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Quick reference guide

Welcome to the Aberystwyth Lifelong learning online handbook!

Dysgu Gydol Oes
Lifelong Learning

Welcome aboard our new online modules. We decided that you probably need a short guide to help with any teething problems you might encounter. This handbook signposts you to various information points that should allay any anxieties you have before you embark on your studies.

About us

Firstly, we regularly use the word 'Aber' as a shortcut for Aberystwyth University. We can't assume that you are local, and many of you are studying from all over the world. You will note that we talk about 'aber accounts', 'aber usernames' and we probably put it in front of other things too!

The word Aber is a suffix word that just means the mouth of a river in the Welsh language, but it is the colloquial name for Aberystwyth. It is a bit quirky, we know. We hope that at some time you will visit our beautiful town, nestled by the sea and surrounded by beautiful mountains. Come and enjoy our heritage and culture and enrol on one of our intensive courses. There is plenty of accommodation and you are assured of a warm welcome.

About our teaching

Each subject programme requires a different style of delivery and, as such, you may experience one or more of these modes of delivery. To access our online programme, you will need a computer with a camera, speakers or headphones, Microsoft Word and an Aberystwyth University username and password that needs to be updated yearly. More information on that later in the booklet.

Modes of delivery:

Self-paced learning: This is common in the Art and Design, Humanities and Science programmes. You will work through the units and activities in your own time and when it suits you, but there will be opportunities to come together online at tutorials and webinars. All the learning content is on the University Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). You will need a password which is only known to you and guidance is given on how to set this up.

The advantage of this format is that you can take your time with your studies and juggle them with your other commitments. 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 again and again. You will receive regular trickle feedback from your tutor on submission of your work, after each unit.

Why are online courses longer?

You will also notice, in some cases, that the duration of online courses is slightly longer than if they were delivered face-to-face. We have found that many students are juggling their study with work so we have added a little bit more time so you can have an improved learning experience.

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

Blended learning:

Some courses may require you to come to Aberystwyth University. These may be more practical, hands-on courses or weekend intensives. This mode of delivery will be made clear when we advertise the course.

These courses will also have a different code identifier. All modules with an L identifier before the number are online courses. e.g.: CL302 is an art course (CL indicates that it is delivered online and 3 indicates the term that it is delivered in. The other numbers are chronologically organised and indicate how many courses are delivered that term. Blended learning will have a BL code.

Accessing your learning units and additional techy tools

We use a secure learning platform (VLE) called Blackboard. We recommend the use of **Google Chrome** or **Mozilla Firefox** browsers when accessing Blackboard and especially when submitting assignments. We don't recommend that you use Safari, Internet Explorer or Microsoft Edge.

After you pay and enrol, you will be sent your unique student number. This will enable you to obtain your student username and set a password for your AU student account. Our online courses require you to set up an account so you can access all the relevant platforms and learning materials.

Having an account gives you many additional benefits such as access to the university library and online journals, an email address and discounts for university services.

You will need to set up the account without our help, because it is a personal and confidential transaction. Please watch the video below as it will give you all the instructions you will need. We suggest that you sit at your computer and access this page on a smart phone, freeing up your computer to work through the instructions to help make the transaction smoother.

How to activate your AU student account (video)

You will need to choose an eight-character minimum password that is unique to you. Common names will not be accepted. We take your security very seriously.

Your tutor will send any communications, called **Announcements**, to your Aber student email account. Therefore, it is important to keep checking this regularly. You are one of us now! You use the same username and password for all other functions.

You navigate Blackboard via chevrons. These move content up and down; it has scroll buttons too. There is a menu or 'filing cabinet' on the left-hand side that shows all the sections available to you. Depending on the course, you might see **Announcements, Module Information, Course Content** or **Learning Materials, Assessment and Feedback, Reading List, Contact** and **Student Support.** Sometimes the left-hand side filing cabinet doesn't show. This all depends on how your computer is set up. To access this,

you need to hover the mouse on the left-hand edge and a chevron will appear allowing you to open the filing cabinet.

A short navigation video is here. This will also be in your course letter and is on the LLL website. We recommend watching this on a phone or tablet next to your computer.

Tutorial software

We use a platform called **Teams** for your tutorials and webinars. This is part of Office 365 and can be accessed via your Aber email. That doesn't mean that your tutorial will be with everyone else; it is just the name for the platform. Guidance for using Teams is within the **Student Support** section of Blackboard and is in this handbook.

