## 1. Introduction: Our Commitment to Student Success

Founded in 1872, Aberystwyth University (AU) is a residential, campus-based, teaching and research university located in rural mid-Wales. Aberystwyth town itself has a small population of just over 18,000, a figure which includes our students. We deliver a broad portfolio of arts, humanities and science programmes to a mainly full-time student body through 17 academic departments organised into six institutes. Driven from the university's strategic plan and through our learning and teaching strategy, our teaching is research-led and committed to ongoing reflection and action aimed at delivering an exceptional student experience. A consistent, planned focus on our student outcomes has delivered high levels of student satisfaction and retention with good levels of graduate employability and postgraduate study. Our students and their representatives know that we seek their views on all aspects of their experience, not limited solely to teaching matters, and respond rapidly to their concerns. We view the student voice as an invaluable resource that enables us to make both short-term interventions and decisions concerning longer-term action.

While we recruit staff and students from across the UK and internationally we also benefit from being located in a richly bilingual heartland where 50% of the population speaks Welsh. Since our foundation, we have been at the forefront of teaching and researching the Welsh language and its literature together with developing a breadth of Welsh-medium provision across the arts and the sciences which we are confident is unequalled in Wales. We have a dedicated community of staff and students who collaborate and participate together to promote and deliver Welsh-medium provision in a bilingual environment.

We are the UK University of the Year for Teaching Quality in *The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2018*.

> *Students at Aberystwyth know they are on to a good thing and have been swift to acknowledge it. The university has secured some of the most remarkable scores in the UK… for the quality of teaching it offers. It is one of a very few universities to increase its student satisfaction scores in this area from last year, against a backdrop of a much tougher National Student Survey*,"
> Alastair McCall, Editor of *The Times/Sunday Times Good University Guide 2018*.

In the 2017 Whatuni Student Choice Awards, we were shortlisted for "University of the Year", we were second overall in the "International Student Experience" category, and in the top ten for "Courses and Lecturers", and "Accommodation". In the 2017 NSS, our students once again expressed themselves to be highly satisfied in respect of the teaching on my course (89%), assessment and feedback (82%), and academic support (86%). Our continuation rate is 95.5%. Our most recent QAA Review (2016) confirmed AU's commitment to inclusivity. It further highlighted as a feature of good practice our pre-enrolment process with its personalised support for students, including those with specific learning needs, which facilitates their transition to university.

We are proud that our comprehensive approach to encouraging and delivering excellence has led to invitations to present the keynote address at the HEA and UUK "Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning" conference in both 2016 and 2017, and a further UUK presentation in 2017.

This submission describes the significant, targeted and ongoing investment in our learning environment, based on active engagement with our students, which underpins an embedded commitment to excellence and delivering positive outcomes. We believe our metrics, supported by the narrative presented below, satisfy the descriptors for a TEF Gold Award.

<u>Students' Union Submission (written by AberSU):</u> Aberystwyth Students' Union (AberSU) has an excellent working partnership with Aberystwyth University, which supports our work and encourages us to be an autonomous organisation for our students. We sit as full members on all the major university committees - Council, Finance and Strategy, Academic Board and Senate being the most important of these. The University has also encouraged us to take an active part in writing our institution's TEF submission from the start.

We very much welcome the efforts the University makes to collect and respond to student input on all aspects of their life in Aberystwyth. It is a mark of our relationship that key data on the University's performance is openly shared with us.

AberSU celebrates the high quality teaching at Aberystwyth with an annual awards ceremony in May, in which students can nominate staff in a variety of categories, including Lecturer of the Year and Tutor of the Year. In 2016/17, we received over 400 nominations which shows the incredibly positive impact teaching staff have on our students. Teaching at Aberystwyth is fundamentally student-centred and the University supports AberSU in encouraging the student voice at all levels. AberSU elects Academic Representatives at course level to sit on Student Staff Consultative Committees (SSCCs). We also elect Institute Representatives who regularly sit on Departmental Learning and Teaching Committees and Periodic Scheme Review panels as student reviewers, giving us a strong voice in the review and reform of teaching and related issues. Having student representation at all levels ensures that teaching is truly influenced by students.

AberSU also works closely with the University to ensure that the student experience at Aberystwyth is of paramount importance. This commitment is reviewed annually in the Student Charter where jointly with the University we commit to ensuring a vibrant, safe and positive learning community in which every student has the opportunity to realise their full potential, and where they are treated in a professional manner with respect, dignity and courtesy. We think it is fantastic that students make up half the membership of the Student Experience and Enhancement Working Group which has a wide remit, including defining and auditing the student representation structures and processes, and developing policy. In response to student feedback, we moved our recent Academic Rep elections to an online system, developed for us by the University and embedded in the ApAber (cf. LE3). This led to record participation levels in our October 2017 by-elections, with a total of 106 nominations and more students standing for office than ever before.

At the NUS Wales Awards in 2017, we were named the Best Higher Education Students' Union in Wales. This accolade acknowledges our role in "shaping education and empowering individuals", and is a reflection of our relationship with the University.

## 2. Features and Structures that Support Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes

Under the provisions of the Higher Education (Wales) Act 2015, our Council must formally assure itself of the quality of our provision and issue an annual statement of assurance to HEFCW. Internally our Senate exercises oversight of academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement of all provision within the University and its collaborative partners. As a committee of Senate, Academic Board is responsible for the quality, evaluation and enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment and for the maintenance of academic standards, including reviewing and further developing policies, procedures and regulations; the minutes of each Academic Board meeting are received and reviewed at Senate throughout the year.

We have worked very carefully to ensure that our strategic plan is reflected not only in sub-strategies, such as teaching and learning, but also in the action plans which are developed from detailed analysis of sector-wide and AU-specific data and qualitative feedback. Specifically, in relation to teaching, AU-wide action plans have been developed with academic staff, student and professional services staff to improve particular areas such as the quality of online learning resources, the development of the online tutor dashboard, the introduction of electronic attendance monitoring and the embedding of employability skills within our teaching (cf. LE1 & SO1). This process ensures consistency of action and delivery across the institution.

Since 1875 we have pioneered the study of the Welsh language, its literature and its history and we continue to lead innovation in developing provision through the medium of Welsh. Welsh-speaking students are represented by departmental academic representatives. In addition, UMCA (Aberystwyth's Welsh Students' Union) is represented on AU's senior committees and our Cangen (Branch) of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (cf. LE3; TEF National Contextual Statement for Wales).

