



Aberystwyth University

Learning and Teaching Strategy

2007-2010

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The Strategy for Learning and Teaching 2007-2010

Executive Summary

1. Aberystwyth University aims to provide a high quality learning environment which involves students at all levels in an active and transforming learning experience. We seek to foster a culture of reflection and innovation to enhance the quality and value of that experience. Our distinctive taught provision is underpinned and informed by high quality research and scholarship and the synergies between research and teaching. We seek to support and develop an increasingly diverse student population, whilst having particular regard to the needs of the students of Wales, and to enable all students to achieve their learning ambitions through the flexibility of our delivery and the support of a strong learning and teaching community. We also seek to develop in our graduates and postgraduates an ability to respond analytically, critically and creatively to a variety of situations and experiences, and to equip them with the academic and transferable skills to enable them to succeed and to continue learning beyond graduation.

2. Building on our established teaching excellence we will continue to identify and respond to changing student needs, developments in learning and teaching practice, changing external conditions and the strategic priorities of government, the Funding Council and the Research Councils.

3. The five key aims of the Strategy are:
 - To facilitate enhancement of learning and teaching
 - To improve the learning, teaching and assessment infrastructure
 - To promote and reward excellence in the provision of learning and teaching
 - To enhance the portfolio and develop innovative teaching methods
 - To develop collaborative links in the delivery of learning and teaching.

The University's Mission for Learning and Teaching

4. The Learning and Teaching Strategy 2007-2010 replaces the previous Strategy (2004-2009) and will be implemented in accordance with the University's mission and aims and objectives for learning and teaching, which are set out in its Strategic Plan 2007-2012.

Aberystwyth University Mission

5. Our mission is to be a first-class teaching and research University which is responsive to the needs of our local community, and those of Wales and the wider world. Aberystwyth University will provide students with learning opportunities of the highest standard, offering a distinctive environment for study and a high quality of life. We will respond to the changing needs of society for skilled, educated and employable graduates. We will engage in high quality research, which satisfies intellectual, cultural, scientific and economic needs, contributing to, and, where appropriate, leading international research agendas. We will contribute to the social and economic development of Wales and play a full and active role in sustaining its culture and the Welsh language. We will serve the community in which we are based, collaborating with local institutions, as well as with those throughout Britain, Europe and the wider world. We will contribute to the achievement of the Welsh Assembly Government's long-term strategy for the HE sector in Wales, as outlined in Reaching Higher.

Aberystwyth University Strategic Aims and Objectives

I. RESEARCH

To engage in high quality research which addresses intellectual, cultural, scientific, economic and policy needs.

II. LEARNING AND TEACHING

To foster a culture of excellence in teaching and learning support by developing and sustaining appropriate policies and practices at institutional and departmental level.

III. WIDENING ACCESS AND DELIVERY

To continue to widen access for students from diverse backgrounds, including students from the local community, and to broaden the delivery mechanisms of our provision in terms of part-time study and distance learning, in order to widen access to higher education and to support the demand for lifelong learning.

IV. MEETING THE NEEDS OF WALES

To play a full and active role in sustaining the bilingual culture of Wales and the Welsh language and in meeting the educational needs of Wales and to support the economic, cultural and social development of Wales.

V. EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

To provide a working and learning environment in which there is equality of opportunity and which is free from discrimination and to ensure full compliance with our statutory obligations in relation to Race Relations, Disability and Equal Opportunities.

VI. COLLABORATION

To maintain and develop collaborative links with other educational institutions so as to maximise the resources available for learning, teaching, research and central services.

VII. PARTNERSHIP WITH INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRISE

To maintain close partnerships with industry and employers, responding to their needs by equipping graduates with the high level

skills and flexibility required in a rapidly changing knowledge economy; contribute to both regional and national wealth creation and economic development through collaborative activities with commercial, industrial, professional and public sector organisations.

VIII. TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

To make effective use of new technology to further our aims in teaching and research.