As an Aberystwyth student you can also access **Box of Broadcasts** which is an amazing resource of radio and tv programmes from many years back. There is a search tool available, as well as a calendar of listings. This is marvellously useful. Again, this is accessed by typing the name of your institution (Aberystwyth University) and then logging in with your Aberystwyth University username and password. Here is the link to Box of Broadcasts, but there will be more information under **Student Support.**

This is great value and included in your course fee, do use it.

All about assessment

You are undertaking a Higher Education accredited module that sits within a Higher Education Certificate. You can, however, take our courses as stand-alone and not study for the entire Certificate. As part of the course, we are required to assess you to see how effective the learning has been. We like to give regular feedback so that you can benefit from this experience and guidance during the course.

Each programme has a slightly different way of gathering student work. Some modules will require you to electronically submit your work via the Blackboard environment, others won't. Your tutor will give you guidance on this in the first unit of Blackboard. In the Art programme this unit is called 'Before we begin' and in other modules it is called 'Introduction'.

Our University electronic submission platform is called Turnitin.

Turnitin

Turnitin is used for Humanities, Science and Social Science modules. This is not used in the art programme yet.

Assessment

You will find your assessment deadline and what you need to do for assessment in the first unit in Blackboard. For some modules it is under the Assessment and Feedback tab. All modules have traditional start and end dates and expected deadline dates for submitting work. We also have a Late Submission Policy, which can be found here.

Collating work for Art modules

Your tutor has devised your learning, so you are building your skills from unit to unit. We ask that after each unit you send your tutor a Word file with task-related work, that includes some reflective writing; this usually forms part of the module assessment weighting. By submitting work regularly to your tutor, you can respond to the feedback, which may result in improved marks. We call this Trickle Feedback; it isn't marked but you get regular feedforward, as we like to call it. We have noticed that our online student's work is of better quality than the face-

to-face learning. That has been an interesting development. This is due to students being able to access the demonstration videos multiple times.

Art history modules will ask for an extract or draft, so you can receive feedback before your final submission; do take advantage of this service.

Many courses have a longer duration than if you were embarking on the module as a traditional face-to-face learning experience. This is because we are aware that you are juggling other commitments alongside your study. Please keep in contact with your tutor if you are experiencing problems; we may be able to help you meet the course deadlines.

How do we assess?

Embedded within **Student Support** or **Assessment and Feedback** on Blackboard are the criteria that we use to assess your work. These sections also have lots of other useful information to help you with your assessments. You could embark on a self-reflective task and work out what your mark might be before the tutor assesses it. If the module has been run multiple times, there may even be examples of essays or student work.

Once the tutor has assessed all your work and given you feedback, an independent moderator reviews your mark and feedback to ensure that there is parity of marking. We also have a visit from an External Examiner once a year in September. They also scrutinise our processes and compare your work with student work from other Higher Education institutions.

Our Quality Assurance process

After you have passed a module, you will receive a transcript from the university once a year, in October, once everything has been approved and validated. It is important to keep this piece of paper somewhere safe as this tracks your progress over the years. If your course runs over our usual academic year, August to August; your course will appear in the following year's transcript. Your tutor will warn you about this.

Types of assessment

We have lots of different modes of assessment, but we don't have exams - we don't believe in them!

You may experience short essays, projects, comparative study exercises, academic poster design, case studies, oral, aural and written assessments, field notebooks, reflective diaries, blogs, logs and journals, mini Panopto recordings, data analysis, timelines, comparative analysis, portfolio, quizzes, reviews, articles and more!

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

Feedback

Your tutor will give you your feedback after each unit if you are studying Art; we call this trickle feedback. This is collated by your tutor and is only assessed / graded at the end. It is used to help you gain a higher final mark. In other subjects, feedback is given after mini tasks, via discussion forums or personal journals, and following the submission of assessments.

Your Feedback to us.

We love feedback!

You will notice that within your Blackboard module you will have links to two surveys. One is at the mid-point of your module, the other at the end, which is a summative evaluation.

These are all read by us, as we want to improve the student experience. Please take the time to fill them out for us. It is an easy one-click survey.

Should you encounter any really pressing issues you can contact your subject Coordinator:

Art and Design: Alison Pierse   chp@aber.ac.uk   (part time contract)

Modern Languages: Antonio   aob@aber.ac.uk

Humanities: Calista Williams   caw52@aber.ac.uk   (part time contract)

Ecology: Calista Williams   caw52@aber.ac.uk   (part time contract)

We also have a **Student Staff Consultative Committee.**

Students from your subject area can also be contacted.

