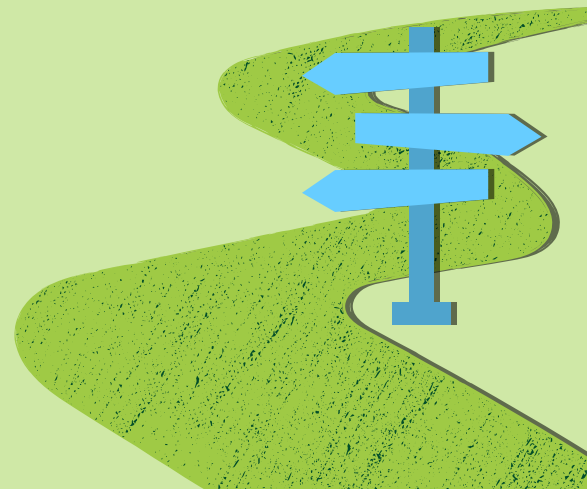
Day 2 - 09/07/2025 (On Campus)

'Exploring key concepts in International Politics through the medium of LEGO'

A key element of first year teaching in the Department of International Politics is to introduce students to key concepts in the field of international relations. Students often find this challenging: many have not studied politics previously, and they can struggle to grasp abstract ideas and discuss them critically.

To support students in this respect, I have designed seminars that use LEGO Serious Play (LSP) as a method for exploring key concepts in International Relations. This presentation will summarise the LSP approach, and how I used this in seminar teaching to explore concepts of statehood, sovereignty, and the international system.

I will highlight the strengths of this approach for student learning, but also the specific constraints of this approach and ideas for further developing the use of LSP in teaching in the future.
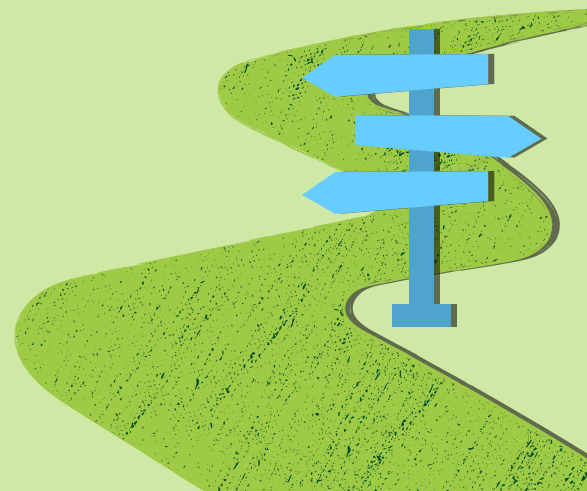
Anwen Elias

'Aspire Reading Lists: what' s new for 2025-2026'

Discover what's new in Aspire Reading Lists for 2024-2025 including ongoing improvements to bookmarking, additional resource types and an update on the implementation on Talis Engage: new functionality for our Aspire Reading Lists tenancy to support the upload of PDF and media files to reading lists, class commenting and personal annotations. Also an opportunity for you to raise your questions and feedback about your use of the reading list service here at Aberystwyth.

Joy Cadwallader
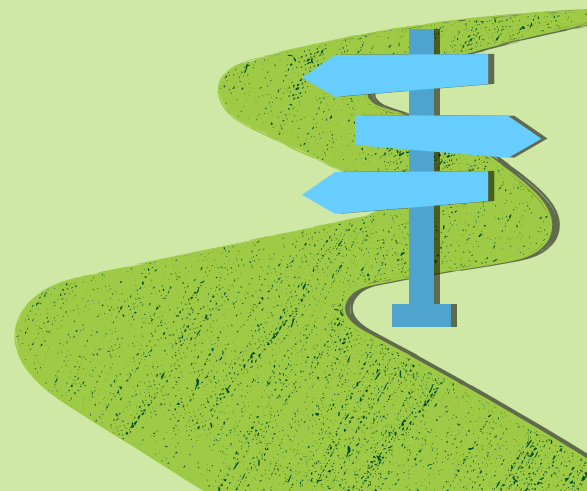
'Who Broke the Ice, and What Came Crawling Out?'

