

Widening Access Strategy

2022 – 2026

Alignment to Aberystwyth University Strategic Plan 2018-2023	
Education and student experience	Provide a wide range of services to assist and develop the skills that are needed in university and to maximise opportunities after graduation.
Contribution to society	Work with schools, FE colleges and employers enhancing 14 to 19 cross-curricula learning across Wales

Alignment to Corporate Risks	
CRR 1	Fail to prevent fall in student recruitment
CRR 3	Poor performance in widening access
CRR 4	Failure to support the University's equality and diversity mission

Introduction
<p>The Widening Access Strategy 2022-2026 sets out Aberystwyth University's priorities for responding to its Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023 commitment to 'improving access to higher education' and to 'encourage participation and collaborative activities through extensive partnerships.'</p> <p>The strategy aligns with and supports the aims and work of the Fee and Access Plans 2022-2023 and the Reaching Wider Programme Plans 2020/21 to 2022/23.</p> <p>We are proud of our work in widening access and have invested substantially in encouraging young people from groups under-represented in Higher Education to broaden their aspirations. Targeted admissions support, innovative school/college events, improved access to our estate, investment in learning and teaching equipment to support learning needs and practical support to improve retention, have resulted in increased participation across several groups. We have improved our admissions processes to ensure that recruitment is fair and have worked to remove barriers wherever we see them, be they financial, conceptual, or physical. We will continue this work through the plans outlined above and through this Widening Access Strategy.</p> <p><u>Our Target Audiences</u></p> <p>We recognise the following groups as under-represented in higher education and/or requiring additional support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students from areas where families are likely to have no previous background of HE • Students within the bottom quintile of lower super output areas in the Welsh Index of our Multiple Deprivation • Students from lower income families • Students with disabilities • Students from a care background or estranged from their family, and Young Adult Carers. • Students from minority ethnic backgrounds • Mature Students • Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) • Welsh Medium Students • Students with children • Students belonging to a religion or belief • Asylum Seekers / Prisoners

Our Strategy Aims and Objectives

Our Widening Access Objectives

1. Work with schools and colleges to raise aspirations of groups under-represented in higher education
2. Break down barriers to application for groups under-represented in higher education
3. Work closely with regional partner to deliver the aims of the Reaching Wider Partnership
4. Work closely with external organisations to continue to raise aspirations of groups under-represented in higher education, through varied events and activities
5. Develop provision that supports progression.
6. Provide support services that improve retention of students from groups under-represented in higher education and develop new services more appropriate to their needs

1. Work with schools and colleges to raise aspirations of groups under-represented in higher education

- 1.1 Provide talks, activities and workshops targeted at young people identified as at risk of low achievement.
- 1.2 Deliver subject specific enrichment activities to students in Wales and the rest of UK.
- 1.3 Enhance sustained provision to raise the awareness of HE with primary age groups in targeted schools and communities where disadvantaged is high.
- 1.4 Enhancement of our current Widening Participation provision focused on targeted schools/colleges.

2. Break down barriers to application for groups under-represented in higher education

- 2.1 Continuously work to improve our contextual admissions policy and procedures. Eligible applicants will receive special consideration, such as a lower offer from that of our standard published entry criteria.
- 2.2 Deliver advice and guidance sessions in schools and colleges in disadvantaged areas, including mock interview sessions and presentations e.g. the UCAS application process, Writing a Personal Statement, Student Finance and Student Life.
- 2.3 Provide travel and overnight accommodation support to enable students to attend on-campus activities e.g. UG & PG Open Days and Applicant Visiting Days.
- 2.4 Continuously improve our bursary and awards programme, monitoring the impact of this on students from under-represented groups. (i.e., Care Leavers, School/College Partnership Scholarships, etc.).
- 2.5 Launch a new Access All Aber programme for post-16 targeted Widening Participation learners.

3. Work closely with regional partners to deliver the aims of the Reaching Wider Partnership

- 3.1 Work closely with our Reaching Wider Partners to ensure a coherent approach to Reaching Wider provision across the region.
- 3.2 Deliver the activities set out in our Reaching Wider Programme Plans 2021/22 to 2022/23 and beyond.

