



# **Welcome to Lifelong Learning**

## Welcome to Lifelong Learning at Aberystwyth University

This Learner Handbook is designed to help you get started on the Lifelong Learning Programme, to guide you on what is expected of you and who you should contact for help and advice.

The Handbook gives you guidance, for example, on unacceptable academic practice, on the University's rules for submitting assignments and what to do if things go wrong. It is not intended to be a comprehensive document - you may have some questions that are not answered on the package pages - if this is the case, please contact us.

Take time to look at the structure of your course, the assignment briefs and deadlines before you start studying, as this will allow you to plan your study around other commitments.

Our [website](#) includes a wealth of material including relevant support for our [current learners](#), details about the [qualifications available](#) with Lifelong Learning and information about the wide range of [subject areas](#) in which we offer courses.

One of the keys to succeeding and enjoying the course is regular communication – with us and with your fellow students. Learning has the potential to be an isolating experience so it's very important to remember that you're not alone and there's a lot of help and support out there – if you ask for it!

Name	Role	Email Address
Elin Mair Mabbutt	Head of Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator: Science, Humanities, ICT, Psychology	emm32@aber.ac.uk
Alison Pierse	Co-ordinator: Art and Design, Professional Development, Natural History Illustration	chp@aber.ac.uk
Antonio Barriga Rubio	Co-ordinator: Languages	aob@aber.ac.uk
Linda James	Administrator	lij20@aber.ac.uk
Faye Davies	Administrator	fad4@aber.ac.uk
Amlyn Ifans	Finance Officer	ari@aber.ac.uk

**Website:** [Lifelong Learning](#)

**General Email:** [learning@aber.ac.uk](mailto:learning@aber.ac.uk)

Follow us on social media to keep up to date with developments and news:

Facebook: [@Dysgu Gydol Oes Aberystwyth Lifelong Learning](#)

Twitter: [@Aber\\_LLL](#)

Instagram: [@aberystwyth.lifelong.learning](#)

## About us

The Lifelong Learning Department at Aberystwyth University has been providing education to students of all ages for over 100 years. The subject areas in which we teach are continuously developed to meet the ever-changing needs and interests of the public.

We have a wide range of courses available that are suitable for both personal and professional development. Our courses are open to adults of all ages, as well as students at any University who may find our degree boosters useful.

Many of our courses are run via distance or blended learning that allows you the flexibility to study when and where you want. Our qualified and experienced tutors provide accessible study resources and are on-hand to offer expert tuition and guidance.

## Working towards a qualification

The course on which you are enrolled is worth 5, 10 or 20 university credits. This may be the only course you wish to take, or you might want to work towards a Certificate in Higher Education or a Diploma qualification. Our courses and qualifications can also be a pathway onto an Aberystwyth University degree scheme in certain subjects.

Our Certificate programmes are designed for part-time study, and you can take 2 - 5 years to complete. It is free to enrol onto the Certificate and then you pay as you go, per course.

The Certificate is awarded after the completion of 120 credits, of which a certain number must be taken from the core, key and optional courses. Not all courses are on offer each year, but we will ensure that all the courses are made available over a period.

We also offer a [Diploma in Field and Conservation Ecology](#). The Diploma follows on from the completion of a Certificate of Higher Education, with a further 120 credits taken to reach 240 - this is equivalent to the second year of a degree.

It is not necessary to sign up for a qualification before you start on your course. You can 'dip in' and choose from courses that interest you. However, you may find it useful to keep potential qualifications in mind when choosing your courses. When you have decided on a qualification, just let us know by emailing [learning@aber.ac.uk](mailto:learning@aber.ac.uk)

Certificates in Higher Education available in:

- [Field Ecology](#)
- [Art and Design](#)
- [Modern Languages](#)
- [Genealogical Studies](#)
- [Natural History Studies](#)
- [Creative Writing](#)

More information about the Certificates and Diploma of Higher Education can be found on our website: [Qualifications Available](#)

## Teaching and Learning

Each subject programme requires a different style of delivery and, as such, you may experience one or more of these modes of delivery.

