Arden University Submission for TEF 2023

1 About the Arden University Context

Arden University is a young, agile, and rapidly growing institution, only awarded University Title in 2015 and Indefinite Degree Awarding Powers in 2021. We have entered the sector with a clear mission to be digital first, to remove barriers to learning, and to focus on the employability of our students and graduates. These three themes characterise our unique context, and are highlighted throughout this submission:

Theme 1) the distinctive nature of Arden University's digital-first, blended and online flexible provision;
Theme 2) Arden University's mission to remove barriers to participation; and
Theme 3) the educational gain that an Arden University student will benefit from in terms of employability, work-readiness, career development, and transferable skills.

As a young institution, participating in TEF for the first time, we welcome the opportunity the exercise offers us to reflect on our journey to date and to consider the trajectory of growth and enhancement ahead of us. For this TEF exercise our benchmark metrics are based on just three years of data, so we have additionally drawn on more recent indictors available internally. Some key growth and investment indicators are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Arden University at a glance

Arden University Growth 2015-2022		
	Arden University in 2015	**Arden University in 2022**
Total student numbers	6,412	20,244
Distance Learning student numbers (UK)	2,472	5,637
Distance Learning student numbers (International)	3,940	2,350
Blended Learning student numbers (UK)	0	10,312
Blended Learning student numbers (International)	0	1,945
Teaching staff	132 ~	1067
Student Experience Staff	47 ~	143
Programmes of Study	50	192
Modules (independently validated by Arden University)	312 (4)	406 (349)
Graduates	64 (of which 40 are classified)	571 (of which 356 are classified)
PSRB Accreditations/endorsements	0	68
Teaching-related spend	£344,036	£18,934,954
New academic content spend		£1,000,400
UK Study Centres (locations)	0	8 (6)
Library Services investment	£35,905	£1,641,861

~ change of HR system (to iTrent) in late 2019 and only migrated records active at the time, so census date is 1/01/2020

Arden University is an Access provider. Of our students, 36% are from IMD quintile 1 and 27% from quintile 2 (Figure 1), and less than 20% of all Arden University students come from families with prior experience of HE (Figure 3). About 32% of our students join us with no or low qualifications (Figure 5). Both our student and staff communities are vibrantly multicultural (Figure 4), with over 130 first languages spoken by our students. Our students tend to be working, they are

older (Figure 2), they are parents or carers, and they are time poor. They commute to our study centres, and do not live on campus. Our unique opportunity to drive Access lies in the proportion of our students falling within the orbit of our Access and Participation Plan, which identifies that:

Our strategic ambitions for the next five years in relation to our identified target groups are designed to serve the challenges of delivering success within the context of 92.7% of Arden University's students falling within one of the AP Groups. The exceptional challenges shown in our assessment of performance require solutions that deliver across our entire student population, as it is essentially Arden University's entire student population that falls within the auspices of the plan (section 2.2)[1].

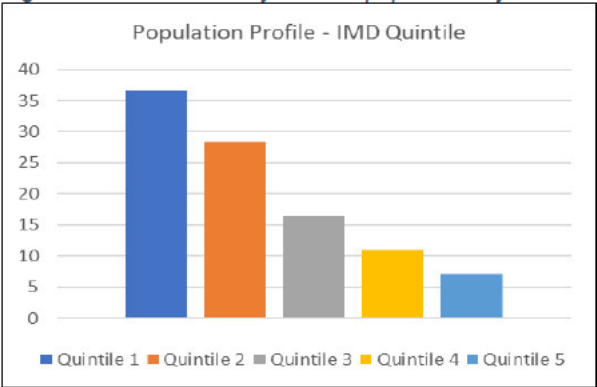*Figure 1 Arden University student population by IMD*
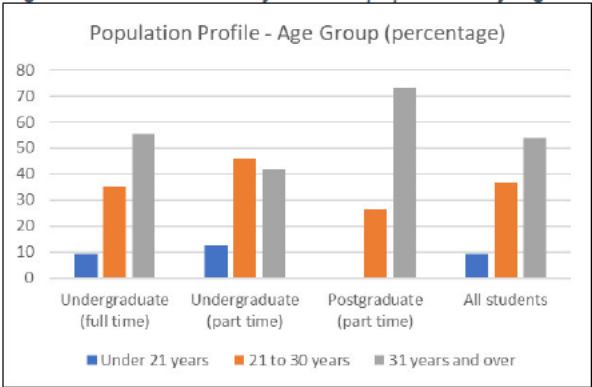

Figure 2 Arden University student population by Age

Figure 3 First in Family to attend university
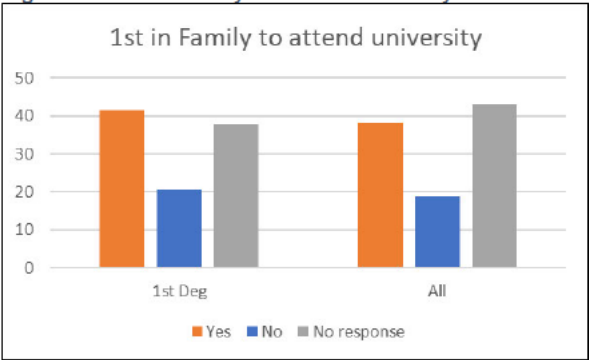

Figure 4 Arden University student population by ethnicity
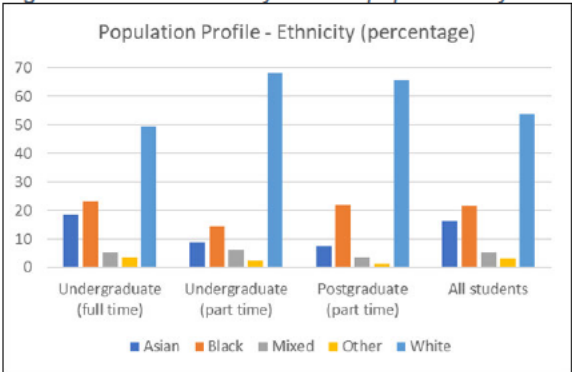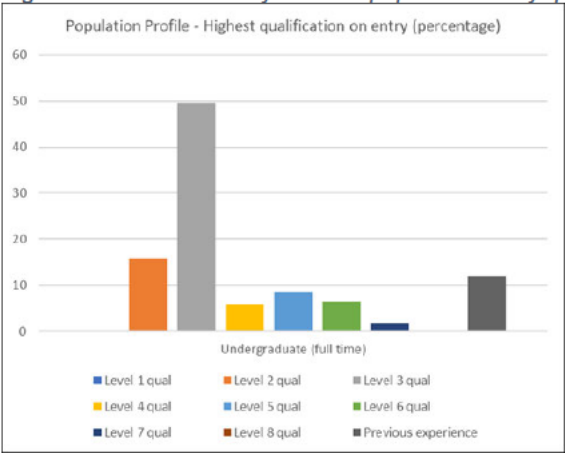

Figure 5 Arden University Student population entry qualifications

To best serve these multiple demographics and to reflect our mission we take a tailored and holistic approach to 'educational gain', considering where our students start their journey with us and what their professional, cultural, and social aspirations might be. For many it is about career advancement; for others it is about becoming educated role models for their children. Students at Arden University have opportunities to develop their own digital capabilities as part of the wider Arden University digital-first learning community, and to graduate with improved academic and professional confidence, and industry-led knowledge and skills (Themes 2 and 3).

Our modes of delivery are fundamental to Arden University's digital-first and industry-relevant mission, as well as serving to remove barriers to learning and supporting flexible study options (Themes 1, 2 and 3). Arden University offers degrees in two modes – part-time, fully online, referred to as Distance Learning (DL), or Blended Learning (BL) which enables full-time study through face-to-face classes supplemented by online learning and directed study. Arden University began as an online-only provider through its DL delivery and subsequently expanded its provision to include BL. We have achieved rapid growth as increasing numbers of students – new entrants to education and returners seeking to accelerate their careers – choose the flexible and adaptive modes of learning in which we specialise. Our DL students study entirely online and have the flexibility to access their chosen modules at a frequency to suit them. BL students have flexibility to manage their studies within a timetable that accommodates mandatory face-to-face sessions in their chosen study centre. We have eight UK Study Centres in Birmingham City Centre, Birmingham Lock 14, Leeds, London Ealing, London Holborn, London Tower Hill, Manchester Barlow, and Manchester Linley. We also have a Study Centre in Berlin.

As a learning organisation we have committed to a culture of continuous improvement, adapting to the challenges of rapid growth in a young organisation, and have invested heavily in student support and welfare (see 2.2), careers support and employability (see 2.3), the scope and scale of our portfolio (see 2.4), staff numbers and development (see 3), and in improvements to our infrastructure, systems, and processes to ensure they evolve to support the needs of our maturing organisation. As an organisation we have adopted SPARK values – Stand out, Progressive, Accessible, Resourceful, and Kindness – values which are embedded in all aspects of staff recruitment and review and are aligned with Arden University Graduate Attributes and incorporated in programme validation.

1.1   Our Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy

Our Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and Action Plan underpin our ongoing prioritisation of educational enhancement activity, in recent years focused on a suite of Academic Excellence Projects (see Table 2). This work is supported by the Faculty of Learning and Teaching which works in partnership with three disciplinary Faculties (STEM, Business and Social Sciences) reporting to the PVC Academic, and across the University's integrated student support and service functions represented in Figure 6.

Our first Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy[2] (Figure 7), approved and published in June 2022 following extensive consultation with staff and students, allows us to answer the following high-level questions:
- What factors shape and inform Arden University's approach to learning, teaching and assessment?

- How does Arden University approach the design of its programmes, the teaching of its students, and the assessment of their performance?
- How does Arden University maintain quality and consistency across all its courses and programmes?