Together our cycle of periodic programme review, annual monitoring of teaching, external examiners comments, departmental learning and teaching plans and module evaluation ensure we operate a rigorous process of continuous monitoring and improvement. External examiners consistently commend our student-centred approach to teaching and learning, our variety of assessments and the manner in which we follow up on their recommendations. Our Annual Monitoring of Taught Schemes' reports present key quality information including responses to comments by external

examiners, an action plan for each module, and identification of features of good practice. Peer observation is embedded in our teaching calendar, with colleagues observed at least once a year. Peer observation feeds into the annual Effective Contribution Scheme meeting (appraisal) between staff and their line managers to identify future training and development needs.

Our distinctive approach to quality draws on detailed analysis by a dedicated central Planning team of all data from the NSS, Your Voice Matters (YVM), and Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQ) (see TQ1) - on average over 20,000 questionnaires a year. Responses are organised into 21 categories, each of which targets key areas of our provision and performance. The power of the system lies in this coordinated analysis and the actions which then arise at module, programme, departmental, institute and university level, subsequently tracked through AU's decision-making structures. This document contains numerous examples of the impact of this approach.

Through our Learning and Teaching Strategy (LTS) we have considered the fitness for purpose of every aspect of the student experience and taken deliberate steps to enhance our culture as well as our academic, physical and technical infrastructure. At the heart of the LTS are university-wide actions to improve four strategic headline areas: the quality of undergraduate teaching, the quality of undergraduate feedback, the quality of undergraduate student support, and action to improve employability. The strength of our approach is that all of the 17 LTS project strands are collaborative implementation projects owned by the community and chaired by academic members of staff, with valuable input from AberSU representatives. Therefore, colleagues across AU have collective commitment to and accountability for the implementation of LTS objectives. We believe that the community of practice (cf. LE2), which we have nurtured in AU, has ensured the outcomes we are proud to report in this paper, and will assure continued delivery and enhancement in the years ahead.

## 3. Commentary on Metrics

Majority Mode. Our majority mode is full-time by a very significant margin. We would ask that the 17% headcount or 3% by FTE part-time registration stated in the metrics summary is viewed with caution and with the following in mind. Part-time study is not part of our core offering and we do not have a traditional part-time student population. Our 'Other UG' students are comprised of 99% extramural registrations and 71% of these are mature registrants with a mean age of 55 studying for personal interest. We also encourage our full-time undergraduates to register for extra mural courses in their free time (typically they develop their foreign language skills) and they make up a further 29% of the 'Other UG' part-time registrations (cf. SO3). In 2016/17, 59 of our 108 First Degree part-time students were UK-based distance learners who did not attend the campus. Another 49 moved from full-time degree study to meet their personal circumstances and are not a representative sample of our students.

Official HESA Employment Performance Indicators have been suppressed (not calculated) for AU for at least the past three years due to the very low numbers in the populations for our part-time first degree and part-time other undergraduate leavers. The negative indicator for this mode of study for year 2 for the 'highly skilled' metric is based on a numerator of only 25, and of these 13 are lifelong learners who were mature OUG leavers. If these leavers were excluded from both the denominator and numerator, the 'highly skilled' metric for our part-time provision, based on just 12 outcomes, would have been 11 percentage points higher and very likely not to have been flagged as being in the bottom 10%.

Longitudinal Educational Outcomes. Our course portfolio does not include many professional degrees which lead directly to a career; nevertheless the experimental LEO data shows that AU exceeds benchmark for the full-time and part-time metric for those in "sustained employability or further study". The part-time indicator is based on a very small sample (see above) of mostly "life-long learners". We attract a negative flag for median earnings for full-time students (cf. National Contextual Statement), although do not receive an "absolute" indicator. For the experimental LEO data, there is no flag in the metrics for the 'sustained employability or further study' metric, with both the full-time and part-time metric exceeding the benchmark allocated. These supplementary metrics are based on graduates from the 2010/11 academic year whose time at the university started back in September 2008. The more recent three years' worth of TEF 'highly skilled' metrics for our full-

time leavers highlights the consistent improvement of employment opportunities and our graduate outcomes (cf. SO1).

| UK, Full-Time, First Degree Students | LEO Data- Full Time | Most Recent DLHE Survey |
|---|---|---|
| Graduating Year | 2010/11 | 2015/16 |
| Majority Intake year | 2008/9 | 2013/14 |
| Percentage in FT Employment, in a professional level job | 50% | 75% (25% point improvement) |

*Table One. Improvement in GPI since the LEO data point*

We agree with the TEF National Contextual Statement for Wales that LEO metrics need to be contextualised with salary levels and cost of living in the locality that the graduate is employed; Wales has the lowest salaries paid to graduates when compared to the other countries in the UK. It should also be noted that since 2013 we no longer offer the part-time HND and HNC courses which may have contributed significantly to the LEO data and the "!" indicator in our part-time metrics.

Our split metrics show a negative flag for employment for mature graduates but the underlying trend is improving – moving from 84% to 86% over the three-year period. Our CareerTrack initiative (cf. SO2) was introduced last year to better identify the specific needs of different student groups, including mature students. We trust that the personalised, pro-active service will continue to improve this metric. At 67% our TEF3 metric for highly-skilled employment for this group is above benchmark.

An additional negative flag is posted against Assessment and Feedback for "Other UG". This group of students all follow a Foundation Degree qualification with our IBERS Institute. The negative results are a historical lagging indicator partially caused by issues with course design, which have been addressed from 2017 intake by a full portfolio review.

### 4. Teaching Quality: Student Engagement (TQ1)

Your Voice Matters. We engage with our students to shape strategy and policy, to indicate emerging concerns and to test the success or otherwise of strategic decisions we have made to develop the learning and teaching environment and infrastructure. At the heart of this engagement lies YVM; this is one of our largest LTS projects. Its core objective is to facilitate an on-going conversation with students about their experience at AU. Students' use of the anonymous web form resulted in 800 actions in its first year of operation (2015/16). Examples of interventions include increasing the number of books undergraduates could borrow and opening our main Hugh Owen Library 24 hours per day in term-time. Students in specific departments have also benefitted from a wide range of actions, such as the construction of new 40-seat cinema in the Theatre, Film and Television department and the provision of a new painting space in the Art School.

Student Engagement with VLE Redesign. In the "Students on Tech" project funded by the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Fund, the E-learning Group engaged a team of students to conduct surveys and focus groups with students across AU. The students wrote a report with detailed recommendations, which were applied to the redesign of our Blackboard VLE. Results from the 2017-18 Information Services User Survey show that the redesign has had a positive impact on the student experience. A paper on this project was presented at the JISC Change Agents Network conference in April 2017 and is awaiting publication in the *Journal of Educational Innovation Partnership and Change* in 2018.