IX. ASSET MANAGEMENT, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND STABILITY

To make the optimum use of all our assets, human, physical and financial to maximise income from a wide range of sources and to manage our affairs efficiently so as to maintain our financial stability and to sustain our future growth and development.

X. GOVERNANCE

To be a responsive, efficient and accountable organisation.

[Source: Aberystwyth University Strategic Plan 2007-2012]

The Learning and Teaching Strategy 2007-2010

Purpose of the LTS

6. Since its inception in 1999, the Learning and Teaching Strategy has served as a focus for pedagogic debate and innovation and has been the means of sharing ownership of learning and teaching objectives and initiatives throughout the institution. It is aspirational and also a means of shaping and sharing good practice, and its themes link individual teachers, departments and faculties in a common purpose and endeavour in their work with students. Its primary function is as an internal document providing a framework upon which the development and management of learning and teaching may be taken forward in the context of the overall Strategic Plan for the University. Its other purpose is to inform external bodies, such as HEFCW, that Aberystwyth University continues to address the needs and requirements of its students appropriately.
7. This latest Strategy has been reviewed by the Learning and Teaching Strategy Working Group, whose members represent the core academic and learning support activities of the University. The Strategy has been endorsed by Senate. In developing this Strategy we have taken account of the guidance issued by HEFCW and the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy document *Reaching Higher, Learning Country 2: Vision into Action*, and HE priorities identified in *Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship – a Strategy for Action*, and *The Leitch Review of Skills*.

The role of the student in the LTS

8. One of the central purposes of the Learning and Teaching Strategy is to address the requirements of a diverse and ever-changing student body. The results of the NSS help the University in adapting its processes to meet the needs of students. A representative of the Student Guild is a member of the Learning and Teaching Working Group. This providing an opportunity, at the outs, for involvement from the student population. We are conscious of HEFCW's concern about the effectiveness of student representation. Involvement of an Officer from the Guild of Students, who also sits on other relevant University committees, will facilitate in understanding the purpose of *strategies*, such as that of the Learning and Teaching Strategy, in shaping and developing the student experience.

9. The previous version of the Learning and Teaching Strategy was updated from the original 1999-2004 document. It provided a framework from which to ensure that developments for the period 2004 to 2009 were relevant to the needs of students, changes in curriculum, technology and HE policy. At that time we moved from ten key objectives to five aims. This framework remains appropriate. The previous Strategy had been written on a five-year timescale, which we are only part way through, and a whole scale redrafting seemed unnecessary in extending it to 2010. Instead the document has been rewritten so that the headings more closely match the guidelines suggested by HEFCW. The underlying framework of five key aims remains the same and SMART targets have been set for the short (2007/08) and medium term (2008-10).

The success of the LTS to date

10. The majority of the short and medium term targets set in the 2004-2009 document have been met, and each year were rolled forward, via the Annual Monitoring Statement, to take account of the next phase of developments in these areas. The success of the strategy to date can be summarised under the five aims articulated in the 2004-2009 strategy as follows:

11. Aim 1: Enhancement of learning and teaching

- Major review of student induction completed and new guidelines established for 2007 entry. The impact on retention will be monitored closely.
- Student survey programme upgraded and training provided.
- APPR (PDP) activity continued, including rolling out to third year undergraduates and research postgraduates, and trialled with taught postgraduates. A review of the overall APPR scheme and the development of an electronic approach to APPR have been initiated.
- CDP- Graduate Employability Awareness project continued. Extended undergraduate CDP, and develop careers element of the

Postgraduate Skills Training programme and started to develop department specific careers resources.