Table 2 Academic Excellence Projects and their Outputs[3]

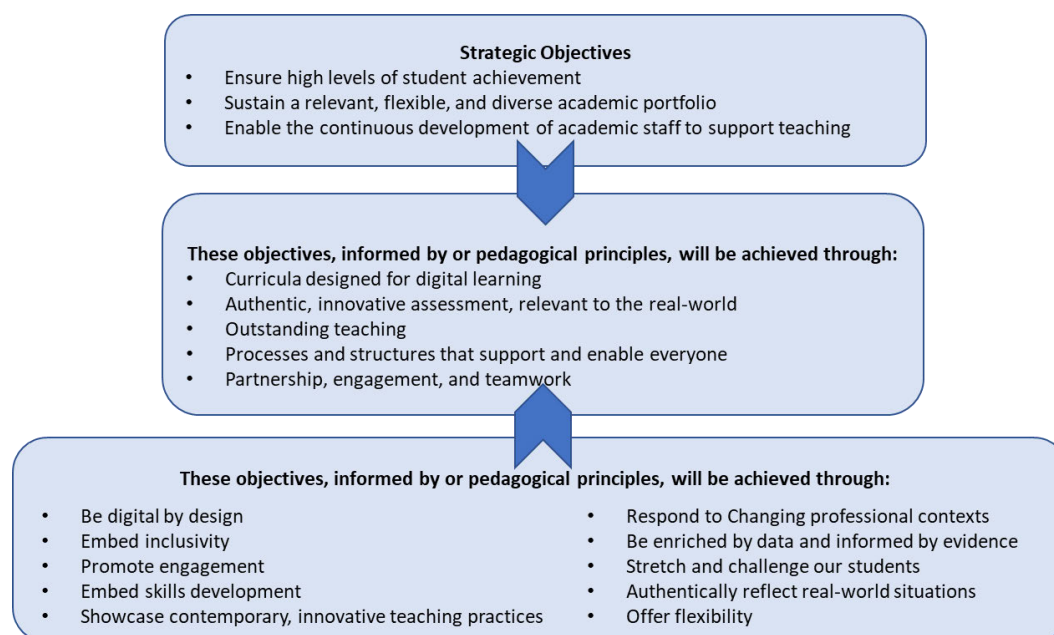| Academic Excellence Project	Progress/Embedded as BAU
Your Degree Your Way	Study Centres fully equipped with audio and visual recording kit to support real-time remote learning.
Library enhancement	All required, cited, and referenced sources made freely available through our digital library - See 2.6
Academic Professional Development	Academic Professional Development unit established - See 3.2
Academic Calendar	New 4x10-week study block calendar introduced – See 2.1
Foundation Year	Evolved into an exemplar informing practice across the University - See 4.1
Student Induction	Ongoing review and enhancement especially relating to point of entry/pre-enrolment preparation for HE studies
Student Partnership	Establishment of Arden University Students' Association, and student internships – See 1.2
Digital Skills Development/Digital Pedagogy	PGCert in Digital Pedagogies and Practices, the first private provider qualification to be Accredited by Advance HE – See 3.2.2
Distance Learning Review	Distance Learning study calendar realigned and updated; VLE undergoing upgrades.
Graduate Attributes	Graduate attributes re-framed to align with Arden University SPARK values and integrated in all modules and programmes, including Arden Achieve.
EDI and BAME attainment gap	Development of the Inclusive Curriculum Framework, Improved metrics on BAME attainment, establishment of EDI working group and formal governance Committee.

Figure 6 Enhancement schematic

The five areas of activity identified in the Strategy drive our learning, teaching and assessment practices, inform the development of our staff and underpin our enhancement agenda. This

Strategy has been and continues to be animated by a portfolio of Academic Excellence Projects. Many of these projects have already been embedded into our core work (business as usual) and represent areas of excellent practice referenced throughout this narrative (summarised in Table 2).

Figure 7 Schematic of the Arden University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

Strategic Objectives
- Ensure high levels of student achievement
- Sustain a relevant, flexible, and diverse academic portfolio
- Enable the continuous development of academic staff to support teaching

These objectives, informed by or pedagogical principles, will be achieved through:
- Curricula designed for digital learning
- Authentic, innovative assessment, relevant to the real-world
- Outstanding teaching
- Processes and structures that support and enable everyone
- Partnership, engagement, and teamwork

These objectives, informed by or pedagogical principles, will be achieved through:
- Be digital by design
- Embed inclusivity
- Promote engagement
- Embed skills development
- Showcase contemporary, innovative teaching practices
- Respond to Changing professional contexts
- Be enriched by data and informed by evidence
- Stretch and challenge our students
- Authentically reflect real-world situations
- Offer flexibility

1.2   Student representation and collaboration

Arden University has always had good channels for collecting student feedback and we continue to enhance mechanisms for formally addressing student concerns. Feedback is collected via Unitu (student voice platform), ilearn (link to feedback form within the VLE), surveys and an action tracker that all student facing teams have access to. This feedback is reported weekly to stakeholders for immediate action where appropriate, monthly to Arden University Board and quarterly to the Student Experience Committee (SEC). The Students' Association also has access to these feedback channels. An interdepartmental Complaints Working Group was created in Autumn of 2022 to better understand themes and root causes identified through our feedback with actions reported to SEC. SEC reports into Academic Board and oversees the Students as Partners Plan[4]. The formation of Arden University Students' Association (AUSA - equivalent to a Students' Union) in 2021-22 has enhanced student partnership, with the President being an active and accountable member of key project boards, including the new academic calendar and the Academic Enhancement Action Group (AEAG).

Arden University is delighted to have supported the establishment of AUSA. We have provided significant financial and staff resources to accelerate the development of the Association, described in more detail in the Student TEF Submission. The Student President has access to data from the University Insights Team – a team providing internal business intelligence and survey data - and has been an active participant in the Arden University TEF Working Group which has overseen the preparation of this narrative. AUSA and Arden University have exchanged draft submissions in the spirit of cooperation and partnership which characterises our established working relationship. The AUSA President has a formal reporting line to the PVC (Students, Quality

and Standards), a regular monthly meeting with the PVC (Academic) and Deans Group, and a direct discussion line to the VC/CEO.

2   Student Academic Experience

In response to feedback received in the 2022 NSS about students wanting their voices better heard, we have developed a new Module Survey aligned to the NSS question banks. The new survey has replaced a previous End of Module Survey and is issued in the middle of each module to allow time for lecturers to receive their results and share these with their students together with key findings and any actions they plan to make to improve the student experience. The new Module Survey went live in October 2022, after consultation with the Students' Association.

Figure 8 Aggregated Module Survey results against NSS benchmark (Oct-Dec 2022)

Undergraduate Blended Learning Students: Satisfaction by question number
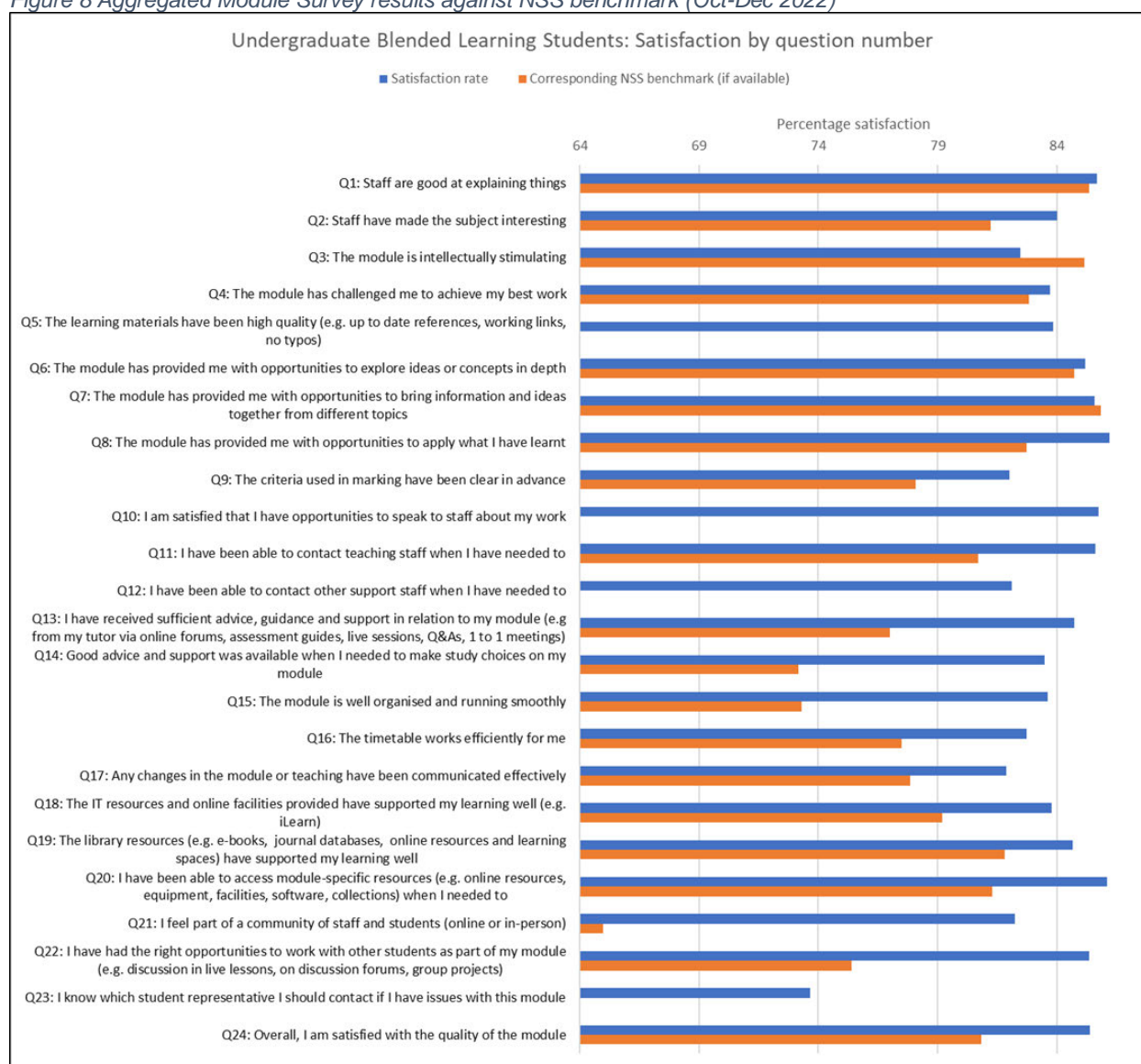
By aligning internal Module Surveys with NSS questions we can track NSS question performance throughout the year identifying areas of strength and weakness. The Academic Enhancement Action Group (AEAG), comprised of representatives from all Schools and support departments across the University, considers trends and results from NSS, PTES and internal surveys, to inform comprehensive enhancement plans. All academic and student support teams across the

University are required to submit enhancement action plans which are held on a dedicated Teams channel, collaboratively reviewed by the AEAG, and progress monitored and supported by a dedicated Academic Enhancement Projects Manager. This enhancement activity is complementary to the formal governance and quality assurance oversight managed by our Quality and Registry teams.