Module Evaluation Questionnaires. Our online MEQs further engage our students with teaching quality enhancement. Through discussions with the HEA, it became apparent that the sector practice of conducting module evaluations at the end of a semester generated little more than "autopsy data". We therefore developed an MEQ policy and reporting process to run the online surveys during the semester, with all modules evaluated over a 4-week period. The process is administered by a central Planning team who set a detailed timetable to ensure all modules are surveyed. Examples of our response at the modular level include the introduction of extra weekly tasks which facilitate more opportunities to receive formative feedback, and an increase in the number of sessions devoted to the writing of critical reviews. An example of our response at AU level includes the introduction of

formal policies which regulate the e-submission of assessment and feedback. Further examples are found in TQ3, TQ4, LE1 and LE3.

Student Engagement with Teaching Data Quality Analysis. Our Student Officers see these analyses and discuss them with the University Executive. Departmental Staff Student Consultative Committees (SSCCs) also consider and respond to these data. These discussions determine next steps in terms of possible changes to module design and delivery, and investment and development by the broader university. This process further facilitates discussions with colleagues and students regarding teaching quality and student outcomes. For instance, student commentary in both YVM and MEQ encouraged us to make the recording of all lectures mandatory for the benefit of the student body (cf. LE1).

## 5. Teaching Quality: Valuing Teaching (TQ2)

The Centre for the Development of Staff and Academic Practice (CDSAP) is part of our Institute of Professional Development. It designs and delivers much of the educational and professional development of staff at the University. In addition to mentoring colleagues and supporting their applications for the various levels of HEA Fellowship, CDSAP provides an annual programme of CPD courses, events and workshops. It also delivers a number of accredited programmes of study, including the PGCTHE and programmes on effective leadership in universities.

Teaching Qualifications. The Aberystwyth-Bangor Joint Scheme for Recognising Continuing Professional Development in Teaching and Supporting Learning is accredited by the HEA and aligned to the aims of the UKPSF. This bi-annual process is a well-established approach to the professional development of staff engaged in teaching and supporting learning and recognises the impact that this has on innovation and the student experience. The panel awards HEA fellowships at all 4 levels, and draws its reviewers and mentors from across the staff in both universities. The majority of our colleagues on teaching and research contracts hold a recognised teaching qualification, 73.1% (FTE level data) compared to the 2014 sector average of 44%. Successful completion of our PGCTHE programme, or evidence of equivalent qualification, is a probationary requirement for all new appointments on standard full-time teaching and research contracts.

Recognition of Excellence in Teaching and Leadership. Our academic promotions structure explicitly recognises leadership and excellence in teaching. Colleagues must demonstrate, as a minimum, good practice. In our most recent academic promotion round, 76% of all successful applicants for promotion to Senior Lecturer supported their applications with benchmarked examples of excellence in teaching and academic leadership. Professorial appointments may also follow this route. Examples of such promotions include a professor in Geography partly for the leadership of a 3-year student retention project; a professor in Psychology for the authorship of internationally acclaimed textbooks and the redesign of our Personal Tutor system; and a professor in Biological Sciences for championing the Foundation Year Life Sciences programme. AberSU also recognises many aspects of excellent teaching and student support in its annual teaching awards ceremony and colleagues may cite such awards or their nomination in applications for promotion. We further encourage excellent course design and delivery through our Exemplary Course Awards.

Managing Workloads. Time for teaching, administration and scholarship is further identified, protected and encouraged via our workload allocation model. Our base line model allocates 500 hours each to teaching, research, and scholarship and management. This is transparently captured in timetable planning (cf. LE1). The workload is then adjusted in the annual meeting of academic colleagues and their line manager through the Effective Contribution Scheme.

Learning and Teaching Enhancement Fund. We maintain a Learning and Teaching Enhancement Fund (LTEF) to which colleagues have access for developing new teaching materials or resources to support innovative pedagogic approaches. Recent projects (2016) have included “Audio Feedback, A Student-Centred Evaluation”, “Enhancing the Role of Coaching and Mentoring in Teaching and Learning”, “Improving Tablet Teaching”, “Student Engagement with Technology-Enhanced Learning” and “Teaching for Postgraduates at Aberystwyth University”.

## 6. Teaching Quality: Rigour and Stretch (TQ3)

We have made no changes to our Cascade system which calculates final degree marks during the time span of the degree class data used for this analysis.

Grade Inflation. The grade inflation data uses 2013/14 as the benchmark year. We have not used earlier dates because during 2009-2013 we were moving from awarding University of Wales degrees to operating under our own degree awarding powers (cf. TEF National Contextual Statement for Wales). The grade inflation metrics show a 5% increase in first class degree awards over 3 years, along with a decrease of 3% in 2:1 degrees giving a net 2% increase in "good honours". The deliberate improvement of our facilities and teaching practices has led to an increase in satisfaction with our teaching, assessment and overall course provision (evident in the NSS results) as well as incremental improvements in the degree outcomes of our students. Therefore, we do not wish to hide from the change in first class degrees awarded, rather use it as evidence that our improved performance and delivery has positively benefited our students' learning outcomes (cf. LE2 & LE3). Additionally, as a result of tightened progression rules, students can now carry fewer module marks below 40% into the final year. This increase in rigour has, counter-intuitively, uplifted the proportion of good degrees awarded.

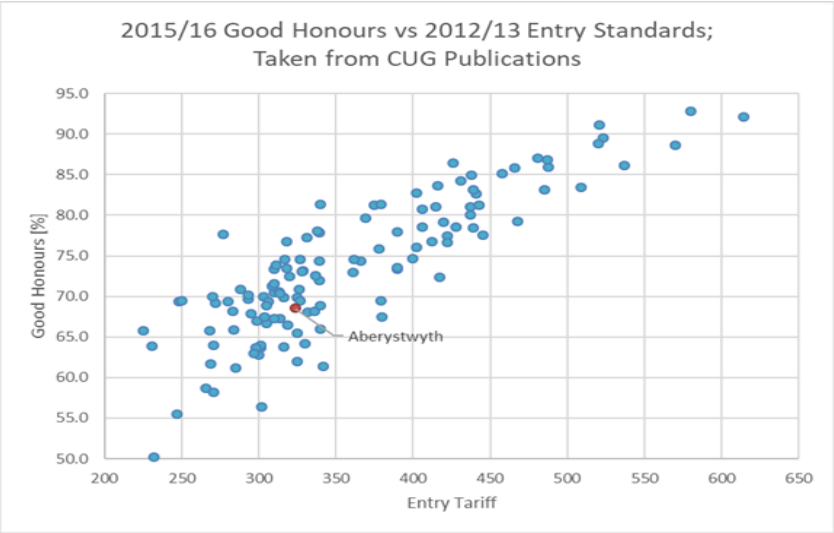


*Chart 1. Showing good honours rates and entry tariff taken from the relevant Complete University Guide.*

Benchmarked Achievement. We would also highlight that Aberystwyth is shown to be in line (Chart 1) with other UK universities if good honours rates are plotted against entry standards from 3 years previously. We believe that this data confirms that we deliver an appropriate level of higher awards, 67% good honours in 16/17, which is notably below the UK average of 71.5% (*HESA data retrieved March 2017*) but in keeping with the entry standard of our students.

