

THE ABERTAY OUTCOME AGREEMENT FOR 2013/14

CONTEXT

Introduction

This Outcome Agreement (OA) is driven by the University's commitment to demonstrate the impact it achieves with the public funding entrusted to it. We have shaped this OA in accordance with our ambitious Strategic Plan 2011-15, which aligns with Scottish Funding Council (SFC) national outcomes and aims to enhance the quality of the student educational experience and the effectiveness of our research and knowledge-exchange activities. This OA, which acknowledges targets and outcomes of previous agreements with the SFC such as the Regional Coherence Agreement and the Regional Coherence Additional – Sport Agreement), represents an evolution from the 2012 OA agreed with the SFC and seeks to build on the aims and objectives expressed in that document, adjusted according to changes in the external environment over the past year. The document is the result of internal consultation, including input from Students' Association Officers, students (via the Students' Representative Council), Senate, and Court. Recognising the SFC's wish for reduced bureaucracy, a more streamlined process, and the progress made against the 2012/13 outcomes, this OA generally presents headline and strategic outcomes rather than micro-level targets. We believe that this will facilitate and enhance in-depth discussions at progress report meetings between the University and SFC officers.

A Pattern of Participation and the Learner Journey

We will have a portfolio of degrees that is academically rigorous, attractive to students, and relevant to the needs of employers in the region and beyond.

The University's strategic approach to teaching and learning revolves around the concept of quality enhancement, with the Student Experience as one of the main themes. The Strategic Plan highlights this approach by stressing that a key objective is ensuring that "a transformational student experience underpins [our] planning". This is coupled to a commitment to increasing the diversity of the student population as a "source of enrichment for everyone in our community", and the concept of student empowerment through meaningful engagement with University level decision-making processes. Accordingly, it will be noted that this OA renews our commitment to working in close partnership with the student body, particularly as represented in the Students' Association.

This OA draws substantially on Abertay's extensive experience in promoting wider access over many years. While maintaining a national and international outlook and reach, we remain at heart a university rooted in our community, developing and building on the concepts of coherent access to degree level programmes, to enhance the employability of all students underpinned by a core commitment to meeting the future economic needs of the region in

particular, and to provide high level educational opportunities to students from the widest possible range of socio-economic groupings.¹

We already have comparatively high levels of recruitment from SIMD20, mature, and EWAS², as well as students studying degree-level HE in FE off campus with partner colleges³, and we can demonstrate relatively high rates of performance among these cohorts in terms of retention, progression and module pass rates. It is worth noting that c15% of our current intake is classified as SIMD20, with a further c18% extending to SIMD40. SIMD20 applicants tend to be from the local community, and in Tayside, 19% of school leavers are from SIMD20, but only 9% have one or more SCQF level 6 qualifications. So, in our case, fewer than 9% of school leavers eligible for HE entry are from SIMD20, but our recruitment percentage is a disproportionate and positive 15%. A third of our students are classified as 'mature', and 16% of our entrants are 'true' articulators, making us the largest provider of degrees to this group in the region. In terms of retention, we significantly exceed our benchmarks for both 'Young' and 'Mature' learners.

Our substantial experience in generating and implementing the SHEP, Regional Coherence Outcome, and Articulation Hub initiatives will also be a key factor in delivering this OA: we have agreed, for example, with our college partners to continue with the Tayside and Fife Articulation Hub Management Committee beyond the end of funding in 2013. Our experience in these areas has given us particular insights into overcoming the challenges of ensuring as smooth a transition as possible between FE and HE – insights that will influence the delivery of this OA.

This OA also restates our commitment to equality and diversity as one of our core values; our Equality Policy and Action Plan, together with ongoing impact assessment of this OA will underpin key outcomes in terms of protected characteristics, equality and diversity.

B Pattern of Provision

We will have excellent degree programmes that emphasise the distinctive Abertay approach to provision and teaching.

The planned reduction in enrolments for 2012/13 and 2013/14 has given us the opportunity to review our portfolio to ensure that we sustain a distinctive range of degree programmes that are sensitive to the needs and demand in our Scottish market, and support our commitment to wider access and

¹ We have drafted this OA in the context of a planned reduction in new enrolments in sessions 2012/13 and 2013/14, following two sessions in which we over-recruited and breached consolidation limits on full-time Scottish/EU recruitment. This reduction will affect the extent to which we can increase new enrolments in particular categories relevant to this Outcome Agreement.