***Distance/Online learning:*** You will work through the units and activities in your own time and when it suits you. However, there will be opportunities to come together online at tutorials and webinars. All the learning content is on the University Virtual Learning Environment: Blackboard.

The advantage of this format is that you can take your time with your studies and juggle them with your other commitments – within the start and finish dates of the courses and, of course, you should submit your assessments on time. The course is delivered in study units with activities that are motivational and engaging. There are opportunities to interact with other students via discussion boards or course blogs and there are plenty of short, step-by-step video demonstrations that you can watch.

***Live, online classes:*** This is common in the Modern Languages and Psychology programmes. During the live online classes, you will receive live presentations from your tutor, you will be able to ask questions and can interact with your classmates in pairs or groups - just like you would in face-to-face classes.

***Blended learning:*** Some courses may require you to come to Aberystwyth University/mid Wales in addition to studying online. These may be more practical, hands-on courses or weekend intensives. This mode of delivery will be made clear when we advertise the course.

## Assessment

As part of the course, we are required to assess you to see how effective the learning has been. We use different modes of assessment, but we **do not** have exams!

Each programme has a slightly different way of gathering student work. Your tutor will guide you on this. Assessments include short essays; projects; comparative study exercises; academic poster design; case studies; oral; field notebooks; reflective diaries; blogs and journals; oral recordings; quizzes; reviews and more!

These modes of assessment develop your knowledge and skills, which may be required in the modern-day workforce.

Once the tutor has assessed your work and provided feedback, an independent moderator reviews your mark and feedback to ensure that there is parity of marking. All course marks and assessment processes are reviewed at an Internal and then an External Exam Board to ensure parity and consistency across subject areas and institutions.

In October, you will receive a Transcript from Aberystwyth University confirming the courses you have studied, and the credits awarded.

Additional information about assessments can be found on Page 11.

## Why Complete Assessments on Lifelong Learning Courses?

We view assessment as an important part of the learning process, and they have the following benefits:

- It is of real value to all learners to receive feedback from the course' expert tutor.
- Research into how we learn suggests that we have a deeper learning experience if we engage in the assessment process.
- Completion of assessments demonstrates support to the tutor who has invested energy and time into planning and delivering lessons.
- They encourage learners to produce work which they can feel proud of, and which would also serve as a solid foundation for further research and/or writing.
- Completion of assessments and the course ensures that Lifelong Learning can maintain our free and low-cost fees (see below).

Assessments are designed for adult learners, and they are introduced early in the course so you will have time to prepare and ask for guidance.

We use a variety of assessment methods, each one designed to be appropriate for the subject and to accommodate the needs of part-time learners. If you are on an intensive course a substantial amount of the assessment will be completed, or at least started, during the course.

### Still not convinced.

Comments from those not taking assessment include:

*'I don't need to do assessment as that is not why I am taking the course'.*

*'I'm not interested in the qualification; I don't need anymore'.*

Lifelong Learning courses are such excellent value for money because we can draw down funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) for every learner that completes the assessments / course. This makes our courses financially viable. This financial support breaks down barriers to learning by keeping the initial cost to learners low and therefore enables our courses to be accessible to all in the community. The course costs must cover tutor preparation, contact and marking time, administrative costs, venue hire and travel, in addition to contributing to central university costs.

If we were unable to draw down government funding through HEFCW, then the standard course fee for a student not submitting his/her assessment would need to be in the region of £380 instead of the current £70/130.

**In summary, assessments are an essential aspect of all lifelong learning courses. They enhance the learning experience as well as supporting the lifelong learning programme and your fellow learners.**

# Why complete assignments and finish your course.



Assessments are an important part of the learning process as they give you the opportunity to consolidate your learning.