Candy Devina Bedworth	Art & Design	cdb13@aber.ac.uk
Annette Williamson	Art & Design	acw6@aber.ac.uk.
Phill Bowker	Humanities	bowker804@btinternet.com
Harry Rogers	Humanities	harriboy@live.co.uk
Marin Berisa	Languages	mab156@aber.ac.uk
Fiona Draper	Science	fjd2@aber.ac.uk
Bob Jacques	Science	rgj2@aber.ac.uk

The Minutes from these meetings can be found at:

https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/lifelong-learning/virtual-student-centre/

This virtual student centre is a one-stop-shop for information. If you think we should include something, please let aob@aber.ac.uk know.

Technical issues

All About Teams

How to use Microsoft Teams

Like Blackboard, you can access Teams online by clicking here and logging in with your Aberystwyth University student username and password. Although not essential, we would recommend you download the Microsoft Teams software onto your desktop. Once you have logged in, you can do this from the Microsoft Teams homepage. Click on the circle in the top right-hand corner of the screen and select Download the Desktop App. If an online meeting has been scheduled by your tutor you will receive an email to your University Email Account that will contain a link, which you can click on to join the meeting. Alternatively, if you go to your **Calendar** in Microsoft Teams, which is on the left-hand side of the screen, you will see a Join button appear by the meeting just before it begins, which you can click on. If you haven't used Microsoft Teams before I would recommend watching this one minute video so you know what to expect.

What is Microsoft Teams?

How do I use Microsoft Teams on my mobile device?

How do I join a Teams meeting?

How do I use the chat facility on Teams?

Using Turnitin

This is our electronic submission platform.

Not all subject areas use this. You will be guided by your tutor.

Important: We recommend students use Firefox or Chrome when submitting assignments.

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

1. Click on the View/ Complete link for your assignment.
2. Your assignment will be listed on the page. Click Submit.
3. Fill in the required details.
4. Click on What are the requirements for an upload to check the guidelines for the file upload.
5. Choose a file and click Upload.
6. Double check the text you have submitted then click Submit, or Return, if you need to upload a different file.
7. Your assignment has now been submitted and you will see your digital receipt.
8. To return to your assignment area in Blackboard, click on the links at the top of the screen.

Frequently Asked Questions

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.

Why has the sidebar menu in Blackboard disappeared?

The sidebar menu in Blackboard is like a filing cabinet and contains all the information you will need, but this sidebar can be hidden. Just hover your mouse over the edge of the left of the page and a left directional arrow will appear, which you can click on. The sidebar menu will then open.

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 (in Modern Languages we use the Zoom platform). 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.

What materials will I need for the course?

If you are enrolling on an art course, the course start letter outlines the approximate total price of the materials you will need with an actual materials list and some places to purchase. It will also be available in the first unit of the course.

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. You will find under **Contacts** in Blackboard 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. For Modern Languages (Zoom) and Counselling Skills (Teams) courses, there are weekly live classes held online.

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, first, 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 (VLE)

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 NFCQ

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: 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.

Feedforward: Tutor feedback that isn't assessed but helps you with your final project or assignment

HE: - Higher Education

IS: this team are heroes and they are called Information Services. They are there to help if you have problems accessing parts of Blackboard. Their email is 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: 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. This has Inbox, Sent and draft messages.

Password: links to your Aber username but needs to be changed yearly. 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.

Screenshot: Taking a picture of the computer screen to show someone. On a Dell computer it is the two keys, the window image and PRTSc, top right-hand side of the keyboard.

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.

VLE: Virtual Learning Environment - Blackboard

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

What our students say…

'I have thoroughly enjoyed the course along with your teaching - it has certainly inspired me to carry on further with the watercolour techniques and new on-line courses. '

'Thanks. Definitely inspired to do more.'

'Many thanks for your help and tips along the way. I have decided to sign up for the Pencil course in September so will look forward to seeing you again then.'

'I have really enjoyed the content of this course. Thank you, the written instructions with links to videos has been very useful.'

'Videos and illustrations have helped a great deal, and frankly, I could go on about the many ways that this class has improved my art. More importantly to me, however, this class has gotten me to think of watercolour and illustration not just as a hobby but a professional skill.'

'This course has resonated with me from day one of reading the brief, knowing that I needed to get involved. I am so grateful that I did, it has been such a benefit to me, and, since October, has helped me to sit still for a minute and explore what I do and why I do what I do, where I am going wrong and how I can move forward.'

'I have therefore treated the course as an opportunity for longitudinal reflection as opposed to starting at time zero and progressing through it with intervals for reflection as suggested. I have enjoyed the flexible pre-recorded format as I have been able to listen, rewind, stop and start all at my own pace. I have also enjoyed the prompts to follow online links to Ted talks and book summaries.'

'I send you in this email my first try at drawing. This has been a hard exercise for me as I have no experience of drawing but I have enjoyed every second of it!'