

# **Aberystwyth University Research and Innovation Strategy 2019-24**

## **Foreword**

Research matters. It informs our teaching and enhances the learning experience. Students are taught by staff who shape our understanding of the world in which we live and who are pushing back the frontiers of what we know

Our research also benefits society. It has an impact upon the economy, on improving the environment, on public policy and upon cultural life in Wales and beyond. It is outward looking, engaging with communities. And through commercial partnerships, it helps to develop new products and techniques.

But above all, research is a quest for knowledge. As a species we are curious – about the world in which we live, about other worlds whether real or imagined, and about ideas. And it is our role as a University to pursue this in a rigorous and non-partisan manner.

This Research and Innovation Strategy outlines what we mean when we say that Aberystwyth is a research-led University. It details the principles that underpin how we pursue research. It identifies a series of actions which will help to develop our research over the next five years. And it articulates how we will further develop a research environment that is ambitious, outward-looking, engaged and inclusive.

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Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation)

## Research and Innovation Strategy

Aberystwyth is a research-led University. This means that:

- Research is a pattern of behavior, embedded in what we do.
- Research and teaching are mutually reinforcing. They work with each other at individual, Departmental, Faculty and University levels to deliver a coherent academic experience for staff and students.
- Research implications should be considered in teaching developments, and vice versa.
- Research is not an isolated activity undertaken within the University, but contributes to the society in which we live.
- Researchers should be provided by the University with the space and time for undertaking research.

The aim of this Strategy is to develop a strong, outward-facing research culture as an enabler for success – to meet the objectives outlined in the University’s Strategic Plan, to improve the quality of our research, to develop new research partnerships and attract new researchers (including research students), to have an impact for the betterment of society in Wales and globally, and to increase research income including grant capture.

There is no one initiative which can realize this, rather we shall work with a clear sense of purpose – to develop a strong, vibrant culture where research is valued by all staff and students. This will require leadership within the University and engagement by all staff. It will involve collaborations across the University and with external stakeholders, and developing both an awareness of and a capacity to shape research agendas in funding bodies.

Five key principles will underpin this development:

### *1. Ambition*

We will actively encourage ambitious, entrepreneurial research that challenges existing approaches and generates new knowledge. We will not fear failure, but will expect staff to engage critically and responsibly with established thinking in order to progress substantially our understanding of the world in which we live and contribute to its betterment. We will seek to increase current, and explore new sources of research income as an enabler for successful research with impact.

### *2. Confidence*

We will work to ensure that staff and students across the University understand that research matters and are confident in the role of research as central to the University’s mission. We will support research, impact, innovation and knowledge exchange in Welsh. We will celebrate and reward research, including knowledge creation, impact, innovation and knowledge exchange.

### 3. *Integration*

We will ensure that research and teaching work together in an integrated academic approach. We will work to involve professional services in improving the research environment, ensuring that they contribute to the development of a strong research culture through a better understanding of the role, significance and requirements of research.

### 4. *Inclusivity*

We will ensure that all staff engaged in research are equal members of the research community, with equal opportunities and treated with dignity, respect and courtesy. We will work with protected groups to ensure that their research talents are developed and nurtured in a way that is equitable and fair.

### 5. *Collaboration*

We will work with bodies in Wales, the UK and globally to set research agendas. We will work with the wider community, in Wales and globally, exploring new forms of dialogue and engagement. We will work with external partners, in Wales and globally, both in generating research and in passing on the benefits of our research.

## **ACTION PLAN**

### **SHORT TERM (to be completed during 2020)**

Action number	Action	Principle addressed
1	We will ensure that each Faculty has an appropriate structure to ensure that high quality research is supported and promoted.	1 & 2
2	We will revisit workload allocation tariffs to ensure that tariffs for roles are properly calculated and do not inadvertently encroach on research time.	1,2,3 &4
3	We will improve the communication of research successes, including those of PGR students, both within AU and externally.	1,2,4 & 5
4	We will introduce a research induction programme for new academic staff and a briefing	2,3 & 5

	session for new staff in professional services.	
5	We will introduce a week long, themed, Festival of Research to showcase our research and engage with local communities.	1,3 & 5
6	We will clarify the role of leaders in research, ensure that they are more proactive in the support of research internally, that they engage in shaping research agendas externally and that they are positioned to assist in horizon scanning for new opportunities.	1 & 2
7	We will consolidate and promote funding opportunities for research on Wales or in the Welsh language; and we will examine ways of encouraging and supporting research through the medium of Welsh.	2
8	We will complete the build phase and enter the operational phase of AIEC and VetHub1; and we will complete phase one of the National Spectrum Centre	3
9	We will develop a policy on the responsible use of research metrics and provide Departments with a basket of longitudinal metrics on their research performance	1 & 4
10	We will review Departmental targets for research grant capture and applications, and how Departments support grant applications through peer review and other mechanisms; and we will introduce new Departmental targets for research outputs, and for impact and innovation activities.	1 & 3
11	We will develop guidance for staff on how to optimise the timetable to balance teaching and research commitments; and we will explore means of protecting research time through the use of the timetable.	2,3 & 4

12	We will pursue UKRI funding for a major research infrastructure project in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences	3
13	We will develop, through RB&I, greater support for innovation, consultancy and business engagement; a 'fast track' facility for small grants requiring a fast turnaround; and, in partnership with academic colleagues, improved horizon scanning of research initiatives.	1 & 3
14	We will complete a policy for due diligence in research collaboration overseas	3
15	We will revise our impact support scheme to incorporate innovation.	3

**MEDIUM TERM (to be completed by end 2024)**

Action No.	Action	Principle addressed
16	We will establish new training in networking for researchers and in mentoring of research staff.	1
17	We will introduce Open Days for potential Research Fellows	1
18	We will improve our monitoring of, and HR support for, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in research.	4
19	We will introduce a new strategy for the support of inter-disciplinary research centres (IRCs)	1 & 2
20	We will review the relationship between the teaching programme and research	3
21	We will continue the development of the National Spectrum Centre	3
22	We will work with the National Library of Wales and Royal Commission for Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales to develop a Research Park for the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences on Penglais	1 & 3
23	We will introduce performance expectations for research staff at different career stages and appropriate for their disciplinary areas, including for grant applications, innovation and impact; and we will incorporate these into promotions criteria.	1 & 4
24	We will expand the role of the Graduate School to provide training and mentoring for Research Fellows and Early Career Researchers. The Graduate School will also provide, or coordinate, training sessions in new methodologies available for all academic staff; and training in impact and innovation for academic staff at	1

	all career levels. We will continue to support Welsh Crucible in training future research leaders.	
25	We will work with national and regional government on new funding opportunities in the post-Brexit landscape.	1, 3 & 5
26	We will investigate an 'entrepreneurs in residence' scheme to promote and improve innovation.	3
27	We will embed research requirements within the Estates Strategy and use of space.	5
28	We will review our schemes which enable students to participate in staff research projects.	1,2 & 5
29	We will work with Human Resources to develop procedures and support for those staff on Teaching & Scholarship contracts who wish to be considered for research contracts.	4
30	We will develop better role profiles for research staff, and improve the processes for recruiting staff on research contracts.	1
31	We will review the policy on research leave to ensure that all research staff have equal opportunities.	4
32	We will explore ways to improve links with researchers not based on the Penglais Campus	4
33	We will introduce new software for improving grant management	1
34	We will improve our monitoring of responsible research, and explore establishing a research integrity unit.	1
35	We will aim to create a scheme enabling Early Career Researchers to spend up to 3 months at a major international research facility as part of their career development.	1, 5