Demonstrate support for your tutor who has invested time and energy into planning and delivering lessons.



A chance for you to produce work in which you can feel proud.



Help us keep our low fees and accessible courses - we can draw financial support for every student who completes their courses.



Fully engage with your course, tutor and fellow students to take advantage of everything that the experience has to offer.



Produce work which can serve as a solid foundation for further study, research and writing.

 [aber.ac.uk/learning](http://aber.ac.uk/learning)

## Feedback

Feedback from your course tutor is important to help you develop and improve your learning. When studying an Art or Professional Development course, you will receive 'Trickle Feedback' – feedback is provided at the end of each unit and is collated by your tutor. In other subjects, feedback is provided following tasks and via discussion forums or personal journals in addition to feedback following the submission of assessments.

## We love feedback!

During your study, we will ask you to complete two short, one-click surveys – one at the mid-point of the course and another towards the end. We will provide links to these surveys on Blackboard and your tutor will inform you when these are ready to be completed.

We kindly ask that you take a few minutes to complete these short surveys because your responses help us improve the student experience on our courses.

**Your university email address...** is the one to which all communications about the course, the university, your assignments etc. will be sent. It is therefore vital that you check your university email account daily.

The quickest way to do this is to use Webmail from the University's webpage (Click the 'Study with us' tab and select 'Information for students', then in the 'Your Sites' area chooses 'Webmail').



## **Supporting our students**

### ***Support from the Lifelong Learning Team***

Your tutors and the entire Lifelong Learning team are committed to helping and encouraging you as you learn. The team meets on a regular basis, so do not worry if you contact the wrong person, as they will pass on your query. If you have any concerns or questions while you are studying, please contact either the academic tutor for your current course or our administration team by emailing [learning@aber.ac.uk](mailto:learning@aber.ac.uk)

### ***Support from the Information Services department***

You may find the “Welcome to Information Services (IS) - Distance Learning Students” webpage useful: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/is/help/distancelearners/>

Contacting IS by telephone: For any login, software or connection problems contact the Information Services (IS) Help Desk on 01970 622400. The opening hours of the IS Help Desk depend on whether you are studying during university term time or during a vacation period.

Alternative ways of contacting the IS Help Desk:

- Email: [is@aber.ac.uk](mailto:is@aber.ac.uk)
- Chat Now: If you cannot get through on the phone you may like to try the Chat Now facility to converse online with a member of the IS staff. You can also send them a message using the online form they provide if Chat Now is offline.

The Chat Now icon and the online query form can be found at: <http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/is/help/contactus/>

### ***Support from Student Support Services***

[Student Support](#) are a friendly, approachable team offering a range of skills and expertise. Working with individuals, the team can achieve solutions for most of the challenges of student life.

More information about support services available to Lifelong Learning students can be found on our website: [Support for Lifelong Learning Students](#)



Getting Started - how will I access the course?

**IMPORTANT: This is a two-step process you must follow when you first enrol. You will then have to re-register (second step below) annually, every August.**

#### **STEP 1: ACTIVATING YOUR ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY ACCOUNT**

Your course materials, important communications and your student record are accessed online but to do so you will need a login and password. Once you have been accepted onto the course you will receive an email telling you your student number and giving you instructions for activating your account. If you have any problems in activating your account please contact the IS Helpdesk (01970 622400).

#### **STEP 2: REGISTERING AS A STUDENT OF ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY (INITIALLY AND EVERY AUGUST)**

Activating your account does not mean you are registered as a student in the university. There is a separate REGISTRATION step which is explained below and which you must fulfil as soon as you have activated your account because there is only a short period during which you can register, beginning from the date when the course starts.