To date (Oct 2022 to Dec 2022), the Module Survey has received 2,111 responses from students across DL and BL study modes. The results of these surveys were largely positive, with 85% of students satisfied with their module. When we delve deeper into the overall results received, we can see our top performing areas are the following: 'The module has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt' (86%), and 'I have been able to access module-specific resources' (86%). The areas we have identified that have the biggest room for improvement are the following: 'I know which student rep I should contact' (74%), 'Any changes in the module or teaching have been communicated effectively (82%)', and 'The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance' (82%). The most recent analysis indicates that responses are above the corresponding NSS benchmark for 18 questions with question 21 (feeling part of a community) scoring 17% above benchmark (See Figure 8).

2.1   Flexible study calendar

The removal of barriers to educational opportunity is at the heart of Arden University's mission and ethos. Our digital-first learning design and delivery means that our full-time BL and part-time DL students can study flexibly, accommodating the other commitments in their lives – paid work, voluntary activities, caring responsibilities, health limitations and so on (Themes 1 and 2). With four entry points a year we run a rolling academic cycle which enables students to start their studies at a time of year that suits them and their work or caring commitments, and without delaying their academic ambitions until a traditional annually occurring entry point many months ahead (Theme 2).
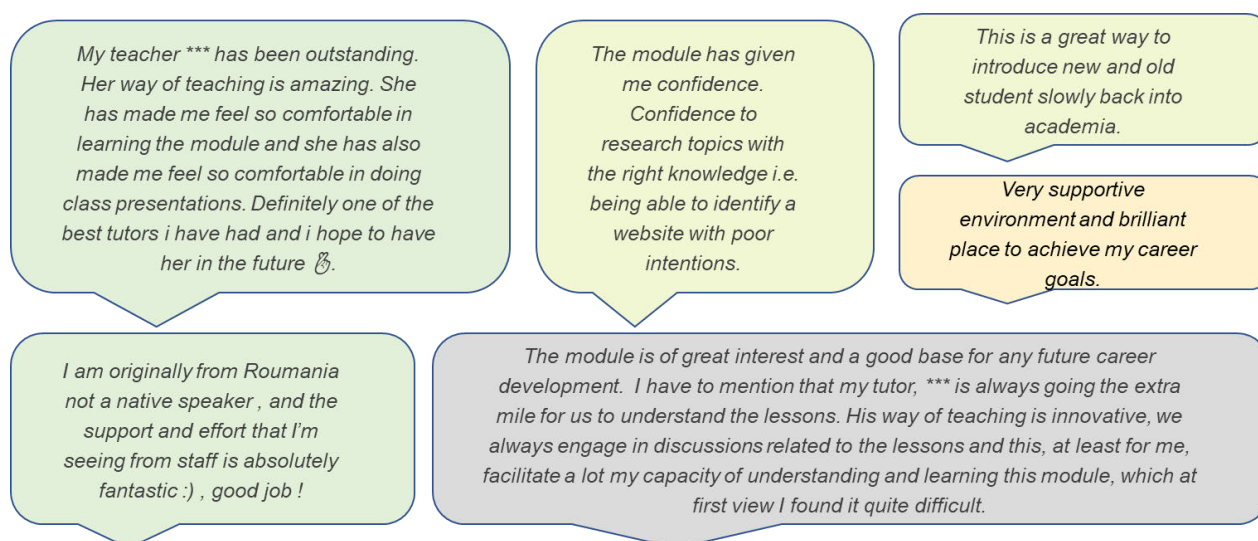
During the last year we have introduced a new calendar for our full-time BL students in response to student feedback and success data. Previously students studied six 20-credit modules, one module at a time in six-week study blocks throughout the year. The new calendar requires six modules to be studied two modules at a time in three 10-week study blocks through the year, with specific modules 'pinned' to ensure fundamental knowledge and skills are acquired in the most appropriate sequence. A fourth block at each level of study is now the basis for Arden Achieve (AA), a longitudinal programme across all levels of study dedicated to enrichment across four pillars - academic, professional, personal, and digital skills. The focus is on adding value to the core curriculum, supporting employability and preparation for transition to the next level of study, to employment or to further study. AA will run for the first time in the February 2023 study block. It is endorsed by leading accrediting bodies, and so gives students the opportunity to showcase their abilities and gain professional recognition from future employers (Theme 3).

The new calendar initiative was nurtured and piloted through one of our Academic Enhancement Projects and is now being embedded as business as usual for all new BL students, with 'old calendar' students transferred across at appropriate points during their programme of study. Change of any kind generally elicits some nervousness but we can monitor satisfaction in near real time through our new approach to routine module surveys, conducted in the middle of each study

block – early indications are that student satisfaction is high. Evaluation of this initiative has been embedded into the academic and business protocols for the new calendar. Early indications suggest that submission and pass rates are ahead of expectations compared to the old calendar.

The impact on continuation will be evaluated once the first cohort of students has completed a year of study in the new calendar in May 2023. We are beginning to get the first like-for-like comparisons between the old and new calendars and have already seen a 2% increase in submission rates under the new calendar. Those now experiencing the new calendar are already providing positive and encouraging feedback. In the new Module Survey conducted specifically with SCC students in October 2022 all of our overall feedback scores were within or above our likely OfS Benchmarks. This survey achieved an overall satisfaction rating of 84.82%. This compares with our last official NSS overall satisfaction rating of 70.75. The comments below indicate feedback about students' confidence with the subject matter (Figure 9).

Figure 9 examples of student feedback from Autumn 2022 module surveys

My teacher *** has been outstanding. Her way of teaching is amazing. She has made me feel so comfortable in learning the module and she has also made me feel so comfortable in doing class presentations. Definitely one of the best tutors i have had and i hope to have her in the future 🐻.

The module has given me confidence. Confidence to research topics with the right knowledge i.e. being able to identify a website with poor intentions.

This is a great way to introduce new and old student slowly back into academia.

Very supportive environment and brilliant place to achieve my career goals.

I am originally from Roumania not a native speaker , and the support and effort that I'm seeing from staff is absolutely fantastic :) , good job !

The module is of great interest and a good base for any future career development. I have to mention that my tutor, *** is always going the extra mile for us to understand the lessons. His way of teaching is innovative, we always engage in discussions related to the lessons and this, at least for me, facilitate a lot my capacity of understanding and learning this module, which at first view I found it quite difficult.
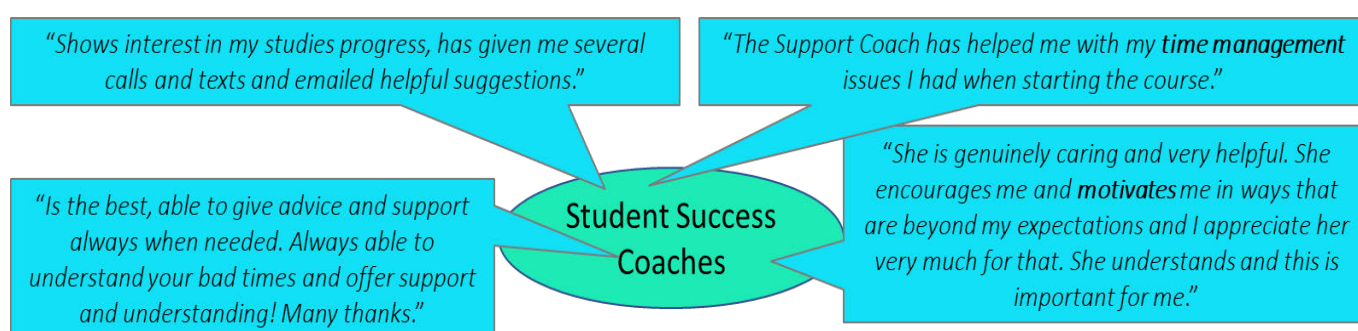
2.2 Outstanding student support

We understand the challenges of supporting non-traditional entrants to university and those arriving with no or low previous qualifications, or with complex health or social circumstances. At Arden University we have invested heavily not just in removing barriers to entry but also in ensuring student success. All new students at Arden University are allocated to Student Support Champions, who ensure that students get a timely resolution to their general enquiries and are triaged for support with any complex needs (Theme 2). Champions integrate across different student support teams and work through multiple communication modes – live chat, email, SMS, phone – to ensure that students are supported (Theme 1). For students with more significant difficulties, dedicated Student Success Coaches ensure that students are progressing well with their studies. One of the ways they do this is by having 1-2-1 'coaching-style conversations' to help students set goals and overcome barriers and challenges (Theme 2). Our Success Coaches also offer group workshops tackling common issues (e.g., an assessment submission webinar or motivational workshops). Success Coaches have managed caseloads rather than dealing with general enquiries. How this support contributes to retention, completion and continuation is addressed later (see Figure 21 and Figure 22) in sections 4.1 and 4.2. The support offered by Success Coaches is valued by students. Data shows their engagement with this support – there

are 3885 students in the Success Coach caseload with 138 appointments conducted during the week to 20 January 2023. [5] Feedback evidences their perceptions of its value (see Figure 10). For students requiring specialist services our Inclusion Team provides advice and guidance on disability, welfare, and financial issues. Financial literacy resources and hardship funds are administered through an online application Blackbullion. (Themes 1 and 2). In 2021/22 we first introduced hardship and digital poverty schemes; in 2023 Arden University has allocated over £850,000 to the student hardship budget, including over £640,000 for digital inclusion (providing laptops and assistive technology, for example) (Themes 1 and 2). [6] In the two month period of November and December 2022 156 applications were made to the hardship fund, of which 51 were successful with average awards of £1340/student. During the same period 57 applications were submitted to the digital inclusion fund with 14 being successful, covering the costs of laptops and broadband.

Figure 10 Student feedback about Student Success Coaches [7]

"Shows interest in my studies progress, has given me several calls and texts and emailed helpful suggestions."

"The Support Coach has helped me with my **time management** issues I had when starting the course."

"Is the best, able to give advice and support always when needed. Always able to understand your bad times and offer support and understanding! Many thanks."