² Entry With Advanced Standing from Scottish colleges into stages 2 and 3 of UG programmes.

³ Including students enrolled on tripartite consortium degrees.

participation and the fostering of a diverse student community. Based on an analysis of programme intake profiles against these commitments (e.g. representation of students from SIMD20/40, articulation from HNC/HND) we were able to identify programmes for temporary suspension or amendment of entry requirements whose contribution to these targets was either insignificant or easy to compensate elsewhere (for instance within a programme in the same portfolio). In addition to programmes suspended the majority of the remaining programmes have been reduced, mostly proportionately on a portfolio/School basis. The overall portfolio has thus been maintained, and the allocation of 12 additional funded UG places to support programmes in Life Sciences (Skills for Growth: Additional UG Places) adds further strength to our priorities.

The 2012 OA set out the distinctive or unique features of Abertay UG and PG programmes in terms of content, delivery and alignment with specific skill requirements of particular industries (vocationally-oriented programmes⁴), and also the strongly intra- and inter-School interdependencies and synergies that characterise many of Abertay's programmes⁵.

We believe these characteristics define the unique contribution that Abertay's academic provision can make to the local and national economies and to society at large. Employability and entrepreneurship will continue to underpin the design and delivery of our provision in the future (see Graduate Skills section below), in line with the detailed description of this aspect of our provision set out in the 2012 OA.

The 2013 OA commits us to working with other bodies to rationalise regional provision in some subjects, improving collaboration, enhancing complementarity, reducing duplication and inefficiencies in delivery, and facilitating the development of excellence in selected areas. We believe that our close links with the future employers of our graduates and a good understanding of the professional environments in which they will develop their careers will offer significant benefits to this process.

C Research Competitiveness

Our research teams, applying expertise from several subject areas, will define and address difficult and complex real-world problems.

We believe that in an increasingly complex, fast-paced and interdependent world, societal challenges such as energy security, transport, climate change and resource efficiency, health and ageing, environmentally friendly production methods and land management will require interdisciplinary

⁴ Wherever possible and relevant, we seek professional accreditation for our programmes. At present, around one third of our programmes have such accreditation.

⁵ Nineteen percent of our modules are delivered to students of more than one school, and 57% of all modules are delivered to students on more than one programme in the same school

solutions achieved through collaboration. Accordingly, Abertay is establishing distinctive expertise in developing interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary research teams. Our current Strategic Plan is increasing the pervasiveness of the research and practice culture across all provision, while promoting national and international excellence in various key areas.⁶ We intend to build on the current planning by reviewing our research leadership, management, and structures, using a thematic approach to address the large-scale issues facing society, in so doing establishing critical mass in targeted areas.

This will be reflected in our submissions to REF 2014, which will be based around interdisciplinary teams, demonstrating our success in bringing together researchers from different disciplines to produce research excellence with positive impacts on society. As part of our preparation for the REF, we have made the selection process as inclusive as possible. All staff members have been invited to nominate themselves for possible submission in the REF. To ensure that any staff personal circumstances, including those of researchers in protected characteristic groups, are taken into account in the selection process, we have set up an advisory board to assess any requested for reduced number of outputs and established an appeals process to ensure all staff are treated fairly and equally.

Our general commitment to research and the specific outcomes listed in this OA must be viewed within the wider context of the research funding regime in which we operate, at both Scottish and UK levels. Our share of research funding allocated by the SFC has declined steadily for several years from an already low level relative to other parts of the sector. Simultaneously, increased competition for UK research council funding and the recent economic downturn has made it increasingly difficult for Abertay to raise research income from other sources. Nevertheless, we will continue to seek alternative sources of research income, including European funding, and collaboration with business, particularly with SMEs in sectors of importance to the Scottish economy.

Abertay continues to place the generation and sharing of new knowledge at the heart of University life, as is made clear in our Strategic Plan 2011-15. We remain convinced that access to active researchers and the opportunity to learn alongside those producing new knowledge are vital elements of the fully rounded learning experience we intend to continue providing for our undergraduates and postgraduates.

The same belief in the fundamental importance of research has inspired the commitments we make in this OA. The result of these commitments will be the continued development of Abertay's distinctive expertise in demand-led and solutions-oriented approaches to innovation with a number of the key sectors identified by Scottish Government for expanding Scotland's international competitive advantage, most notably, the digital creative industries, the environment and food and drink. This applies both to research,

⁶ Including environmental sciences, policing, forensics and criminal justice and in inclusive technologies for sustainability, well-being and security.

as discussed in this section, and to knowledge exchange, as discussed in the following section.