**IF YOU DO NOT REGISTER you will continue to have access to your account and learning materials for a few days BUT YOU WILL SUDDENLY BE LOCKED OUT AT THE END OF THE REGISTRATION PERIOD (when the system flags up that you are not a registered student).**

#### **HOW TO REGISTER:**

1. Online registration is accessed via the 'Student Record' link on the web at <https://studentrecord.aber.ac.uk/en/> (or go to [www.aber.ac.uk/en/student](http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/student) and find 'Student Record' under the 'Your Sites' heading).
2. After logging in to your student record you should click on the 'On-Line Registration' link (under the 'Your Tasks' heading on the right).
3. You will then be guided through the process, which will ask you to confirm your 'Personal Details', 'Addresses' and 'Study Scheme'.
4. Once you have completed registration you will receive a confirmation email.

If you have any queries concerning registration, please contact the Lifelong Learning team via [learningaber.ac.uk](http://learningaber.ac.uk). It is important to let us know if you are going to be unable to register fairly immediately because if you do not complete registration, you will not be a registered student and your access to university facilities will automatically be suspended after the short window of time has expired.

## Using BlackBoard

Blackboard is Aberystwyth University's online learning environment. Blackboard has a range of tools for communication, collaboration, assessment, feedback, reflection and content management, and provides an online space for activities to support learning and teaching.

You can access Blackboard via <http://blackboard.aber.ac.uk> with your Aberystwyth username and password.

Blackboard can be logged into from any computer connected to the Internet using a browser - we recommend using **Firefox** or **Chrome** for Blackboard.

Follow the link below for excellent guidance on how to navigate Blackboard:

[Guide to Blackboard Ultra - Students : Information Services , Aberystwyth University](#)



## Using Microsoft Teams

We use a platform called Teams for your tutorials and webinars. This is part of Microsoft Office 365 and is accessed via your Aber email.

Information and guidance on using Teams can be found here: [Teams : Information Services , Aberystwyth University](#)

We would recommend you download the Microsoft Teams software onto your desktop and phone. You can do this when you have logged into Teams – just click on the circle in the top right-hand corner of the screen and select 'Download the Desktop App'.

## Using Turnitin

Turnitin is our electronic submission platform for assessments.

Not all subject areas use this. Your tutor will guide you.

We recommend students use **Firefox** or **Chrome** when submitting assignments.

Turnitin assignment submission points can be found under 'Assessment and Feedback' on Blackboard.

**Guidance and information about using Turnitin can be found at: [E-submission : Information Services , Aberystwyth University](#)**

## Attendance

The University requires students to attend all timetabled activities. As such, all the scheduled activities that are part of Lifelong Learning courses are compulsory, unless stated otherwise. These shall include but shall not be limited to lectures, seminars, practical classes and tutorials. Your lecturers and tutors will monitor your attendance to scheduled sessions and monitor engagement with blackboard materials.

If illness or other special circumstance is likely to prevent you from attending a taught session you must contact your course tutor.

If your academic progress is being affected by personal or medical extenuating circumstances, you should contact the tutor or the subject co-ordinator for your current course.

The University's regulations on academic progress and attendance at classes can be found at [University Regulations on Academic Progress](#)

[More information and policies can be found here.](#)

## A note from your tutors ...

Lifelong Learning at Aberystwyth University is proud to offer flexible qualification opportunities. In exchange for this flexibility, students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning by keeping up to date with course content as well as engaging with the course, the tutor and fellow students.

New course content is usually released weekly, and students should do their best to follow that content on a week-by-week basis. Falling behind by more than 3 weeks will negatively impact on that student's learning experience.

Additionally, some courses contain weekly learning activities. Failure to produce these weekly tasks will prohibit the student from extensions and re-sit eligibility.

## **Additional Information About Assignments**

### **Referencing**

Referencing is a very important part of scientific writing. Done correctly it allows readers to find the original source and read more about any points/facts you have discussed in your piece of scientific writing.

It is also very important that you reference all work that is not your own, as failure to do so is considered unfair or bad practice by the University. If the University believes you have committed unfair or bad practice, you may have quite serious penalties applied to your final grades.