Student Success Coaches

"She is genuinely caring and very helpful. She encourages me and **motivates** me in ways that are beyond my expectations and I appreciate her very much for that. She understands and this is important for me."

2.3   Careers service - designed in partnership with students and industry-focused

In 2021 we set out to enhance our careers services and worked with students to understand what their study and career motivation was when they started at Arden University, and what they most wanted and needed as they progressed through their studies and on to post graduate study or occupations (see Figure 11 and Figure 12) (Theme 3). As mentioned elsewhere, many of our students are not typical school leavers and many already have years in the workforce. It has become clear that their motivations are not simply personal career progression, but rather cover a range of life choices, personal efficacy, familial and societal considerations. Some Arden students have deep-seated long-term motivations around what they want to achieve in their career, but they need our help determining what the first step is on that path after graduation. This understanding of our students' motivations and goals, and their varied starting points, allows us to recognise the diverse trajectories they are each on, and the ways in which Arden can support them towards success beyond the achievement of their degree. Career and professional development are therefore embedded within Arden's core teaching at all levels. With 92.7% of our students falling within the scope of our Access and Participation Plan (see population graphs on page 2) we are committed to ensuring that all students, even those not completing their programme of study, nevertheless exit with skills and knowledge that will enhance their life and work prospects (Themes 2 and 3). [8]

Our UG students find real value in the careers integration that we design into their modules (e.g., CV writing, professional development portfolio, team roles) and students value the integration of employment skills with their course material, because they get feedback from tutors, and do not have to find extra time to fit in careers sessions (Themes 1, 2 and 3).

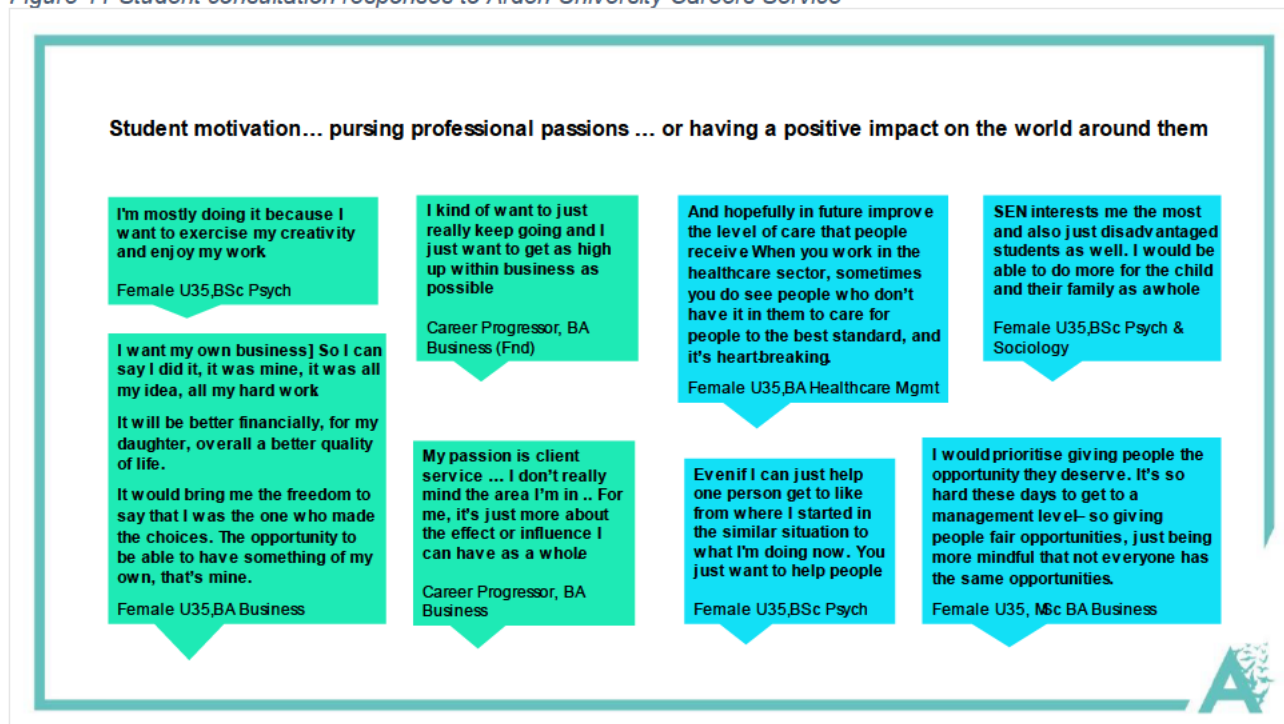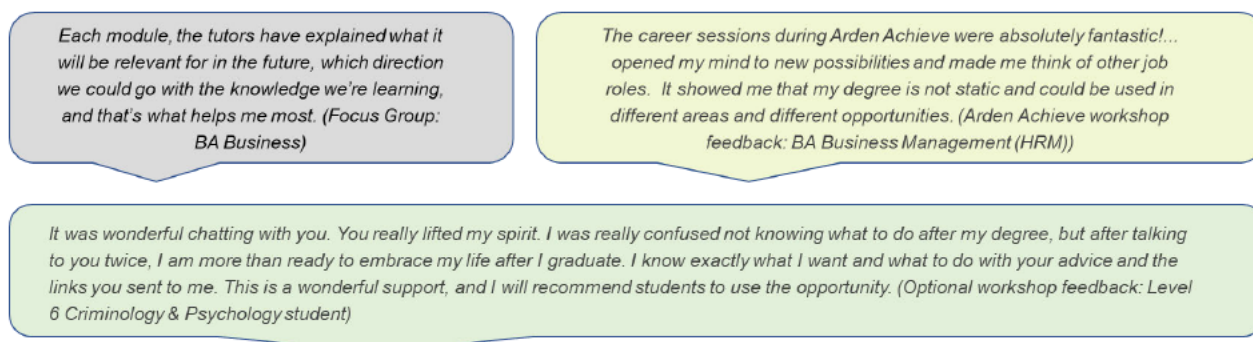Figure 11 Student consultation responses to Arden University Careers Service [9]

Figure 12 Illustrative quotes from student feedback to the careers team about tutor support

> Each module, the tutors have explained what it will be relevant for in the future, which direction we could go with the knowledge we're learning, and that's what helps me most. (Focus Group: BA Business)

> The career sessions during Arden Achieve were absolutely fantastic!... opened my mind to new possibilities and made me think of other job roles. It showed me that my degree is not static and could be used in different areas and different opportunities. (Arden Achieve workshop feedback: BA Business Management (HRM))

> It was wonderful chatting with you. You really lifted my spirit. I was really confused not knowing what to do after my degree, but after talking to you twice, I am more than ready to embrace my life after I graduate. I know exactly what I want and what to do with your advice and the links you sent to me. This is a wonderful support, and I will recommend students to use the opportunity. (Optional workshop feedback: Level 6 Criminology & Psychology student)

2.4 The Arden University portfolio – a focus on employability and industry-readiness

As evidenced below and in Table 1 above, we have invested significant resource in maintaining and expanding our academic portfolio to ensure learning materials are current and industry relevant (Theme 3). We are committed to maintaining a dynamic curriculum in service of a diverse and growing student community, and the ever-evolving needs of a knowledge economy workforce. We have developed and launched 18 new programmes (approximately £2.3M investment) and 130 new modules (approximately £130,000 investment) during our 2021-22 Arden financial year, which coincides with significant year-on-year enrolment growth (5,266 in 2019/20, 10,201 in 2020-21, 12,108 in 2021/22).

At Arden University we pride ourselves on the industry relevance and credibility of our qualifications, and this is a fundamental part of our approach to educational gain (Theme 3). Of our portfolio of 191 programmes 51 are accredited and 17 endorsed by relevant PSRBs. We have active relationships with 20 PSRBs, an increase of 13 during 2022, and over 20,000 students are enrolled on PSRB accredited or endorsed programmes. Full details of these relationships and

student numbers are presented in Table 3 below. It is important to us and to our students that they are considered career-ready and professionally skilled (Theme 3). As an example, the revalidated BSc Accounting & Finance will be one of the very few programmes in the country to carry triple accreditation from accounting bodies ACCA, CIMA and CFA, and our BSc in Project Management is one of only two undergraduate programmes in the world achieving Recognised Assessment status from the Association of Project Management. Our focus on career-readiness is further endorsed by External Examiner comments (Figure 13).

Figure 13 Feedback about real-world relevance of our programmes, received from our External Examiners

In terms of meeting the purpose of business modules, as set out by QAA, there are very clear examples of good practice. The Learning Diary in Management of self and others clearly helps students to plan and develop careers in the field. The assessment for contemporary issues in tourism management demonstrates the student's understanding of tourism in a global context, requiring them to consider the changing external environment. This level of understanding helps students move towards being effective global citizens. (2021, Business)

Arden's curriculum reflects well on module leader/team awareness of contemporary practice; the education side and the field expertise. My belief is that this is based on internal research/scholarship/industry informed processes.(2021 Business)

We are very aware of the lack of cultural and social capital that can adversely affect our students' progression and career opportunities and have fostered industry relationships which address the lack of educational and career opportunity affecting marginalised students, for example the Fantasy Wings Scheme and Bentley Motors mentoring programme illustrated in Figure 14 (Themes 1 and 2).

Figure 14 Industry experience schemes

A student from Arden University will be involved with a new programme, designed to equip young people with a critical understanding of the skills required and significant career development needed in order to become pilots and enter the Aviation Industry. Fantasy Wings intends to help young people from BAME backgrounds and young women, who remain under-represented groups within the aviation industry, and is partnered with the Biggest Aviation organisations in the UK including British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, NATs, the Air Race World Championships and more. As well as helping them understand the skills required to become pilots, at the end of the programme, 50 young people will be selected to have a trial flight and 3 young people will have their 45-hour Private Pilot Licence training sponsored by Fantasy Wings. (Arden website news item)

An Arden Student has been awarded a place on Bentley Motor's prestigious 'Extraordinary Women' mentorship programme. As part of the programme, the STEM student who is studying for a BSc in Computing at Arden, will be connected with an expert working at Bentley in order to help share their insight and experience to inspire her career journey and demonstrate the range of careers available in the automotive industry. She will be mentored by   at Bentley.(Arden website news item)

In addition to these external schemes, we have updated our graduate attributes (Figure 15) and mapped them to our Arden University values (defined on page 3). These graduate attributes are being incorporated into all new programme validations and revalidations as they occur (Theme 3). We have also introduced paid and voluntary student intern opportunities within the University, for example, Student Data Champions (three in 2022, increasing to 10 in 2023) located within Library Services, Voluntary Research Assistants (10 in 2022 now increasing to 32), Learning Assistants (30 in 2022), one data processor (2022) in the School of Psychology, and paid student panellists on our EDI Inclusion Panel (10 in 2022, increasing to 20 in 2023) located in the Faculty of learning and Teaching. Authentic assessments and placements with industry partners are also embedded within our programmes.

