

INSTITUTIONAL HEALTH DIAGNOSTIC

# Caerwen University

*Five-Dimension Diagnostic Scorecard and Integrated Strategic Take*

**CRITICAL**

**D1**

Demand

**D2**

Enrolment

**D3**

Outcomes

**D4**

Finance

**D5**

NSS

IHD | 15 April 2026 | Prepared by Blairgowrie HE Advisory

*Integrates D1 to D5 intelligence across demand, enrolment, outcomes, finance, and satisfaction.*

**Illustrative Report with Live Data**

# Validity and Data Sources

**This diagnostic is valid for 12 months from the most recent data vintage across component products.**

Component vintages: D1 UCAS 2025 | D2 HESA DT051 2024/25 | D3 HESA Graduate Outcomes 2022/23 | D4 HESA Finance 2023/24 | D5 NSS 2025

## Data Sources

Component	Source	Vintage	Sector Coverage
D1 Demand	UCAS End of Cycle Data	2016 to 2025	460 providers
D2 Enrolment	HESA DT051 Student Record	2020/21 to 2024/25	328 providers
D3 Graduate Outcomes	HESA Graduate Outcomes Survey	2018/19 to 2022/23	481 providers
D4 Financial Health	HESA Finance Statistics (T1 + KFI)	2020/21 to 2023/24	322 providers
D5 NSS	National Student Survey	2023 to 2025	498 providers

*Methodology grounded in 14 years of HE leadership including a PVC role at BIMM University and a DBA from the University of Bath (2023). All RAG scores and verdict labels are produced by the published methodology without post-hoc adjustment.*

**Illustrative Report with Live Data**

# Diagnostic Scorecard

Five dimensions, RAG-rated against published thresholds

Code	Dimension	Headline Finding	RAG
<b>D1</b>	<b>Demand Pipeline</b>	Yield 23.8%, accepted -27.1% over 5 years (sustained_decline)	<b>RED</b>
<b>D2</b>	<b>Enrolment Trajectory</b>	Total 9935, +2.4% over 5 years (volatile)	<b>AMBER</b>
<b>D3</b>	<b>Graduate Outcomes</b>	Positive outcomes 85%, -0.4pp vs sector, tier average	<b>AMBER</b>
<b>D4</b>	<b>Financial Health</b>	Surplus excl. pension -8.6%, 3 deficit years, tier critical	<b>RED</b>
<b>D5</b>	<b>Student Satisfaction</b>	1 theme(s) materially below sector, Organisation +3.1pp, Student Voice +0.9pp	<b>AMBER</b>

OVERALL VERDICT

**Critical**

**0G / 3A / 2R**

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# Verdict Narrative

## CRITICAL

Caerwen is currently scored 0 Green, 3 Amber, and 2 Red across the five health dimensions, producing the verdict Critical. Three of five dimensions are in the red zone (Demand, Outcomes, Financial Health) and two are amber (Enrolment, NSS). There is no green dimension to function as a strategic anchor or financial buffer.

The most consequential single fact in this diagnostic is that Caerwen is already operating at a surplus of -8.6% excluding pension service costs, with three deficit years on the trailing record and active flags for both sustained\_deficit and high\_borrowing. The financial position is not a buffer absorbing demand decline; it is itself the principal symptom. The conventional sensitivity question for a stressed institution (how much enrolment can the surplus absorb before the model breaks) does not apply here because the model has already broken. Break-even for forward enrolment scenarios is at zero drop from current.

On the demand pipeline, yield has moved from 32.7% in 2020 to 23.8% in 2025, and accepted volumes are down 27.1% over five years. On graduate outcomes, the institution is fractionally below sector (-0.4pp on positive outcomes), placing it in the average tier with no headroom either way. The 12 to 24 month implication of holding current trajectory is that the cross-dimensional pressure compounds: weak conversion now signals to next year's applicants on Discover Uni, weak finance forecloses the marketing and product investment that would normally arrest a yield slide, and amber enrolment leaves no volume cushion if the international reversal that has masked domestic decline begins to unwind.

