



Designated Quality Body
in England

Assessment for Variation of Degree Awarding Powers

Arden University Limited



Review Report

September 2020

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Summary of assessment team findings

Underpinning DAPs criteria	
Criterion A: Academic governance	Met
Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks	Met
Criterion B2: Academic standards	Met
Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience	Met
Criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff	Met
Criterion D: Environment for supporting students	Met
Criterion E: Evaluation of performance	Met
Overarching criterion	
The provider is a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems	Met

About this report

This is a report of an assessment of Arden University Limited conducted by QAA in March 2020 in accordance with the process outlined in [Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers, December 2019](#).

Assessment for the variation and revocation of degree awarding powers (DAPs) is the process QAA uses to provide advice to the Office for Students (OfS) about the quality of, and the standards applied to, higher education delivered by a provider in England that has an existing DAPs authorisation and where variation or revocation is to be considered.

The assessment was undertaken for the purposes of providing advice to OfS on whether Arden University's existing renewable powers be granted on an indefinite basis.

Provider information

Legal name	Arden University Limited
Trading name	Arden University
UKPRN	10005451
Type of institution	Higher education institution
Date founded	1991 as RDI (Resource Development International)
Date of first higher education provision	1991
Application route	Variation of Degree Awarding Powers (time-limited to indefinite)

Level of powers applied for (if applying for additional levels)	Not applicable
Subject(s) applied for (if applying for additional subjects)	Not applicable
Current powers held (if applicable)	Taught Degree Awarding Powers (time-limited)
Date current powers granted (if applicable)	1 September 2014, extended for one year from 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2021
Location(s) of teaching	Coventry (head office), Birmingham, London (Ealing, Holborn, Tower Hill), Manchester and Berlin
Number of current programmes as at September 2020 (updated student numbers provided by the University on 9 September 2020)	22 master's degrees 48 bachelor's degrees 1 postgraduate certificate
Number of students on programmes leading to the University's awards as at September 2020 (updated student numbers provided by the University on 9 September 2020)	10,471 (5,348 part-time/5,123 full-time) In addition, a further 599 students are studying on programmes leading to awards of the following: Anglia Ruskin University (566 students under an exit plan extending to 2022) Pearson (27 students) University of Sunderland (2 students) University of Wales (4 students)
Number of staff as at September 2020 (updated staff numbers provided by the University on 9 September 2020)	104 academic permanent staff (including 16 full-time managers; 54 full-time non managers; and 8 part-time non managers) 239 support staff (including 42 full-time managers; 171 full-time non-managers; 7 part-time managers; and 19 part-time non-managers) The University also has 204 contractor staff
Current awarding body arrangements	Anglia Ruskin University, University of Wales, Pearson, University of Sunderland

About Arden University

The University's history dates back to 1991 when it was first established as RDI (Resource Development International). It was granted taught degree awarding powers in 2014, followed by university title in 2015. RDI was renamed Arden University in 2016 when it moved away from offering purely part-time distance-learning academic programmes through the addition of full-time, face-to-face programmes as part of a blended learning approach designed to combine the strengths of the online learning environment with classroom contact. The first

study centre for blended learning was opened in London (Ealing) in 2016, to be followed by other centres in Holborn and Tower Hill, and Manchester and Birmingham.

In 2016 ownership of the University transferred from the Capella Education Company to Global University Systems (GUS). In 2018, the University successfully registered with the Office for Students and opened its first international study centre in Berlin. In 2019 the University began offering Degree Apprenticeships and successfully re-applied to the Register of Apprenticeship Provision. A new Vice-Chancellor/Chief Executive Officer, Professor Carl Lygo, the founding Vice-Chancellor of BPP University, was also appointed that year. The University offers programmes in Business and Management, Law and Social Science, Computing and Information Technology, and Psychology.

How the assessment was conducted

The QAA assessment team completed an assessment of the University according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers, December 2019*.

The team appointed to conduct this assessment was:

Name: Mary Blauciak

Institution: formerly University of Derby and Manchester College

Role in assessment team: Institutional Assessor

Name: Mark Davies

Institution: University of Sunderland

Role in assessment team: Institutional Assessor

Name: Victoria O'Donnell

Institution: Laureate Online Education

Role in assessment team: Institutional Assessor

Name: Robert Trimble

Institution: University of Cumbria

Role in assessment team: Institutional Assessor

The QAA Officer for the assessment was Irene Ainsworth.

The size and composition of this team is in line with published guidance and, as such, is comprised of experts with significant experience and expertise across the higher education sector. The team included members with experience of a similar provider to the institution, knowledge of the academic awards offered and included academics with expertise in subject areas relevant to the University's provision. Collectively, the team had experience of the management and delivery of higher education programmes from academic and professional services perspectives, included members with regulatory and investigative experience, and had at least one member able to represent the interests of students. The team included at least one senior academic leader qualified to doctoral level. Details of team members were shared with Arden University prior to the assessment to identify and resolve any possible conflicts of interest.

The team conducted the assessment by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers. The criteria used in relation to this assessment are those that apply in England as set out paragraphs 215-216 and in Annex C in the OfS regulatory framework. To support the clarity of communication between providers and QAA, the DAPs criteria from the OfS regulatory framework have

been given unique identifiers and are reproduced in Annex 4 of *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*.

In the course of the assessment, the team read 223 documents presented in support of the application. An initial set of 119 documents was provided as supporting evidence with the self-assessment document. Following a desk-based assessment of this initial evidence against the DAPs criteria, a request for additional evidence was made. This request covered areas from all five DAPs criteria which had been identified as requiring follow-up investigation. An additional 79 documents were provided in response. Key themes pursued in the course of the assessment included the University's academic governance and management arrangements; how the University ensures that it maintains and communicates definitive programme and qualifications information; annual monitoring and periodic review arrangements; processes for moderation, assessment, complaints and appeals, and how the University responds to student feedback; the means by which the University ensures that its staff are appropriately qualified, have relevant expertise to support and assess student learning, and are themselves enabled to develop academically and professionally; and the means by which the University enables student development and achievement.

While the assessment had initially been referred by OfS as a desk-based assessment only, the team identified issues relating to Criterion C1 and, by extension, the Overarching Criterion that it considered warranted further investigation. OfS agreed that the team should explore these issues further through meetings with senior staff and with staff involved in teaching and supporting student learning. COVID-19 considerations meant that the meetings were conducted online through videoconferencing technology. The University provided a further 25 documents in advance of the meetings held. The key themes pursued in this phase of the assessment were: the means by which teaching and research qualifications are sought and checked through the staff recruitment process; the probationary and annual review processes used by the University to record and monitor staff performance and identify areas for development; the role of the Academic Staff Development Plan, how it is implemented and how it supports staff; the University's approach to the management of staff workloads, including systems used to manage this and how any workload plan is being developed and implemented; and the role of the staff student satisfaction survey and how the University is identifying and addressing issues outlined in the evidence provided to the team.

The team sampled the following areas of evidence. Details of the evidence assessment team considered are provided in the 'Explanation of findings' section of this report, below.

- A random sample of records of study/transcripts
- A random sample of overview reports of accreditation of prior learning decisions
- A random sample of a student record of appointment with an academic skills tutor
- A random sample of student appeal and complaint cases and outcomes
- A random sample of moderated student work
- A representative sample of external examiner reports and responses
- A representative and random sample of job descriptions, profiles and advertisements
- A random sample of supporting educational needs process outcomes

The samples considered, and how and why they were chosen, are described within the discussion of each criterion under 'How any samples of evidence were constructed'.

Details of the evidence assessment team considered are provided in the 'Explanation of findings' below.

Explanation of findings

Criterion A: Academic governance

Criterion A1 - Academic governance

- 1 This criterion states that:
- A1.1: *An organisation granted degree awarding powers has effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.*
- A1.2: *Academic governance, including all aspects of the control and oversight of its higher education provision, is conducted in partnership with its students.*
- A1.3: *Where an organisation granted degree awarding powers works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, it ensures that its governance and management of such opportunities is robust and effective and that decisions to work with other organisations are the result of a strategic approach rather than opportunism.*

2 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers, December 2019*.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

3 The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and Arden University's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes described in Annex 4 and 5 of this Guidance as follows.

Specifically, the review team considered or assessed the following.

- a To test the extent to which the University's mission, strategic direction and policies are aligned, developed and communicated, the team considered the Access and Participation Plan (APP) [004], summary of strategic direction [005], governance handbook [006], Academic Board minutes, December 2019 [019], Access and Participation Committee (APC) terms of reference [031], the website <https://arden.ac.uk/studying-with-us/about-arden>, the academic staff development plan [076], sample output from strategic digital exploration day [107], the updated 2019-21 Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Plan [127] and the student submission.
- b To understand the respective responsibilities of the Board of Directors (BoD), Academic Board and other bodies involved in the governance of the University's higher education provision, the team reviewed the governance handbook [006], Academic Standards and Ethics Committee (ASEC) terms of reference (undated) [008], a Memorandum of Understanding between the Academic Board and the BoD [007], Academic Board's terms of reference, March 2019 [011], Senior Management Team (SMT) terms of reference [012], Quality and Standards Committee Terms of Reference [013], Academic Board minutes, December 2019 [019], Validation Handbook [023], Annual Report of Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) to

Academic Board [020], the Regulatory Framework [025], Academic Board minutes, September 2019 [059], ASEC minutes, January 2020 [115], academic governance review at ASEC [119], ASEC Terms of Reference, March 2020 [124] and a paper at Academic Board on the academic governance review [129].