- Provide all undergraduate students with the opportunity to engage in structured and supported processes of personal development planning (PDP) which meet QAA minimum expectations and institutional standards.
- From September 2006 all new research postgraduates (MPhil and PhD students) have been included in the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme, which involves the participation of a mentor (an academic member of staff) and is supported by the Postgraduate Skills Training Programme.
- In 2006/07 a PDP for taught Masters students was introduced in three academic departments on a trial basis which will be consolidated in 2007/08.
- Ability to produce personal timetables for each student over the web now in place.
- Staff Development courses offered through the medium of Welsh through collaboration between the Centre for the Development of Staff and Academic Practice and the Centre for Welsh Language Services. These courses are aimed at both academic and administrative staff and provide training on the implementation of the University's Welsh Language Scheme as well as practical support for those who wish to improve their skills in using Welsh. Round Table sessions are held once every semester and provide a forum for academic staff who teach through the medium of Welsh to discuss topical issues in Welsh medium provision both within the University and on a national level.

12. Aim 2: Improved learning and teaching infrastructure

- E-learning initiatives continued and accelerated, including targeted one to one training sessions for staff, increased involvement in the PGCHE scheme, and continuation of the programme of departmental consultations.
- Involvement in national E-Learning Benchmarking Project.

- Upgrade to Blackboard Enterprise (AU virtual learning environment) with new tools including the adaptive release of materials, improved reporting on student progress and a Welsh language interface
- Continued refurbishment of IT and data projection facilities in teaching rooms.
- Refurbishment of IBS laboratory space and annex to TFTS housing the Cavanagh Collection.
- The University is developing a revised 10-year Estate Strategy, an important feature of which will be the identification of the future needs for accommodation for learning and teaching. We continue to explore ways of optimizing the use of existing learning and teaching space and to ensure that it is accessible to all users.
- The University continues to invest the DDA allocated funds in accordance with agreed priorities. This helps ensure safe movement of students, staff and visitors around the campuses and ready access into and safe egress from the University's buildings.

13. Aim 3: Promotion and reward of excellence in the provision of learning and teaching

- Teaching excellence awards and promotion of HEA.
- Our target for HEA applications is no longer relevant, as HEA has introduced its Professional Recognition Scheme, whereby staff are automatically eligible to be a fellow, with no charge, upon completion of an accredited qualification.
- Our plan to monitor Peer Observation centrally has had to be postponed because of staff resignations in key areas, although Peer Observation schemes operated in individual departments. (Funds reallocated to E-learning).
- Completed review of guidelines for LTS Enhancement Fund and supported six projects.
- Revised Guidelines for promotion to Senior Lecturer implemented.
- Involvement in Teachability Project, *Creating an Accessible Curriculum for Students with Disabilities* based on the University of Strathclyde's work in this area.

14. Aim 4: Development of innovative new modules and programmes

- Restructuring of marketing of UG schemes completed.
- New range of subject combinations approved including Joint Honours Psychology combinations, and range of Cert HE schemes approved as part of widening access strategy.
- Postgraduate Legal Practice Diploma now established.

15. Aim 5: Development of collaborative links in the delivery of learning and teaching

- Working with Bangor in implementing HEFCW's recommendation over reconfiguration of ITT provision in Wales, and Teaching in HE programme.

Key priorities of the LTS 2007-2010

16. The following key priorities have been identified for the 2007-2010 Strategy:

- student retention
- E- Learning Strategy
- supporting student involvement and participation in quality
- employability
- Welsh medium issues

Aims of the LTS 2007-2010

17. The 2007-2010 LTS has the following aims:

1. To facilitate enhancement of learning and teaching
2. To improve the learning, teaching and assessment infrastructure
3. To promote and reward excellence in the provision of learning and teaching
4. To enhance the portfolio and develop innovative teaching methods
5. To develop collaborative links in the delivery of learning and teaching.