*Methodology note: RAG scores and the overall verdict are produced by the published Blairgowrie IHD methodology applied without post-hoc adjustment. Marginal cases (such as D3 at -0.4pp vs sector) sit on whichever side of the threshold the published rule places them.*

# 01

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## Demand Pipeline

*UCAS applications, offers, and yield, ten-year trajectory*

RED

# D1: Funnel Overview

Five-year UCAS funnel for Caerwen, sector benchmark 2025

Indicator	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Applicants	8275	8425	7720	8365	8215 (-3406810.0)
Accepted	2290	2200	2160	2025	1955 (-1153510.0)
Yield %	27.7	26.1	28	24.2	23.8 (-10.0)
Offer Rate %	84.7	81.9	81.8	77.8	75.1 (+3.5)
OTA %	28.9	28	30.1	27.6	28 (+1.1)

Peer benchmark: Compared against 10 size-matched UK providers; peer-confirmed run not available, ranking limited to candidate set.

Caerwen shows a sustained five-year decline in both volume and conversion. Accepted applicants are down 27.1% over the period to 1955 in 2025. Yield has fallen from 32.7% in 2020 (the peak) to 23.8% in 2025 (the trough). Both applicant\_trajectory and accepted\_trajectory are classified as sustained\_decline, and yield\_trend as declining. Under the published D1 RAG rule (declining yield triggers RED regardless of applicant volume), this dimension scores RED.

# D1: Demand and Financial Sustainability

Forward enrolment sensitivity at current cost structure

Enrolment Drop	Income £m	Surplus £m	Surplus %
Base (current)	£170.1m	£-14.6m	-8.6%
-5%	£166.5m	£-18.3m	-11%
-10%	£162.9m	£-21.9m	-13.4%
-15%	£159.3m	£-25.5m	-16%
-20%	£155.6m	£-29.1m	-18.7%

Caerwen is currently operating at a surplus of -8.6% excluding pension service costs. The break-even threshold is therefore at zero drop from current enrolment. There is no headroom: forward enrolment scenarios cannot be discussed in terms of "how much can the financial model absorb before crisis", because the model is already in deficit. The strategic question is timeline to recovery, not timeline to crisis.

Sensitivity model: tuition concentration 53.2%, institution type research (mapped to research\_intensive), multiplier 0.4256. Income £170.12m at base.

# 02

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## Enrolment Trajectory

*HESA student record, five-year trend by level and domicile*

AMBER

## D2: Five-Year Enrolment Profile

Total, undergraduate, and postgraduate headcount with sector direction

Indicator	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Total Headcount	9705	10505	10825	10835	9935
Undergraduate	6905	7010	6475	6720	6665
Postgraduate	2800	3495	4350	4115	3270

### Domicile composition, 2020/21 versus 2024/25

UK 81% → 78.2% EU 4.7% → 2.1% International 19% → 21.5%

Structural shift over the period: UK share -2.8pp, International share +2.5pp. Aggregate +2.4% growth is driven by international cohorts; UK trajectory classified stable, international classified sustained\_growth, EU classified sustained\_decline.

Under the published D2 RAG rule, GREEN requires ≥5% growth AND sustained\_growth trajectory. Caerwen shows +2.4% growth and volatile trajectory, so this dimension scores AMBER. The growth is real but its quality is contested by the volatile and intl-dependent profile.

## D2: Enrolment and the Financial Window

*Connecting D2 trajectory to D4 break-even threshold*

**The conventional enrolment-finance window analysis asks: at the current rate of enrolment change, when does headcount reach the level at which the institution's cost structure breaks? For Caerwen, this question is mis-specified.**

The cost structure has already broken. The D4 sensitivity table on slide 7 shows that at zero drop from current enrolment, Caerwen operates at a surplus of -8.6% excluding pension service costs. The break-even drop is therefore 0%. There is no forward enrolment threshold to hit, because the institution is already past it.

The forward enrolment picture is contested. In aggregate, D2 shows +2.4% headcount growth over five years, which superficially looks like a growing institution. The composition tells a different story: international growth (sustained\_growth) has masked a stable-trending UK cohort and a sustained\_decline in EU students. If the international supply pipeline reverses, even modestly, the aggregate +2.4% reverses with it, and the institution loses the only volume signal currently keeping the diagnostic out of D2-RED.