- c To test the effectiveness of the University's academic governance and oversight of its higher education, and the relationships between different committees, the team considered the Governance Handbook [006]; Academic Board Terms of Reference, March 2019 [011]; Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) terms of reference [013]; the QSC annual report to the Academic Board [020]; Academic Board minutes December 2019 [019]; a quarterly report on student progression [021]; a continuation report to Academic Board [022]; a summary of regulatory updates to Academic Board [026]; Learning and Teaching Committee Terms of Reference [028]; Admissions Committee Terms of Reference [029]; Awards and Progression Board Terms of Reference [034]; Course Committee Terms of Reference [035]; External examiner reports and responses [039, 044, 159]; an evaluation of external examiner activity 2018-19 [042]; Academic Board minutes, September 2019 [059]; a schedule of delegation: quality assurance and academic standards [121]; Academic Committee Structure [136]; annual complaints review 2019 [145] annual review of appeals [146], annual complaints review [147] reports considered by Academic Board; and the Student Submission.
- d To determine the depth and strength of academic leadership and understand the respective roles, responsibilities and relationships between key post holders responsible for the provision of services supporting teaching and learning, the team considered the QSC annual report to the Academic Board [020]; the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan [127] and a continuation report to Academic Board containing detailed data relating to student continuation and proposed actions to address poor outcomes for blended learning students [022]. In addition to the job description for the Director of Library Services [103] provided by the University as part of its initial evidence, the team also scrutinised the curricula vitae and job descriptions of the Director of Student Experience [165, 166] and the Director for the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching [167, 168] and reviewed records of Senior Academic Team (SAT) meeting discussions, August 2019 [187, 188].
- e To understand the relationship between the University's strategic direction [005] and policy development, the policy implementation process, how it communicates its policies and procedures, and how it monitors feedback from stakeholders, including students, the team considered examples of current committee terms of reference (Academic Board [011], QSC [013], Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) [017], annual monitoring and review pro forma – undergraduate business [018], QSC annual report [020], Academic Board Minutes December 2019 [019], Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) [028], APC [031], Awards and Progression Board (APB) [034] and Course Committee [035] Terms of Reference, Academic Board Minutes, 26 September 2019 [059], a completed Annual Monitoring and Review Form – undergraduate business August 2018-July 2019 [141], student feedback and actions on study centres [160] and the Student Submission.
- f To judge whether the University will continue to manage successfully the responsibilities that would be vested in it were it to be granted indefinite taught degree awarding powers, the team examined professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) letters and certificates [015] and an example of periodic review of the University by Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) in May 2018 [122] and external examiner reports and responses [039, 044, 159].

g To determine the University's approach to partnership working, the team examined the ARU exit plan [003], Partnership Committee terms of reference [032], the collaborative and partnership register [060] and the most recent Partnership Committee minutes, April 2020 [123].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

4 The volume of evidence relating to criterion A was sufficiently small to enable the team to assess all the documents provided and, therefore, no sampling was undertaken.

What the evidence shows

5 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

6 On becoming a university in 2016, Arden set itself an ambition 'To become known as the university that made higher education more accessible, engaging and beneficial to people everywhere' [Summary of Strategic Direction 005]. The summary indicates that the purpose of the University is 'to help people thrive and succeed through "real-world" relevant education that is fuelled by technology, shaped by employers and built around people's lives.' The University's vision is underpinned by the values of support, integrity, innovation and ownership, which are referenced in the Governance Handbook [006] and published on the University website [<https://arden.ac.uk/studying-with-us/about-arden>].

7 The University's Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2020-21 [004] reflects the University's vision and the University's mission 'to remove the barriers to higher education, inspire new ways to learn and enrich people and their lives', while acknowledging challenges with continuation, particularly in relation to blended learning. Actions to address this are outlined in the APP which sets out 12 initiatives to improve student success [004]. These include individual Coaching Programme and Academic Skills Advisors for full-time blended learning; two weeks diagnostic and intensive skills training at the start of studies on full-time blended learning programmes to ensure the provision of targeted study skills support; provision of a new, dedicated counselling service for special educational needs students; and the development and expansion of flexible study options for students. The initiatives are clear and cover targeted actions comprehensively, with a specific focus on identified groups to improve student retention and success. The Access and Participation Committee (APC) [031] is responsible for reviewing and developing the University's policy and strategy in relation to promoting fair access to, and participation in, higher education, monitoring the APP and keeping Academic Board informed about the performance of the APP against agreed performance measures [004]. The Student Submission confirms that students consider the mission statement to be coherent and accessible [Student Submission].

8 The Academic Board Chair's verbal update on key academic developments within the University was presented to the Board in December 2019 [019]. This referred to the key part that the Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Plan 2019-21 [127] had to play in achieving the University's vision and five strategic priorities [005]. These priorities have been identified as structures, policies, systems and processes which support high quality learning, teaching and assessment for student success and to meet regulatory requirements; enhancing student success; learning environments and high-quality academic resources; the promotion of a culture of innovative learning, teaching and assessment which ensures students' secure development of subject knowledge and digital skills; and an enhanced research and scholarly culture, through supporting and developing all staff. The LTA Plan identifies measures of success or key performance indicators (KPIs), timescales and owners for each objective.

9 The LTA Plan 2019-20 has been designed to link with, and support, the University's proposed five-year strategy [005, 107, 127]. It is to be monitored and updated by the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) with progress reported to Academic Board and the Board of Directors' Academic Standards and Ethics Committee (ASEC) [127]. The LTA Plan details the University's commitment to devising a coherent approach to delivering the University's higher education mission and strategic direction. For example, Objective 1 includes a review of governance and committees to 'enable key priorities to be communicated, actioned and monitored, at different levels' [127]; Objective 2 addresses challenges with progression rates; Objective 3 relates to the learning environment, resources and development; Objective 4 the development of digital skills (digital first initiative) [107], and Objective 5 HEA/Advance HE Recognition (staff development plan - Professional Development and Recognition [076]. Academic Board minutes, December 2019 [019] note the extensive input of academic and support staff into the LTA Plan which has been refined by the LTC, demonstrating the inclusion of staff at all levels in the development of this initiative.

10 A comprehensive Staff Development Plan [076] has been produced to support the five-year strategic plan. This includes mandatory, role-specific, enhancement of learning and teaching, and professional development (with a focus on HEA/Advance HE recognition). Staff with a direct responsibility for academic or student-facing support are required to engage in continuing professional development that will enable the objectives set out in the academic strategy and the LTA strategy to be met [076]. Staff development plans during the last year have focused on addressing the rapid development of blended learning together with plans to focus, in the year to come, on staff skills and capabilities required to enable the University to become a 'digital first' university in support of the University's five-year strategy [107]. Digital capability audits are to be used to inform staff development.

11 The Governance Handbook [006] indicates that the Board of Directors (BoD) is responsible for strategic direction and governance, financial and legal matters, and annual performance management against agreed targets. The University's self-assessment document indicates that the BoD has a separate legally binding agreement with the University's shareholders with a view to ensuring that commercial considerations do not override the academic integrity or quality of education offered by the University. The self-assessment document also states that ASEC (see paragraph 9 above) was established in 2018 to scrutinise the work of the Academic Board to give assurance to the BoD and students of the University that the Academic Board ensures academic quality [ASEC Terms of Reference 008, ASEC Minutes January 2020 115, Academic Governance Review at ASEC 119, ASEC Terms of Reference March 2020 124, Paper at Academic Board on Academic Governance Review 129]. ASEC includes an independent external chair and student and staff members. Other BoD committees include the Finance and Resources Committee (to advise the Board on budgets, treasury and external financing matters), Audit Committee (to oversee the implementation of a five-year audit plan); Nominations Committee (to oversee practice in the nomination, selection, induction, evaluation and re-election of non-executive Board members and the appointment of senior executive officers); and the Remunerations Committee (to advise the Board on the framework and policy of remuneration for university employees). In addition, the University's Executive, which is responsible for considering and shaping the University's strategy and for setting priorities and performance goals for the Senior Management Team, under the guidance of the BoD and Academic Board, also reports to the BoD.

12 The BoD also has a legally binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (August 2015 - pre-GUS) with Academic Board to ensure that there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility between the two bodies in managing higher education [007]. The MoU states that the BoD is to seek Academic Board approval for commercial decisions which may materially and detrimentally affect the University's academic standards or the

quality of the student learning experience. It also requires the BoD to keep Academic Board informed of (i) major plans which may influence academic development, course delivery and assessment; (ii) changes to the constitution of the organisation, BoD membership and senior staff appointments; and (iii) consult with Academic Board and seek approval for any proposed amendments to any regulatory or other documents relating to academic standards or plans relating to the academic delivery of a programme. The MoU indicates that the BoD has delegated authority for academic governance to the Academic Board [007]. Together, these two bodies govern the University. An academic governance review paper, January 2020, notes that the Chair of ASEC recently stood down due to a conflict of interest [119] and the minutes of the ASEC January 2020 meeting record that the current, temporary, chair is a member of the BoD [115].

13 The University's Executive is responsible for considering and shaping strategy, providing leadership in achieving institutional objectives [006]. This includes assessment and monitoring of risks and providing feedback and advice to the Board of Directors. The terms of reference of the University Executive and Senior Management Team (SMT) were revised in February 2020 [012]. SMT is responsible for monitoring performance in the delivery of strategic objectives, the operation of academic programmes in accordance with the Regulatory Framework [025] and for other policies and procedures arising from the University's committees, including Academic Board and the BoD. SMT establishes subgroups with delegated powers to support it in discharging its responsibilities, as appropriate [006].

14 Academic Board's Terms of Reference [011] clearly state its composition and responsibilities as the custodian of academic standards and quality and the approving body for all awards conferred in the name of the University. Chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) and supported by eight subcommittees, including the Quality and Standards Committee [013], it approves the University's regulations and any subsequent amendments to ensure that these take due account of relevant legislation and sector-wide guidance relating to UK higher education. Academic Board establishes and reviews the University's academic policies and procedures which apply to its provision, including new programme approval and the establishment of validation mechanisms in accordance with the Validation Handbook [023]; the admission of students, teaching, curriculum content and examination of the academic performance of students; complaints and appeals; the appointment of internal and external examiners; the management of risk to academic standards and quality; and oversight of student success rates and outcomes [Governance Handbook 006, Academic Board's terms of reference 011, Validation Handbook 023, Arden University Regulatory Framework 025]. Academic Board's role in establishing and overseeing the implementation of policies ensures that the policies supporting the University's higher education mission, aims and objectives are consistently applied [Academic Board Minutes December 2019 019, QSC Annual Report to Academic Board 020, Academic Board Minutes September 2019 059, Paper at Academic Board on Academic Governance Review 129].

15 The University has produced a Schedule of delegation: quality assurance and academic standards [121], indicating where key decisions are made in relation to the academic standards and quality of its awards and to whom these decisions have been delegated. The schedule identifies final authority (approving body) and delegated authority. Subcommittees reporting to the Academic Board include the Admissions Committee which is responsible for reviewing and developing admissions policy and practice [029, 121]; the Access and Participation Committee; Data Governance Board; the Learning and Teaching Committee [028], which is responsible for developing and ensuring the currency of the University learning and teaching strategy as well as the assessment strategy; the Quality and Standards Committee; the Research Committee; the Partnership Committee; and the Awards and Progression Board which is responsible for oversight of the award of credit and qualifications and, where applicable, advise whether students should be recommended to a

professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) for inclusion on the appropriate professional register [034]. QSC is responsible for the development, monitoring and evaluation of the University's regulatory framework and its constituent regulations, policies and quality assurance and enhancement procedures [013]. In all cases, the associated terms of reference are appropriate to their functions.

16 The Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) advises the Academic Board on recommended changes to regulations and quality processes and manages, on behalf of Academic Board, the approval of new provision and changes to existing programmes. It also maintains oversight of programme monitoring and review, student engagement and external examination mechanisms [020]. There is a reporting line to the QSC from Course Committees which are responsible for all programme delivery-related matters [035]. QSC's Terms of Reference [013] indicate that it is responsible for overseeing the validation process and for considering the approval of new programmes and the revalidation of existing programmes on behalf of the Academic Board [136]. Academic Board's terms of reference, March 2019 [011] do not explicitly refer to programme approval but Board minutes considered by the team show that reports from validation events are reviewed by the Board [019]. QSC is responsible for oversight of external examiners, their reports and responses to these.

