1. Quality Assurance at Aberystwyth

- 1.1 About the Handbook
- 1. The Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) provides an accessible source of the policies, regulations and procedures which support the management of academic standards and quality at Aberystwyth University. It is for use by university staff, external examiners, external reviewers and collaborative partners. The Handbook is published online but its individual sections can also be downloaded as a pdf and printed. It also contains a link to the <u>University's Rules and Regulations</u> and <u>Examination Conventions</u>.
- 2. Every member of staff has a responsibility to ensure that the reputation of Aberystwyth University is maintained and enhanced wherever possible, and that our quality assurance procedures remain rigorous and transparent.
- 3. Additional information and electronic copies of forms and templates (including forms for external examiners) can be downloaded from the relevant section of the AQH. As forms are updated regularly, they should always be accessed via the Handbook rather than saved and reused from previous years.
 - 1.2 Quality Assurance Systems
- 1. Aberystwyth University prides itself on the high standards of learning and teaching opportunities offered to its students. These are underpinned by effective quality assurance systems developed over many years and refined in light of the QAA frameworks and guidance. The University's quality assurance systems have four main roles:
- (i) To ensure the currency, validity, standard and quality of our schemes of study, and that these are properly planned, delivered, modified, and monitored
- (ii) To maintain the highest standards of academic quality and continuous enhancement, in compliance with the expectations outlined in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- (iii) To enhance quality by promoting continual critical reflection, so that we are always seeking ways of improving the quality of the student experience that we offer
- (iv) To underpin the strategic development of the schemes and academic disciplines that we offer.
- 2. The **UK Quality Code for Higher Education** gives all higher education providers a shared starting point for setting, describing and assuring the academic standards of their higher education awards and programmes and the quality of the learning opportunities they provide. It is the core reference point used in all QAA review activity: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code
- 3. The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies provide important reference points for higher education providers, assisting them in setting and maintaining academic standards. The frameworks are central to the Expectation in Chapter A1: The National Level of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education that degree-awarding bodies use external UK and European reference points to secure threshold academic standards across the higher education sector: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/the-existing-uk-quality-code/part-a-setting-and-maintaining-academic-standards
- 4. **Subject Benchmark Statements** are part of the Quality Code. They set out expectations about standards of degrees in a range of subject areas. They describe what gives a discipline its

coherence and identity, and define what can be expected of a graduate in terms of the abilities and skills needed to develop understanding or competence in the subject: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements

5. QAA also provide a range of other guidance material, for example covering topics such as the award of academic credit, the equivalence of qualifications throughout the countries of the UK, and how contact hours and assessment contribute to the quality of your education.

• 1.3 Academic Committees

- 1. In accordance with Aberystwyth University's Supplementary Royal Charter the Senate is 'the academic authority of the University and shall be responsible to the Council for the academic functions of the University in teaching and research and the regulation of the academic interests of the students'. The Senate's constitution, powers and functions are provided by Ordinances. Further details on the Senate's responsibilities, membership and decisions can be found on the relevant sub-pages.
- 2. Senate has overall responsibility for ensuring that the University adheres to the UK Quality Code, and delegates responsibility for individual sections to the following boards: Academic Board, Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions Board, Research Board, and the Collaborative Provision Board. The terms of reference and membership of these bodies are published online, together with a chart of academic committee structures: https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/governance/sub-committees/. Staff at Aberystwyth can also access terms of reference, templates for minutes and committee papers, and details of committee meetings through Academic Registry webpages.
 - 1.4 University Officers with responsibility for Quality Assurance
- 1. The Vice-Chancellor is the chief academic and administrative officer of the University with responsibility for its overall performance, and is the Chair of Senate.
- 2. The Pro Vice-Chancellors, Learning & Teaching and Research, are key members of the <u>University Executive Group</u> and report to the Vice-Chancellor on their specific areas of responsibility.
- 3. Responsibility for the conduct of a Faculty is vested in the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor, who is accountable to Council, via the Vice-Chancellor. Faculties facilitate the organisation and academic work of the University.

The Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellors perform a crucial co-ordinating role between the departments operating within their respective spheres of interest. They are also empowered to take executive action on issues of concern, subject to reporting to their faculties, the Academic Affairs Committee, Pro Vice-Chancellors Learning & Teaching and Research, and Vice-Chancellor as appropriate. The Faculty PVCs co-operate closely in their areas of responsibility and organise, via the Academic Registry, to discuss and make recommendations on items common to the faculties. In this they are greatly assisted by key Registry support staff. They also meet regularly to ensure that the faculties deal with student issues in a consistent way. They are supported in their roles by Associate Deans, who have specific responsibilities for Learning & Teaching, Research, and Welsh Language provision.