18. Aim 1: To facilitate enhancement of learning and teaching

- 1.1 *Ensure that teaching and programme development are informed by current research and scholarship.*
- 1.2 *Review learning and teaching in order to continue to meet the needs of a diverse student body by:*
 - *ensuring that all students are prepared for their studies by effective induction practices;*
 - *ensuring that all new developments in learning and teaching meet the needs of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001;*
 - *making programmes accessible to non standard entrants;*
 - *ensuring that the language and learning needs of international students are properly supported;*
 - *promoting gender and race equality by ensuring that programmes and modules are appropriate to a diverse society;*
 - *building on existing strengths in student retention;*
 - *building on pilot schemes to enhance career management and skills training for non traditional students*
- 1.3 *Building on our existing ESRC recognition, continue to enhance generic and subject-specific research training and transferrable skills development for postgraduates to address the requirements of the Research Councils and the needs of employers.*
- 1.4 *Develop more effective means of identifying and sharing good practice.*
- 1.5 *Enhance the effectiveness of teaching quality through improved internal and external quality assurance procedure in the light of feedback on our QAA Institutional and Estyn Reviews.*
- 1.6 *Working with the Guild of Students to improved effectiveness of student representation.*

19. Aim 2: To improve the learning and teaching and assessment infrastructure

- 2.1 *Embed the aims of the Learning and Teaching Strategy in the policies and practices of academic departments and support services.*
 - *Ensure that all academic departments develop and review their learning and teaching and assessment strategies and practices in light of the developing institutional strategy and the changing external environment.*

- *Ensure that all relevant staff are aware of and respond to developments in the QAA Academic Infrastructure and the new Quality Assurance and Standards Framework in Wales.*
 - *Ensure that the requirements of the Learning and Teaching Strategy are addressed during the annual planning round.*
 - *Ensure that central services sections and departments contribute fully to the development of and respond to the challenges of the Learning and Teaching Strategy in their Strategic Plans.*
- 2.2 *Use appropriate sources of capital funding for learning and teaching and IT infrastructure to provide staff and students with access to the physical resources, facilities and technical infrastructure necessary to achieve the aims of the Learning and Teaching Strategy.*
- *Enhance library and information resources.*
 - *Develop the technical infrastructure, including network access and PC provision.*
 - *Provide new learning spaces for students.*
 - *Maintain the quality of recently upgraded teaching rooms, including IT, data projection and video-conferencing facilities.*
 - *Optimise the use of teaching spaces by improved timetabling, space and room management.*
- 2.3 *Promote and facilitate the appropriate use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a means of improving access to learning and enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the learning and teaching experience.*
- *update the institutional e-learning policy and strategy, building on the excellent progress already achieved and taking account of HEFCW e-Learning Strategy.*
 - *Provide local and remote access to suitable digital content, web-based learning materials, software products and virtual learning environments.*
 - *Strengthen mechanisms and, where possible, increase resources to support staff and students in their use of e-learning resources, technology based techniques and online tools.*
- 2.4 *Continue to engage with issues arising from the Bologna process, including ECTS and the Diploma Supplement.*

Aim 3: To promote and reward excellence in the provision of learning and teaching

- 3.1 *Implement the recommendations of a recent review and the reorganisation of Staff Development.*
- 3.2 *Develop and review a staff development programme which supports the L&T Strategy.*
- 3.3 *Continue to develop the tHE for all academic staff new to teaching and to link it to the probationary compact.*
- 3.4 *Improve dissemination of information on good practice in learning and teaching.*
- 3.5 *Develop and support peer observation of teaching.*
- 3.6 *Recognise and, where practicable, reward individual initiative and achievement in developing learning and teaching by:*
 - *continuing to support the publicise the teaching award scheme.*
 - *continuing to support a teaching award scheme for graduate teaching assistants.*
 - *encouraging and recognising staff involvement in external QA review and audit activities, for example with QAA, Estyn and professional bodies.*
- 3.7 *Promote links with the HE Academy and work with colleagues in Wales to promote learning enhancement across the sector.*

20. Aim 4: To enhance the portfolio and develop innovative teaching methods

Taking into account both the need to ensure that the University continues to recruit in line with its funded numbers and the requirement for the HE sector to continue to contribute to the development of a skilled work force:

