Action Plan Response to the Quality Enhancement Review, undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency, Wales, in April 2022

Response to the QER Outcome and Technical Report
The University was delighted by the positive Outcome and Technical Report received from the QAA's QER Review Team, which found that we have 'robust arrangements in place for securing academic standards, managing academic quality, and for enhancing the student experience'. Due to the pandemic, this was a reduced review and hence there are no reported outcomes regarding enhancement of the student learning experience and of learning and teaching. The focus was on quality assurance and Aberystwyth University was awarded the highest judgment available. The University welcomed the recognition of the quality of our offering to students, both in terms of our academic standards and the wider student experience. The report reflects very positively on our provision across the board, including our approach to reaching into new areas which provide much needed skills for employment, both in our own region and in many other regions across the globe.

News of the review outcome was released to the media in a joint statement by AU and the QAA. Information was communicated internally in an all staff email alongside the NSS 2022 outcome, which placed Aberystwyth University top for student satisfaction in Wales and England and second in UK among universities featured in the latest edition of *The Times / Sunday Times Good University Guide*. Staff meetings have also included reference to the QER. Relevant stakeholders including partner bodies were also informed. The report has been submitted to our Academic Board and will be reported also to Senate and Council, as well as being referred to in our annual quality assurance and partnership monitoring reports to Council and Senate. |

Response to the Commendations					
Aim	**Action**	**Notes**	**Responsibility**	**Target Date**	**September 2023 update**
1. The University's 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					
1.1 To build on this recognition as we continue to encourage staff and student take up of opportunities to use the Welsh language in their work and their teaching	Use where appropriate in the roll out of the new strategy for the development of Welsh medium teaching and learning, research and staff and student education		Professor Anwen Jones (Pro Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for Welsh medium academic provision) and Aberystwyth branch of the Coleg	Annually to each cohort.	This is an encouragement that we give every cohort annually, and we monitor the registration for numbers of credits across the student body.

			Cymraeg Cenedlaethol		
2. The responsiveness of the University to national and regional employability needs through the development of new focused and innovative partnerships					
2.1 Seek further opportunities to work with bodies locally and across Wales to deliver courses that meet employment needs	Build on this positive feedback, utilise in discussion with potential partners as evidence of our successful track record		Professor Tim Woods (Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning, Teaching and Student Experience), University Executive, and Partnerships Office (Academic Registry)	September 2023 and ongoing	Possible areas are Social Work with Ceredigion County Council, Level 4 Nursing with Hywel Dda Health Board. Discussions will continue with a variety of other potential partners as the University faces the changing needs and opportunities in the region and across Wales.
3. The supportive and collegiate relationships the University develops with its partners that enables them to participate as equals in the partnership					
3.1 To continue to identify and develop suitable partnerships where we believe effective and productive working relationships can deliver new learning opportunities	Emphasise in our reporting and information the quality of our existing partnerships and refer future potential partners to this		Professor Tim Woods (Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning, Teaching and Student Experience), University Executive, and Partnerships Office (Academic Registry)	September 2023	The University will continue to work with partners like Hywel Dda Health Board and Ceredigion County Council, but a whole host of other potential partners associated with particular areas/disciplines in the University, both in the UK and internationally.
Response to the affirmations					
Aim	**Action**	**Notes**	**Responsibility**	**Target Date**	**September 2023 update**
4. 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					
4.1 To move from manual processing to online workflows for all aspects of PGR management, providing greater ease of use for staff and students and clearer university	Implement the Skillsforge software in stages during 2022-23, in particular providing annual progress monitoring and assessment via online workflows		Professor Reyer Zwiggelaar (Head of Graduate School) / Faculty Registrar (PG)	July 2023	The HoG continues to work with the FR (Postgraduate) to implement the 'Skillsforge' software, purchased to enhance management of PGR student processes and data, in stages, providing annual progress monitoring and assessment via online workflows. A soft launch

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oversight of key processes					has taken place with limited functionality around changes to thesis titles and supervisors and with capacity for recording student/supervisor meetings. This will be publicised to encourage use while next stages of functionality are developed, including extensions and monitoring. The project is behind schedule but monitoring is expected to be fully online for summer 2024
5. The steps being undertaken by the University to ensure programme specifications are kept up to date					
5.1 Ensure all current programme specifications are accurate with working links	Check all existing specifications to identify any issues and update as required		Mrs Kim Bradick (Deputy Registrar - Assurance & Enhancement) / Quality Assurance Team within Academic Registry	July 2023	Project undertaken to update all programme specifications for current schemes. Departments have provided information to central QA Team – as of start of September the data entry phase is almost completed
5.2 Put in place a new system of recording programme specifications to facilitate updating	QA team to work with Information Services to enable better recording		Mrs Kim Bradick (Deputy Registrar - Assurance & Enhancement) / Quality Assurance Team within Academic Registry / Information Services	July 2023	Development work has been undertaken by BIS in conjunction with the QA Team and will shortly move to replacing the current web pages with pdf versions, as a durable 'date stamped' format, which will include information such as professional accreditation and weighting of year in industry and year abroad elements not previously published.
5.3 Install mechanism for annual updating of all programme specifications	Discuss with Faculties how best to ensure any changes to programme		Mrs Kim Bradick (Deputy Registrar - Assurance & Enhancement) /	Annually from 2023/24	Departments will be asked to check programme specifications as an annual exercise, so there should be a definitive programme

