# The College, Swansea University Learning & Teaching Strategy

## Background

Following the creation of the Joint Venture between Navitas and Swansea University, The College became fully embedded, academically, within Swansea University. As a consequence The College’s academic procedures were revamped to be fully aligned and compatible with those of Swansea University.

Although a considerable amount of work has already been undertaken to incorporate The College within Swansea University’s academic infrastructure there is clearly an ongoing requirement to ensure continued alignment with the University’s developing Learning & Teaching (L&T) strategy.

## Swansea University (SU) Learning & Teaching (L&T) Strategy

The L&T strategy of SU is a based on a series of planned developments over the next two to five years for learning, teaching and assessment that are founded on its centenary commitments:

1. We will deliver inspirational teaching, enhanced and informed by world-class research and professional practice
2. We will increase the participation of students from under-represented groups and communities, and provide the quality of support needed to enable their success
3. We will respect and value our students as partners
4. We will create a supportive and enriching learning environment for all our students
5. We will provide exciting opportunities for students to enhance their skills, global knowledge and cultural agility
6. We will support our students to achieve the highest possible academic and employment outcomes

In particular the focus will be on achieving six objectives:

* Objective 1- Students will benefit from personalised, flexible and inclusive learning with the support of learning communities.
* Objective 2 - The six dimensions of the Centenary Curriculum will be embedded to the highest standard within all programmes to develop the Swansea Graduate.
* Objective 3 - Our teaching community will be empowered to deliver high quality teaching and assessment and will be recognised and rewarded for doing so.
* Objective 4 - Representatives of students, alumni, employers and service users will engage and contribute to the development in learning, teaching and assessment.
* Objective 5 - Cultivate our learning environment to enable our learning communities to flourish.
* Objective 6 - Our academic data systems and processes will support staff and students in the delivery of excellence in learning, teaching and assessment.

## Staffing Structure

The design, development and implementation The College’s L&T strategy will be the responsibility of its academic team led by six Academic Leads who are senior members of staff who individually are responsible for particular areas of specialisation: Human & Health Sciences, Arts & Humanity, Science, Engineering, Medicine, Law and

Management. Another member of the Academic Lead team is responsible for the provision of special programmes and support, whilst another is responsible for English Language (ELTS). In addition to policing standards and ongoing development of relevant course material the Academic Leads liaise with SU College Link Tutors to ensure continued alignment of module content and teaching practice. Leads have collective responsibility for academic quality delivered by The College.

In addition, the Academic Leads represent The College on a number of SU committees: Academic Regulations & Cases Board, Collaborative Provisions Board, SAILS Management Board, Prevent, SEA, and SALT.

The academic team have a range of skills that exceed disciplinary backgrounds: Approximately a third of the staff have PhD’s, others with postgraduate qualifications. A

number of staff have many years teaching at all levels of tertiary education.

The quality of staff is a key success factor for The College as this is the first contact for the introduction, or reintroduction, of students into full time mature education and the efficacy of The College pedagogic processes is crucial to its success.

## The College L&T Strategy

In aligning The College’s L&T strategy with that of the University one needs to be cognisant of The College’s *raison d’etre*: the provision of widening access courses for students wishing to attend SU. In doing so our focus is on ensuring that the students not only have the academic foundation to progress to their respective Host College (whether undergraduate or postgraduate), but are also prepared to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them on the remainder of their academic journey.

It also needs to be recognised that the societal development of certain students during their programme of study with The College is crucial to their own well-being and continued academic development.

Underlying our L&T activities there is general recognition of the need to embrace technology where appropriate. Used within a blended context, technology can significantly assist the development of individual skills for effective collectivism in learning whilst highlighting the negativity of isolationism. Technology is an effective tool for the acquisition and dissemination of information but cannot replace the benefits of knowledge development through group working. Clearly, the ability to include those who would otherwise be unable to participate is where technology has considerable value. However technology has a place, effectively embedding it in the learning environment is the desire of The College.

The College L&T strategy underpins the six centenary commitments of SU for both international and home student cohorts who are at the beginning of their respective journeys. Although there is a clear pedagogic purpose to the L&T strategy, recognition is given to their personal aims and aspirations whilst instilling the necessary disciplinary skills necessary for the realisation of their dreams.