There are several standard methods for quoting, or citing, references correctly. Different subjects require you to use different methods. Your academic lecturers will provide you with further information in relation to this.

### **Preparing assignments for submission**

Assignments should be typed, in 10-to-12-point font size, (Times Roman or similar), ideally double-spaced with margins set at 'Normal' from Page Layout menu.

All pages should be numbered. Individual assignments will specify a maximum word count on the front page. Unless stated otherwise, graphs, charts, captions and the references are not included in this count.

The assignment (final version only) should then be uploaded electronically through the Blackboard site (full instructions are available above). BlackBoard will automatically allocate a number, and this will allow us to mark anonymously. Please do not put your name anywhere on your assignment.

It is important that you wait until Blackboard confirms that the upload is complete.

### **Clarification of coursework brief**

It is your responsibility to ensure that you understand the requirements of the coursework that has been set.

Lifelong Learning staff policy is to reply to emails within three working days so you should not expect a response in time to help if you ask for guidance less than three days before the deadline. Some staff will let you know at the start of the course on which day they access emails.

University policy on late/non-submission Work submitted after the deadline without an extension will have the mark reduced to ZERO however feedback will be provided on your assignments. Please get in touch with your lecturer if you do miss the assessment deadline.

## Frequently Asked Questions

If you can't find an answer to your query here, just send us an email: [learning@aber.ac.uk](mailto:learning@aber.ac.uk)

### ➤ Why can't I access Blackboard in my usual browser?

Are you using Safari, Internet Explorer or Microsoft Edge? We recommend the use of **Google Chrome** or **Mozilla Firefox** browsers when accessing Blackboard and especially when submitting assignments.

### ➤ Why am I struggling to use Blackboard on a tablet or phone?

We recommend that you download the Blackboard App. The Blackboard App is available in iOS, Android, and Windows. For further details on how to download and use it, [click here](#).

### ➤ I am an Aberystwyth University staff member, and I can't see my course listed on Blackboard?

Even if you are a member of staff with an AU staff account, you will still need to activate a separate student account to access your course. You will have a student login and email account so you can access your course on Blackboard and correspond with your tutor.

### ➤ What is Microsoft Teams?

Teams is the online tool we use to speak to our students for one-to-one tutorials or online live teaching sessions. If you experience *break up or interrupted reception* when using Teams, it may help to switch your camera off and just have audio. Instructions for Teams are in this handbook.

### ➤ How can I contact my tutor and when are they available?

You can contact your tutor by email. Our tutors are all part-time and some of them work for other employers, outside of the university. Under **Contacts** in Blackboard, you'll find the tutor's university office hours and when they will respond to your email.

➤ **Why should I complete the assignments?**

Our assignments help you to consolidate and reinforce your learning as well as reflect on the work you completed. You'll also find them enjoyable, as you can showcase your learning and skill development.

Our programme is subsidised by the Welsh Government, and we can access certain funding if students complete the course assessments. This funding helps us sustain our programme and keep our courses at an affordable level.

➤ **How should I organise my studies?**

We highly recommend that you set aside some time in the week to regularly access the course learning materials in the step-by-step self-paced units. We have designed the courses for you to be able to access them when it suits you, but we recommend regular, bite-size learning.

Make a space in your home that is dedicated to learning if you can. Is it comfy, is your chair in the right position? A good and warm environment is conducive to more engaged learning.

➤ **Are these online courses Higher Education accredited?**

Yes, all our courses are awarded a National Qualifications Framework Level. You can choose to study courses as stand-alone or work towards one of our Certificates in Higher Education. Our courses can also count towards the first year of a degree with a partner institution. Ask the relevant Subject Coordinator for further details.

➤ **What can I expect from my tutor's feedback?**

The feedback from your tutor should identify the strengths in your work and then give you guidance on how you can build on these strengths. The tutor will also identify areas for future development and improvement. They may highlight resources you may find useful and give you tips that you can put into practice for future assignments. You will be asked to undertake a self-directed project that demonstrates all that you have learnt within the course. It is aimed that the theme is negotiated between your tutor and yourself.