### **Window framing for the Board:**

*The "window" provided by enrolment is the current dependence on international growth offsetting domestic flatness. That window is open while international demand holds, and closes the moment it doesn't. The financial model has no buffer to absorb the closure.*

# 03

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## Graduate Outcomes

*HESA Graduate Outcomes Survey, five-year tracking*

AMBER

Illustrative Report with Live Data

## D3: Outcomes Profile

*Positive outcomes, unemployment, and full-time employment, sector-benchmarked*

Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Positive Outcomes %	84 (-0.6)	86 (+0.3)	86 (-0.4)	87 (+0.9)	85 (-0.4)
Unemployment %	8 (+0.9)	6 (-0.4)	6 (+0.8)	5 (-0.4)	6 (+0.2)
FT Employment %	47 (-1.7)	49 (-1.2)	54 (+0.4)	56 (+2.8)	51 (-0.6)

**OUTCOMES TIER: AVERAGE**

*Tier-matched peer set: 10 candidate peers identified; peer-confirmed run not available, ranking limited.*

Caerwen positive outcomes for 2022/23 are 85% versus a sector value of 85.4%, a gap of -0.4pp. Unemployment is 6% (sector 5.8%), and full-time employment is 51% (sector 51.6%, gap -0.6pp). pos\_trajectory is classified as stable; unemp\_trajectory as improving. The institution sits in the average outcomes tier. Under the published D3 RAG rule, this dimension scores AMBER. The -0.4pp gap sits within the -1.0pp tolerance band that catches rounding-noise marginal cases, and pos\_trajectory is stable rather than declining. The dimension is not GREEN because the institution does not sit in the leading or above-average tier on positive outcomes.

# D3: Outcomes and Demand, the Causal Chain

What prospective students see, and how it connects to UCAS conversion

## WHAT APPLICANTS SEE ON DISCOVER UNI

Discover Uni surfaces graduate outcomes data prominently in side-by-side institution comparisons. Prospective students see two numbers: positive outcomes percentage and the comparison flag versus sector average.

### Caerwen signal:

- 85.0% positive outcomes, 2022/23
- Sector average 85.4% (-0.4pp)
- Tier classification: average
- Trajectory: stable

*Net effect: applicants comparing Caerwen against UK averages see no positive differentiator and a small negative gap. The signal is neutral-to-mildly-negative, not strongly negative.*

## CAUSAL CHAIN TO YIELD

The cross-connection logic asks whether D3 outcomes weakness is materially constraining D1 yield. Two tests:

### Test 1: Is D3 materially below sector?

No (-0.4pp, within the -1.0pp tolerance band). X

### Test 2: Is D1 yield declining?

Yes (sustained\_decline, peak 32.7% to trough 23.8%). ✓

### Cross-connection does NOT fire: outcomes\_demand\_link

*Test 1 fails. The D3 deficit is within the -1.0pp tolerance band that catches rounding-noise marginal cases. The institution is fractionally below sector but not materially so, and the published methodology declines to draw the cross-connection. The yield decline has another origin upstream of outcomes positioning.*

# 04

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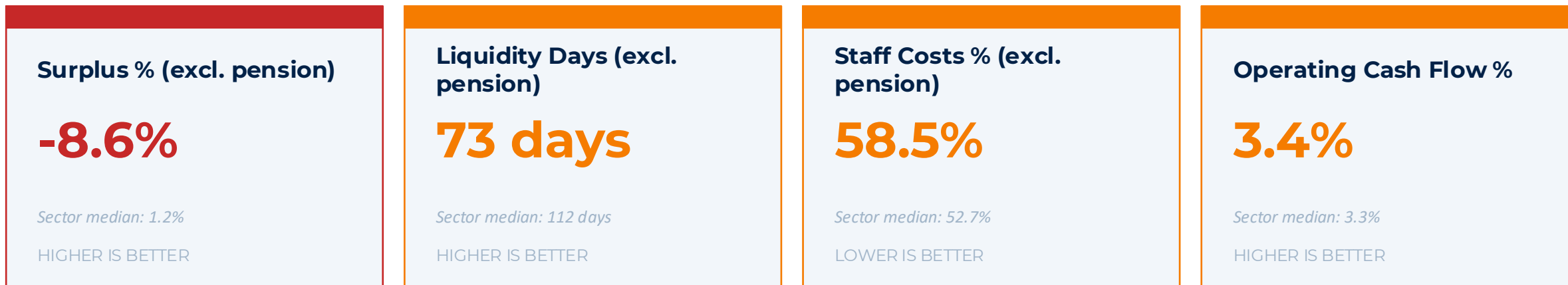
## Financial Health