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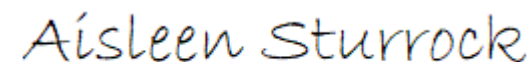|	specifications are identified and applied		Quality Assurance Team within Academic Registry / Academic Board		specification, against each programme, each academic session.
Response to the recommendations					
Aim	**Action**	**Notes**	**Responsibility**	**Target Date**	**September 2023 update**
6. Ensure effective University oversight of the uptake and engagement of staff and students with the requirements of the personal tutoring system					
6.1 Determine whether changes are required to our current approach to personal tutoring to enhance engagement with the process.	Re-focus our Working Group on Personal Tutoring to meet regularly during the 2022-23 to consider, for example, the balance between individual and group meetings and how departments might adapt a centrally produced framework to their own needs	Student views will be sought through normal representative mechanisms and students will be encouraged to raise issues around tutoring within their departments/Faculties	Dr Malte Urban (Chair of Working Group on Personal Tutoring) / Academic Board	September 2023	The PT Working Group met regularly and a 'Briefing on Personal Tutor and Records-Keeping' document has been issued to help PTs to offer good guidance to students and ensure that appropriate support is offered to those who may be struggling. The WG recommended a streamlined workflow for PT meeting administration and set out precise requirements for record keeping. PT meetings now consist of group meetings, with individual meetings being reserved for tutees who request such a meeting or in cases where a department has concerns. Other complementary initiatives include the appointment of a Student Induction and Inclusion Officer in November 2023 in Student Services, who will liaise closely with the Personal Tutor system.
6.2 Establish a reporting mechanism to enable monitoring of adherence to the policy	Develop and provide Information Services with a specification to	The required data are recorded within Aladdin currently and therefore the main	Dr Malte Urban (Chair of Working Group on Personal Tutoring) /	Reporting to be available for 2023-24 session	Group and individual meeting attendance records are kept on Aladdin. The WG determined that the framework and the tools for

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	work to in generating appropriate reporting	task is to develop a report and not to record additional data	Academic Board / Information Services		record keeping remain fit for purpose and rather that it is consistent uptake, engagement, and use that are required.
7. Implement a system that ensures institutional oversight for the approval of external examiners for research degree awards					
7.1 Remove reliance on one post-holder by establishing a small group to approve nominations for PGR external examiners	Graduate School to convene group with Head and Deputy Head of GS plus the Faculty Registrar (PG) to comprise approval panel	Graduate Schools is currently appointing a Deputy Head to be in place in October 2022	Professor Reyer Zwiggelaar (Head of Graduate School) / Faculty Registrar (PG)	October 2022	The Graduate School established a small group to approve PGR External Examiner nominations, comprised of the Head, Deputy Head and Faculty Registrar (Postgraduate), reporting to RDC and on to Academic Board, in line with the reporting of the appointment and extensions of all taught External Examiners Change to process considered and approved by Academic Board.
7.2 Record all appointments through the committee structure as for taught awards	Each meeting of Research Degrees Committee to receive report on new external examiners with key data and forward to Academic Board	Focus or reporting will be on compliance with the Academic Quality handbook appointment standard criteria and any approved deviations	Professor Reyer Zwiggelaar (Head of Graduate School) / Faculty Registrar (PG) / Research Degrees Committee / Academic Board	October 2022	Appointments reported through Research Degrees Committee to Academic Board.
8. Ensure all students receive timely assessment feedback in line with University requirements					
8.1 Greater awareness among staff and students of the policy to avoid any misperception and enhanced understanding by students of the mechanisms available to report issues	Departments to emphasise and explain the policy at induction events and at SSCCs with Feedback being a standing item on SSCC agendas	2022 NSS results show AU's overall satisfaction score for the timeliness of feedback is 80%, a slight increase on the 2021 score and significantly ahead of benchmark for AU and the sector average. We therefore see this	Heads of academic Departments / Students' Union / Academic Registry	September 2022	Timely assessment feedback remains high on the agenda in all departments and is specifically explored with student groups during departmental reviews.

		as enhancing considerable success but recognise the importance of consistent, timely feedback			
8.2 Enhanced monitoring of compliance with policy	Investigate with Information Services possible technical solutions and discuss with Associate Deans how to ensure consistent sampling across the Faculties	Given the reliance on external software and the limited data we believe we could extract from Turnitin, we are not confident of a technical fix but this may become feasible with new versions of software	Ms Emma Williams (Academic Registrar and chair of Associate Deans for Learning and Teaching) – regular meetings with Academic Registry / AR Quality Team / Academic Board	September 2023	Possible technical options to support enhanced monitoring of compliance with the policy have been explored. Owing to concerns about the robustness of the data, the ADLTs worked with the LTEU to review sample reports generated from BB to help to determine how useful they might be. There remain unanswered questions on how the data is derived and it has been concluded that reports are of limited value, although they may be helpful if closer investigation of a specific module or assessment is needed. The ADLT group is satisfied that there are already good mechanisms in place by which students can, and do, report concerns regarding marking turnaround times and feedback deadlines. The LTEU will advise the ADLT group of any BB developments which may be forthcoming.

Professor Elizabeth Treasure, Vice-Chancellor

Ash Sturrock, Students' Union President (2022)

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