D University and Industry Knowledge-Exchange Collaboration

We will actively engage with industry, business, the community and cultural matters to further knowledge in those areas.

Both our Strategic Plan 2011-15 and the 2012 OA made plain our commitment to engagement with the wider community and to public dissemination of our research outputs in a mutually enriching process of Knowledge Exchange (KE) and learning. Under the Plan, we are developing our distinctive approach to demand-driven knowledge exchange activity to make a significant contribution to the Scottish and UK economies, particularly in areas of high potential such as the creative industries and food and drink, via an ever-growing network of national and international collaborations of different scales and across a wide spectrum of stakeholders (including industry, community groups, HEIs, public services etc.) to deliver the required interdisciplinary solutions of the future. To this end, we will continue to work with Scottish Enterprise and other organisations to promote the growth of the Scottish economy through knowledge exchange.

The 2013 OA tracks this trend with specific targets in the areas of continuous professional development opportunities for business, a greater involvement by staff and the University as a whole in public engagement with science, cultural engagement and KE events. We will also be able to demonstrate greater public access to our IP and greater contribution to national policy development in all the fields where we are active.⁷

E Graduate Skills

We will produce excellent graduates, knowledgeable in their subjects, able to work independently and with others while extending their boundaries through curiosity and creativity.

The learner journey at Abertay is founded on a well-established and mature set of “Abertay Graduate Attributes”. The Abertay Graduate Attributes encompass core intellectual and cognitive skills, abilities and attitudes specifically designed to support retention, progression and, ultimately, employability – equipping our graduates to meet the expectations of future employers. We take confidence in making these assertions as a result of the findings of the Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) carried out by QAA in session 2011/12. The ELIR Report (August 2012) stated that Abertay Graduate Attributes provide for ‘planned opportunities across the curriculum for students to develop graduate attributes and employability skills’. Further,

⁷ It should be acknowledged, however, that Abertay has experienced a decline in its share of national KE funding comparable to the decline in research funding noted above, which will inevitably affect the extent to which achieve the KE aspects of this OA.

the report highlighted 'positive engagement with the national enhancement themes', which 'has helped the University to embed graduate attributes across the curriculum and to develop more innovative forms of assessment'. Given that the Abertay Graduate Attributes lie at the foundation of the way we enhance the learner journey, the initiative itself has no targets or quantitative success indicators. Instead, the attributes inform and contribute to the ways in which other outcomes such as employability, retention, progression, and articulation will be achieved. Portfolio planning and the quality enhancement core themes that underpin our delivery of teaching, learning and the whole student experience are all designed and implemented in line with the concept of the Graduate Attributes.

We are committed, through the inculcation of our Graduate Attributes and through the way in which we design and deliver programmes, to enhancing the graduate-level employability of our students, enabling them to gain such employment, progress within and beyond an enterprise, contribute effectively to strategic direction, and to achieve their potential. The targets specified in this section of the OA derive directly from the vision, values and objectives set out in our Strategic Plan 2011-15.

OUTCOMES

A PATTERN OF PARTICIPATION AND THE LEARNER JOURNEY

We will have a portfolio of degrees that is academically rigorous, attractive to students, and relevant to the needs of employers in the region and beyond

A1 Recruit 16% of our Scottish undergraduate students from SIMD20 backgrounds and a further 19% from SIMD40 (an increase to 35% from 2012/13 which was 33%)

A2 Increase⁸ our recruitment into the AHEAD access programme to 38 (from 35 in 2012/13), which is for students from the local region who either have no prior direct family experience of HE or who have low prior educational achievement

A3 As per the Regional Coherence agreement with the SFC, ensure that a minimum of 150 students articulate through the following route: HNC/D into year 2/3

A4 By December 2013, working with the Students' Association, review and revise the Student Partnership Agreement

A5 In order to facilitate improvements in services delivered by the Students' Association, facilitate an increase in the staffing complement of the Association, by increasing the budget allocation by 18% over 2012/13 levels

⁸ Increases throughout the document are over 2012/13 baseline levels

A6 By November 2013, evaluate our approach to quality enhancement of the learner journey, using, *inter alia*, NSS results, and develop an action plan to deliver improvements