4. Work closely with external organisations to continue to raise aspirations of groups under-represented in higher education, through varied events and activities

- 4.1 The successful implementations of this strategy will require collaboration and partnership working. We will continue to work with a range of strategic partners to support our widening participation activities. Our partners include:
- Reaching Wider Partnership
 - Seren Network
 - Nuffield Project
 - Urdd Gobaith Cymru
 - Scarlets (Community Work)

- Welsh Government – Senedd
- National Library of Wales
- Go Wales
- Hay Festival
- CREDU, Connecting Carers
- Ceredigion Careers
- Higher Education Funding Council Wales (HEFCW)
- CLASS Cymru Care Leavers and Student Support Wales)

5. Develop provision that supports progression

- 5.1 Develop and enhance alternative pathways to Aberystwyth University by continuing to develop our Foundation Programme.
- 5.2 Work with external partners to create work experience opportunities for students on higher education courses in Wales.
- 5.3 Working across the university to offer distance and blending learning to expand opportunity, achievement and attainment.

6. Provide support services that improve retention of students from groups under-represented in higher education and develop new services more appropriate to their needs

- 6.1 Continuously monitor and improve our bursary and awards programme, monitoring the impact of this on students from under-represented groups.
- 6.2 Review and publicise the hardship funding (access to a discretionary fund that provides support to students experiencing financial difficulties).
- 6.3 Continuously work to improve support offered to students who identify with a disability or with a mental health condition.
- 6.4 Expand on the opportunity for peer mentoring engagement supporting a positive transition to Aberystwyth University.
- 6.5 Provide wellbeing support for students to ensure they are equipped to reach their academic potential.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Strategy and operation development is constantly informed by data. The data is collected through a wide variety of channels, including:

- Admissions – application rates, offer-making rates, conversion data.
- The Planning Office – sector benchmarking (e.g. via HESA)
- Students Recruitment and Widening Participation – application rates, geographical spread of applicants. All events have event evaluations (e.g. Welsh Bacalaureate days, schools on campus, Access All Aber, Open Days, Applicant Visiting Days)
- Marketing – Digital marketing data reports, analysis of web and social media traffic, market intelligence reports to inform advertising campaigns.
- We are currently looking into joining Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) which is a service to obtain better information about the progression routes of schools and college students who participate in our outreach activities.

- 1. Work with schools and colleges to raise aspirations of groups under-represented in higher education.**
 - i. Reduce the access gap between entrants from POLAR 4 Quintile 5 and Quintile 1.
 - ii. Collect data on those from underrepresented groups.
 - iii. A regular cycle of audit against our widening participation activities.

- 2. Break down barriers to application for groups under-represented in higher education.**
 - i. We will encourage widening access to study, by having fair and flexible entry routes, offering diverse qualification. Our students will be empowered to succeed whatever their personal and social background.
 - ii. To strategically review and continuously refresh scholarships/bursary provision to ensure it continues to support students from underrepresented groups you need it the most.
 - iii. We will work to increase the number of students who attend Access All Aber each year.

- 3. Work closely with regional partner to deliver the aims of the Reaching Wider Partnership**
 - i. Increase the number of educational opportunities.

- 4. Work closely with external organisations to continue to raise aspirations of groups under-represented in higher education, through varied events and activities.**
 - i. We will monitor and assess all our outreach activities with external organisations and track year on year improvements in engagement.

- 5. Develop provision that supports progression.**
 - i. Develop study skills modules tailored to the confidence building needs of underrepresented groups with the Careers Readiness Support.
 - ii. Establish a clear and transparent route into university for students undertaking a range of qualification in a range of settings.
 - iii. Maintain Careers Service support for students who need help with CV's, application forms, interviews, work experience and placements.
 - iv. We will look to increase the number of Care Leavers, Young Carers and Estranged students continue with a Postgraduate degree.

- 6. Provide support services that improve retention of students from groups under-represented in higher education and develop new services more appropriate to their needs.**
 - i. Increase the number of entrants from a care background.
 - ii. Personal Tutors to support students academically.
 - iii. Signpost Mentoring Scheme provide free and confidential advice on all aspects of university life.
 - iv. We will aim to increase the number of students who receive the Disabled Students' Allowance.

Our core performance indicators will provide a measure of progress for each strategic priority.

Participation of under-represented groups at Aberystwyth University UK domiciled mature full-time undergraduate academic years of entry 2015/16 to 2020/21				
Number from low participation neighbourhoods	Percentage from low participation neighbourhoods	Benchmark (%)	Standard deviation (%)	Target 2023/24
155	12.0	12.6	-0.88	13%
Students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance				
Number in receipt of DSW	Percentage in receipt of DSA	Benchmark (%)	Standard deviation (%)	Target 2023/24
510	11.8	8.0	+0.88	12%

Targets 2022 - 2026

Improve the HESA benchmark figure from low participation neighbourhoods. Current benchmark 12.6%

Support the application, transition, progression, and retention of specific cohort of Widening Participation students.

Maintain the percentage of students in receipt of the Disabled Students' Allowance.