Each academic department within a faculty has a Head with designated roles and responsibilities, which include oversight of academic programmes and structures. The Faculty

Pro Vice-Chancellor and Associate Dean of Faculty are supported by a Faculty Manager and advised by an Executive Committee, which includes staff with responsibility for key areas such as Learning and Teaching and Quality Assurance and Enhancement. All faculties are required to have an Academic Affairs Committee. This is set out in <u>University Ordinances and Regulations</u>.

Heads of Department are charged with the day-to-day management of the teaching and research within their departments within the guidelines established at University level, including the Academic Quality Handbook. Departments have designated Directors of Learning and Teaching and Directors of Research reporting to the Head of Department on these issues. Each department is required to hold departmental meetings involving all academic staff at least once a term to discuss academic issues. The functions of the meeting include:

- (i) To serve as a medium of consultation with and provide advice to the Head of Department on the conduct of departmental affairs
- (ii) In furtherance of the above to discuss the following:
 - o the nature and content of courses
 - o the allocation of teaching and other departmental duties
 - o the allocation of departmental funds and accommodation
 - o the use of secretarial, research and technical assistance.

As part of the above, they receive the reports from Departmental Learning and Teaching Committees, of formal programme monitoring undertaken in the department annually and also formally log in the reports of the departmental Staff-Student Consultative Committees which serve as a useful feedback mechanism between staff and students.

- 4. The Head of the Graduate School is responsible for the provision of Researcher Development training within the University as a whole, and also has a co-ordinating role in the development of policy on postgraduate matters, the provision of facilities for postgraduates, and for monitoring the recruitment and academic progress of postgraduate students. The Head of the Graduate School also approves nominations for external examiners on research degrees.
- 5. A number of senior Academic Registry staff are involved in the operation of Quality Assurance procedures reporting to the Academic Registrar. The Academic Registry also provides support at faculty level.
 - 1.5 Levels of responsibility at University and Faculty level
- 1. To reflect the structure of the University and recognise the role of the faculties in quality assurance and enhancement, some quality functions are delegated to faculties whilst others remain at University level.

University level processes

- 2. Responsibility for the following quality assurance processes and procedures is retained by the University's Senate, Academic Board and other sub-committees:
- (i) Development and approval of academic frameworks, regulations and procedure
- (ii) Departmental Periodic review, including periodic revalidation of provision

- (iii) Approval of new and major restructuring of schemes
- (iv) Approval of External Examiner appointments.

Faculty level quality procedures

- 3. Responsibility for the following procedures and processes is delegated to faculties and exercised through faculty committee structures:
- (i) Implementing policy and procedures for quality assurance and enhancement in schemes of study, including for their design, approval, monitoring and review
- (ii) Consideration of Annual Monitoring of Taught Schemes
- (iii) Scheme suspension, withdrawal, and changes to titles
- (iv) Module approval (process overseen by Academic Board)
- (v) Considering student feedback (through feedback processes and student representation)
- (vi) Accreditation of schemes by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).
 - <u>1.6 Family and Personal and/or Professional Relationships</u>
- 1. This policy applies to any personal and / or professional relationships that could, or be perceived to impact on the integrity of the working relationships within the University.
- 2. Where a student or applicant is:
- (i) The sibling, parent, child or other family relation of a member of staff

or

(ii) The partner or is in a relationship with a member of staff.

Then the member of staff must play no part in the admission, supervision or assessment of that applicant/student. This is primarily to ensure impartiality in the treatment of the applicant/student, including the possibility that they would be assessed more strictly in order to emphasise the intention not to show favouritism. It is also to protect staff from accusations of favouritism and to avoid any perception of favouritism in third parties.

- 3. Members of staff must declare any such relationships to their line manager as soon as a potential conflict becomes apparent, so that arrangements can be made to ensure they are not involved in any activities where there is a conflict of interest. In this context, 'members of staff' includes anyone contracted to undertake teaching and related activities, including students with part- time contracts, and 'applicants/students' encompass all levels of study up to and including research students.
- 4. Members of staff may also consult the Management of Conflict of Interest in the Workplace Policy https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/policy-and-procedure/managingofconflict/
 - <u>1.7 Monitoring and Review</u>
- 1. Academic Board retains overall authority for reviewing the effectiveness of the University's quality assurance and enhancement processes as set out in the QAA Quality Code. Detailed consideration of these processes may be delegated to its sub-committees as appropriate. It will also publish a revised version of the AQH at the beginning of each academic session.