A7 As per the SFC *Investment Scheme awards*, ensure that 12 additional students are recruited to the Life Sciences portfolio (BSc Biomedical Sciences; BSc Applied Biomedical Sciences); that 40 additional students are recruited into identified areas, in conjunction with Dundee College and Angus College, commencing their studies at HN level in college in 2013 and transitioning to HE on completion of their HND; and that 20 additional students are recruited to the MProf Food Innovation in session 2013/14

A8 As per the agreement with the SFC for additionally funded places for the Skillset Academy, ensure that 40 students are recruited to the that area

B PATTERN OF PROVISION

We will have excellent degree programmes that emphasise the distinctive nature of our provision and approaches to teaching

B1 In consultation with the Fife and Tayside Health Boards and other providers, develop our Centre for Excellence in Mental Health Nursing

B2 Engage on an ongoing basis, at senior level, with other local institutions to improve collaboration, enhance complementarity, and reduce duplication

B3 Engage in a continuous programme of evaluation of academic delivery, with an interim report by September 2013, considering, *inter alia*, the development of excellence in selected areas, efficiency, and the relationship to research

B4 With SFC funding, by September 2014 complete the first phase of the planning for the Dundee Academy of Sport, thereby regionalizing sport education provision in Tayside, and providing coherent and efficient opportunities for education from Access to PhD level

C RESEARCH COMPETITIVENESS

Our research teams, applying expertise from several subject areas, will define and address difficult and complex real world problems

C1 By October 2013, increase by the proportion of academic staff that hold PhDs, from 57% (109/191) currently to 60%

C2 Approve, by September 2013, a revised Research and Knowledge Exchange Enhancement Plan to feed into strategic development discussions

C3 By March 2014, implement the Research Concordat for the development of staff

C4 By September 2013, apply to join the Athena SWAN Charter, and produce an action plan to achieve a Bronze Award

C5 By July 2014, increase the number of women professors in the university from 2 to 4

C6 Maintain levels of involvement with research pools and relevantly similar groups

D UNIVERSITY AND INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE COLLABORATION

We will actively engage with industry, business, the community and cultural matters to further knowledge in those areas

D1 Increase the number of staff directly engaging with the public in Café Science events, the Dundee Science Festival, and the Women in Science Festival, to 30 from the target of 28 in 2012/13

D2 Introduce opportunities for participation, for the public and academics, in cultural engagement or KE events (such as art exhibitions) related to our research and KE agenda

D3 Make available to the public 26 new registrable and non-registrable IP opportunities, under an easy-access IP model (same level as for 2012/13)

D4 Maintain the level of contribution to national policy making through membership of advisory panels, cross-party groups, public policy groups, or relevantly similar bodies

D5 By July 2014, Introduce an IP Platform Initiative to facilitate licensing, to industry, games development projects produced at Abertay

D6 Further develop the network of contacts with SMEs in the key sector of Food and Drink, through increasing the number of Interface projects carried out by Food Innovation at Abertay (increase from 15 to 17 projects)

E GRADUATE SKILLS

We will produce excellent graduates, knowledgeable in their subjects, able to work independently and with others, while extending their boundaries through curiosity and creativity

E1 By July 2014, initiate a project to support and enhance the teaching and learning experience, by investing GBP 2.8M in the IT infrastructure

E2 By September 2014, ensure that every degree programme features employer engagement in delivery

E3 By September 2013, appoint a Director of International Relations and Academic Partnerships, to champion internationalisation and mobility for students and staff

E4 By September 2013, appoint an International Student Mobility Officer

E5 Avail every student of the opportunity to participate in Personal Development Planning (PDP)

E6 By November 2013, employ a revised method for the strategic allocation of resources to improve the student experience, for example through analysing student:staff ratios across the University, with a view to implementing changes to staffing levels

E7 Work with the Students' Association to evaluate and make recommendations in respect of academic feedback time, nature, and quality



Scottish Funding Council
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A' brùshachadh foghlaim adhartach agus àrd ìre

Outcome Agreement between the University of Abertay Dundee and the Scottish Funding Council for academic year 2013-14

On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council

Signed: *Laurence Howells*
Print name: Laurence Howells
Position: Interim Chief Executive
Date: 3 June 2013

On behalf of the University

Signed: *Nigel Seaton*
Print name: Professor Nigel Seaton
Position: Principal and Vice Chancellor
Date: 06/06/13

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