Professional Accreditation. We currently have 123 programmes, of 309, accredited by a professional accrediting body. We believe such accreditation is central to assuring our students graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue a professional career.

Aspirational Progression. AU has increased the number of Integrated Masters courses from 6 to 22, across eight departments. The elevated progression standard (50% module pass mark as opposed to 40%) and the higher entry standards expected of these courses (two A level grades or equivalent) applies the rigorous standard we expect from students aiming for a Masters-level qualification. This growing group of students will clearly influence our outcomes at graduation. Recent data shows particular success with the new MBiol qualification, where 17 students transferred in Year 2 on to the IM course in 2016. In addition, typically 10% of our FT UG students progress onto taught postgraduate programmes.

Tightened Progression. In 2013/14, we changed our progression rules, reducing the number of failed credits that a student may carry forward to 20, or typically just one module. Support for our students

has ensured that progression rates remain high, while delivering increased rigour and an improved standard of learning for students progressing into the final year.

Teaching Hours. We are clear that every 10 credits studied requires 100 hours of engagement from our students, monitored via the online tutor dashboard. In addition, MEQs capture students' views on teaching hours, positive and negative, which are incorporated in our Annual Monitoring of Taught Schemes and discussed in the SSCCs. The pedagogic underpinning for the contact hours within each subject discipline is discussed within SSCC meetings. We have also benchmarked our contact hours against the sector in each subject discipline and established that we conform to the norms.

Unfair Academic Practice. A further benefit of our assessment and feedback policy (cf. TQ4) is that all written assessments are checked for originality using the Turnitin platform. Each assignment receives an unambiguous originality score from this platform. Our students greatly value this facility as it ensures that poor academic practice does not go unchallenged and does not rely on the ability of faculty members to recognise text. Students identified through this process are required to attend mandatory training on good academic practice.

## 7. Teaching Quality: Feedback (TQ4)

Student dissatisfaction with their feedback and colleagues' frustration with students' failure to collect huge volumes of written feedback from pigeon holes, or act on the feedback received, led us to work in partnership to develop a comprehensive range of solutions. Direct student input came from the leadership and engagement of the AberSU Education Officer whose election campaign had been based upon a "Focus on Feedback"; and a second year of continuity was maintained when the post holder went on to become the AberSU President.

Following a two-year trial period we introduced e-submission of all coursework in 2014, backed up by training that facilitated submission of coursework and online marking. Students must now submit work for assessment electronically and the majority receive their feedback electronically in written, video or audio mode. In 2015, over 50,000 assignments were submitted electronically, and over 47,000 were marked and given feedback online. Another benefit of this technology is that we are able to audit that all programmes meet our 3-week feedback deadline and take appropriate action to support our students on the very rare occasions where we fail to meet this target.

In 2015, the assessment and feedback strand of the LTS further enhanced these areas across the whole of AU with a particular focus on developing the quality of feedback. The group developed a new assessment and feedback policy that put the learner at the heart of the system, with feedback and feedforward supporting the incremental development of the learner. In response, we have developed "authentic assessment" that tests academic ability and knowledge in the context of tasks that are worthwhile and significant, yet remain relevant outside an academic setting. Examples we use include writing business plans, industrial reports for a line manager, scientific papers, video diaries, and journalistic pieces.

The AU-wide personal tutorial curriculum now delivers specific sessions on how to use feedback and feed it forward into next assignments (cf. LE3).

We believe that these actions have had a clear impact on learner development (cf. TQ2) with a corresponding increase in learner satisfaction with assessment and feedback. In NSS 2013 student satisfaction with our assessment and feedback was 65%; this has improved year on year to 82.8% in NSS 2017. This is 9% above the sector average and represents a 17.8% improvement in four years.

## 8. Learning Environment: Resources (LE1)

Physical Infrastructure. Our Learning Space Project was a £9 million initiative launched in 2012 to improve the physical environment, to facilitate student learning and encourage modes of teaching beyond the traditional lecture. Core to this was the appointment of a learning space designer who comprehensively redesigned our rooms in line with international best practice and in consultation with a wide constituency including our student body. With increased note-taking on electronic devices, for example, our students highlighted the need for abundant power supply points in both

lecture theatres and social learning spaces. The project delivered a designed choice of room and furniture layouts supporting a range of pedagogic methods, ease of use, consistent technical functionality and classroom technologies that enhance the learning environment. Over three years each of our 60 lecture theatres and six major laboratories were rebuilt to these international standards; in addition, six large scale social learning spaces were opened. We continue to monitor students' views of our learning spaces via internal surveys. The Learning Space Project was shortlisted for the THELMAs "Outstanding Estates Team" in 2015.

Lecture Capture. As a result of the Learning Space Project, all learning spaces are equipped with a lecture recording facility. Our students' enthusiasm for this innovation led to our commitment to record all teaching sessions. The formal policy introduced in 2016/17 required that all lectures should be recorded and made available to students. Effective use of lecture capture and how the facility can be used to enhance the classroom experience has been a regular feature of our annual Learning and Teaching Conference and staff training sessions. In 2013/14 we recorded 2,102 sessions; in 2016/17 this totalled 13,000. Student use of this resource is considerable with unique views rising to over 30,000 in some weeks or over 300,000 minutes of viewing.

Learning Technology. In addition to lecture capture, we have embraced teaching with mobile phones and tablets. All our lecture theatres are also equipped with wireless display technology. Our Institute of Physics, Mathematics and Computer Science has pioneered tablet teaching. This innovation led to invited talks at HEA conferences and three AberSU teaching awards as well as opening new pathways for widening participation and student support.

Blackboard. We have used Blackboard as our VLE for 13 years. In response to student feedback and to ensure consistency of the student experience and learner support, Senate has defined a "Required Minimum Presence" (RMP) as an AU-wide minimum standard. The RMP draws upon selected elements from Blackboard's Exemplary Course Programme. The aim is to ensure that students can easily find all the relevant module content in their Blackboard modules, and to support good practice in learning, teaching and assessment. Over 2,000 taught modules meet this standard. To further enhance the use of the VLE to improve student learning, and share good practice, we introduced the annual Exemplary Course Awards. These recognise excellence in learning and teaching, and support staff in designing their Blackboard modules. The impact of this programme has been the improvement in Blackboard standards as colleagues learn from and adopt exemplary practices as demonstrated by winning modules.