- 4.1. *Identify and develop high quality undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in new or emerging areas.*
 - *Identify subject areas where there is scope for development and likely demand from potential students.*
 - *Build on existing and developing strengths in research and teaching.*
 - *Promote appropriate interdisciplinary developments.*
 - *Develop Welsh-medium provision.*
 - *Ensure that these developments are supported by effective Quality Assurance and evaluation mechanisms and benefit from rigorous external advice and scrutiny.*
- 4.2. *Identify and develop new or existing programmes to facilitate:*

- *new pathways to entry and progression;*
 - *flexible modes of study (e.g. part-time study , or distance and mixed mode delivery);*
 - *enhanced Welsh-Medium provision.*
- 4.3 *Enhance student skills and employability by:*
- *embedding skills development and awareness within the curriculum;*
 - *building on the work to develop a university-wide on-line PDP;*
 - *increasing opportunities for work placements both in new and existing programmes;*
 - *developing on-line means of engaging students in career management activities;*
 - *developing closer working between CAS and academic departments;*
 - *facilitating student contact with alumni as a source of advice and information.*
- 4.4 *Review the portfolio of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes to identify:*
- *strengths to be built upon;*
 - *areas of weakness to be addressed (including patterns of low recruitment), and/or areas with potential for development, taking into account sector-wide issues such as those to be identified in the HEFCW review of provision in Modern Languages;*
 - *identify opportunities for developing modules promoting global sustainability and citizenship*

21. Aim 5: To develop collaborative links in the delivery of learning and teaching

- 5.1. *Identify and develop new opportunities for collaborative links to promote more effective and efficient delivery of HE programmes and modules, by:*
- *participating fully in HESG reviews of Welsh-medium provision;*
 - *building on existing collaborations in Welsh-medium teaching and developing new initiatives;*
 - *pooling academic expertise from different HEIs to enhance or secure provision in specific subject areas;*
 - *reviewing opportunities for collaboration in provision of postgraduate research training;*
 - *supporting collaborative initiatives that promote a holistic approach to the development and exploitation of academic library and IT resources in Wales;*

- *exploring new opportunities for partnership working in the public sector as the ambitious Public Sector Broadband Aggregation Project is gradually rolled out;*
- *extending the existing collaborative arrangements for provision of the PGCHE (the tHE) to include a wider range of HE partners within and beyond Wales as resources allow;*
- *Strengthening contact and sharing best practice with other PDP providers across the UK.*

Links with other Institutional Strategies and Plans

22. In addressing the aims and objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan in the specific area of Learning and Teaching, this Strategy provides structured guidance for the strategic development and management of learning and teaching. The LTS also seeks to embed the aims and objectives of a number of other institutional Plans, Strategies and Policies.
23. The University is fully committed to the Funding Council's and the National Assembly Government's priority of Widening Access and delivery and removing barriers (whether physical, social, cultural or financial) to Higher Education. Our work in this area is supported by our **Widening Access Strategy 2006 – 2009**, as well as by our **Disability Equality Scheme**, our **Gender Equality Scheme** and our **Race Equality Policy** and their associated annually reviewed action plans. The Learning and Teaching Strategy supports these strategies through the development of new pathways to entry and progression, flexible modes of delivery, the development of mentoring schemes, the enhancement of support for student skills development, and the clear articulation of the university's commitment to providing a safe and supportive learning environment that is open to all who are qualified to benefit from it.
24. **The Information Services Strategic Plan** supports the LTS through an ambitious program of enhancement to facilitate the use of new learning technologies to support innovative teaching and learning methods and increase the accessibility, quality and effectiveness of the learning experience.

25. **New Staff Development Strategy** underpins the development and enhancement of learning and teaching through Staff Development's varied programme of seminars, workshops and training events, which includes the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education, accredited by the HE Academy and Health Professions Wales, which is taken by all teaching staff new to HE.

26. **The Careers Information, Education and Guidance Strategy** interacts with the Learning and Teaching Strategy in seeking to embed skills development within the curriculum of all departments, to broaden the learning opportunities available to our students, and to respond to the needs of society for skilled graduates and, in particular, to respond to the needs of the business and industry communities of Wales.