Provider name: Arden University
UKPRN: 10005451

Table 3 Active relationships with PSRBs at December 2022 [10]

	Name of PSRB	New in 2021/22	No. of Arden Programmes accredited	No. of Arden programmes Endorsed	No. of Arden students registered on accredited programmes	No. of students registered (by the University) for membership status	Self registration available
1	British Psychological Society (BPS)		4	-	2307	2307	-
2	Association of Project Management (APM)		2	-	426	-	✓
3	Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM)		4	-	295	295	-
4	Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD)		2	-	271	271	-
5	Solicitors Regulatory Authority (SRA) #		N/A	N/A	957	-	-
6	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)		2	-	1122	-	✓
7	Chartered Management Institute (CMI)		22	-	9214	9214	-
8	Agency of Public Health (APHEA)	New	2	-	122	-	✓
9	Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport (CILT)	New	2	-	94	-	✓
10	Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS)	New	2	-	94	-	✓
11	Chartered Institute of Management & Accountants (CIMA)	New	2	-	1122	-	✓
12	Digital Marketing Institute (DMI)	New	2	-	187	187	-
13	Skills For Health	New	-	2	2346	N/A	N/A
14	Skills For Care	New	-	2	2346	N/A	N/A
15	Institute of Health & Social Care Management (IHSCM)	New	-	1	2267	-	✓
16	Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM)	New	3	-	3410	3410	-
17	Tourism Management Institute (TMI)	New	-	1	60	60	-
18	Institute of Travel & Tourism (ITT)	New	1	-	60	60	-
19	The Association for Business Psychology (ABP)	New	1	-	29	-	✓
20	Institute of Engineering and Technology (IET)^	New		11	1488	1488	-
Totals			51	17	28217*		
# phasing out due to changes in the regulatory landscape for legal training * exceeds total student numbers because of multiple accreditations on some programmes ^ These students are on Programmes registered under "IET Academic Affiliate" agreement with IET							

Figure 15 Graduate attributes mapped to Arden University SPARK values

Arden University Graduate Attributes	Arden University SPARK Values (see section 1)
Digitally literate to show confident and critical use of information and digital technologies across a range of professional, personal and academic contexts. (This may include but is not limited to computer literacy, digital information, digital media, digital communications, and collaboration competencies).	**Progressive Resourceful**
Contextually innovative through applying skills of critical, creative, and evidence based analysis and /or personal reflection to current real-world situations and future challenges.	**Stand out Progressive**
Socially intelligent and proactively inclusive, able to effectively navigate complex (working) relationships with others from any background or culture using teamwork, communication, and leadership skills.	**Accessible Kindness**
Professionally knowledgeable in their subject area, with in-depth comprehension, awareness, independent research skills, and other skills associated with their subject area and disciples(s).	**Stand out Resourceful**

2.5   Digital-first pedagogy and learning design

Elsewhere in the UK HE sector digital learning has mostly followed and been adapted from traditional face-to-face delivery. Here at Arden our programmes, modules and study support have been designed and developed from digital pedagogy principles for primarily digital delivery. Our Blended Learning provision emerged from our Distance Learning digital portfolio and is augmented by face-to-face classroom sessions rather than the ancillary deployment of e-learning in traditional settings (Theme 1) (see section 1).

Our digital learning products are supported by study centres that offer complete connectivity, including classrooms that are equipped with cameras and microphones for remote teaching, as well as class recording. We encourage students to bring their own devices, so that they are constantly and consistently immersed in Arden University's digital ecosystem. As mentioned in section 2.2, students facing financial hardship or digital disadvantage can apply for support from our hardship and digital inclusion funds. All enrolled students at Arden University are provided with a Digital Backpack including Office 365 subscription, Zoom video conferencing, BibliU online Library access, the Abintegro careers portal, and our community forum Unitu (Themes 1, 2 and 3).

Arden University ensures that its academics are supported and skilled in the creation of learning materials for digital delivery. Every subject-matter expert (SME) receives over 100 hours of dedicated support from an in-house digital learning designer on each new module they develop. Throughout onboarding, storyboarding and detailed planning sessions the learning designers provide expert advice on digital pedagogy, helping the SMEs to design for fully online delivery by default while creating opportunities for enhancement through face-to-face sessions. SMEs also receive individual feedback on their draft lessons from either Arden University's Head of Learning Design or Head of Digital Learning Delivery at three key stages throughout the development process and are supported in creating bespoke welcome videos and micro-lectures by a team of in-house multimedia designers. Our learning designers build all modules to ensure quality, accessibility and consistency across all Schools and programmes. Digital Learning colleagues are encouraged to engage with the Association of Learning Technology and seek Certified

membership to ensure our work is informed by established good practice and emerging trends in digital learning development.

Where other more traditional Online Programme Management (OPM) functions follow a more 'book production' approach adapted for digital, at Arden University the entire module-development process is fully digital first and online, with all meetings, file submissions, quality checks and version control handled via module-specific Microsoft Teams channels supported by ticketing (Kayako), multimedia (Vyond, Adobe Creative Suite) and content authoring systems (Articulate Rise, H5P). The development of new programmes is very much a collaboration, marrying the teaching and professional expertise of the SMEs with the technological and pedagogical expertise of the digital learning team, and the academic information skills of the Library team (Theme 1).

2.6 Digital-first library and academic skills support

Our Library Services are an excellent example of how our commitment to removing barriers to learning, our digital first ethos and our strategic Academic Enhancement Projects together support excellent learning and teaching for our students (Themes 1 and 2). Since appointing its first dedicated Library team in 2020, Arden's Library Services have undergone a complete overhaul, transforming a narrow selection of resources into a cutting-edge digital space that encourages participation and access. There are no costly reading lists issued to Arden University Students. We have made a firm sector-leading commitment that students will face no additional costs or barriers to access any of the materials that are required, recommended, or cited during their study. During programme and module development the Library works with programme teams and learning designers to ensure that all resources cited in modules are freely available through the library portal, and seamlessly through links embedded in modules on the VLE. We also make a suite of essential and optional software available to students free of charge under University licenses - the Digital Backpack (see 2.5) - and provide students and staff with free curated access to LinkedIn Learning to encourage wider learning acquisition of work-related skills (Themes 2 and 3).

Driving this transformation is the introduction of a comprehensive single-sign-on Library Portal. In 2020, Arden owned just 5136 eBooks (many with limitations on access). Having added substantial collections to the library, including BibliU, Sage Journals, Science Direct, and the British Library's Digital Content Store, Arden University students now have unrestricted access to a broad range of eBooks, journals, academic and industry databases to support their studies. The platform also provides dedicated subject guides, and access to a range of support including asynchronous guidance, bookable workshops and 1:1 support. The increase in resources and support has driven an increase in students' engagement with the Library. In 2020 Google analytics linked to EBSCO (Arden's main Library platform) indicated that weekly unique visits/number of accesses ranged from 267–655. In mid-January 2023 the Open Athens dashboard that we now use indicated that the access figure had risen to 13,452 accesses per week, with 17,366 active Library users.

Academic Skills Tutor (AST) teams are embedded within Library Services to promote independent study, research, innovation, and academic confidence. They deliver optional workshops and one-to-one support sessions 6 days per week, daytime, and evenings, to ensure students can access support flexibly around their other commitments (Theme 2). Throughout 2021 and 2022 our Academic Skills Tutors have worked across the University to embed academic skills into the curriculum following an early pilot with our Institute of Foundation Studies. We have seen an

increase in the uptake of optional support following this intervention - the uptake of 1:1 AST support increased from an average of 165 sessions per month to 328 per month between 2021 and 2022.

Library Services also hosts the English Language Hub which is dedicated to supporting students who do not have English as their first language; with a diverse student population speaking over 130 languages, we recognise that studying in a second language can be challenging and are committed to removing linguistic barriers. A team of English for Academic Purposes Lecturers deliver provision to better support students to achieve greater linguistic accuracy, fluency, and confidence. Our Library Services score increasingly highly in student satisfaction surveys:

- Satisfaction scores in relation to the Library Service in the end-of-module feedback survey have improved year on year from 2020 (62.7%), to 2021 (68.8%), and 2022 (75.2%)
- Satisfaction scores in relation to the Library Service in NSS feedback have improved from 2020 (61%), to 2021 (64.73%), and 2022 (69.51%).

During 2022-23 we are recruiting 7 additional Lecturers into the English Language Hub, 8 additional Librarians and 6 more Academic Skills Tutors to improve services and build students' academic confidence (Theme 1 and 2).
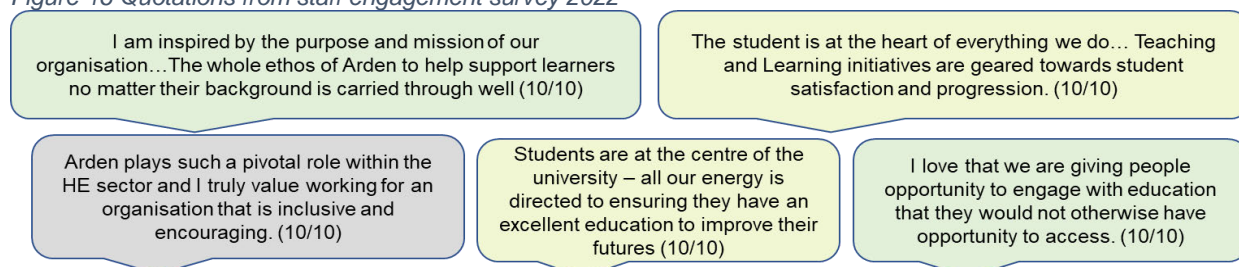
3   Investment in teaching excellence - Staffing

3.1   Staff engagement

We are committed to fostering staff engagement because content, engaged and satisfied staff deliver a more engaging, responsive, and caring student experience. Our SPARK values (see section 1) are embedded into our staff recruitment, appraisal, and recognition frameworks.