17 External examiner reports seen by the team [039, 044, 159] confirm that academic standards are appropriate and that assessment is of a comparable standard with other higher education institutions. QSC's report on its work in 2018-19 to the Academic Board, December 2019 [019, 020], included a review of external examiners' reports which referred to a lack of detail in many of them. The Evaluation of External Examiner Activity 2018-19 [042] noted the lack of a formal interim reporting structure in that, while external examiners are asked to review and provide feedback on work for each assessment period, they tend not to provide comments over and above their satisfaction with the grades awarded. While more feedback is provided in the annual report process, examiners' comments were often quite limited. Appropriate actions were suggested, including inviting external examiners to attend course committees, introducing an automated system for sampling and the provision of further training for external examiners. An update on this activity provided by the University, at the request of the team, includes assurance that the new process (introduced in January 2020) ensures that comments are recorded formally and that follow-up action is taken by the relevant committee. Actions and responses to matters raised and actioned within interim reports are to be captured in a rolling action plan with updates shared with external examiners after each meeting. Other actions include the development of an online SharePoint area for external examiners to access key policies, dates and documentation, which is due to be launched in the summer of 2020. The team found QSC's annual report to Academic Board [020] to be comprehensive and detailed.

18 The team noted that the Academic Board and the BoD receive quarterly reports on student progression [021] and BoD's consideration of Academic Board reports [021, 022] and minutes [019, 059], including a QSC annual report to Academic Board on the maintenance of academic standards [020] (also submitted to the ASEC), a quarterly report on student progression [021], a report on continuation [022], proposals for revisions to the regulatory framework [026] and reviews of complaints and appeals [145, 146, 147], and provide evidence of the University's scrutiny of performance and student outcomes through its committee structure and its recognition of the need for a greater focus on enabling the delivery of successful outcomes for all the University's students, which are recognised and valued by employers and/or enable further study.

19 Since 2018, academic structures have been reorganised to clarify differentiation of function and responsibility. This includes the appointment of a Pro-Vice Chancellor (PVC) Academic who reports to the Vice Chancellor. The University's self-assessment document

indicates that the PVC Academic chairs the Academic Board and is responsible for oversight of the academic experience. The PVC, together with the four Heads of School, the Director of the Centre of Innovation in Learning and Teaching and the Director of Academic Planning and Resources make up the Senior Academic Team (SAT). SAT minutes, August 2019 [187] demonstrate an active approach to addressing operational concerns, including discussion about the blended learning model, introduction of new posts, including a specialist librarian (in response to National Student Survey (NSS) results), a review of study skills modules and consideration of additional staffing, teaching observation revision, data compliance and late assessment upload. Minutes of the subsequent SAT meeting held later in August 2019 [188] demonstrate that identified actions from the previous meeting had been progressed appropriately. The University has recognised the need to improve preparation, analysis and deliberation of student performance data sets and has taken action to facilitate a proactive approach to data quality and security [020]. This is evidenced by, for example, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan [127] and a continuation report to the Academic Board containing detailed data relating to student continuation and proposed actions to address poor outcomes for blended learning students [022]. Curricula vitae and job descriptions reviewed by the team show that senior post-holders are well qualified and have relevant expertise and experience [103, 165, 166, 167, 168]. The team considered that there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership.

20 The University implements its policies and procedures within a coherent committee structure with upward reporting ultimately to the Academic Board [011, 059]. A series of initiatives have been progressed recently to drive the University's five-year strategy [005] by improving the coherence and functioning of academic governance, further clarifying lines of accountability and improving engagement and communication with students. Course committees [035], which include student representation, are required to undertake quarterly monitoring, incorporating feedback from students, staff and external examiners. Actions are monitored through course committees and feed into annual monitoring processes [Annual monitoring pro forma Business 018, 141].

21 QSC draws together institutional-level themes [QSC annual report 020] for report to the Academic Board [Minutes December 2019 019]. Academic Board, QSC, Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC), LTC, APC, Awards and Progression Board (APB) and course committee terms of reference [011, 013, 017, 028, 031, 034, 035] include staff representation (academic and professional); students are represented on the Academic Board (Student President), QSC, SSLC [SS], LTC and course committees [011, 013, 017, 028, 035] demonstrating the formal inclusion of a wide range of internal and external stakeholders in academic governance. Membership of the Academic Board includes an external quality adviser and three external members with experience of UK higher education alongside the University's senior post-holders and the President of the Student Association [011].

22 The team noted that student feedback (relating to facilities available and module-related issues, for example) had been considered and action had been taken to improve the study centre environment accordingly [160]. The Student Submission notes student involvement in the development and communication of the University's policies and procedures, indicating that the academic governance arrangements in place ensure effective student engagement. Minutes show that students attend current committees regularly, that they engage in academic governance and are involved in discussions about academic developments within the University. Additionally, students are elected as student representatives at programme level, providing course feedback and contributing to programme decision-making. Some students from the representative group are elected to take part in university-level decision-making through membership of university committees [083, 059] and, additionally, Academic Board [019]. The Student Association President's

membership of Academic Board and other university committees further enables student representation at the highest level within the University [SS].

23 The University has held degree awarding powers since 2014. During this period, it has undergone external reviews by QAA (the most recent in 2017) and by PSRBs, including the Association for Project Management (APM), the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), The Chartered Management Institute (CMI), the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and the British Psychological Society (BPS) [015], each of which confirmed that the University continues to meet expectations for the quality and standards of its academic provision. An example of periodic review of the University by ARU in May 2018 [122] concluded that the University 'demonstrated an ongoing ability to manage academic standards and to develop and enhance the quality of its taught courses'. The courses were deemed appropriate with regard to currency of content [122]. No conditions were stipulated and two commendations and four recommendations were made. External examiner reports and responses made to them [039, 044, 159] confirm that academic standards and student assessments are appropriate.

24 The University is continuing to work with its university and awarding body partners, particularly ARU [003], the University of Wales and Pearson, throughout the partnership exit phase in accordance with its terms and conditions and awarding body regulations. The University does not currently have any collaborative partnerships for its own awards but, in preparation for this possibility in the future, the Partnership Committee has reviewed its Terms of Reference [032] to ensure oversight of UK and international partnerships. Discussion at an April 2020 meeting of the Committee [123] covered improvement to current processes and planning for future collaborations. This included an agent approval checklist review [060]; collaborative partnership review; proposed franchise map; update to the process map; proposed changes to the Committee's terms of reference for future oversight of UK and international partnerships; review of a proposed partnerships form; and agreement to create a separate register (from an agents register) for academic partnerships [123]. The Committee's Terms of Reference [032] include the need to consider all memorandum of agreement and articulation agreement proposals and due diligence and to make recommendations for approval by the Admissions Committee. They also include the need for appropriate monitoring mechanisms for quality assurance and risk management in accordance with external requirements [032].

Conclusions

25 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular Annex 4.

26 Following careful consideration of the evidence presented, the team reached the view that University's higher education mission and strategic direction, and associated policies, are coherent and published, and that the organisational structures will facilitate their consistent application. The need to improve routine preparation, analysis and deliberation of student performance datasets has been recognised and addressed to provide a proactive approach to data quality and security. The University's academic development plan, policies, processes and regulations support its higher education mission, aims and objectives.

27 The University's actions have further clarified and differentiated function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision. Governance and executive functions are clear, the former resting with BoD and the latter with the Academic Board and the SMT. The Memorandum of Understanding explicitly delineates the division of

responsibility between BoD and the Academic Board. The curricula vitae examined by the team confirm that there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership.

28 Wide representation of staff (academic and professional), students and external stakeholders through the University committee structure and membership, ensures their formal inclusion in the development and communication of policies and procedures. This demonstrates the University's commitment to conduct the academic governance and oversight of its higher education in partnership with its students.

29 The available evidence leads the team to the conclusion that the University is developing effective plans to address requirements in anticipation of future partnership development and to ensure that developments are based on a strategic approach, informed by the effective assessment of risk, including the carrying out of due diligence. The University is developing discriminating processes for the approval of new partners. The team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1 - Regulatory frameworks

30 This criterion states that:

B1.1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers has in place transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications.

B1.2: A degree awarding organisation maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

31 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers, December 2019*.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

32 The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and Arden University's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes described in Annex 4 and 5 of this Guidance as follows.

Specifically, the review team considered or assessed the following.

- a In order to establish that the University's academic frameworks governing the award of academic credit and qualifications are transparent, cover all aspects of the student journey from admission to completion and are monitored to ensure that they remain fit for purpose, the team examined the Quality and Standards Committee's Terms of Reference [013], a 2020 schedule for the review of mappings to the Quality Code [014], annual monitoring and review documentation [018, 027], QSC Annual Report to Academic Board [020], the Regulatory Framework [025], a Summary of Regulatory Updates to Academic Board [026], Programme Handbook examples, January and February 2020 [036, 054], Student Handbooks for Online and Blended Learning Students, September 2019 [056, 057], a range of policies and procedures (Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy and Procedures, November 2015 [063], Admissions Policy, January 2020 [130], Procedure for the Production, Publication and Amendment of Student Handbooks, April 2020 [131], Guidelines for Moderators, May 2019 [132], Policy on Internal Moderation, May 2019 [133], Unfair Practice Policy, May 2019 [134], Academic Appeals Process, May 2019 [135], Procedure for the Production, Approval and Maintenance of Online Module Learning Material [137]) and information at <https://arden.ac.uk/studying-with-us/about-arden/our-policies-standards>
- b To identify how the University seeks to ensure that its academic frameworks and regulations governing its higher education provision are effective and implemented fully and consistently, the team reviewed the minutes of Academic Board, December 2019 [019], the Validation Handbook [023], an example of a Validation

Event Pack [055] and a proposal to move to a more continuous mode of evaluation and monitoring of outcomes [140].

- c To identify how the University maintains definitive records of programmes and qualifications, including subsequent changes to them, the team considered the University's list of programmes [002], a programme specification with Subject Benchmark Statement [024] and a record of process of study with examples [139].
- d To understand the University's process for issuing records of studies to students and alumni and to establish that students and alumni are provided with appropriate records of study, the team considered the Awards and Progression Board's Terms of Reference [034] and details of a record of study process [139].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

33 The team reviewed a random sample of three records of study/transcripts [139] to confirm that students and alumni are provided with records of study.

What the evidence shows

34 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

35 QSC's responsibilities [013] include the development, monitoring and evaluation of the Regulatory Framework [025] and its constituent regulations, policies and quality assurance and enhancement procedures. It is responsible for the approval of new programmes and changes to existing programmes; maintaining oversight of programme monitoring; student engagement; and external examination mechanisms (including the evaluation of external examiner nominations and their appointment). The assessment team considered an annual report on the work of QSC in 2018-19 to Academic Board [020] and noted reference to a review and revision of the Regulatory Framework and updates and revisions made to a range of documents as part of the Committee's work for the year.