27. **The Estates Strategy** includes a programme for improving teaching accommodation and, where practicable, adapting it for changing teaching methods and for accessibility, as well as for enhancing data projection facilities.

28. **Welsh Medium Strategy.** The Learning and Teaching Strategy interacts with the **Welsh Medium Strategy** which operates in accordance with the requirements of HEFCW and the Welsh Language Scheme, supporting and promoting provision for Welsh-medium teaching and study, and expanding such provision to the extent that resources and demand allow. Aberystwyth University also actively engages with all collaborative WMHESG initiatives.

29. **Postgraduate Strategy.** The Postgraduate Strategy complements the Learning and Teaching Strategy with its focus on the enhancement of postgraduate learning through: the review and development of taught postgraduate degree schemes; a programme of training and support for new and experienced supervisors of research students; the provision of generic and subject-specific research training; and an extensive programme of transferrable skills training and continuing professional development.

Management, Review and Monitoring of the Strategy

30. This section describes some of the mechanisms for realising the aims of the Learning and Teaching Strategy and outlines how progress is monitored and measured and the Strategy's effectiveness assessed. A Pro Vice-Chancellor has executive responsibility for implementation and oversight of the Strategy and chairs the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy Working Group. This Working Group consists of the Pro Vice Chancellor, three Deans, Director of Postgraduate Studies, Director of Information Services, a representative of the Guild of Students, the Academic Secretary and the Secretary to the Working Group. Day to day administration is undertaken by the Academic Registry, reporting to the Pro Vice Chancellor, and involves liaising with sections of the university responsible for the implementation of aspects of the strategy, collating information for evaluating and reviewing policy.
31. The Working Group was established by Academic Affairs Committee in May 2007 to revise the Strategy and to monitor and revise qualitative and quantitative targets, with policy decisions taken at Academic Affairs Committee, also chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor. The HEFCW funding which is linked to institutional L&T Strategies will be managed through the Working Group, and formally approved by Academic Affairs Committee.
32. In each year the SMART Targets are devised and brought forward by the Working Group for approval by Academic Affairs Committee and recommendation to Senate. Once the Targets are approved Job Sheets are issued to those identified with responsibilities for carrying out specific actions, and they are asked to report on progress at the end of each academic session. In central services and learning support areas, Heads of Sections and key committees are charged with responsibility for implementing particular aspects of the Strategy.
33. At Departmental level, Departmental Learning and Teaching Committees are responsible for:
 - Implementing departmental learning and teaching strategies in the context of the institutional LTS

- reviewing degree programmes and modules and developing new ones to meet changing needs, including seeking ways of collaborating with other institutions in developing new proposals;
- ensuring that programme specifications and module descriptions are kept up to date;
- receiving and considering reports from Staff-Student Liaison Committees;
- identifying staff development needs in respect of innovative teaching and use of IT.

34. At the end of each academic session the Working Group reviews progress on meeting targets, assesses the effectiveness and continuing relevance of the Strategy and of specific targets in light of comments from the Faculties and academic and central services departments, and in the context of developments in the sector and of HEFCW circulars. The Working Group will produce an annual report on progress and suggest priorities for the coming year which are circulated to the appropriate committees for discussion before rolling the Strategy forward and developing the Targets for the next year.

Qualitative and Quantitative Targets

35. Qualitative and quantitative targets are provided for the short (2007/08) and medium (2007-2010) term (Tables 1 and 2). We understand that the medium term targets may be made SMART-er as the time period covered by the strategy progresses.

Supporting Documents

University's Institutional Strategic Plan

Research Strategy

Postgraduate Strategy

Human Resources Strategy (including the Staff Development Strategy)

Widening Participation Strategy

University's Disability Statement

Draft Policy on Equality and Diversity

Race Equality Policy and Action Plan

Information Services Strategic Plan

Estates Strategy

Careers Information, Education and Guidance Strategy

Third Mission Strategy

Policy on Welsh-Medium Provision

Welsh Language Scheme.

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