Timetable. Student feedback in 2012 demonstrated low levels of satisfaction (72%) with the operation of the timetable. In response, we completely re-engineered our timetable including the development of new systems, the creation of a new timetable team and the overhaul of our processes for planning teaching. The impact of these changes ensured all student and staff teaching activity was captured on the timetable. This gave students a personalised timetable and allowed us to release teaching and exam timetables earlier. We pay close attention to this feature of our students' learning experience. By 2017, the MEQs reported 87% satisfaction with the operation and delivery of the timetable, and the NSS reported 86% satisfaction with the organisation and management of our teaching.

Library Resources. In partnership with other universities in Wales, we won the Outstanding Library Team category at the 2015 Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Awards. Our Information Services team also won the Customer Service Excellence award in 2015. Our annual investment in information provision is well above the average of all UK HE providers at £221 per FTE student versus the average of £177 per FTE student in 2015/16. Investment in electronic books has also delivered encouraging results and on average each student now downloads 71 e-books a year. To further support outcomes and enhance the student experience, we have invested in the provision of online reading lists, which link directly to digital and physical resources. Over 90% of all taught modules now have online reading lists, the only exceptions being modules with embedded reading, field courses, practical based and dissertation modules.

Our approach to designing and maintaining the learning environment has seen satisfaction with learning resources and facilities rise from 81% in NSS 2014 to 89% in NSS 2017. Internally, students rated the support provided by our IT resources at 89.75% and their access to online learning

resources at 90%. Between 2014 and 2017 internal surveys also reported increased satisfaction with library opening hours (up 20%), the range of resources available (up 7%), access to resources (up 10%), and the quality of library spaces (up 10%). Following student feedback, in January 2018 we completed a £1 million redesign and rebuild of the ground floor of our main Hugh Owen Library to develop better access and provide improved group and social learning spaces.

## 9. Learning Environment: Scholarship, Research and Professional Practice (LE2)

An Aberystwyth education is founded on engaging, creative teaching, delivered primarily by research active staff. The overwhelming majority of our teaching staff are contractually required to deliver both teaching and research. In REF 2014, 95% of our research activity was recognised to be of an international standard or higher. We are ranked within the top 50 institutions in the UK for Research Power (*Research Fortnight*) and Intensity (*Times Higher Education*).

Research and Teaching. Research-led teaching stretches students and engages them in contemporary research. In particular, it provides them with current subject-specific knowledge, a greater understanding of the research process itself, its application and the grand challenges and innovations in their discipline. Modules that directly reflect staff research interests are a particular feature of the final year (cf. TQ3). In addition, an extended research project is a key feature of many programmes and typically weighted as a third of the final year credits. In addition to research-led taught modules, our students can collaborate with any of our research groups, use any of our research facilities or join field research. For example, our upland farming research station, Pwllpeiran, is used by research scientists and agriculture and environment students to put theory into practice; by computer science students to develop robotics platforms and remote sensing projects, and by geographers looking at the pollen history of the Middle Age development of the region by Cistercian monks. Furthermore, our students benefit from full access to the National Library of Wales (copyright library) located adjacent to our main campus. With the teaching of specialist modules comes the responsibility of ensuring appropriate resourcing; in 2017, the MEQs reported 89% satisfaction with the provision of module specific resources (cf. LE2).

Building a Community of Practice. Our faculty identified the need to build a community of practice across disciplines to share good practice and inspire each other. In response, the Aber Academy was established in 2014 - a physical space with a lecture theatre, meeting rooms, a fully-equipped computer suite, media lab and film studio. The Academy Forum hosts regular themed discussion groups, training events, and mini-conferences for academic staff and students to encourage pedagogic and technical development. In addition, our Nexus website (established in 2009) provides online support for learning and teaching development and a wide range of useful Wikis. The traffic to Nexus testifies to the value and impact of this pedagogic development and support: between October 2016 and October 2017, it received visits from 4,882 unique users.

Our annual Learning and Teaching Conference is a 3-day event that aims to build an inclusive community of practice for our staff and students. Participation in, and leadership of, these sessions can be cited in applications for promotion. We also draw on good practice in the wider HE sector through invited external keynote speakers. The AberSU Education Officer also gives an annual keynote. Conference themes are identified through engagement with key stakeholders and these have included the following:

- 2017 - Promoting Staff and Student Growth
- 2016 - Appreciating Excellence: Discover Dream Design Deliver
- 2015 - Celebrating the Diversity of Teaching Excellence
- 2014 - Inspiring Teaching: Sharing Teaching and Technology Tales
- 2013 - Why Change the Way I Teach? Enhancing Student Engagement and Learning

These developments have helped to develop an informed and enthusiastic community of practice that is central to our delivery of an excellent student experience with strong outcomes.

## 10. Learning Environment: Personalised Learning (LE3)

Online Study Support. AberSkills is our online study support vehicle, accessible via Blackboard, which hosts resources that enable students to further develop good academic practice and referencing, academic writing, preparing for exams, making effective presentations, learning strategies, library and information skills, statistics and numeracy, language support and employability. Students wanting or needing more support may also enrol in taught modules which further enhance undergraduate writing, communication skills and information skills.

Learner Analytics. Targeted support of our students called for a detailed picture of their engagement with the University. Therefore, we developed a comprehensive range of engagement and performance indicators to enable the targeted use of learning analytics. Indicators include attendance (each of our teaching spaces is equipped with an electronic attendance monitoring), use of our VLE Blackboard, and use of recorded lectures. All key information we hold on a student's performance and engagement is presented on our tutor dashboard **"A**berystwyth **L**earning **A**nalytics **D**ashboard **In**teractive (Aladdin)". Tutors use the engagement indicators embedded in the tutor dashboard to identify changes in student behaviour as early as possible and to ensure that support and appropriate personalised intervention occurs. JISC has recognised our leadership in this area by making us partners in their Learning Analytics Pathfinders group of five institutions who are leading the development of predictive analytics.