36 The Regulatory Framework [025] is the primary regulatory instrument in a hierarchy of instruments adopted by the University. It sets out details of the general principles and guidelines for the award of academic credit and the University's qualifications. Updated in December 2019 [026] in recognition of the need to address an increase in blended learning students, the Regulatory Framework contains a comprehensive and transparent set of regulations and procedures governing taught programmes of study. To ensure currency, the University has produced a schedule, including named owners and contributors, for the review of Quality Code mappings 2020 [014] to align university functions to the revised UK Quality Code (2018).

37 Policies, processes and procedures examined by the team relating to annual monitoring and review [018, 027], the accreditation of prior learning [063], admissions [130], the production, publication and amendment of student handbooks [131], moderation [132, 133], unfair academic practice [134], academic appeals [135], and the production, approval and maintenance of online module learning material [137 <https://arden.ac.uk/studying-with-us/about-arden/our-policies-standards>], were found to align with relevant external reference points. The Regulatory Framework [025], quality assurance process and associated policies are readily accessible through the University website and further guidance is set out in student handbooks which are designed to be read in conjunction with specific programme handbooks [036, 054, <https://arden.ac.uk/studying-with-us/about-arden/our-policies-standards>]. The team found that the LLB (Hons) with Qualifying Status Programme Handbook, February 2020 [054], provided as an example, set out details relating to the maximum programme duration, core and optional modules, level of the modules, information

relating to assessment, and the programme specification. Generic handbooks for distance and blended learning students [056, 057] include comprehensive information relating to the obligations of both staff and students as well as student support alongside the regulations, policies and procedures that apply in determining student assessment, progress and achievement.

38 The University has identified the need for review and refinement of the Annual Monitoring and Review (AMR) process, including a proposal that institutional actions should feed into the Academic Board Quality Enhancement Plan [019]. The AMR review has identified that the current process does not provide evidence of 'regular and focused monitoring, review and attendant actions by academic teams' [140]. The review also concluded that the format of the AMR template did not facilitate effective evaluation and that the targets for improvement are not specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART). Comprehensive and appropriate proposals for improvement have been drawn up. These include a shift to a more continuous mode of evaluation; staff development; a greater focus on data; and increased academic engagement at course committees, with a view to introducing the revised system from November 2020 [140].

39 The University has developed a detailed and comprehensive Validation Handbook covering all stages of the validation process for new programmes and modifications to existing programmes (February 2019) [023]. A validation pack reviewed by the team included a detailed introduction to the University, programme handbooks and staff CVs [055]. The team considered that this information provides clarity and support to panel members and others involved in the validation process. It includes an event schedule, panel membership, membership of the team submitting the proposed award and a panel briefing document outlining responsibilities, validation documents and information about the formulation of a panel's decision. Panel members are required to ensure that all awards meet the requirements of The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and align with relevant external reference points.

40 The University has a definitive list of formally approved programmes [002]. This makes clear the mode of delivery and, where appropriate, the delivery site. The number of students currently undertaking each programme is shown in a clear table. Once formally approved by Academic Board, programme documentation (including course structure overview, programme specification and module specifications) is held centrally by the Quality Department. Full programme details are included in programme handbooks which are routinely distributed to students by the Admissions Team as part of an offer pack. The self-assessment document indicates that, once enrolled, students may also access programme details via the ilearn online learning environment. The team's review of a programme specification and Subject Benchmark Statement [024] found that the information provided, including mapping of modules, was detailed, clear and comprehensive.

41 The process for issuing records of study is managed by the Registry's Awards and Graduation team [139]. Once approved by the Awards Board [034], graduating students are provided with records of study (transcripts) in hard copy and in digital formats for full awards, exit awards and for credits gained by students who have withdrawn [139]. Interim transcripts, which are held electronically on the University's student record system (iSystem), are available to students on request. The transcripts reviewed by the team fully reflect the mode of study and student achievement and include a breakdown of module results, an overall aggregate mark and, where appropriate, the award classification.

Conclusions

42 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular Annex 4.

43 The University has developed comprehensive and transparent regulations relating to the award of academic credit and qualifications supported by appropriate policies and procedures which it operates within a coherent committee structure, ultimately reporting to Academic Board. The University has undertaken a systematic review of its performance to ensure that its regulations, policies and procedures align with sector practices, are effective and will be consistently applied. The regulatory framework, policies and procedures articulate how the University governs the award of academic credit and qualifications. Underpinning policies, processes and procedures support the regulatory framework and are readily accessible through the university website. The University maintains a definitive list of each formally approved programme and qualification. Programme specifications contain comprehensive information, in a standardised format. The team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Criterion B2 - Academic standards

44 This criterion states that:

B2.1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications.

B2.2: Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that they are able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that the standards that they set and maintain above the threshold are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

45 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers, December 2019*.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

46 The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and Arden University's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes described in Annex 4 and 5 of this Guidance as follows.

Specifically, the review team considered or assessed the following.

- a To determine whether higher education qualifications are offered at levels corresponding to the FHEQ and that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment, the team examined the Regulatory Framework [025], unconfirmed Academic Board Minutes, December 2019 [019], the Validation Handbook [023], a summary of regulatory updates to the Academic Board [026], a programme specification with Subject Benchmark Statement [024] and an example of a new course approval process (for an MBA apprenticeship) [053].
- b To verify that the University takes account of relevant external points of reference and makes use of external and independent expertise in setting and maintaining academic standards, the team considered Academic Board's Terms of Reference [011], Academic Board unconfirmed minutes (December 2019) [019], the University's Validation Handbook [023] and the Regulatory Framework [025]. The team also considered an example of a new course approval process (for an MBA apprenticeship) [053] and a panel validation pack [055] to confirm that programme approval arrangements are robust and explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and that academic standards are being maintained.
- c In determining whether programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements are robust, applied consistently, explicitly address that UK threshold academic standards are achieved and academic standards are being maintained, the team examined Academic Board unconfirmed minutes (December 2019) [019]; QSC's

annual report on its work in 2018-19 to the Academic Board [020]; a draft validation and periodic review schedule 2020 [045]; Periodic Review Handbook [046], Updated Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan [127]; the Academic Board Quality Enhancement Plan 2019-20 (updated) [128]; a periodic review schedule and self-evaluation document template [138]; a proposed change from annual monitoring reviews to annual rolling action plans [140]; and a completed annual monitoring form for undergraduate business provision (2018-19) [141].

- d To understand how the University makes use of appropriate external and independent expertise in establishing and maintaining threshold academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications, the team reviewed Academic Board unconfirmed minutes (December 2019) [019]; QSC's annual report on its work in 2018-19 to the Academic Board [020]; Regulatory Framework [025]; external examiner reports and responses [039, 044, 159]; an external examiner annual report template [040]; Periodic Review Handbook [046]; and an example of a new course approval process (for an MBA apprenticeship) [053].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

47 The volume of evidence relating to criterion B2 was sufficiently small to enable the team to assess all the documents provided and, therefore, no sampling was undertaken.

What the evidence shows

48 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

49 The Regulatory Framework [025] underpins the development and delivery of programmes of study leading to the University's awards. The framework gives guidance on programme delivery and the production of validation documents, programme handbooks and programme specifications. It also provides the framework for annual monitoring and periodic review. It sets out, in a single place, the procedures to be followed in securing award standards. It specifies awards that the University may make, and the relationship between these and student achievement and credits, including a means of calculation of degree classification. It also specifies the need for external examiner scrutiny of all assessments that count towards an award of the University, and the means by which awards are made institutionally by a system of examination boards. Progression and completion rules, including compensation, are clear and logical. The procedures detailed in the framework are robust.

50 Academic Board approved changes to the Regulatory Framework, reflecting the increasing proportion of blended learning students, in December 2019 [019, 026]. The changes, which are to come into force in September 2020, include amendments to progression, mitigation, trailing of credit, retakes, anonymous marking, re-admissions and periods of registration [026]. The team considered that they represent positive features designed to both protect academic standards and maximise the opportunity for students to demonstrate attainment of standards. The changes show that the University keeps a watching brief on its regulations and responds when circumstances change.

51 A programme specification and module specifications, setting out the intended learning outcomes and how these can be achieved or demonstrated, form part of the Programme Handbook which is generated as part of the approval processes. The Validation Handbook [023] draws attention to external points of reference to be used, including PSRB requirements, Subject Benchmark Statements, the Quality Code, and the FHEQ. Once approved, programme specifications and programme handbooks are the definitive

documents to be used for programme delivery and assessment [025]. Programme specifications provided by the University reflect the University's requirements and distinguish clearly between academic levels [024, 053].

52 The Validation Handbook [023] details a robust process for approving new programmes that employs a set of nine validation criteria to be considered by approval panels. The responsibilities of the panel and its composition are clearly set out. To date, all validation panels have been chaired by external members of Academic Board and the University's Head of Quality has provided briefing sessions on the University's approval processes and regulations for the Chairs [Additional Evidence Request Response, 1 May 2020 point 17]. The panel's decisions are subject to QSC approval and endorsement by Academic Board [019]; this mechanism provides appropriate corporate oversight. The definitive programme handbook is the final documentary outcome of the validation process. The Validation Pack [055] reviewed by the team is the documentation provided to a validation panel. It opens by making a strong statement to the panel about the relationship of the process to external points of reference. The panel included two external members and their role, as specified to the panel, is to provide in all cases specialist knowledge of the subject area and, additionally, either insight and experience gathered from similar processes at other providers, or perspectives from the relevant industry or profession.

53 The example of the new course approval process [053] provided to the team comprised a new course proposal template; Academic Board approval to proceed; the validation panel report; programme team response to the panel's conclusions; the programme handbook, including programme specification and module definitions; and the student handbook. These documents demonstrate a robust process in practice with checks at appropriate points by the Academic Board and they show that external reference points feature throughout. There is strong use of external expertise, both in terms of discipline requirements (two external members of the validation panel), as stipulated by the Regulatory Framework [025] and in accordance with the example validation pack [055], and, more generally, in relation to pedagogy and quality assurance (three external members of the Academic Board). Standards were set at levels consistent with the FHEQ and showed alignment with the Regulatory Framework [025]. The validation panel set one condition and this, in part, concerned the UK Quality Code: there was concern that the previous Code was referenced, rather than the revised Code. The revised Code was then used in the revised documentation. Academic Board Minutes [019] provided to the team confirm that the Board plays a deliberative role in overseeing programme approvals, appropriate to its terms of reference [011].

54 The completed annual monitoring form for undergraduate business provision (2018-19) [141] reveals that programme annual monitoring is reliant on a robust action-planning process and the development of key performance indicators by, and for, the programme team. All modules with a pass rate of less than 75% are explicitly reported on to consider what changes may increase the pass rate. The example AMR [141] supplied was extremely detailed and presented a very good position statement for the programme which was the subject of the report. However, the team noted that the process does not explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the University are being maintained.