RED

*HESA Finance Statistics, surplus, liquidity, and concentration risk*

# D4: KFI Dashboard

Four key financial indicators with sector benchmarks and active flags



**ACTIVE HEALTH FLAGS**

high borrowing • sustained deficit

Under the published D4 RAG rule, RED triggers on either deficit (surplus\_excl\_pension < 0) OR critical liquidity (< 30 days). Caerwen triggers on the deficit condition (-8.6%) at scale, with three deficit years on the trailing record and active sustained\_deficit and high\_borrowing flags.

*Note: Caerwen is a Welsh provider and is regulated by Medr (CTER), not the Office for Students. The OfS Financial Sustainability Reporting framework does not apply, so OfS perimeter callouts are omitted.*

# D4: Income Concentration and Forward Risk

*Tuition fee dependency, income mix, and the forward enrolment connection*

## TUITION FEE DEPENDENCY

# 53.2%

*of total income from tuition fees, 2023/24*

Five-year trend: 50% → 49.5% → 49.8% → 53.2%

### Income mix (2023/24):

Tuition	53.2%
Research	13.2%
Funding body grants	13%
Other	18.9%

## CONCENTRATION RISK READING

Tuition concentration at 53.2% sits below the 70% creative-PE-style threshold but above the 50% secondary threshold. Caerwen has a research-active income mix with research at 13.2%, funding body grants at 13%, and other income at 18.9%.

The demand-finance forward risk cross-connection FIRES on the secondary clause: any meaningful tuition dependency ( $\geq 50\%$ ) combined with active deficit ( $\text{surplus\_excl\_pension} < 0$ ). The financial pressure has a different shape from a creative-PE provider, but it is still forward-risk exposed because the deficit leaves no buffer to absorb further yield decline.

***The strategic implication is that the income concentration argument cannot be used to deflect the diagnostic. Caerwen is not concentrated enough to be a single-channel institution, but it is concentrated enough that yield decline cannot be absorbed by other income lines while in deficit.***

*Restatement of the slide 7 finding for emphasis: Caerwen is already in deficit at base. Forward enrolment scenarios cannot be discussed in terms of financial buffer because there is none. The enrolment dependency that matters most for forward risk is the international growth currently masking a flat UK cohort, not the aggregate tuition concentration figure.*

# 05

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## Student Satisfaction

*NSS seven themes, sector-benchmarked*

AMBER

# D5: NSS Seven-Theme Scorecard

*NSS 2025 themes versus sector, all higher-better*

Indicator	2023	2024	2025
<b>T1: Teaching on my course</b>	81 (NaN)	86.4 (NaN)	87 (NaN)
<b>T2: Learning opportunities</b>	76.9 (NaN)	81.3 (NaN)	83.3 (NaN)
<b>T3: Assessment and feedback</b>	76.8 (NaN)	80.6 (NaN)	80.2 (NaN)
<b>T4: Academic support</b>	77.4 (NaN)	85.1 (NaN)	88.3 (NaN)
<b>T5: Organisation and management</b>	66.2 (NaN)	73.2 (NaN)	80.7 (NaN)
<b>T6: Learning resources</b>	83.1 (NaN)	84.3 (NaN)	85.8 (NaN)
<b>T7: Student voice</b>	68.1 (NaN)	74.9 (NaN)	79 (NaN)

## MATERIALLY FLAGGED THEMES

- Assessment and feedback (Theme\_3): score 80.2, gap -3.8pp, severity notable

Under the published D5 RAG rule, RED requires Organisation OR Student Voice >8pp below sector OR 3+ themes flagged material. Caerwen has 1 theme flagged (Assessment and Feedback at -3.8pp) and Organisation +3.1pp, Student Voice +0.9pp, both above sector. Score: AMBER. The two themes most consequential for prospective applicants on Discover Uni (Organisation and Student Voice) are positive.