ApAber. The in-house development of the multi-platform and bilingual ApAber app was prompted by the Learning Analytics Project Group, which suggested we present the data embedded in Aladdin to our students. The group also identified a requirement to allow centralised and personalised access to the myriad of information our students need via a mobile platform. Now in its second full year of operation, the app offers students access to their email, their calendar, their modules via Blackboard and gives information on PC-availability across our campus. Students can also check their overall attendance record and whether they have successfully registered their attendance at a particular timetabled class. They can view their personalised timetable, bus schedules and library book loans. We also use the app to keep students up-to-date with news and upcoming events. Our Academic Quality and Records Office also use the app to directly link our students to key information about their academic progress, examinations, appeals and complaints, and graduation. In short, the app provides easy access to all the information our students need. Adoption was rapid, with over 3,000 users within the first month, 6,168 in the first year and 8,394 by year two. Essentially, the entire student body now routinely use ApAber. Following further input from our students, we added all AberSU facilities to the app and incorporated a voting tile to aid AberSU democratic processes and participation. This innovation has enriched our student democracy. Participation in the October 2017 SU elections (1,184 voters) was double the participation in 2016 and eight times higher than 2015.

Personal Tutor System Enhancement. The personal tutor is central to our development of the student learner, the development of key skills and pastoral support. To ensure that our tutor system was as good as it could be, we conducted research across the HE sector to identify the principles and practices that are the hallmarks of an effective personal tutor system. As a result, we have designed and implemented a consistent AU-wide tutorial system. This ensures regular contact with personal tutors throughout all years of study. Content guidelines on Blackboard ensure that tutors cover all the essential elements for academic and pastoral support, including (but not exclusively) patterns of lecture attendance, writing and study skills, evaluation of academic performance and evaluation of student responses to feedback (cf. TQ4). Carefully considering, understanding and using feedback to move forward is essential to student development. As a central system, applied uniformly, student engagement with personal tutor meetings is monitored and recorded. A particularly important feature is that students have access to the notes made in these meetings. A hallmark of our personal tutor system is a high level of student satisfaction, with our latest MEQs showing 94% satisfaction with ability to contact staff across all years and all modules, and 95% for our third year students. An integral part of our student support framework, NSS 2017 reported 86% satisfaction for academic support.

Studying Abroad. We draw on our wide network of around 200 global partner universities to offer study places to students on every continent as part of an Exchange, Erasmus or an Erasmus+

scheme. We have a dedicated Study Year Abroad team offering support and guidance to relevant students before, during and after their placement. The statistics speak for themselves. Our Modern Languages department, where all students undertake a Study Year Abroad, consistently reports high graduate prospects results - DLHE 2015/16 indicates 87% (13% points higher than national figure (cf. SO1).

Enhancing the Welsh-medium Student Experience. 31% of our Welsh domiciled students are fluent Welsh speakers. A major strength of our approach to personalised learning is the Welsh-medium and bilingual provision offered at the University. Any student may request and submit assessment through the medium of Welsh, regardless of the language of delivery of the module. In line with best practice, we seek to appoint Welsh-medium external examiners to assure rigour and stretch in our Welsh-medium provision. In addition, the use of the Welsh language is integral to all our academic and governance structures.

In seeking to enhance provision for students through the medium of Welsh, we have invested in the appointment and development of academic and professional staff. Targeted investment, as well as working in partnership with national bodies such as the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, enables us to deliver Welsh-medium teaching in areas of priority to the Welsh economy, including STEM areas such as Computer Science, Physics, Mathematics, as well as Agri-Biotech and the Bio-economy, including Veterinary Bioscience. We are the only HEI in Wales that achieves the 40 Welsh-medium Credit threshold in Physics, Mathematics and Computer Science. Aberystwyth is the leading Welsh-medium provider in the Sciences, employing 20 of the 30 active Welsh-medium teaching staff in Biological, Mathematical and Physical Sciences (2015/16 FPE / HESA). Excellence in Welsh-medium teaching is celebrated at the AberSU Teaching Awards and our new St David's Day Awards established in 2017. Of the 309 programmes we list on UCAS, 77% (239) offer at least 25% of teaching through the medium of Welsh. In 2016/17, 79% of our bilingual students studied at least 40 Credits in Welsh and 44% studied 80 credits. To deliver this extensive choice, the University has developed a vibrant academic community in which 21.8% of FTE can teach through the medium of Welsh which is double the figure of 10.8% for the rest of Wales (Stats Wales website).

A number of projects contribute to enhancing the Welsh-medium student experience, including research about Welsh-medium and bilingual education to develop a greater understanding of the needs of the Welsh-speaking student community. The Head of Geography and Earth Sciences led a team of academics on a Coleg Cymraeg-funded project entitled 'Linguistic Impact Report – Students' Experience of the Welsh Language in HE'. The report has helped inform AU's provision, including the development of a new Welsh-medium Scholarships programme and an integrated support package entitled '6 Addewid Aber / Aber's 6 Pledges', which guarantees flexible opportunities to study in the medium of Welsh, a Welsh-speaking personal tutor, bilingual work experience, guaranteed Welsh-medium student accommodation, lessons to improve Welsh language skills and free membership of UMCA.

| DLHE Statistics Based on Student's Degree of Study though the Medium of Welsh in their First Year of Study | | |
|---|---|---|
| | In Employment / Further Study | In High-Skilled Employment / Further Study |
| 0 Credits | 94.9% | 73.9% |
| At least 5 Credits | 97.4% | 79.2% |
| At least 40 Credits | 98.4% | 80.3% |
| At least 80 Credits | 100.0% | 78.1% |

Evidence of the demand for these higher bilingual skills comes from the DLHE outcomes achieved by graduates who have undertaken some of their studies through the medium of Welsh. Demand is also driven by the needs of employers as well as by the developing devolved legislative framework in Wales. As well as demand, the students are supported by being able to access support from bilingual Careers Service advisors and placement and employment opportunities in Welsh and bilingual settings (cf. SO2).

We provide access to Learning Resources through the medium of Welsh for students. This provision also includes frontline bilingual staff within the Library Service to assist students. Our Information Services also prioritises student-facing applications and software ensuring that the interface for all relevant systems is thoroughly bilingual, for example the popular ApAber app. Our colleagues are engaged in developing the Coleg Cymraeg's Subject Plans and have attracted funding for the

production of learning resources in a range of subjects, including Mathematics, Physics, Law, Business, Geography, International Politics, Modern Languages, History, Media, Theatre and Film Studies, and Linguistics including Old Welsh.

### 11. Student Outcomes and Learning Gain: Employment and Further Study (SO1*)*

Consistent focus on the development of employability skills, work-based learning and the introduction of an industrial year in many of our programmes has delivered a steady improvement in graduate outcomes. The latest DLHE survey published by HESA in 2017 showed that, 95% of our 2016 graduates were in work or further study and 74% were in highly skilled employment or further study. A report in *The Economist* (10 August 2017), which weighted graduate employment outcomes in respect of subject mix and distance from London, ranked us 38th in the UK.