## Glossary of Terms

We have a lot of acronyms and jargon. If you haven't studied for a while it can be very confusing at first, so here are some explanations.

**Announcements:** a system and platform where the tutor will contact you with news and it will arrive in your email inbox. Therefore, you need to keep checking your email. We recommend creating a shortcut on your desktop.

**Aspire:** electronic access to a module's reading list; some modules don't require this.

**Blackboard:** our Virtual Learning Platform.

**Blog:** a communal platform within Blackboard for students to share images and comments.

**Box of Broadcasts:** an external site hosting a massive library of radio and TV programmes for research.

**Blended learning:** the course will be delivered partly online but some units of teaching, like field study will require you to come to campus.

**CHE:** Certificate of Higher Education.

**Core Module:** a compulsory module required to complete a Certificate of Higher Education.

**Course Unit:** a small unit of learning.

**Credit:** the term used to represent the amount of time required to complete a module.

5 credits = 50 hrs

10 credits = 100 hrs

20 credits = 200 hrs

This is notional study hours - some students do far more than this.

**Credit Framework:** a national comparison of levels across different providers. It is often called [NQF](#).

**External Examiner:** a person appointed from another Institution who scrutinises marking, assessment and policies and is part of our Quality Assurance protocol.

**Face to Face Delivery:** traditional delivery of courses – not online.

**Feedback:** this is captured within the Blackboard environment as surveys, but we also give you feedback on your work.

**HE:** Higher Education.

**IS:** Information Services. They are there to help if you have problems accessing parts of Blackboard. Their email is [is@aber.ac.uk](mailto:is@aber.ac.uk). We recommend that you create a screenshot of the problem within the body of the email. This will help them solve the problem quickly.

**Moderator:** an independent appointment whose job is to scrutinise all the assessment and feedback, to ensure that it is fair.

**Module / Course:** a course of study on a theme.

**OneDrive:** your university file storage where you can save work. This is also accessed from your Outlook account. Look for the 'box of squares' in your email, top left-hand side of your inbox.

**Outlook:** your secure email platform.

**Password:** links to your Aber username but needs to be changed annually. You get 8 reminders by email so don't ignore them or you get locked out of the system!

**Panopto:** a platform to record a video or audio for tutors and students.

**Summative Feedback:** the final feedback given to you by your tutor.

**Transcript:** a log of the courses you have successfully passed in the academic year.

**Turnitin:** an electronic platform to submit assignments for some subjects.

**Trickle feedback:** regular personal feedback on your work which is not assessed.

**Teams:** the tutorial package that is part of your Outlook email. Look for the box of squares in the top left-hand side of your Outlook email.

**Tutorial:** a chance to meet your tutor and discuss your progress and path of learning.

**Username:** your unique portal access. It is usually three letters and a couple of numbers. Keep it safe, it is your passport to learning.

**Webinar:** a platform where many students can share information and talk to each other





## Plagiarism

We have a responsibility to the awarding bodies who issue your certificates to ensure that the work presented has been produced by you. Therefore, your work will be checked for plagiarism or malpractice.

This means that:

- Work must not be copied and passed off as your own
- Other people's ideas and opinions are not reproduced without acknowledging the source
- Online translation tools must not be used to copy the work of others
- You must not collude by working with other learners to produce work that is submitted as an individual learner's work. (This does not mean that you cannot do group work.)
- You must not pretend to be someone else to produce the work for another person
- You must not arrange for another person to take your place in an assessment, examination or test
- You must not fabricate results and/or evidence

**In short you must not cheat to gain an unfair advantage.**

Further information in relation to the University's Unacceptable Academic Practice can be found here: [Regulation on Unacceptable Academic Practice](#)

**We would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the very best with your studies on the Lifelong Learning programme!**