



# Quality Enhancement Review of Aberystwyth University

## Outcome Report

April 2022

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*This report is published in both Welsh and English.*

## About the Quality Enhancement Review method

The QAA website explains the method for [Quality Enhancement Review \(QER\)](#) and has links to the QER handbook and other informative documents.<sup>1</sup> For 2021-22, the scope of QERs focused on quality assurance in line with the changes made by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) to external quality assurance requirements in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, QAA published an addendum to accompany the QER handbook which explains the adaptations to the method delivery. For 2021-22, providers have the opportunity to engage with QAA separately on quality enhancement. You can also find more information about the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#).<sup>2</sup>

### About this review

This is the Outcome Report of the QER conducted by QAA at Aberystwyth University. The review visit took place online between 25 and 27 April 2022. The review was conducted by a team of three reviewers:

- Mrs Claire Blanchard
- Professor Diane Meehan
- Miss Nina Di Cara (student reviewer).

QAA reviews are evidence-based processes. Review judgements result from the documents review teams see, the meetings they hold, and drawing upon their experience as peer reviewers and student reviewers.

In this report, and based on the information presented, the QER team makes judgements on:

- the requirements of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) Part 1 for internal quality assurance
- the relevant baseline regulatory requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

It is possible for the overarching judgement to be expressed in three levels which indicate whether the provider 'meets these requirements', 'meets them with conditions', or 'does not meet requirements'. More detail on these categories is provided in the QER Handbook.

The overarching judgement for this report can be found on page 4 followed by any commendations, affirmations and recommendations.

A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review.<sup>3</sup> The Technical Report sets out the team's findings under each heading in the QER method.

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<sup>1</sup> About QER: [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/quality-enhancement-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/quality-enhancement-review).

<sup>2</sup> About QAA: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>3</sup> Technical Report: [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/Aberystwyth-University](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/Aberystwyth-University)

## About Aberystwyth University

Founded in 1872, the University is celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Originally a founding member of the University of Wales in 1893, the University secured its own degree awarding powers and then University Title in 2007, and since 2009 all students have been admitted to Aberystwyth University degrees. Today it is a medium-sized, research-active University and has a broad range of subjects across physical and natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and creative arts.

The University's mission is to deliver inspirational education and research in a supportive, creative and exceptional environment in Wales. The University's Strategic Plan (2018-23) sets out five high-level objectives: to empower students to unlock their own potential; to support researchers to undertake research with impact of world-leading quality; to make a significant contribution to Wales and beyond; to be an international destination of choice for students; and a commitment to Welsh language and culture.

The University has 17 departments/schools/institutes which are organised into three faculties offering a wide range of vocational and academic subjects across physical and natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and creative arts.

There are currently around 5,300 full-time undergraduate students registered with the University and a very small number of part-time undergraduate students. For taught postgraduate provision there are just over 300 full-time and 90 part-time students, and a further 250 full-time students registered on research degrees. There are about 45 distance learning undergraduate students and 650 distance learning students at master's level. The University is one of the main providers of Welsh medium higher education and around 775 of its current full-time students are fluent Welsh speakers.

The University has a relatively small collaborative provision portfolio. At present, there are three franchise arrangements, two dual/joint degrees, one validation arrangement and a small number of collaborative partnership arrangements in Wales and China.

Key and important developments undertaken by the University to address national priorities and support regional and community needs has been the introduction of nursing qualifications with the award of a contract by Health Education and Improvement Wales until the end of the decade and a joint veterinary degree with the Royal Veterinary College along with associated degree schemes in veterinary biosciences.

In the previous QAA review in 2016 there were five recommendations, one affirmation and one feature of good practice. The first recommendation was to ensure the systematic involvement of students as partners in programme approval and review, and the enhancement of the student experience, and students are now included as members of scheme approval and periodic review panels. The second recommendation to ensure that a consistent approach to academic appeals is practised within and across institutes, and the fourth recommendation to ensure consistency of core information provided to students in handbooks within and across institutes have both been addressed through the introduction of a new template for programme handbooks. The University has taken a number of steps in response to the third recommendation to ensure that all postgraduate research students receive appropriate training before undertaking teaching and assessment. This has included the introduction of a centralised register of students who teach, a training programme which has been accredited by Advance HE at Associate Fellowship level, and approval of a version of the NUS/UCU Postgraduate Employment Charter. In addition, the University is currently involved with a HEFCW-funded project to review policy and practice in postgraduate teaching. The final recommendation was to consolidate and clearly articulate strategic

priorities for the enhancement of learning opportunities at institute level and the University addressed this by introducing a new enhancement plan in 2017.

## Judgements about Aberystwyth University

Based on the information presented, the review team judges that:

- Aberystwyth University **meets** the requirements of the ESG Part 1 for internal quality assurance.
- Aberystwyth University **meets** the relevant baseline regulatory requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

This is a positive judgement, which means the provider has robust arrangements for securing academic standards, managing academic quality and for enhancing the quality of the student experience.

## Commendations

The QER has identified several commendations, which are summarised below.

- The readily accessible and embedded support for staff teaching and assessing through Welsh language medium as well as staff and students learning Welsh that encourages engagement and participation with the language.
- The responsiveness of the University to national and regional employability needs through the development of new focused and innovative partnerships.
- The supportive and collegiate relationship the University develops with its partners that enables them to participate as equals in the partnership.

## Affirmations

The QER has identified several affirmations, which are summarised below.

- The programme of work the University is undertaking to develop a new digital system that will allow enhanced institutional oversight of the experience of postgraduate research students.
- The steps being undertaken by the University to ensure programme specifications are kept up to date.

## Recommendations

The QER makes several recommendations.

- Ensure effective University oversight of the uptake and engagement of staff and students with the requirements of the personal tutoring system.
- Implement a system that ensures institutional oversight for the approval of external examiners for research degree awards.

- Ensure all students receive timely assessment feedback in line with University requirements.

## Further information

A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review. The Technical Report sets out the team's findings under each heading in the QER method.

This review and its findings relate to the provider as a whole and do not supply information about individual programmes of study or subjects. For further information about those, contact the provider or visit its [website](#).

Further information about QAA and QER can be found on the [QAA website](#).

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