We use the Workday Peakon staff engagement platform which has collected 200 million data points against which we can benchmark where Arden University stands against global and industry peers. In response to the question "I'm inspired by the purpose and mission of our organisation", Arden University academic and whole organisation staff scored above the Peakon global benchmark with a net promoter score placing Arden University in the top 25% of education organisations in the global sample and scored above benchmark on the question "I understand how my role contributes to the overall organisational strategy". Free text comments from the staff engagement survey appear in Figure 16.

Figure 16 Quotations from staff engagement survey 2022 [11]

I am inspired by the purpose and mission of our organisation…The whole ethos of Arden to help support learners no matter their background is carried through well (10/10)

The student is at the heart of everything we do… Teaching and Learning initiatives are geared towards student satisfaction and progression. (10/10)

Arden plays such a pivotal role within the HE sector and I truly value working for an organisation that is inclusive and encouraging. (10/10)

Students are at the centre of the university – all our energy is directed to ensuring they have an excellent education to improve their futures (10/10)

I love that we are giving people opportunity to engage with education that they would not otherwise have opportunity to access. (10/10)

3.2   Investing in the Arden University workforce

Particularly relevant to our digital-first mission is the strategic expansion of our Digital Learning team which has almost doubled in size (from 11 to 20) during 2021-22, with particular growth in the

number of learning design and learning technology roles and the appointment of its first permanent Director. Further expansion to 36 colleagues is planned for 2022-23 (Theme 1).

Since 2020 the teaching staff headcount at Arden University has increased from 132 to 1067[12]. Of the headcount in 2023, 24% are salaried/permanent but Associate staff also enjoy full access to staff development offered by Academic Professional Development and the School of Digital Learning (see 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 below).

We embed employability and industry-readiness into our staff base as well as our programme design and delivery. Associate Lecturers (ALs) recruited from industry provide valuable current insights from their other workplaces which are highly pertinent to Arden University's vocational/professional portfolio. It is clear from student feedback to the careers team that students really appreciate the industry experience of their lecturers and gain valuable intelligence about how their degree will serve their career ambitions (see Figure 11 above) (Theme 3). As contracted rather than permanent staff ALs offer flexible teaching capacity which can be reduced or increased in response to demand on specific programmes and in specific locations. This has helped us dynamically expand our portfolio, enables us to maintain modest sized student cohorts in all our study centre locations (average class size is 17 with maximum class size 34), respond to growing demand for out-of-hours classes in person and online, and enables us to sustain our growth in student numbers. We are, however, acutely aware of the risks associated with over-reliance on ALs and are committed to achieving and maintaining a 50:50 split between Associate and permanent teaching staff within five years through continuing investment.

Our Institute of Foundation Studies only recruits ALs with teaching qualifications to ensure that students on 1+3-year degree programmes receive the support they most need for a successful start to their studies. Similarly, ALs supporting English for Academic Purposes or Academic Skills have relevant specialist teaching qualifications. ALs working on other programmes or at higher levels where industry or disciplinary knowledge and experience are most valued by students, receive mandatory induction and have full access to our Academic Professional Development portfolio, are encouraged to achieve HEA Fellowship from Advance HE if they do not already have this, and have access to our Advance HE-accredited Postgraduate Certificate in Digital Pedagogies and Practices, delivered by our School of Digital Education (Theme 1). Between 2020 and 2023 the percentage of teaching staff with a teaching qualification and/or HEA Fellowship has increased from 56% to 61%. In the most recent data available from HESA Arden has 69% of permanent staff with a teaching qualification (as defined by HESA) placing us well above the sector average of 51%[13], and for Arden University this has been achieved against the backdrop of a 100%+ increase in teaching staff headcount since 2020.

As mentioned elsewhere, any staff working on course materials, whether permanent or contracted, receive over 100 hours of specialist support from our Digital Learning team. Although different specialist departments, Digital Learning, Library Services, the School of Digital Education and Academic Professional Development are all located within the Faculty of Learning and Teaching. This Faculty is led by the Dean of Learning and Teaching who works closely with the Deans of our disciplinary Faculties (STEM, Business and Social Sciences), under the Executive leadership of the PVC Academic. This structure has helped us develop an academic enhancement culture which spans the entire University (see Figure 6), which is well evidenced throughout this narrative by examples of excellent practice derived from both academic and support functions of the University.

3.2.1 Academic Professional Development

A fundamental element of our LTA strategy and commitment to high quality student learning is support for our staff through Academic Professional Development (APD). All Arden University staff including ALs have access to a broad portfolio of pedagogic and academic leadership programmes through APD, and an indicative list is provided below. We support candidates for all categories of HEA Fellowship and from our population of 1067 academic staff, we currently have colleagues awarded Fellowship in all categories: AFHEA 162; FHEA 228; SFHEA; 57; PFHEA 4 (numbers correct as of January 2023 and include academic staff who fall outside of the coverage of the HESA Staff return)[14]. The percentage of teaching staff specifically with HEA Fellowship of any category has increased from 18% to 25%. To increase these percentages in the context of exceptional growth in staff headcount represents an enormous effort and commitment to teaching excellence.

In late 2021, we launched a comprehensive Academic Professional Development programme, supported by senior academic appointments to lead this area. The APD portfolio is structured around five pillars (see Figure 17). In 2022 an estimated 1300 staff participated in APD activities.

Figure 17 The five pillars of Arden University's APD portfolio

Our APD programme consists of (participants in 2022):

- Academic induction for new starters (eight/year; (200+ lecturers)
- A suite of synchronous and asynchronous training courses in aspects of teaching and learning (500+)
- Monthly lunchtime seminars, ad-hoc mini conferences, and an annual conference (50-70/event)
- An observation of teaching policy and programme, consisting of evaluative and collaborative observations (rolling out to all staff)
- An academic mentoring programme (58 to date)
- Training courses and writing retreats to support scholarship and research (100+ in 2020)
- A training and development programme in academic leadership and career development (20-25 participants/session)
- An experiential HEA fellowship scheme, following a supported cohort approach (30/per cohort)
- Support, training, and mentorship for National Teaching Fellowships and Collaborative Awards for Teaching Excellence
- Support for colleagues aspiring to Professorship.

The diversity of Arden University staff means that lecturers bring a wide range of different teaching philosophies and approaches. The Arden University new lecturer induction programme encourages and shares this diversity of approaches, while sharing practical insights and guidance to ensure teaching is student-centred and engaging. From the first moment, our induction package

emphasises the diverse profile of our students and encourages lecturers to identify ways to reduce barriers and support students towards transformative learning (Theme 2).

Figure 18 Teaching staff ethnicity
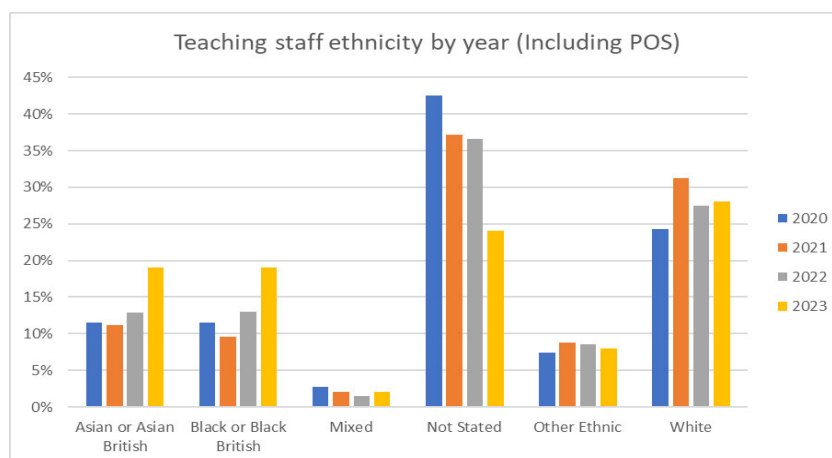
Participants on APD programmes are surveyed after each event, and the APD programme is evaluated by an annual survey, providing baseline data from a broad cross-sectional sample of staff in 2021 (N=161) and counterfactual data in 2022 (N=219). This revealed:

- 65% of academics now said that they felt part of an academic community at Arden University (4% increase), and 45% of academics felt that Arden University helped them connect to academics outside of their immediate area (18% increase)
- 57% of academics now felt that Arden University gave them the training and resources they need to excel in academic practice (15% increase)
- 67% of academics felt that Arden University offered opportunities for them to develop their skills (18% increase)
- 45% of academics now felt that Arden University supported them to develop skills for research and scholarship (12% increase)
- 58% of academics now felt that Arden University helped them believe in themselves and their academic abilities (18% increase)
- The impact of APD can also be seen in External Examiner comments (see Figure 19).

Figure 19 Sample comments from External Examiners illustrating the impact of APD at Arden University

> *I believe the delivery and assessment of these modules continue to be commended. I noted in the exam board that the assessments were excellent, with a great variety of assessment designs. I also echoed the other EE on the quality of feedback, witnessing good reiteration of learning outcomes so students can see where to focus their attention in future work. (2020 Psychology)*

> *The assessments are creative and I have generally been very impressed with the ability for MLs to come up with exciting ways to test student knowledge across the respective modules that I have reviewed. (2022 Law)*

3.2.2   The School of Digital Education – developing digital first teachers

Established in 2021, the School of Digital Education works to implement a purposeful pedagogy that embraces digital opportunities by not only establishing qualifications and programmes in digital education, but also by supporting teaching-related scholarship, particularly the areas of curriculum

mapping and evaluation for projects, and a programme portfolio to optimise student completion and success (Theme 1). The School currently offers the Postgraduate Certificate in Digital Pedagogies and Practices. This programme has been designed to enable digital teaching practices based on sound pedagogic principles to deliver learning which will meet the needs of 21st Century students (Theme 1, 2 and 3).