This presentation explores how metaphor, creativity, and student-led narrative can foster engagement, support autonomous learning, and build meaningful community in the classroom. It begins with a simple, playful prompt: "Draw me an animal. Give it a name." Without overthinking, students create creatures that they resonate with building that emotional tie - some draw whales who need the group to thrive, others sketch solitary rhinos who charge ahead on their own terms. Each drawing becomes a reflection of identity, agency, and how students situate themselves within a learning environment.

These spontaneous illustrations open up unexpected conversations. They reveal how students understand themselves not just as learners, but as participants in a classroom ecosystem - sometimes confident, sometimes hesitant, often humorous, and always unique. By giving their animal a name, students take ownership of their narrative. This activity disarms anxiety, lowers barriers to participation, and lays the groundwork for dialogue about learning styles, support needs, and group collaboration.

This session will share insights from implementing this task in undergraduate teaching, with examples of how it helped develop reflective practice and fostered an inclusive sense of belonging. It will also provide adaptable resources for using metaphor-based prompts across disciplines and levels. The session argues that the animals students draw - however odd or abstract - offer a powerful way to surface hidden dimensions of engagement and autonomy. The polar bear may break the ice, but it's the named creatures that crawl out which shape the learning that follows.
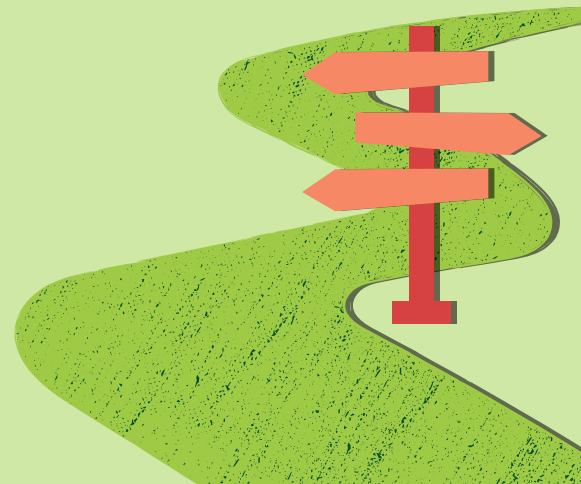
Bruce Fletcher Wight

'Cynllunio Cwricwlwm Cynhwysol: cyfieithu a'i botensial (Designing an Includive Curriculum: translation and its potential)'

Bydd y cyflwyniad hwn yn ymateb i un o themâu penodol y gynhadledd, sef dylunio asesiadau y gellir eu haddasu. Yn hyn o beth, rhoddir sylw i brosiect cyfredol Adran y Gymraeg ac Astudiaethau Celtaidd i gynllunio cwricwlwm cynhwysol drwy greu pecyn o adnoddau dysgu i staff a fydd yn hwyluso cynhwysiant a chynrychiolaeth ehangach ar holl gynlluniau gradd yr Adran.

Bydd dwy ran i'r cyflwyniad. Yn y rhan gyntaf, trafodir yr hinsawdd ddiwylliannol a phroffesiynol sy'n gyrru'r prosiect hwn, gan roi sylw penodol i'r heriau strwythurol ac ymarferol y mae ieithoedd lleiafrifiedig fel y Gymraeg a'r Wyddeleg yn eu hwynebu wrth gyflwyno croestoriadwyedd (S. intersectionality) a sicrhau amlygrwydd i destunau gan awduron o liw, LHDTC+, anabl, a niwroamrywiol: adroddiadau'r sectorau cyhoeddi ac addysg, mas critigol a chapasiti yn y byrdymor, a phrosiectau a rhaglenni cyfredol i adeiladu mas critigol a chapasiti yn y tymor hir.