At AU, work experience is embedded in students' overall learning experiences. This begins in the teaching they receive in their first year and our MEQ survey indicates that 88% of our first year students are satisfied with the development of employability skills in their modules. Our students also benefit from the professional skills requirement of PSRB accreditation (cf. TQ1). For example, accreditation by the Royal Society of Biology requires the development of a skills passport by every student.

Engaging with Industry. AU has a long tradition of engagement with major employers. We have learned from the success of the work experience placements in our Computer Science department, which has outstanding employability statistics (95% of CS graduates entered worked at a professional level in 2016 - 13 percentage points above subject sector score, HESA 2017). We also offer four-year degrees, with Integrated Years in Industry/Years in Professional Practice (IY), across eight disciplines. In 2011, we offered 16 IY programmes; by 2017, this had grown to 45 courses. Engaged employers include Experian, Disneyland Paris, Qinetiq, UK Parliament, Welsh Government, Waitrose, BBC, S4C, Network Rail, RCAHMW, Innovis, Balfour Beatty, and Virgin Finance. Combining the three latest DLHE surveys shows that 95.6% of our students who did their UG degree with an IY were in 'professional' level employment or 'graduate' level further study within six months of graduating.

AberForward**.** Due to our rural location and the limited range of employment opportunities available locally, on-campus work experience opportunities are vital and a key aspect of our commitment to enhance the future employability of our students. We currently offer 4-6 week paid professional work experience opportunities in academic and professional support departments. All AberForward placements are supported by training workshops, covering employability skills such as leadership development, CV writing, interview skills, project management, and Excel in the workplace. Over the past three years we have offered over 400 employment opportunities through this initiative. We also offer a longer-term internship scheme for recent graduates, with 44 graduates benefitting from this initiative over the past three years.

AberWorks. Another example of our commitment to supporting students who can work part-time at AU and gain valuable, paid work experience. In 2017, this initiative offered 680 employment opportunities to our students.

AberPreneurs. We provide a bespoke service for all students and graduates interested in becoming freelance, self-employed, or establishing a social enterprise. The programme includes a business start-up week, mentoring by professionals and entrepreneur role models, one-to-one support by a Careers Consultant, workshops and skills training. In 2017, we organised 29 events, attracting more than 500 attendees. We run an annual Inventerprize competition with a £10,000 prize (funded by alumni from the world of business), using a Dragon's Den format. Recent winning businesses include the Papora language learning website and Kar-go, a driverless parcel delivery vehicle development venture.

Volunteering. Volunteering is a key feature of student life at Aber. Our accredited "Investing in Volunteers" scheme is coordinated by a dedicated resource based in AberSU. Opportunities include working with national organisations such as the RNLI, St John Ambulance, Sea Cadets, Working with Women on Probation, as well as our own after-school Robotics Club, local conservation work and the running of over 150 student societies. AberSU has over 1,300 registered volunteers who all

contribute to our local community. A further 400 are involved in community projects such as hospital radio, Beach Buddies and Community Sports Coaching. Student engagement in these and other activities is validated and recorded in the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) issued to our students at graduation.

### 12. Student Outcomes and Learning Gain: Employability and Transferable Skills (SO2)

We have embedded employability in the curriculum of all programmes. A skills-development rubric has been developed for each academic department to highlight the transferability of skills from academia to employment. Recent MEQs confirm this, showing satisfaction with the development of employability skills in taught modules across AU at 89%.

CareerTrack is a data collection process that captures the "career readiness" of every student at the beginning of each year of study. New students indicate their perceived "career readiness" and work experience at registration. We are therefore able to highlight the need for careers' guidance and advice from their first week with us. This enables us to tailor personalised support and guidance appropriately; we also take account of other information about the student, such as entry grade, performance to date, or financial background. In addition, Careers Education is available bilingually (cf. LE3), is further tailored to departmental needs, and adapted to target specific cohorts.

Programme Development. Programme development is undertaken with the importance of employability in mind and the regular process of PSRB re-accreditation ensures that the awarding employer groups are satisfied with the real-life application of knowledge and skills in these programmes. Our permanent teaching staff include professionals and practitioners: published novelists and poets, lawyers, teachers, marketers, app developers, national museum curators, business consultants, professional translators, and government advisors. The input of employers and practitioners is a regular feature of the curriculum. For example, conservation/ agriculture students visit National Trust and Natural Resource Wales sites; students from our Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies have worked with BBC staff in their on-campus studio, and with Fiction Factory on the internationally successful *Y Gwyll / Hinterland* crime thriller series filmed locally. Departments are encouraged to invite experienced professionals to deliver seminars. One example of this is our Department of International Politics which regularly invites Foreign and Commonwealth Office experts, United Nations officials and others to meet our students and discuss their working life and career. Through this approach, we produce confident and employable graduates with the professional competencies valued by employers.

### 13. Student Outcomes and Learning Gain: Positive Outcomes for All (SO3)

As a predominantly full-time, residential university, we pride ourselves on our sense of community – among students, between students and staff, and between our University community and the close-knit bilingual community of Aberystwyth. A sense of belonging and being part of a supportive community where help is easily at hand is key to ensuring that our students, whatever their background, are enabled to achieve a positive outcome. Our determination to develop and support this strong community has driven our student accommodation and estates strategy since 2012. Fferm Penglais, our award-winning student residence complex, was explicitly designed to encourage communities to develop. All our accommodation has ample communal space, both for socialising and for shared study; and we maintain appropriate Welsh-medium living spaces. We have a commitment to the support of healthy living and as part of this commitment, students living in our residences now enjoy free access to our gym facilities and exercise classes. This encouraged an extra 40,010 visits in 2017 - a 36% increase. With 81% satisfaction in our 2017 MEQ surveys, our students clearly feel that they are part of a strong learning community.

All students can take a free additional language course, *ab initio,* from the wide range available from the University's Lifelong Learning department. Our flexible, module-based curriculum also allows students to take one module from another department outside those required for their degree (cf. Commentary on Metrics).

Transitioning to University. We identified the social and academic issues that are likely to arise during this period, intervening to reduce the sense of isolation which can be felt by new students and highlighting the opportunities to positively transition to university life. We use data analysis to identify

at-risk groups and these details are communicated to departments to ensure supportive monitoring of at-risk individuals within these groups. We have also identified key moments in the student journey where we may positively support students at risk of withdrawal. Aladdin is vital to this monitoring and intervention (cf. LE3). Welcome Week activities now include specific central events, in addition to the interactions with staff and other students that promote social belonging at departmental and course levels. We also ensure that new entrants are quickly put in touch with their tutors and other key contacts. Latest MEQ data indicates that 93% of first year students agree that they are easily able to contact staff for academic support from the outset (cf. CareerTrack in SO2 and narrative in SO3).

