



Improving student satisfaction through process change.

Aberystwyth Fast Facts:

- 10,000 students
- 6 academic institutes
- Established 1872
- West Wales coast (UK)
- Strong research arm
- Centralised timetabling
- Auto-schedule lectures
- Top 4 in UK and 1st in Wales for overall Student Satisfaction (NSS, 2016)

"Successful Timetabling has played an important part in improving the student experience."

Jackie Sayce

Institute Manager
Aberystwyth University

The Challenge

Aberystwyth took in an unusually large intake of students in 2011. This placed considerable pressure on the university's existing timetabling processes. As a result, the 2012 National Student Survey (NSS) highlighted shortcomings in Aberystwyth's organisation and management of courses. Data collection was inconsistent, leading to availability clashes. Lectures were scheduled by a central timetabling office into a subset of large classrooms; smaller rooms were 'owned' and managed by departments, making them invisible to the central scheduling team. Furthermore, classes were 'rolled over' from the previous year, meaning that a big room which had once housed a big class might be allocated to a far smaller group – and vice-versa. This had led to inefficient use of teaching space.

The Solution

In 2013, Aberystwyth commissioned Scientia to undertake a Business Process Review. Our recommendations led to a complete restructure of its timetabling and space management processes, including:

- Making more rooms centrally owned and therefore available to the central Timetabling team;
- Refining data collection methods to reduce staff and room availability clashes;
- Implementing the auto-scheduling capability of Syllabus+ Enterprise, meaning classes would be appropriately scheduled according to room capacity; and
- Creating a personalised timetable for each student.





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The Outcome

With teaching space now largely centrally-owned, formerly 'hidden' spaces devolved to Faculties are now visible to the central Timetabling Team. Combined with the auto-scheduling functionality in Syllabus+ Enterprise, Aberystwyth has been able to optimise its use of rooms and resources, significantly improving utilisation rates.

"Thanks to these changes, we now have the most efficient timetable possible."

Tim Davies, Director of Information Services at Aberystwyth

"We've undergone a complete change in concept and culture. Before, we scheduled classes with very little information available to us, meaning that we spent a lot of time after the production of the timetable making changes – a very labour-intensive process. We reduced the number of ways for staff to give us their availability information and made the format consistent. Having that information at the start of the process means far fewer changes once the timetable's been produced. Autoscheduling with Enterprise means we are optimising the available space and providing the best possible timetable for our staff and students each year," said Tim.

Combined with other efforts to improve the student experience, Aberystwyth has once again put itself back at the top of the tables, achieving 92% in the 2016 NSS – 4th in the UK and 1st in Wales for overall satisfaction. This 9% year-on-year rise was the second-biggest improvement for a mainstream university in 2016. Satisfaction with the organisation and management of courses has also made a marked improvement.

"Successful Timetabling has played an important part in improving the student experience."

Jackie Sayce, Institute Manager at Aberystwyth

Building on recent successes, Aberystwyth has recently launched its ApAber app, enabling students and staff to access their personalised timetables on the web and from mobile devices. Amongst other things, they can also access their AberLearn virtual learning environment, see what public computers are available, check their attendance record, and find out how much money they have on their AberCard.

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