In addressing the objectives of SU L&T strategy:

* *Objective 1:* The College small class policy enables bespoke, focused sessions. Each lecture is accompanied by tutorial support sessions tailored to meet students’ needs. Additional support classes are provided to students as and when required. Here the collective activity of Academic Leads in overseeing those students whom may be considered at risk is a significant factor in The College’s success.
* *Objective 2*: As already alluded to above, the quality of the staff employed to deliver these bespoke pathways that are linked to Host College degree programmes is a crucial success factor. This commitment is reinforced by The College’s positive student staff ratio.
* *Objective 3*: The synergetic relations of those delivering modules across a number of pathways is a key factor in ensuring the effective integration of our students into Host Colleges. In this way the symbiotic relations between Academic Leads and Link Tutors assists with the smooth transition and integration of students through the alignment of modules and learning practices/techniques. Alignment of best practice is assured with the involvement of The College staff in Swansea Academic Learning & Teaching (SALT) community.
* *Objective 4*: The College is aware of the need for students to be embedded with the student culture of SU. The College hold Student Forums and focus groups where students can express their opinions either directly or via their respective student representative. The link with Host College Student Forums and social activities is also actively encouraged to maximise student experience. Students are also actively encouraged to fully utilise central student amenities, support facilities and sports societies.
* *Objective 5*: The learning environment of The College is linked with that of SU in that full advantage is taken of SU’s learning platform, Blackboard (soon to be Canvas), to provide a blended learning environment incorporating recorded summaries for exams and assessments, video recordings of laboratory/workshop activities enabling students to familiarise with SU learning environment. This is seen as a key provision in supporting students encountering particular difficulties in attending and participating in The College activities. In recognition of the importance of ensuring successful transition to mainstream degree programmes, The College arranges for students to attend large classes within Host Colleges to assist with their adjustment.
* *Objective 6:* The College utilises SU student data recording systems to monitor student progress, and hence the effectives of our strategy in preparing students. Tracer statistics for all years of study for respective students is a key checkpoint in analysing the effectives of our modules and our pedagogic methodology during our Annual Programme Review with academic staff, Academic Leads and Link Tutors.

## Work Undertaken

As part of the academic incorporation of The College within SU a number of academic activities were undertaken during 2018-2019:

*Module Reviews:*

* In excess of 55 modules were reviewed for all Foundation (level 3) and non-Integrated degree (level 4) pathways.
* All Pre-Masters modules were reviewed light of SU L&T Strategy and feedback from Link Tutors.
* Assessment schedules and learning outcomes were reviewed to ensure alignment with SU Academic Quality Services (AQS) guidelines.

*Annual Programme Review (APR):*

* The Navitas Annual Monitoring of Modules and Programmes (AMMP) process was reviewed and it was agreed that The College should follow the University’s Annual

Programme Review (APR) process from 2018 onwards.

* A new APR form was produced containing tracer stats that enabled performance monitoring of existing students on current modules and progression data for those previously transitioned to the University.

*Assessment Moderation Process:*

* The existing peer review process for assessments needed upgrading to conform with AQS Guidelines. From 2019 onwards:
	+ All assessments will be stage 1 moderated to ensure their effectiveness and alignment with learning outcomes.
	+ All assessments with a weighting of 30%+ will also undergo stage 2 moderation by the University host College. Pre and post- assessment moderation will be undertaken by stage 2 moderators.
	+ Semester timeline for pre and post- assessment stage 2 moderations has been agreed with the University host College.
	+ The process above will cover Foundation, non-integrated Level 4 and non-integrated Pre-Masters programmes.

*Academic Staff:*

* An audit of academic staff was undertaken to ensure relevant depth and breadth of experience was present to support The College’s academic strategy.
* At any given time there are approximately 30 academics actively engaged in teaching delivery each semester.
	+ Approximately a third have doctorates, and the majority have Masters Degrees.
	+ All staff have teaching experience and relevant qualifications and are approved by Academic Advisory Committee prior to engagement.
	+ Six new staff members were recruited for the 201903 (Sept-Dec) semester, with more are being considered for 202001 (Jan-May) semester for coverage in certain subject areas.

*Staff peer observations:*

* A teaching assessment of all new academic members of staff is undertaken by one the Academic Leads during their first semester.
* Peer observations of all staff is undertaken once a year during the 01 semester each academic year (Jan-May).
* The rationale and processes around peer observations have been reviewed and updated to align with SALT.

*Ethics Committee:*

* As with other academic working protocols, the establishment of an Ethics Committee and its alignment with the University procedures is crucial.
* Although the amount of work undertaken by students in relation to ethical material is minimal, the instalment and operation of an auditable ethic assessment procedure has been completed and aids with the alignment of The College with other University Colleges.

## Issues to be considered

*Issues to be considered over next two years:*

* Continually develop, monitor and re-assess the effectiveness of The College delivery.
* Develop programmes with our SU Colleges for both home and international students where pathways do not currently exist, building on experience and success of existing widening access pathways, requiring vertical and horizontal integration across all SU colleges.
* Develop blended techniques using recently established learning platform (Canvas).
* Arrange visiting lecturers/presenters to raise the importance of widening access within the context of diversity and inclusion within the societal and commercial environments.