## D5: The Discover Uni Signal

Student Voice and Organisation as the visible NSS themes for prospective students

### ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT (T5)

# 80.7%

+3.1pp vs sector

### STUDENT VOICE (T7)

# 79%

+0.9pp vs sector

### Connection to D1 yield

The satisfaction-demand cross-connection asks: is Student Voice below sector AND is yield declining? For Caerwen, Student Voice is +0.9pp ABOVE sector, so the cross-connection does NOT fire. Prospective applicants checking Discover Uni see two NSS signals from Caerwen that are both above sector. This is one of the few unambiguously positive findings in the diagnostic.

*Strategic implication: NSS is not the lever. Caerwen's student satisfaction signal is broadly intact and the two themes most visible to applicants are positive. The yield decline is therefore not being driven by a visible NSS deficiency, which means improving NSS would not directly arrest the yield slide. The yield problem is upstream.*

# 06

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## The Integrated Blairgowrie Take

*Cross-dimension connections, strategic priorities, and the bottom line for the Board*

# The Integrated Blairgowrie Take

*Cross-dimension connections drawn only where the data supports them*

## Demand-Finance Forward Risk

**FIRED**

*Test: D1 yield declining AND (tuition  $\geq$ 70% OR (tuition  $\geq$ 50% AND deficit))*

Yield trend is declining and tuition concentration (53.2%) combined with active deficit (-8.6%) trips the secondary clause. Forward income decline cannot be absorbed by other revenue lines while the model is in deficit.

## Outcomes-Demand Link

**NOT FIRED**

*Test: D3 pos\_vs\_sector\_pp  $<$ -1.0 AND D1 yield declining*

Why not: D3 deficit (-0.4pp) sits within the -1.0pp tolerance band that catches rounding-noise marginal cases. The yield decline has another origin upstream of outcomes positioning.

## Enrolment-Finance Window

**NOT FIRED**

*Test: D2 five\_yr\_change\_pct  $<$ -5% AND break-even threshold defined*

Why not: D2 is +2.4% over 5 years (volatile), not below -5%. The window framing is in any case mooted by break-even at 0% (already past it).

## Satisfaction-Demand Signal

**NOT FIRED**

*Test: D5 Student Voice gap  $<$ -3pp AND D1 yield declining*

Why not: Student Voice is +0.9pp ABOVE sector, well clear of the threshold. NSS is intact and is not the lever.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (3 max, framed as choices)

1. Cost base or recovery model: address the structural deficit (D4) at root, not by absorbing it through marketing or recruitment investment that the model cannot fund. 2. International risk insurance: model the downside if the international growth that masks domestic flatness reverses (D2). The aggregate +2.4% should not be the headline number for the Board. 3. Yield mechanics, not perception: the D1 yield slide is happening despite NSS being intact and outcomes being at sector. The cause is upstream of communications, in conversion mechanics, offer pricing, or the applicant's comparative read against named peers.

**Bottom line: Caerwen is Critical because the financial model is already past break-even and there is no green dimension to function as a strategic anchor. The first task is recovery, not growth.**

# Blairgowrie HE Advisory

*Strategy that survives first contact with operations.*

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## ADVISORY SUITE

<b>D1</b> Demand Intelligence	<b>V1</b> Student Value Diagnostic
<b>D2</b> Enrolment Intelligence	<b>V2</b> Employee Value Diagnostic
<b>D3</b> Graduate Outcomes	<b>V3</b> Student Momentum Diagnostic
<b>D4</b> Financial Health	<b>V4</b> Main Scheme Conversion
<b>D5</b> NSS Intelligence	<b>CED</b> Clearing Exposure Diagnostic
<b>IHD</b> Institutional Health Diag.	