2. The Academic Registry welcomes comments on the content and presentation of this Handbook from all users as part of the continuing process of improvement and for the development of future versions. Any comments should be sent to: quality-assurance@aber.ac.uk

• 1.8 Academic Quality Handbook 2024/2025: Summary of Key Changes

The following table provides a list of changes which have been made following the publication of the 2023/24 version of the AQH in September 2023.

Section	Change	Date
2. Development and Review	2.2 Module Approval Outcome vocabulary 28. Vocabulary in table of skills updated by Careers Service -	September 2024
2. Development and Review	2.12 Departmental Quality Audit Questionnaire removed	September 2024
2. Development and Review	2.4.7, 2.5.3, SDF 1.1, SDF2 and SDF4 forms updated to include consultation with service departments.	Portfolio Planning Committee January 2024
3. Assessment of Taught Schemes	3.2 Assessment policy and procedures Bilingual policy for assessments 27. Aberystwyth University operates a bilingual policy for all written assessments, including coursework essays and examinations. Any student may choose, regardless of whether the main language of assessment of the module in question is Welsh or English, to submit examination scripts and assessed coursework in either Welsh or English (with the exception of assessments where language assessment is included in the module learning outcomes). Students pursuing modules through	Academic Board July 2024

the medium of Welsh will be examined in that language; students pursuing modules through the medium of English are entitled to be assessed in Welsh. However, in order to allow time for the preparation of Welsh examination papers for English medium modules, students are asked to notify the Welsh Language Services Centre by the dates published by the Centre 1 November for Semester One exams and 1 March for Semester Two exams. 3. Assessment 3.2 Assessment policy and procedures Academic of Taught Board 30. All centrally-timetabled examinations in the main **Schemes** venues to be either 1.5, 2 or 3 hours in duration. Centrally June 2024 timetabled online exams requiring on campus invigilation may also be of one hour's duration. 3. Assessment 3.2 Assessment policy and procedures September of Taught 2024 40. In Part One, undergraduate students who fail to **Schemes** complete the year satisfactorily as defined in the conventions are normally allowed to repeat the whole or part of the year as full-time, part-time or part-time external students. The University operates a 'false start' for students at Part One only. A 'false start' allows the student to start Part One again afresh, relinquishing ALL previous marks. Student may only take a 'false start' on ONE occasion and it must follow the initial first attempt at Part One. Students who take a 'false start' must still complete the degree within the maximum time limit for obtaining a

degree (see Rules and Regulation Part B).

In Part Two, including the Final Year, undergraduate students may not resit any module for

which a pass mark has been attained previously. Students who fail to complete the year

satisfactorily as defined in the conventions are normally allowed to repeat the failed credits.

Students commencing their studies in Part One or Part Two from September 2018 onwards

should refer to the Regulations for Modular Initial Degrees: Section 17, if they are considering changing their degree scheme, for guidance on the number of attempts to pass a module that

are permitted (whether newly chosen or previously studied).

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3. Assessment of Taught Schemes

3.4 Monitoring Academic Progress & 3.13 Templates
Chapter updated to remove requirement to send template
letters in hard copy, and terminology reviewed to reflect
trauma-informed approach.

April 2024
(Associate
Deans
Learning
and
Teaching
— March
2024)

3. Assessment of Taught Schemes

3.6 Academic Practice & 3.13 Templates

3. All students referred to the UAP process shall be directed to the University's general

guidance and resources and the link to the referencing and plagiarism awareness guide shall

be included in the UAP minutes.

15. All cases where UAP has been substantiated shall be referred to https://libguides.aber.ac.uk/referencing.

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Chapter reviewed and UAP template letters updated to reflect trauma-informed approach and reference to seeking support added.

September 2024

3. Assessment 3.7 Examinations and Examination Boards September of Taught 2024 Submission deadlines for taught postgraduate **Schemes** dissertations/projects Specific deadlines removed and replaced with statement 26. For full-time candidates, the deadline for the submission of the final 60 or 120 credit Element of assessment (the dissertation or equivalent depending on individual degree scheme requirements) is 50 weeks from the start date of the scheme (to the nearest Friday). Submission deadlines for PGT schemes with durations that differ from the standard 12 months should be set by the academic department in line with the Regulations for Modular Taught Postgraduate Awards (see Registration Periods and Time Limits). 3. Assessment 3.7 Examinations and Examination Boards September of Taught 2024 32 (ii) Senate Examination Board will consider and confirm **Schemes** all results for taught schemes. The University will appoint an External Reviewer, an experienced member of Registry staff at another university, to oversee the operation of Boards. The Senate Award Examination Board is chaired by a Pro Vice-Chancellor unless the PVC delegates this responsibility to a member of Academic Board. Senate Progression Examination Boards are chaired by the Academic Registrar (unless responsibility is delegated to another senior member of Registry staff). Senate Exam Board Terms of Reference updated (para 32 & 38)