Clubs and Societies. Our 150+ student societies – academic, sporting, political, leisure – are key to a sense of belonging, and it is clear that student-led subject societies in particular help academic and employability success. For example, the student publication for the Geography Society shares experience of field trips with students and gives advice on option choices, while the Physics Society developed a publication designed to help students interested in taking up science writing as a career. Weekly socials happen in many subject societies, as well as friendly competitions. Subject societies provide a space where students can learn from students above them about the practicalities of doing a degree, and share ideas about future plans.

Students with a Declared Disability. In 2016-17, 1,147 students disclosed a disability representing 13.9% of the student population. The number of students at AU who received Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) in 2015-16 was 576 (50.2% of those disclosing) - higher than the UK figure of 42.2%. In 2015/16, 79 students disclosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and 140 with Mental Health issues, representing 8% and 14% of the disabled student population. The current UK figures (ECU – 2014/15) show a disclosure rate of 2.9% and 14.8% respectively. The proactive work we do encourages disclosure and helps us to provide a range of tailored support services. Students in receipt of DSA withdraw from their studies at a lower rate (3.2% in 2016-17) than those not in receipt (3.7%), which demonstrates the support they receive. Over the last three years, students with a declared disability achieved an average of 16.7% first class degree awards and those with no declared disability achieved an average of 16.4% - further evidence of our commitment to supporting the achievement of excellence for all our students. These outcomes confirm the QAA's (2016) judgement that the range of support we provide is a feature of good practice.

Targeted Employability Support. The Aber+ scheme is a joint venture between our Student Support and Careers services. It helps students in receipt of the DSA, whom our monitoring has identified as not engaging with the Careers Service, to make effective use of it. In 2016/17, students regularly engaged in the pilot scheme, attending 12 workshops as well as 1-to-1 appointments, designed specifically for this cohort. As a result, 85% of these students gained work placements through Graduate Opportunities Wales. The effectiveness of this team approach is further demonstrated by our employability statistics, which show no significant difference between the employment rates of graduates with a declared disability and those reporting no disability.

Targeted Mentor Support. During 2016-17, 30 Signpost Peer Mentors were allocated to 122 mentees who were identified as having need of additional support, and 51% of mentees actively received support from their mentor. Of the students who received active mentor support, 97% remained in their studies. In addition to our Signpost Mentoring scheme, specialist mentors are available to students who have mental health issues or who are on the autistic spectrum and all schemes are accredited by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation.

Care Leavers. Care leavers are also carefully supported and while their numbers are low, there is no statistical difference between the degree class outcome of this group and non-care leavers.

Financial Support. In recognition that financial concerns are a major reason for some students discontinuing their studies, or underperforming, we automatically offer cash bursaries for students with family incomes of less than £35k p.a. We also operate a Hardship Fund, which disbursed £119,015 in 2016-17. Our Financial Advice Service, based in Student Support, is accredited by the National Association of Student Money Advisers.

Mental Health Support. In addition to the number of students disclosing mental health conditions, we are seeing an increasing number of students presenting for wellbeing support such as

counselling. To improve response times, we have introduced an online wellbeing registration process that enables us to triage students to appropriate support within one working day. We are also working in partnership with NHS Wales to offer the ACTivate Your Life course, which helps individuals deal with a range of emotional issues including anxiety, stress, lack of motivation, depression and self-confidence, to our first year students.

Widening Participation. We have a dedicated Centre for Widening Participation, Equality and Social Inclusion (CWPESI), which works with schools and colleges as well as mature students from our local community and areas of low participation to enhance their pre-entry education and provide excellent preparation and transition skills to HE. In the last four years, our Summer University (pre-HE, level 0) project has had almost 300 graduates and of those completing the project (selected on WA criteria / Hardest to reach), 82% have gone on to HE in AU and other HEIs. CWPESI tracks more than 90% of Summer University graduates for at least five years. For those in AU, who also receive additional mentoring, particularly on entry, retention over the last three years is 91%. In 2016, more than 60% of Summer University cohort graduated with good honours degrees (Class I or II(I)). CWPESI gives detailed feedback to every applicant with whom it works and interviews as many as possible to give them experience. The quality of our on-going support is borne out by our "++" flag for continuation for POLAR Quintiles 1 and 2. CWPESI works closely with the GO Wales (a Welsh national initiative) team, referring students from our widening access programmes who are targeted under this provision (approximately 40 referrals per year).

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students. Our split metrics show positive flags for Assessment/Feedback and Continuation for BME groups. Internal performance statistics are reviewed regularly as part of our Equality Strategy to monitor whether there are patterns showing poorer performance in any ethnic group. AberSU has a BAME student officer for advocacy, support and signposting. Black History Month is celebrated annually, and, in 2016, AU was awarded the Black History Month Diversity Champion Award, which celebrated the positive impact of our distinguished alumni.

Lesbian, Gay, Bi- and Transgender students. Aberystwyth University and town has a thriving LGBT community and cultural scene, and we have student and staff groups. In November 2017, our Equality and Diversity Team hosted our first conference on *Transgender and Binary Lives.* This drew together 65 participants from across the UK and featured discussions and workshops led by speakers from Stonewall Cymru, Welsh Government and Diversity Role Models. We are proud that we feature highly in the Stonewall Awards, as this is further confirmation of our commitment to being a strong, supportive community.

International Students. We attract students from over 90 countries. Our international students are supported by the International English Centre, which is accredited by the British Council and ranked 3rd in the UK following our most recent British Council Audit in 2017. Students are helped to develop their spoken English and academic writing skills in both pre-sessional courses and may enrol on courses which provide further support throughout their studies. The International Office also provides formal support and advice as well as informal social events and trips around the UK, which help our international students adjust to life in the UK. *One World Week*, in which our international students entertain and educate Aberystwyth's town and gown community, is a key date in the local calendar. We were ranked 2nd in the UK in the international category of the 2017 Whatuni Student Choice Awards.

## 14. Concluding Statement

Aberystwyth University has been providing education for nearly 150 years in mid Wales. Drawing on our historical reputation, this submission demonstrates our commitment to providing an exceptional 21st century education and student experience achieved through detailed attention to both national and university data as well as student and staff feedback. We have presented considerable evidence to demonstrate the impact of our actions to the benefit of students and the resulting improved outcomes. We work systematically as a whole university community to implement continuous improvement and this approach is reflected in our 2018-23 strategic plan. We support and challenge our students to reach their full potential, as part of an inclusive and welcoming community located in an outstanding natural environment.