Arden University is the first, and to-date only, alternative provider in the UK to achieve Advance HE accreditation[15] of its PG Cert in Digital Pedagogies, which enables Arden University to award Associate Fellowship and Fellowship on behalf of Advance HE. The AHE accreditation panel commended Arden University on the following aspects of the programme:

That Arden University is making a clear investment in the professional development of staff that teach and support learning aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF). … the PSF is embedded in institutional strategies and policies, for example the Learning and Teaching Plan (2019) which explicitly states the professional development of academic staff as a priority.

the provision submitted for accreditation reflects the institutional context and provides an opportunity for staff to achieve an appropriate category fellowship that is aligned to teaching and learning in an online learning environment.

The PGCert has been designed to be inclusive to the wide range of staff who teach and support learning including Associate Lecturers. The dispersed online model suits multiple audiences recognising the varying levels of experience

a considered approach to embedding Fellowship and accreditation at the institution… building the internal capacity required to successfully operate an accredited programme through supporting key individuals to achieve an appropriate category of Fellowship via direct application… ongoing commitment to continue to support staff to apply for Senior and Principal Fellowship through direct application to Advance HE.

The School of Digital Education also administers the Innovation Fund[16] which supports the development of scholarly work in Arden University. Current and recent projects illustrate our commitment to applied learning, industry relevance and removing barriers to learning and digital engagement (Themes 1, 2 and 3), and include:

- Developing Learning Materials to address the British Values and Safeguarding agenda for Degree Apprenticeships
- Graphic Design: Generation of an annual Photographic and Design Competition
- Project Management: Arden University MOOC
- Healthcare Management: Digital Literacies
- Law: The Virtual Law Firm

In 2023 we are significantly expanding the scope of the Innovation Fund to support paid Student Internships as part of our portfolio of initiatives to improve student partnership, provide meaningful work experience, and integrate student perspectives into our ongoing enhancement agenda (Theme 3).

3.3   Professorship pathways

To support, reward and celebrate staff contributions to our core teaching mission we have developed criteria for Professorship based on Teaching Excellence and Academic Leadership, as well as Research and Scholarship[17]. We have conferred Professorships in recognition of

outstanding impact in all three of these areas. We are developing further criteria for Professorship based on Professional Practice and impact on industry. Our professors are influencing sector-wide initiatives in learning and teaching, equality diversity and inclusion, and the work of national PSRBs.

4 Student outcomes

As we were only awarded TDAP in 2015 the benchmarked data from OfS only covers three years of Arden University metrics and therefore represents the earliest years of our existence as a university. Where possible we have augmented benchmark data with more recently available HESA data, NSS results for 2022, and internal Module Survey results which mirror NSS question banks. This enables us to reflect the impact of our well established ongoing academic enhancement programme and identify priorities for further investment.

4.1 Continuation

Arden University's trajectory on continuation rates is one of continuous improvement; overall continuation rates have improved by 10% over three years because of investment and enhancement plans. For our largest group of students (Full Time Foundation Degree) the continuation rate improved from 63.9% to 74.2% between the 2020/21 and 2021/22 Unistats returns[18]. This improvement is attributed to significant investment, additional support, and targeted personal tutoring. Arden University's recruitment cycles allow students to enrol two weeks prior to programme starts; this routinely leads to significant numbers of student withdrawals that are not academic related (e.g., failure to secure funding) after benchmark data is captured. Therefore, the recording methodology combined with enrolment patterns place a drag on the University's overall continuation rate. However, Arden University is committed to the challenge of taking continuation rates far beyond the benchmark standards.

With 92.7% of our students falling within the scope of our APP we are particularly vigilant about risk factors impacting student success. We have undertaken detailed analysis of the factors and pressure points leading to withdrawal or academic failure, an example snapshot of which is presented in Figure 20[19]. We have developed a range of interventions in response to what we know from this analysis, as mentioned previously. Figure 21 and Figure 22 illustrate the comprehensive range of student support interventions routinely put in place to support continuation. We are in the process of implementing an enhanced week-long Introduction to HE mini-module[20] for applicants to our Certificates in HE who have no or low previous qualifications. The intention is to model a typical week of HE study on the programme so both academic colleagues and applicants can assess candidates' readiness to study. We are mindful of our obligations to candidates vulnerable to academic failure or disappointment and will signpost unsuccessful applicants to a suite of free online skills and knowledge resources so that even those unable to progress immediately will exit with some learning gained from both the application process and the subsequent signposted development opportunities (Themes 1, 2 and 3). Our Institute of Foundation Studies has seen significant improvements in continuation from level 3 study to level 4 and we are currently considering which elements of this provision could be applied more widely across our entire student population.

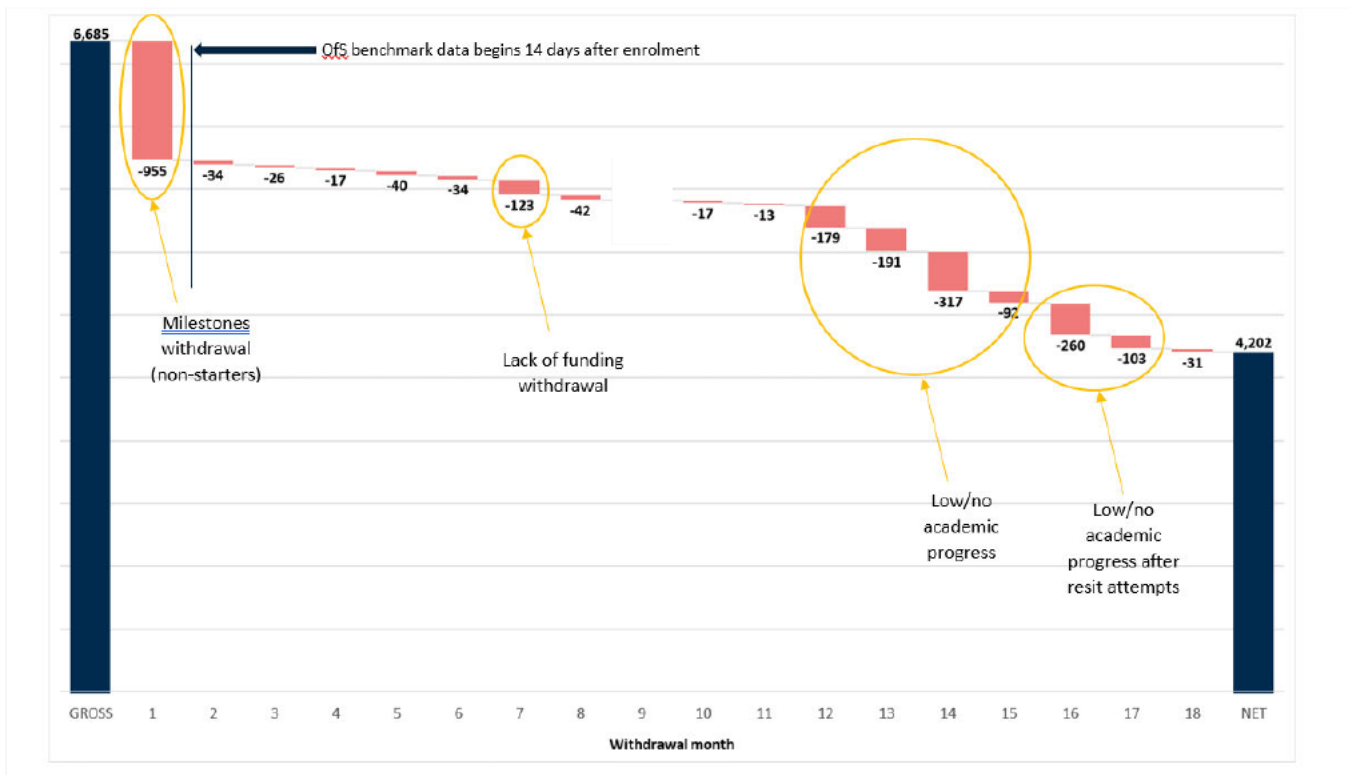Figure 20 Full-time April 2020-2021 cohort leavers within the first 18 months