3. Assessment of Taught Schemes	3.8 Special Circumstances and Reasonable Adjustments 7. From Semester 2, 2023-24, students with illness lasting two weeks or less are not required to submit a doctor's note to support their claim, but instead may self-certify their illness. Their impact statement should indicate the dates of illness alongside the impact that this illness has had. 8. For illness of longer than 2 weeks, or for other special	May 2024
3. Assessment of Taught Schemes	circumstances, students should submit independent documentary evidence wherever possible. - 3.12 Internal Reviewer Chapter updated to reflect current practice of exam board internal reviewers -	September 2024
3. Assessment of Taught Schemes	3.14 Assessment Glossary Addition of a Glossary of Assessment Terms.	Academic Board November 2024
4. Examination Conventions	4.4 BVSc Year 1 and Year 2: Rules for Progression For students starting before September 2024 6.1 To progress to Year 2. In addition to passing overall a student must have completed at least 6 weeks of AHEMS (in accordance with the AHEMS guidelines applicable to their year of study) prior to the start of BVSc Year 2. A student who has not completed 6 weeks will normally be required to delay their progression to the next year. 6.2 To progress to year 3. In addition to passing overall a student must have completed at least	September 2024

12 weeks of AHEMS (in accordance with the AHEMS guidelines applicable to their year of study)

prior to the start of BVSc year 3. A student who has not completed 12 weeks will normally be required to delay their progression to the next year.

For students starting from September 2024

6.3 To progress to Year 2. In addition to passing overall a student must have completed at

<u>least 5 weeks of AHEMS (in accordance with the AHEMS</u> guidelines applicable to their year of

study) prior to the start of BVSc Year 2. A student who has not completed 5 weeks will

normally be required to delay their progression to the next year.

<u>6.4 To progress to year 3. In addition to passing overall a student must have completed at</u>

least 10 weeks of AHEMS (in accordance with the AHEMS guidelines applicable to their year of study) prior to the start of BVSc year 3. A student who has not completed 10 weeks will

normally be required to delay their progression to the next year.

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4. Examination Conventions

4.5 Degree Schemes with Sandwich Year, or Integrated year Studying Abroad non-language

September 2024

Schemes

4. In cases where students return from exchange programmes or study year abroad with insufficient credits and/or failures, departmental exam boards should submit recommendations

on progression to Senate Examination Board. All recommendations be reviewed by a special circumstances panel which reports Senate Examination Board, in accordance with its terms of reference.

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4. Examination
Conventions

4.8 BSc Nursing (Adult) and BSc Nursing (Mental Health)

Resit arrangements brought into line with standard AU schemes (students to resit any failed

elements/modules in the summer resit period, not as insemester resits).

Clarification that students must pass all components of all modules across Part One and Part

Two, as well as theory and placement hours.

Introduction of a BSc in Healthcare Studies as an exit qualification for students who fail to meet

the PSRB requirements but do meet AU Modular Initial Degree requirements.

Academic Board July 2024

4. Examination Conventions

4.12 Conventions for the classification of modular degrees

12. One Year Top-Up Schemes: the cascade will be calculated on the basis of the marks

awarded by AU only and filled from the top band down, with best 80 credits at the highest

level in the top band first, followed by the remaining 40 credits at the lower band.

Academic Board

June 2024

4. Examination Conventions

4.13 The Window of Opportunity (Honours Degree Conventions)

1. The following rules apply to the operation of the Window of Opportunity:

Preponderance

2. Students whose cascade average falls within 1%* of any borderline SHALL be raised to the

higher class provided they meet one of the following criteria:

EITHER at least 50% of credits over Part Two as a whole, excluding Sandwich Year or Year Abroad, in the upper class or above;