55 The AMR process has undergone recent review, leading to Academic Board approval of a modified process [Updated Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan 127]. This follows an identified need for improvement to both the template used and the presentation of data to make the process of evaluation, review of student outcomes and suggested actions and enhancements less onerous for the report author and the audience. The changes proposed and to be adopted from November 2020 [140] largely concern enhanced reporting, for example, using SMART criteria and the foregrounding of any issues

identified, such that remedial action is swifter and targeted. Through a rolling action plan, monitoring will be of a more continuous nature. The changes present no significant impact on the University's maintenance of academic standards but enhanced reporting will mean that, should standards issues be identified, they will be more quickly resolved. Although the revised process does not explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the University are being maintained, it does explicitly consider external examiner reporting, and, in general, the team considers the revision as positive. QSC's Annual Report to Academic Board and the Board's consideration of the report [019, 020] demonstrates appropriate consideration, through presentation and discussion, of approval and annual monitoring reports. In particular, a special meeting of QSC [020] discusses all annual monitoring reports, raising action points for the University as appropriate.

56 The draft validation and periodic review schedule 2020 [045], periodic review schedule and self-evaluation document template [138], and the updated Academic Board Quality Enhancement Plan [128] show that a manageable programme review schedule is in place and that staff training was planned for May 2020. The review schedule has been revised in the light of COVID-19 with sensible timings to allow for a phased return to work. The University's Periodic Review Handbook [046] states that periodic reviews are scheduled to take place on a five-year cycle. Evidence of outputs of the periodic review process was not available because the University has yet to operate a periodic review, its programmes being approved in 2015.

57 The example of a new course approval process [053] shows strong use of externality in accordance with the University's Regulatory Framework [025], and the Periodic Review Handbook [046] confirms that periodic review panels should normally include two external members and professional peers, including industrialists or representatives from PSRBs, as appropriate. Examples of external examiner reports and responses [039, 044, 159] and the external examiner annual report template [040] show that there is ample opportunity for external examiners to comment on the continuing appropriateness of academic standards, that they do so, and that the University takes note of their comments, and takes action in response where it deems necessary. The QSC annual review report considered by Academic Board in December 2019 [019, 020] demonstrates that external examiners are asked specifically to comment on the appropriateness of threshold academic standards and on the comparability of standards with the sector more generally. There were no adverse comments by external examiners in relation to standards for the 2018-19 academic year.

Conclusions

58 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular Annex 4.

59 The University has clear mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its awards and sets out all processes in a single place: the Regulatory Framework. The Framework specifies awards that the University may make, and the relationship between these and student achievement and credits gained through the achievement of learning outcomes, including a means of calculation of degree classification that is within sector norm boundaries. It also specifies the need for external examiner scrutiny of all assessments that count towards an award of the University, and the means by which university awards are made by a system of examination boards. Progression and completion rules, including compensation, are clear and logical. The mechanisms described are applied diligently in practice, though the team was unable to view examples of periodic review since none has yet taken place given the timing of initial approval of programmes

leading to the University's own degree awards. Programme approval and monitoring arrangements are robust and are kept under review for continued relevance to the nature of the University's programmes and students. Programmes meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ.

60 In setting and maintaining academic standards, the University takes appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise. The approval process makes reference to external reference points, including PSRB requirements, Subject Benchmark Statements, the Quality Code, and the FHEQ. Approval panels include two external and independent members whose role is to provide, in all cases, specialist knowledge of the subject area and, additionally, either insight and experience gathered from similar processes at other providers, or perspectives from the relevant industry or profession. Ultimate approval is given by the Academic Board, which has three external and independent members. There is ample opportunity for external examiners to comment on the continuing appropriateness of academic standards and the University takes note of, and acts on, their comments, where it deems necessary. External examiners are asked specifically to comment on the appropriateness of threshold academic standards and on the comparability of standards with the sector more generally. There were no adverse comments by external examiners in relation to standards for the 2018-19 academic year. There is a clear and sustained commitment to the assurance of standards. The assessment team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Criterion B3 - Quality of the academic experience

61 This criterion states that:

B3.1: Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that they are able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students from all backgrounds, irrespective of their location, mode of study, academic subject, protected characteristics, previous educational background or nationality. Learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured.

62 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers, December 2019*.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

63 The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and Arden University's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes described in Annex 4 and 5 of this Guidance as follows.

Specifically, the review team considered or assessed:

Design and approval of programmes

- a To check that responsibility for approving new programme proposals is clearly assigned; that the University operates effective programme design, development and approval processes which ensure that the coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained; and that subsequent action is carefully monitored, the team scrutinised the Validation Handbook [023], a programme specification mapped to the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement [024], New Course Proposal Template information [051] and an example of the new course approval process [053].
- b To understand how relevant staff are informed of, and provided with guidance and support on, the course approval procedures and their roles and responsibilities in relation to them, the team reviewed the Validation Handbook, February 2019 [023] and read the stage gate process for new course development [052].

Learning and teaching

- c To determine whether the University articulates and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching which is consistent with its stated academic objectives, the team examined a Summary of Strategic Direction presentation [005], the University's learning model [093], Guidance for Authors Creating Online Learning Materials [182], active learning events [183], an April 2020 lecturer induction presentation [184], discussion forum training slides for participants [185], a baseline state student application model [105], the LTA plan [065; 127] and a tutor pack [095].
- d To understand how the University maintains physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting

dignity, courtesy and respect in their use, the team viewed the LTA plan [065, 127], a digital learning environment capability mapping document [104], a study centre specification [112] and a Student Feedback and Actions on Study Centres document [160].

- e To establish how students are enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development, the team examined material, provided by the University at the team's request, indicating how students are able to monitor their academic progress [153] and the Student Submission.

Assessment

- f To check that the assessment processes used by the University enable all students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought, the team examined the Regulatory Framework [025], the exceptional mitigating circumstances policy [038], the accreditation of prior learning policy and procedures [063], the LTA plan [065, 127] and an APL Report [149].
- g To determine whether students are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice, the team considered the regulatory framework [025], an academic skills team induction presentation [154], an academic skills tutor role introduction and frequently asked questions [155], information on academic skills workshops and user count [157] and Student Records of Academic Skills Appointments [158].
- h To understand the University's processes for managing unacceptable academic practice, the team examined an unfair practice annual report, 2018-19 [097], an unfair practice in assessment quality assurance document [134], Arden study skills: intervention, support and training (ASSIST) module screenshots [142] and Subject Minutes included in an example of a student complaint and appeal [148].
- i To determine that assessment and moderation processes are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in these processes, the team reviewed the guidelines for moderators [132], the policy on internal moderation [133], marking team procedures [151] and examples of student work and moderation [152].

External examining

- j To verify that the University makes scrupulous use of external examiners in the assessment process, that it gives full and serious consideration to external examiners' feedback and that it responds to comments received in a timely manner, the team examined QSC's annual report to the Academic Board [020], an evaluation of external examiner activity 2018-19 [042], a proposal for changes from annual monitoring reviews to annual rolling action plans and QSC minutes, March 2020 [140] and examples of external examiner reports and the responses to them [159].

Academic complaints and appeals

- k To establish the effectiveness of the University's procedures for managing academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of their academic experience, the team considered the academic appeals process [135], QSC minutes, March 2020 [140], the student complaints procedure [144], annual reviews of complaints and appeals noted at the Academic Board [145, 146, 147], an example of a successful appeal and an example of an unsuccessful complaint [148].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

64 The team sampled the two most recent overview reports of accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL) decisions [149] to understand the University's approach to the accreditation of prior learning in considering exemptions from assessments. It reviewed a student record of appointment with an academic skills tutor [158] to demonstrate student use of the support available. One student appeal case and one student complaint [148] were considered to determine whether the University has effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints. Two examples of moderated student work (one undergraduate and one postgraduate) [152] were considered to understand the outcomes of the moderation process. The team also sampled three external examiner reports [159], selected on the basis of their responses in a summary of external examiner comments included in the QSC Annual Report to Academic Board [020] to establish the nature and timeliness of responses made to examiners in each case.

What the evidence shows

65 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

Design and approval of programmes

66 Proposals for new programmes of study must be approved by the Board of Directors and by Academic Board and cannot proceed to validation without the prior approval of Academic Board which receives reports on validation outcomes from QSC [023]. Academic Board maintains strategic oversight of processes for, and outcomes of, programme design, development and approval, supported by QSC. QSC manages the approval of new programmes and changes to programmes, reporting outcomes, and recommends regulatory or process changes to Academic Board [023]. As noted in section B2, programme specifications generated as part of the approval process include a focus on programme learning outcomes, achievement and assessment, distinguishing between academic levels.

67 Evidence submitted by the University shows that new programmes are designed using a standard programme specification template and require SMT, Academic Board and Board of Directors approval [051]. The example programme specification supplied by the University for an LLB (Hons) with Qualifying Status contained five awards, four subsidiary to LLB (Hons) with Qualifying Status [024]. The programme specification clearly states the target award and exit award available to students and explains the nature of the learning, teaching and assessment methods and strategies at each level of study. The team found that the information provided enables the University to secure and maintain programme coherence of the target and exit awards available.

68 The course proposal template [051] and example of a recent course approval following the new process [053] show that proposals include an overarching rationale, market analysis and evidence of demand, the proposed course structure, considerations of risk to the business relating to operational complexity, resourcing and the impact on IT

systems, steps to be taken up to the point of delivery and financial information and academic assumptions. The processes for the design, development and approval of programmes include external perspectives and the example of a recent course approval [053] (comprising a completed new course proposal template; Academic Board approval to proceed; the validation panel report; the programme team response to the panel's conclusions; the programme handbook (including programme specification and module definitions) and the student handbook) indicates that the programme design and approval process is robust, clear and effective. The programme development team responded to the validation panel report, which included two conditions, five recommendations and three commendations, in a serious and collegial manner. The team considered that the University's processes are effective as they allow for detailed consideration of academic, financial and other resource implications and serve to promote consistency of approach in relation to the information to be provided to inform decision-making.

69 The Validation Handbook, February 2019 [023], to which staff have intranet access, sets out the University's requirements for the validation and approval of new academic programmes and changes to existing programmes. The Handbook outlines the validation process and validation criteria to be adopted by programme teams developing new programmes and by validation panels when scrutinising new proposals. It sets out documentation requirements for different types of programme proposals, including, as a minimum, a programme handbook (covering the course structure overview, programme specification and module specifications), student handbook, overview document and staff CVs. The stage gate process for new course development [052] shows explicitly the procedure for programme development from idea to delivery in a presentation format suitable for informing and training relevant staff. The roles of the Propositions Group (to generate ideas for new programmes through 'blue-sky' thinking, soundings from stakeholders, and market trends), the New Course Proposal Group (which develops or rejects ideas from the Propositions Group) and the Programme Development Group are clearly set out, as is the requirement for approvals by SMT, Academic Board and the Board of Directors at various stages of the process.