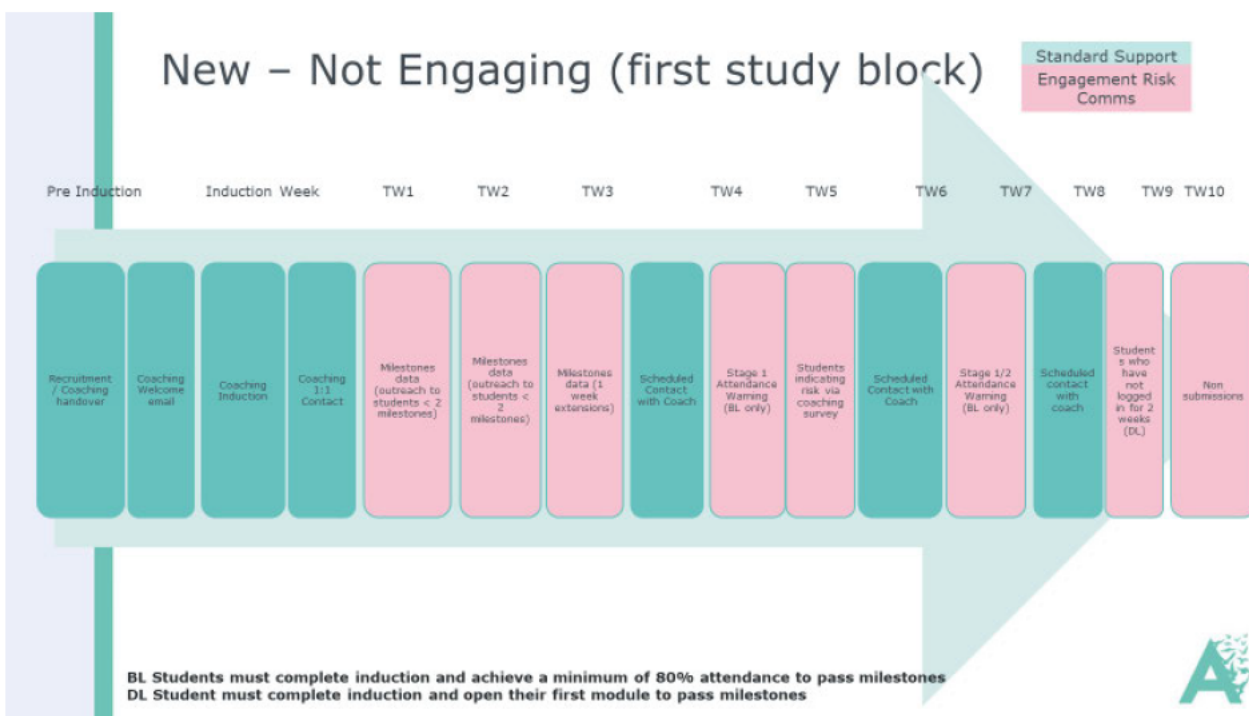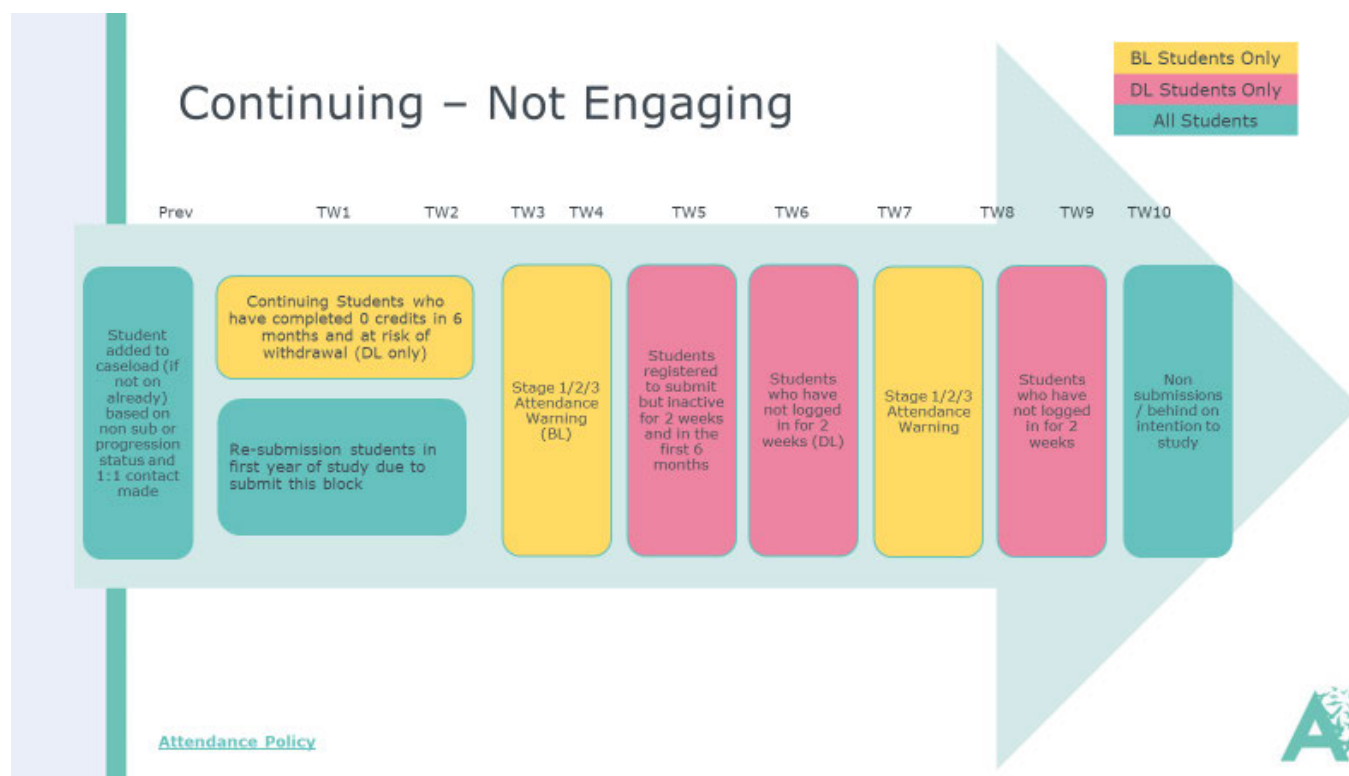Figure 21 Interventions to support continuation (new students)

Figure 22 Student support interventions to support continuation (continuing students)

4.2   Completion

With only three years of benchmarked completion data available to us we must be cautious about the conclusions we draw. It should be noted that the indicators and split indicators for completion in relation to Arden University are affected by the use of a 3-year aggregate, of which one of those years saw a data cleanse leading to the removal of an additional 274 records that were not active students but were counted as withdrawals. Given the low denominator this has resulted in a significant, and potentially misleading overall position on completion rates.

For our students who experience financial pressure due to studying there is a strong driver to exit their programme of study as soon as they are offered a job that meets their career aspirations or life circumstances. Programme teams routinely review withdrawals and have noted that some students having acquired industry-required knowledge and skills embedded within their programme design, are keen to pursue opportunities to earn professional salaries as soon as possible (Theme 3). In an extract from our BA Graphic Design Annual Monitoring and Review report[21] the Programme Leader writes that "withdrawal forms note students are happy with teaching and learning and get jobs - finance is a big factor in withdrawing".

Irrespective of early exits by satisfied and successful students, whose lives, work, and social opportunities have been enhanced by their study experience, 62.2% of completing students who enter Arden University with qualifications at level 3 or below exit with a good degree, outperforming students entering with level 4 or above (50.3%) and mature/or no qualifications (61.5%) (Theme 3)[22]. These indicators remain below benchmark but nevertheless represent significant added value and learning gain for a cohort where 63% are from IMD quintiles 1 and 2. At Arden University we

are proud of the role we play in widening participation and offering life enhancing, transformational education (Theme 2 and 3).

4.3   Progression

Again our benchmarked metrics do not tell a complete story in relation to progression. We know from research undertaken by Advance HE (*Employability: a review of the Literature 2016-2021)[23]* that students and graduates with the same demographic profile as most of our students are systemically disadvantaged in the labour market and have materially lower employment and progression outcomes. The exclusion of health care professions from the classification of managerial/professional employment also materially affects Arden University's historical progression data since Health Care Management has been one of its main disciplinary areas since 2017/18.

Our commitment to addressing barriers to learning and success is reflected in our approach to course design and delivery. The principles of course design for employability, which are at the heart of our educational gain aspirations for our students, are comprehensively represented in Table 3, and particularly well represented by the 'gold standard' example of globally recognised accreditation for our BSc Project Management which has achieved Recognised Assessments status with the Association for Project Management (APM), the chartered body for the project management profession. This is an internationally recognised mark of quality and highlights the strength of our assessment strategy – the course team designed the programme with the aim of achieving this distinction. Arden University's programme is one of just two undergraduate programmes to achieve Recognised Assessments status. All our BSc Project Management graduates will have their technical knowledge pre-approved when they apply for Chartered Project Manager status.

In information gathered in the graduate outcomes survey[24] there are indications that our graduates actually earn marginally above the national average: "*The median salary of those employed who declared their income is £26,000, this is £1,000 higher compared to last year where the median salary was £25,000. The median salary of full-time graduates who obtained first degree qualifications and entered full time paid employment in the UK when considering all skills levels in the sector is £25,000*" (Graduate Outcomes Survey results 2022). Importantly even where our progression metrics are below benchmark, we have significant evidence of holistic educational gain well beyond what is usually assumed for students from IMD quintile 1 and 2, for whom just having professional and educational aspirations is beyond the expectations inherent in their socio-economic context. As discussed in the opening Context (see section 1), 92.7% of our students fall within the orbit of our APP. Arden University is fundamentally transforming widening participation in higher education through its commitment to being digital-first, removing barriers to opportunity and hard-wiring educational gain, industry readiness and employability into the DNA of our programme design, build and delivery.

5   Future focused and enhancement driven

Arden University is a young university with relatively little recent data to reference. We have experienced rapid growth in portfolio, student numbers and staffing. During the Covid pandemic it became clear that the flexibility offered by our distance and blended provision is attractive to prospective students, especially because our multiple entry points throughout the year enable

students to commence study with us without waiting for the annual entry point typical of most UK providers (Theme 2). This of course comes with its own challenges. In addition to significant enhancements to our business infrastructure – improved student records systems, upgrades to the VLE, for example – we have already embarked on a comprehensive programme of academic enhancement activity which we expect to positively impact our progress beyond benchmarks across all metrics. Many of the areas of excellence celebrated in this submission have themselves originated in Academic Excellence Projects which have developed outstandingly effective business-as-usual from seed-corn investments.

We have an immediate priority to establish an Enhancement Hub to oversee and coordinate existing and new continuous improvement initiatives (Themes 1, 2 and 3). We have already started to recruit dedicated project managers within the academic areas to ensure a rigorous and robust approach to all enhancement initiatives (one in post, and one advert currently live as of December 2022). Core activities to be brought together within the Hub are expected to include:

- enhancement-focused data collection and creation, especially with regard to developing more robust educational gain methodology;
- stimulate and incubate innovation through expansion of the Innovation Fund;
- introduction of Student Voice weeks to share feedback and report back to students on how we have responded to and acted upon student feedback;
- establishment of a cohort of paid Student Interns to work on enhancement projects, thereby supporting student employability and hard-wiring student partnership into our enhancement agenda; this will build on the excellent practice already introduced in the Library Services (Student Data champions), and School of Psychology (Student Volunteer Teaching Assistants and Research Assistants); and
- enhance pre-entry, entry point and pre-enrolment support and assessment of students' motivation and readiness to study in HE, building on the Introduction to HE module being implemented for Cert HE applicants; our parent organisation, Global University Systems (GUS), has recently acquired the Future Learn MOOC platform and we will be exploring how we might utilise that platform to provide opportunities for pre-entry/enrolment, holistic personal development, and employment skills acquisition.

In this submission we have been proud to celebrate the transformational education we provide to underrepresented and marginalised communities. We have demonstrated our commitment to supporting and enabling academic achievement and aspiration through investment in our industry-ready portfolio, in our comprehensive student support and in the teaching capabilities of our staff. At Arden University 92.7% of our students experience limiting circumstances. We have genuinely embraced the challenges of widening participation, removing barriers to learning for students and harnessing digital capability to advance educational and career opportunities. We have demonstrated that we are on an upward trajectory across all metrics and remain committed to continuous improvement and investment across all areas of the University in support of our fundamental mission: to be digital-first, to remove barriers to learning and to support employability.

Provider name: Arden University
UKPRN: 10005451

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