Bydd yr ail ran yn cyflwyno'r pecyn o adnoddau dysgu Cymraeg sydd ar waith i gefnogi ymdrechion staff yr Adran i sicrhau cwriclwm ac aseiniadau cynhwysol, gan fanylu ar botensial cyfieithu fel datrysiad byrdymor i heriau mas critigol a chapsiti. Bydd cyfle i drafod aseiniadau enghreifftiol ac i ystyried camau nesaf y prosiect a'r potensial ar gyfer rhannu'r pecyn yn ehangach i ddisgyblaeth y Gymraeg ac Astudiaethau Celtaidd yn gyffredinol.

This presentation will respond to one of the specific themes of this conference, namely the design of adaptable assessments. In this regard, we will discuss a current project in the Department of Welsh and Celtic Studies for planning an inclusive curriculum by creating a package of teaching resources for staff that will facilitate inclusion and wider representation on all of its degree schemes.
The presentation has two parts.

The first part will discuss the cultural and professional climate that drives this project, paying particular attention to the structural and practical challenges that minority languages such as Welsh and Irish face when introducing intersectionality (S. intersectionality) and ensuring the visibility of texts by writers of colour, and LGBTQ+, disabled, and neurodiverse writers: reports from the publishing and education sectors, critical mass and capacity in the short term, and current projects and programs to build critical mass and capacity in the long term.

The second part will present the package of Welsh-language learning resources that will support Departmental efforts to ensure inclusive assignments and curriculum, detailing the potential of translation as a short-term solution to challenges around critical mass and capacity. There will be an opportunity to discuss sample assignments and to consider the next stages of the project and the potential for sharing the assignments package more widely to the discipline of Welsh and Celtic Studies in general.

Mandi Morse & Cathryn Charnel-White

'Inclusive classroom discussion: break out of the "usual suspects" scenario'

The talk will outline my experience employing free-to-use online graphical calculators (principally Desmos). This gives students the functionality to visualize mathematical features that would otherwise be very abstract or even obtuse. Moreover, it offers students the chance to explore the behaviour of models by changing parameters. SES feedback has been positive and I will go through some examples which illustrate the pedagogical possibilities and advantages.

John Gough
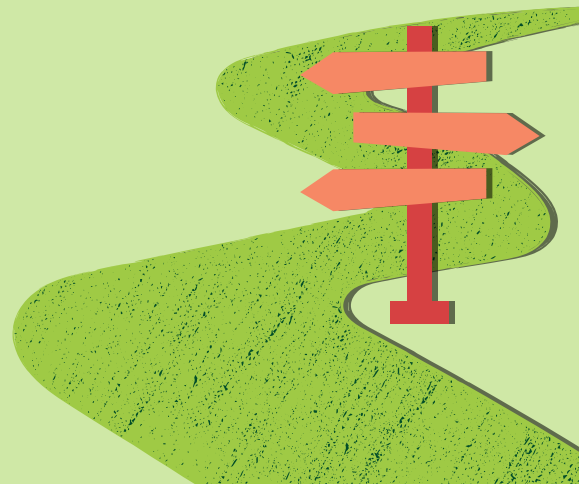
'Celebrating the Teaching for Postgraduates at Aberystwyth University (TPAU)'

The Teaching for Postgraduates at Aberystwyth University (TPAU) programme, initiated in 2016, aims to enhance the practical and pedagogical skills of Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs) who are actively engaged in teaching within their respective departments. This programme has successfully trained over 170 participants across 11 cohorts. Accredited by Advance HE, the programme confers Associate Fellow status (Descriptor 1) upon completion.

The TPAU programme is designed to provide PGRs with a comprehensive foundation in effective teaching practices. It encompasses a broad spectrum of core teaching areas, thereby expanding the participants' pedagogical knowledge and expertise. The programme's accreditation through Advance HE ensures that it meets high standards of teaching excellence.

This event will showcase the journey of some of the alumni in higher education or industry. We will ask previous students to give an overview of what they learnt while on TPAU and how they've used these skill sets in their working/student lives. We will ask our alumni to give their stories in person, on-line or via recorded clips so we can show the audience the successes of TPAU since it started in 2016. We will show how TPAU has influenced teaching and learning in the University as well as further afield.

Annette Edwards, Ian Archer, TPAU Alumni