Learning and teaching

70 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan 2019-21 (LTA Plan) [065] aims to support the University's mission to provide opportunities for individuals to access higher education in a way that suits their personal circumstances and ambitions and equips them for employment in the 21st century. It shows clear linkages with the University's vision and mission as expressed in the self-assessment document and the five-year strategic plan [005]. It plans developments across five cross-cutting themes (student success, staff development, quality enhancement, flexibility and innovation, and sustainability) grouped into five objectives, with an overall emphasis on student progression. The Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) is responsible for monitoring progress against each element of the objectives. Although each objective is broken down into elements that performance can be measured against, in many cases the measure of success (target) is not sufficiently expressed such that its achievement can be verified. Nonetheless, the document gives a sound steer to the University's learning, teaching and assessment activities.

71 The Arden Learning Model (ALM) [093], a four-phase strategic approach to learning and teaching to develop graduate attributes, reflects the learning processes (gathering, engaging, consolidating, and moving forward) involved in the student learning journey. The sample tutor pack [095] shows a detailed scheme of delivery across a range of modules that supports tutors in delivering a consistent experience to students across the University's sites. The scheme is heavily predicated on learning outcomes and gives tutors explicit instructions on how to structure learning sessions, with a focus on interactive learning, though there is sound emphasis on allowing tutors to contextualise materials to their own

delivery style or the needs of their particular students. The scheme of delivery shows strong links to the University's 'core values' and the ALM [093]. The model is iterative, occurs in all modules and becomes more academically advanced through a programme [Guidance for Authors Creating Online Learning Materials 182, Active Learning Events 183, April 2020 Lecturer Induction 184, Discussion Forum Training Slides for Participants 185]. This evidence shows strong articulation with the learning model and introduces, explains and discusses the model with teaching staff through induction and ongoing development.

72 In the LTA Plan [065, 127] consideration is given to learning environments, both virtual and physical, in, for example, producing physical environments that enable more flexible and innovative pedagogies. The Study Centre Specification [112] shows a consistency in approach to creating physical learning environments across the University's sites (centres) that are accessible and fit for purpose, specifying rooms, room layouts, and infrastructure. The Baseline State Student Application Model [105] is an overview of the electronic management information systems and applications that can impinge on student life. It shows that the virtual learning environment (VLE) has been integrated into a broader raft of digital architecture to support the functioning of the University, including, for example, library provision, timetabling, finance and induction. The University's self-assessment document indicates that each site has a welcoming reception area, student breakout space, study area, information technology (IT) access, and quiet meeting rooms. The digital learning environment capability mapping document [104] shows that the University took considerable steps, in the planning of its VLE, to ensure the creation of a multifunctional and accessible system. The Student Feedback and Actions on Study Centres document [160] shows that the University collects student opinion on the quality of learning environments through a variety of means, principally through SSLCs. The team viewed a variety of evidence, for example changes to furniture, noticeboards, whiteboards, catering facilities, IT equipment and social facilities, that demonstrate the University is responsive to student requests in creating supportive and comfortable learning environments.

73 The self-assessment document highlights the centrality of the University's VLE ilearn, which accommodates the module content for both blended and distance learning, to the learner experience. By dividing up content into small units or 'lessons', the University seeks to enable students to access content using a range of different platforms. Students have access to an electronic system [153] that shows them which modules they have completed, and which modules are in progress, by means of a progress bar, showing elements they have completed. The student written submission confirms that students are able to access these data.

Assessment

74 The Regulatory Framework [025] sets out clear principles of assessment, including specifying that each programme must offer a range of assessment methods and the need to address learning outcomes. Internal moderation is specified for all assessment tools and for some student work. Procedures for assessment design are robust. Principles of external examining and its need for all final assessments that count towards an Arden University award are clearly articulated. External examiners check and report on standards and quality at both subject (module) and award level. As a minimum, all subject and award boards include at least one external examiner to verify (or otherwise) assessments and student achievements. The LTA Plan [065, 127] emphasises that all programmes have a range of assessment modes aligned to module content, and that some assessments will aid development of employability skills. The Student Submission confirms that students consider that assessed work is graded fairly and that feedback is adequate to meet students' needs. The exceptional mitigating circumstances policy [038] provides for students to present mitigating circumstances on specific grounds, and also states which grounds would not

qualify as mitigating circumstances. The policy is clear and prescribes courses of action to be taken when mitigating circumstances are accepted by the Student Affairs Committee.

75 The Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) Policy and Procedures [063] comprise a solid framework for the award of university credit on the basis of accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL), founded on the achievement of learning outcomes. Credit previously achieved on conferred awards at lower levels than the award for which the student is applying, or on incomplete programmes, may be used to gain entry with advanced standing up to a maximum of two-thirds of the credits required for the award, subject to professional body requirements. The procedures do not apply to modules at Level 6. Academic transcripts indicate whether or not a conferred award includes the recognition of prior learning and list modules against which the transferred-in credits apply. Transferred-in credits do not normally contribute to the algorithm used to determine the classification of an Arden University award. Documentation, approved by the Admissions Committee, must be completed in respect of APCL claims and applications for recognition of such claims must be supported by an admissions tutor [063]. The APL Policy and Procedures document [063] specifies overview reporting of APCL decisions to the Admissions Committee and then to Academic Board. Examples of these reports [APL report 149], produced quarterly, reveal they take the form of a narrative from the University's Admissions Tutor for non-standard and APCL applications, offering comments on process. No quantitative data are presented so the University does not, at least through formal reporting, keep a check on the extent of its use of APCL. However, there are plans, though not yet agreed, to introduce quantitative reporting.

76 The Regulatory Framework [025] clearly indicates principles underpinning unacceptable academic practice (termed 'unfair practice') and that students will be trained in avoiding unfair practice. Members of the Academic Skills Team (AST) [154, 155] run workshops on good academic practice and how to avoid plagiarism. The Academic Skills Workshops and User Count [157] show that these are well attended and students can access AST members individually for advice about developing good academic practice [158]. The Unfair Practice in Assessment Document [134] specifies behaviour that constitutes unfair practice and mandates the originality checking of all student work. It stipulates sound procedures to be followed in formally informing the student of the alleged malpractice and the establishment of an investigative committee of enquiry with clear terms of reference, procedures to follow, and penalties available. While at a local level, detected academic malpractice is discussed and reported on at subject boards [148], oversight is the responsibility of the LTC, which receives annually an annual unfair practice report [097]. The report contains quantitative data with an extensive narrative on the operation of the system, with recommendations for improvement. In combating unacceptable academic practice, the University requires those students who have received a formal warning about their academic conduct to complete the online module 'Arden Study Skills: Intervention, Support and Training' (ASSIST). The module (ASSIST Module and Development [142]) informs students about the University's approach, regulations and policies concerning academic malpractice, how they can produce acceptable academic writing, including the developmental use of plagiarism-checking software, and how to avoid collusion. Although the module is new, the Unfair Practice Annual Return 2018-19 [097] suggests that it is effective in reducing reoffending. The team concluded that the University operates sound processes for the detection, investigation and prevention of unacceptable academic practice.

77 The policy on internal moderation [133] and guidelines for moderators [132] are consistent with each other and specify how moderation of assessed work is to be approached and achieved. The system provides checks that student work has been marked in relation to learning outcomes and marking criteria, gives assurance to students about fairness of marking, and allows a cross-comparison of standards across a subject area. The marking team procedures [151] provide detailed information and guidance for markers,

moderators, administrators and other staff about the processes and systems in place to ensure internal marking and moderation and the recording of grades is carried out carefully, rigorously and robustly. In particular, at least 20% of scripts will normally be selected for moderation, with minima and maxima of eight and 250, respectively; where there is more than one marker, the sample should include at least two scripts from each individual marker; for undergraduate programmes at least two scripts should be selected for moderation at random from each of the classification bands. This approach to sampling is adequate to detect systemic issues. The sample of marked student work [152] provided to the team shows appropriate use of marking criteria and moderation.

External examining

78 QSC's annual report to Academic Board [020] and the Annual External Examiner Review and Effectiveness report which included an evaluation of external examiner activity 2018-19 [042] demonstrate that the University takes very seriously its use of external examiners. The QSC report [020] identifies key themes from the work of external examiners and presents a matrix of external examiners' responses to questions asked on the template, along with each examiner's response to each question. The latter report [042] identified that reports could be perfunctory and do not always capture issues dealt with informally at module or programme level. The University has responded by producing new reporting templates that encourage criticality and more relevant reporting. The University also identified that more thorough and comprehensive training for its external examiners is required and has plans for this [020]. The team concluded from these documents that the University is making appropriate use of external examiners.

79 The minutes of the March 2020 Quality and Standards Committee [included in information about the Revised Annual Monitoring Process 140] reveal detailed consideration of the reports of external examiners with appropriate action planning. In addition, the University is able to call upon the services of an external examiner to help resolve internal assessment issues [140]. For example, some discrepancies were consistently identified between first and second markers for undergraduate dissertations in Berlin, and the internal resolution, with limited discussion, was to take a mean. As a result, the external examiner was asked to examine the work and comment on the working practices. Based on the external examiner's comments, there is to be a review of the assessment of the dissertation module and the training given to supervisors, focusing on marking and feedback [140]. The team viewed this action, arising from the good use of an external examiner, as a positive feature in maintaining standards and enhancing quality.

80 Examples of external examiner reports and the responses to them [159] show effective use of external examiners in the setting of assessment tasks and review of student work. Where external examiners make negative comments, these are addressed directly, and the reporting form prompts external examiners to comment on the process for responding to their comments. In some cases where external examiners were critical, the University chose not to accept the critical comments and communicated this decision to the external examiners in a reasoned and logical manner. However, in one case more than one response was supplied by the University to the external examiner: a formal short letter and a less formal but more extensive and detailed communication, both from the relevant programme leader. Relying on parallel systems, including one that lacks formality, may be inefficient and there are negative implications for record-keeping and maintaining security of the University's processes. In another case, only a perfunctory formal letter was supplied to the external examiner, though the external examiner's comments were considered internally. Thus, there is some inconsistency in responding formally and in full to the comments of external examiners.

Academic complaints and appeals

81 The academic appeals process document [135] specifies the grounds on which an academic appeal may be made, and specifically indicates that an appeal cannot be made on grounds of academic judgement. It specifies a formal process whereby the relevant Head of School considers the appeal. There is a second stage, if necessary, at which students can request a review of the decision on procedural grounds, or on the availability of new evidence. The review is considered by a senior academic who was not involved in the consideration of the original academic appeal. This person may request additional information or evidence from the student, in which case the student is notified in writing and given at least five working days to respond. Any appeals that are upheld trigger the production of a report, such that the incident can be learned from. The process document makes plain that final review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) is possible. The student complaints procedure [144] makes the distinction between a complaint and an appeal, and specifies a four-stage complaints process: local resolution, formal complaint, review, and referral to the OIA. The team regarded the procedure as robust, with appropriate timescales. The University provided an example of a successful appeal [148] by a student against the incorrect application of a penalty for exceeding a word limit in assessed work. The University also provided an example of an unsuccessful complaint [148] by a student concerning various perceived deficiencies in service. The examples showed timely procedures that followed the University's formal processes.