Academic Board

June 2024

	OR at least 80 credits out of the final 120 Part Two credits in the upper class or above. * cascade averages shown to one decimal point for the information of examination boards will be rounded up (0.5 and above) or down (<0.5) to the nearest whole number. And applicable only to students starting Part Two prior to September 2024 (i.e. operation of the 2% Window of opportunity)	
4. Examination Conventions	4.16 CertHE Healthcare Education Retrieval of failure 2. Students will be required to resit and/or resubmit the failed component(s) of the theory modules in each semester. Students will have TWO opportunities to resit a failed theory module or component. The first opportunity will be an in- year semester resit. If the in- year semester resit is failed, funding is suspended for one year and students will have one final opportunity to resit externally within 12 months. After an external resit a student will re-join the main cohort during the next academic session.	March 2024 (Academic Board – June 2024)
4. Examination Conventions	4.19.3 Students starting a Master's Degree or Postgraduate Award FROM September 2024 Reference to Window of Opportunity removed	Academic Board June 2024
5. External Examining Taught Schemes	Chapter reviewed, including criteria for appointment (It is not permissible for a department to engage more than one External Examiner from the same department at any institution), publication of External Examiners' names,	September 2024

	Right to Work check required documents and process updated, requests for in-person visits to be made to qaestaff@aber.ac.uk, timing of commencement and duration of PGT External Examiner appointments clarified, reference to PGCE removed, clarification of role of External Examiners in Semester One, attendance at Semester 3 Examining Board and timing of submission of annual report by Health Education External Examiners clarified.	
6. Student Support & Representation	Chapter 6 updated by Student Services to reflect current practice and trauma-informed approach. 6.7 Student Representation 7. Complaints and Disciplinary (viii) Complaints about Academic Representatives and their associated activities shall be dealt with in line with the Students' Union Complaints Procedure. (xi) All disciplinary matters within Academic Representation will be dealt with in accordance with the Students' Union Disciplinary Procedures.	September 2024
9. Learning & Teaching	9.3 Credit Accumulation and Transfer Reference to Pass Degree (35-39%) removed -	September 2024
10. Undergraduate Admissions and 11. Postgraduate Admissions	Chapters removed from AQH to Admissions webpages	September 2024

14. Final Review	Chapter and FR Application Form updated to add right of Final Review of decisions made by Finance Office (outstanding fees and charges) - Chapter updated to change the deadline for submitting Support to Study Final Review applications and Finance Final Review applications to 2 working days.	Academic Board (July 2024)
Various	Reference to Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ) replaced with Student Experience Survey (SES) in Chapter 2.2 Module Approval, Chapter 2.10 Departmental Review, including periodic revalidation of provision, and Chapter 6.4 & 6.7 Student Support & Representation	August 2024
Various	Reference to Fitness to Attend replaced with Support to Study in Part A Chapter 6.1 Student Support and Representation, Chapter 12.4 Academic Appeals, Chapter 14.1 & 14.8 Student Complaints, Chapter 16.3 Fitness to Practise, and Part B Important Information for students (9.3)	August 2024
Various	PGCE Part B Regulations for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) removed Reference to PGCE removed from Part A 16.1.4 Fitness to Practise and 16.4 Appendix 1 removed Part A 4. Examination Conventions - 4.20 Award Rules for Postgraduate Certificate in Education removed Reference to PGCE removed from Part A 5. External Examining	September 2024
Regulations for Modular	BSc Nursing (Adult) and BSc Nursing (Mental Health)	Academic Board

<u>Initial Degrees</u>	Clarification that students must pass all components of all modules across Part One and Part	July 2024
	Two, as well as theory and placement hours.	
	Introduction of a BSc in Healthcare Studies as an exit qualification for students who fail to meet	
	the PSRB requirements but do meet AU Modular Initial Degree requirements.	
Regulations for Modular Initial Degrees	Updated to clarify the requirements for a top-up degree	Academic Board June 2024
Regulations for Modular Initial Degrees	28. Clarification of time limits for the completion of awards (full-time, part-time and distance learning)	Academic Board June 2024
Regulations for Modular Taught Postgraduate Awards	18. Clarification of time limits for the completion of awards (full-time, part-time and distance learning)	Academic Board June 2024
Regulations for the Foundation Degrees	7. Clarification of time limits for the completion of awards (full-time, part-time)	Academic Board June 2024
Academic Regulation on Academic Progress	Terminology reviewed to reflect trauma-informed approach	September 2024
Regulation on Unacceptable Academic Practice	Terminology reviewed to reflect trauma-informed approach 1.4 The university recognises that a referral to the Unacceptable Academic Practice process is	September 2024

often preceded by and/or accompanied by other adversity and an escalation in distress.

<u>Students are therefore urged to seek confidential</u> <u>support from Wellbeing, which does not</u>

disclose its work with the wider university except where there is a serious safeguarding risk. Students may also wish to seek support from the Students' Union, who can help by guiding you through the process and can support you by attending the panel meeting with you.

Updated: Sept 2024