82 Reviews of complaints and appeals are presented to QSC [140] and to Academic Board [145, 146, 147], however, the report on complaints scheduled to be presented to the QSC in March 2020 was delayed and will instead be presented directly to the Academic Board [140]. Complaints reviews for the academic year 2018-19 and 2019-20 did not show an excessive number of cases, and showed that most are resolved before the formal stage, though the review team noted that the report for 2019-20 was produced before that academic year had ended. Appeals reviews for academic years 2016-17 to 2018-19 showed few appeals and there was an appropriate analysis from which the University could learn.

Conclusions

83 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment* by QAA, October 2019, in particular Annex 4.

84 The validation handbook specifies effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes that are operationalised in a robust manner, with checks at the end of each stage by Academic Board. Resultant programme specifications clearly explain how each award is internally coherent. Staff are supported in undertaking these procedures through a stage gate document that specifies all roles.

85 The University's strategic approach to learning and teaching is embodied in its learning model, a four-phase strategic approach to develop graduate attributes that involves gathering, engaging, consolidating, and moving forward. The model is embedded and is transmitted effectively to staff. The LTA Plan 2019-21 gives a sound steer to the University's learning, teaching and assessment activities and shows clear linkages with the University's vision and five-year strategy, although some targets in the LTA Plan are not sufficiently expressed such that their achievement can be verified. Schemes of curriculum delivery are heavily predicated on learning outcomes and give tutors flexibility to contextualise materials to their own delivery style or the needs of their particular students. The team noted that the University responds well to student concerns about physical and virtual learning environments and has mechanisms for ensuring a uniformity of experience for students.

Students have access to an electronic system that allows them to monitor their progress and further their academic development.

86 Strong principles of assessment are set out in the regulatory framework, including specifying that each programme must offer a range of assessment methods and the need to address learning outcomes. Procedures for assessment design are robust. Recognition of prior learning is possible and there is a detailed scheme for its operation; however, there is currently an absence of formal reporting on such activity.

87 Through the work of the academic skills team, students are provided with opportunities to develop skills in good academic practice. The University has sound procedures to be followed in responding to cases of unacceptable academic practice, including formally informing the student of alleged malpractice and the establishment of an investigative committee of enquiry with clear terms of reference, procedures to follow, and penalties available. The University supports students whose practice has been found to be unacceptable by requiring them to take a module on acceptable academic writing. Internal moderation of assessment procedures are sound.

88 The University takes very seriously its use of external examiners. Principles of external examining and the need for all final assessments that count towards an Arden University award to be scrutinised by examiners are clearly articulated. External examiners check and report on standards and quality at both subject (module) and award level. As a minimum, all subject and award boards include at least one external examiner to verify (or otherwise) assessments and student achievements. However, there is some inconsistency in responding to external examiner reports: in one case more than one response was supplied by the University to the external examiner, a formal short letter and a less formal but more extensive and detailed communication; in another only a perfunctory formal letter was supplied to the external examiner, though the external examiner's comments were considered internally.

89 Student complaints and appeals procedures are clear. The team saw examples indicating clarity of process, and appropriate and timely action taken by the University.

90 The shortcomings described in this conclusions section do not individually or collectively present a significant risk to quality. In other aspects, for this criterion there is sufficient, valid, credible and reliable evidence that demonstrates most of the evidence requirements/behaviours. The assessment team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff

Criterion C1 - The role of academic and professional staff

91 This criterion states that:

C1.1: An organisation granted powers to award degrees assures itself that it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students. Everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the level(s) and subject(s) of the qualifications being awarded.

92 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers, December 2019*.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

93 The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and Arden University's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes described in Annex 4 and 5 of this Guidance as follows.

Specifically, the review team considered or assessed the following.

- a To understand the University's strategic approach to teaching, learning and assessment, the team considered external examiner reports [039, 044], the LTA Plan [065], the Academic Staff Development Plan 2019-20 [076], the outline of the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) [079], Academic Committee Structure document [136], matrix setting out the responsibilities of the Director of CILT and the Director of Student Experience [164], Academic Staff Development Plan February 2020 [169], the Academic Staff Development Statement and Plan [218], the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan Updated July 2020 [222] and the University's response to a request for additional information following initial assessment, 1 May 2020.
- b To establish how academic staff practice is informed by subject-specific and educational scholarship and that staff are able to actively engage with research and/or advanced scholarship, the team considered the Research Plan 2019-21 [078], Research Committee minutes, November 2019 and January 2020 [081, 082], LTC minutes, February 2020 [083], List of Publications Research and Scholarly Activity [085] and Research Focused Staff Development Opportunities [209].
- c To determine the nature of the staff profile and the means by which staff are supported in their roles in facilitating student learning, the team reviewed a Dissertation Supervision Handbook [073], Dissertation Supervisor Training [074], Author Pack [075], Teaching Qualifications and HEA Recognition document [077], Arden University Learning Model [093], HEA Fellowship Resources and Guidelines [173] and a list of permanent academic staff and contractors July 2020 [197].

- d To identify how learning, teaching and assessment practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and educational scholarship, the team considered Annual Development Review Templates 2019 [172, 198], Performance Management Recognition Based Pay and Giving Feedback Workbook [201], Probation Review Process Guidelines for Managers [202], Probationary Review Form [203], Academic Staff Probation [204], Three Month Probationary Review [205], Three Month Probationary Review Form Signed Off [206], Six Month Probationary Review [207], and Six Month Probationary Review Form Signed Off [208].
- e To identify whether external stakeholders confirm that the University has sufficient and appropriately qualified staff with relevant academic and professional expertise, the team considered PSRB letters and certificates [015], the Validation Handbook [023] and an example of a validation pack [055], an Association for Project Management Assessor Report 2019 [048], BPS 2017 and 2018 visit reports and the University's responses to these [049, 050], a Workload Planning Proposal [219] and the University's response to a request for additional information following initial assessment, 1 May 2020.
- f To determine whether the strategies in place to support and develop academic staff ensure that staff have access to development opportunities aimed at enabling them to enhance their practice and scholarship and, where appropriate, to maintain and develop their experience of curriculum development and assessment design, the team considered the LTA Plan [065], employee survey questions [162] HR Climate Survey Results, April 2019 [163] and the Engagement Survey [221].
- g To confirm whether the University has appropriate staff recruitment processes, the team reviewed an Academic Interview Record Form [066], an Author Recruitment Process document [067], job descriptions for academics [068], examples of academic posts [161], job profiles [175], examples of correspondence with contractors and permanent staff [210-216] and the ID Reference Qualification Verification Procedure [217].
- h The team also held discussions with teaching and learning support staff [STSL Meeting] and with senior staff [SS Meeting] to discuss matters arising from the above.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

94 In addition to the job descriptions for 12 contracted academic roles and a research assistant considered as part of the initial evidence set [068], the team considered a representative and a random sample of eight job descriptions, job profiles and job advertisements comprising advertisements for four academic post vacancies and four job profiles for different levels of employee roles. These were considered to evaluate the qualifications and experience staff are required to have in order to be considered for an academic role (employed or contracted).

What the evidence shows

95 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

96 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan (LTA Plan) 2019-2021 [065] makes it clear that staff support and development are central to the University's strategic approach to learning, teaching and assessment. Where staff development is an identified need in relation to objectives and actions specified within the LTA Plan, it cross-references to the Academic

Staff Development Plan [076] for further details. Progress against objectives laid out in the LTA Plan is monitored by the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) and reported to Academic Board. The LTA Plan and updated LTA Plan relating to Objective 5: Research and Scholarly Activity (July 2020) [222] identify five key interconnected themes relevant to the University's plans for this period and priority objectives with actions, owners, measures of success and timelines. Staff development is a key theme, cutting across all objectives and actions, including the promotion of a culture of innovative learning, teaching and assessment, ensuring 'students' secure development of subject knowledge and digital skills' and an enhanced research and scholarly culture 'through supporting and developing all staff'. With regard to the updated plan relating to research and scholarly activity which aims to promote an enhanced research and scholarly culture, through supporting and developing all staff, an Innovation in LTA Fund was launched in January 2020 to support small-scale research projects linked to student success in LTA and to increase shared opportunities for research-informed teaching. Three projects were approved in May 2020. A new Research and Scholarly Activity Plan has also been produced. Other activities include a plan to support pedagogic research and the delivery of the LTA Plan as part of an Academic Excellence Enabler Project 10 to be launched in September 2020, the establishment of processes for supporting external grant bidding opportunities and the Annual Staff Research Conference (planned for September 2020 but now to be held in early 2021 due to COVID-19).

97 The University has established a Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) under the leadership and management of the CILT Director with a remit to 'implement and evaluate a number of key initiatives which enhance educational practice and student outcomes across the University' [079]. Launched in March 2020, the CILT is responsible for delivering the priorities of the LTA Plan, driving positive changes and innovation across subject disciplines and service areas, and engaging with staff directly involved in supporting student success and with external bodies to develop and implement innovative and effective practices in learning, teaching and assessment across the University. It is also intended to create opportunities for staff to explore, test and evaluate new practices, developing teaching, learning and assessment by research-informed practice. Responsibility for actions relevant to staff development falls to the CILT Director who also chairs the LTC [065].

98 The team was initially unclear how accountability for progress towards the support and development of academic staff would be ensured, given the CILT Director's responsibilities for staff development and for chairing the Committee monitoring action taken in this area. It also sought to understand the relationship between key post-holders with responsibility for the implementation of the LTA Plan [065]. The University explained that the roles of the Director of Learning and Teaching and Director of Academic Professional Development had been combined into the Director of the Centre for Innovation, Learning and Teaching role [the University's response to a request for additional information following initial assessment, 1 May 2020]. It also provided a matrix setting out the responsibilities of the Director of CILT and the Director of Student Experience, clarifying their respective roles and responsibilities, management relationships and committee membership [164]. An Academic Structure document [136] indicated that the Chair of LTC was appointed on a two-year basis with the possibility of renewal and that LTC appoints a Deputy Chair from among its members. While the CILT Director is the current Chair, this would not be a permanent arrangement. The team was satisfied with these arrangements for governance and accountability in relation to staff development.

99 The Academic Staff Development Plan 2019-20 [076] includes an objective to enhance the research and scholarly culture through supporting and developing all staff. It provides information about all mandatory training to be offered during the year, and all role-specific training and development opportunities available across the year (for example, for lecturers, module leaders, programme team leaders and dissertation supervisors).

Learning and teaching enhancement opportunities include lunchtime guest speakers, course design workshops and annual conference activity. The Plan also specifies the format for each activity (including face-to-face workshops, webinars, and drop-in sessions), timings, and who will facilitate.

100 The Academic Staff Development Plan [076] demonstrates that staff have continued opportunities to further enhance and develop their practice in assessment, feedback, marking and moderation. The team noted that external examiner reports [039, 044] confirm that staff have appropriate expertise in providing feedback on assessment that is constructive and developmental. The Student Submission also confirms that students regard feedback provided as relevant and timely. The Academic Staff Development Statement and Plan [218] provides updates on activities completed, those which have yet to take place and those scheduled for some point in the future. The Statement confirms that some development activities are mandatory, some optional, and some are mandatory for those in specific roles. It also confirms that changes take place across the year in response to new developments or issues that arise (for example, COVID-19).

101 The University's Research Plan 2019-2021 [078] sets out the University's ambition to support scholarship and research, opportunities for collaboration, and dissemination of activity via the CILT and the academic schools, and identifies eight objectives and the means to achieve them. These include the creation of discipline-specific research groups; recruitment of new staff with doctorates, and encouragement of staff to register for doctoral degrees and to publish and present more widely. A Research Focused Staff Development Opportunities document [209] provides information about how the University supports disciplinary and pedagogic research, and includes details of local, school-level opportunities allowing for involvement in research activity. Staff told the team that permanent and contracted staff have access to all of these research-focused staff development opportunities, including conference attendance, financial support for research projects and tuition fees [STSL Meeting]. A list of publications, research and scholarly activity [085] provides details of publications and of research/scholarship for 74 members of staff. Two staff members mentioned external examiner roles at other institutions.

102 Research Committee minutes, November 2019 [081] and January 2020 [082] show discussion of an institutional shift towards an expectation of research and scholarship by staff when their job descriptions do not include these and they have no capacity within their existing workloads to engage in such additional activities, despite the Research Plan 2019-2021 [078]. Staff who met the team indicated that it would be helpful to have allocated time in their workloads for research [STSL Meeting]. The updated LTA Plan objective 5 relating to research and scholarly activity [222] indicates that time will be allocated for research and scholarly activity. As indicated above, the University has launched an Innovation in LTA fund. LTC Minutes (February 2020) [083] indicate that this is intended to promote scholarly work within the University, leading to the development of staff research and the enhancement of the learning experience for students.

103 The self-assessment document indicated that the lecturer base has been largely stable and a number of lecturers have been employed by the University for over a decade. The document also referred to an increase in the ratio of permanent to temporary lecturers. According to the self-assessment document, staff teaching on the University's programmes are required to have a relevant postgraduate qualification and that, increasingly, staff are recruited with doctorates. Academic staff are also required to have a teaching qualification or be prepared to work towards one (timeframe not defined) and to have experience of, and familiarity with, UK higher education and sector requirements and practices. The team identified a small number of academic staff (14) who do not appear to meet the minimum stated academic qualification, and whose highest qualification is at bachelor's level [List of permanent academic staff and contractors July 2020, 197]. Senior staff explained that some

staff may not meet the University's minimum stated academic qualifications of a postgraduate qualification where there is a need for a practitioner base in a subject area. In such cases, the breadth of qualifications and experience across a programme team would be taken into account [SS Meeting]. The assessment team acknowledged the experience that practitioners bring to bear in teaching and supporting student learning on courses with an applied and practical orientation and noted that the majority of staff did have a postgraduate qualification. The team also noted the use of teaching observations and informal evaluations arising from such observations by managers, allowing for discussion of performance and development needs [STSL Meeting].

104 The self-assessment document indicated that over 90% of staff have a teaching qualification [SS Meeting] and the University has a target to achieve 100% HEA Fellowship by the end of 2021 [173]. Of the 336 staff listed in the table of permanent staff and contractors July 2020 [197], 65 are identified as having a higher education-specific teaching qualification. Of the 142 staff who state that they have a teaching qualification, 77 have qualifications that do not relate to higher education, including, for example, primary or secondary school teaching qualifications, Teaching English as a Foreign Language or further education qualifications. While senior staff are aware that the higher education sector does not generally consider primary school teaching qualifications to be appropriate for staff teaching in higher education, they considered secondary school and further education teaching qualifications to be appropriate, given the shift from offering part-time distance learning only following the introduction of full-time face-to face blended learning opportunities in 2016 and the support needs of students from disadvantaged groups [SS Meeting]. Of 231 staff listed in a Teaching Qualification and HEA Recognition document [077], 83 have some level of HEA Fellowship (20 permanent and 63 contractors). Staff who met the team confirmed that appropriate support was in place for anyone who wanted to work towards a teaching qualification or seek Fellowship and that they would be encouraged to do so, but the team noted that not all staff, including line managers, appeared to be aware of the target [STSL Meeting]. Updated information provided by the University at the end of the assessment indicates that around 40% of teaching staff currently have HEA Fellowship and, although senior staff acknowledged that reaching 100% by the end of 2021 would be a 'stretching' target to achieve, they believed it to be important to strive towards this, nonetheless [SS Meeting]. Overall, the team formed the view that staff were appropriately qualified in terms of the level and the subjects being taught.

105 Noting that the self-assessment document reports increases of 400% in the University's permanent staff between 2017 and 2020 (from 26 to 104 staff) and over 300% in teaching contractors (from 65 to 212) during the same period, and a table of permanent staff and contractors [197], the team queried whether staff development activity included in the Academic Staff Development Plan, February 2020 [169] and the LTA Plan Updated July 2020 [222] is available to all. The Academic Staff Development Plan, February 2020 [169], updated Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan July 2020 [222] and the University's response to a request for additional information, 1 May 2020, confirm that all professional development activities, apart from HEA Fellowship support, are available to employees and contractors. The team noted that the response also indicates that the University will look at rolling HEA Fellowship support out to contracted staff next year.

106 Contracted staff are remunerated separately for engagement in professional development events and training [SS Meeting]. Those who met the team felt that professional development opportunities are available to them as much as to permanent staff, and indicated a high level of satisfaction with the professional development opportunities the University provides (STSL Meeting). The team noted that several 'mandatory' training sessions on key issues to do with teaching, learning and assessment, inclusivity, and research, were included in a single staff development day in September 2020 [218]. The team considered that this would not allow much time for exploring each issue in sufficient

depth but were told that these sessions were intended to be 'kick-off' events only, and that further, follow-up development opportunities would be provided after the event [SS Meeting]. Staff indicated that some initial training for staff is mandatory (for example, General Data Protection Regulations, Ethics, Equality and Diversity, Health and Safety, and Prevent) as part of their initial induction [STSL Meeting]. Although the team considered that there is a lack of clarity about other training considered to be mandatory for staff after induction, staff confirmed that they are able to engage in various formal and informal training and development activities on an ongoing basis, particularly in relation to assessment. Such activities include subject-specific and pedagogic research groups, webinars, staff conferences, internal school meetings and the opportunities such activities provided for sharing good practice. Staff also spoke of support and guidance received from mentors, managers and fellow colleagues [STSL Meeting].

107 The University has developed a range of material and provides training to support staff in their different roles. For example, an Author Pack [075] provides guidelines on the presentation of online interactive learning materials, specifically the production of a storyboard and creating module materials, and introduces authors to the Arden University Learning Model [093] involving a four-stage iterative journey, taking students through the processes of gathering, engaging, consolidating and moving forward as they progress through their learning journey. The team considered that these staff development resources for authors are likely to ensure consistency and parity in the creation of content across modules. The Dissertation Supervision Handbook [073] comprehensively covers dissertation requirements for all subject areas and includes information specific to the roles and responsibilities of a dissertation supervisor. Dissertation supervisor training [074] is also provided, covering the supervisor allocation, dissertation and ethics processes, student progress monitoring, scheduling of student appointments and key principles of dissertation supervision.

108 As part of an annual development review process [172], staff reflect on performance against objectives from the previous year and against role competencies, and prepare a development plan for the following year in conjunction with their line managers. The team noted that, although training materials provided for managers [201] refer to an employee's objectives, the template [172] did not include a section where performance objectives or targets from the previous year are presented, with details of any progress against them. The team was therefore unclear how targets, objectives or actions would be recorded and tracked. Teaching staff who met the team referred to a spreadsheet of objectives being maintained and directed the team to the 'Development Plan' section of the annual review form where staff identify professional development plans for the forthcoming year and indicated that these would equate to performance objectives [STSL Meeting]. Senior staff told the team that individuals' performance objectives are recorded in Microsoft Teams [SS Meeting]. Despite this lack of clarity about where an individual's annual performance objectives are identified and recorded, the team heard that teaching staff feel that the annual review process is fair and useful in relation to professional development, although they suggested that clearly stated objectives would enhance the process overall [STSL Meeting].

109 The Probationary Review Form [203] is also missing a section for objectives to be recorded. Probation Review Process Guidelines for Managers [202] indicates that the probationary period is six months, gives details of information that must be discussed with new employees within their first week (including probationary objectives), and advises that an informal follow-up meeting should happen after one month in post, followed by formal reviews at three months and six months using a Probationary Review Form [203]. The guidance [202] provides information for managers on how to extend probation where objectives have not been met. From the completed examples of probationary review forms provided [205-208], the team could not identify objectives set for the staff members on starting work. It also noted that one set of forms (dated February 2020 and May 2020) [206,

207], differed from the template provided for the team [203] and are not the same as the forms dated April 2020 and July 2020 used in the other case provided [205, 208]. One set [206, 207] does have an additional section where the employee's initial probationary objectives should be included but, despite this, in the three-month review document [206] this section is left blank, so there was no record of objectives set. In this case, the team noted that there were some areas where the employee's performance was not judged to be satisfactory, yet this is not measurable against any previously agreed objectives. The team also noted that no response had been given to a request from the employee for support to develop skills in project supervision in the three-month review and there was no follow-up within the six month probationary report [207] which identified that a heavy workload had been a contributory factor in certain tasks not being performed well, leading to an extended probationary period. It was only at the point of the six-month review that specific objectives for the next three months were identified and these were not SMART (for example, one reads, 'improve the quality of work').

110 From a table of 38 staff members who were listed as being on probation [204], the team noted that 18 had been in post for longer than the six-month probationary period (ranging from seven to 11 months) and information relating to three-month reviews was missing. Senior staff told the team that three members of staff had had their probationary periods extended beyond six months in the past 12 months [SS Meeting]. Given this, the team was unclear why 18 members of staff were still included in the table despite having been in post for more than six months [SS Meeting]. Senior staff told the team that managers receive training in key performance indicators and setting performance objectives, and that, in the event of an employee's workload being too heavy, managers would work to address this [SS Meeting]. Staff who met the team provided reassurances that performance objectives are set and agreed at the initial meeting with the manager, although there was a lack of clarity about exactly how and where these would be recorded. Nevertheless, staff who met the team stated that they felt that the probationary process was fair, useful, and supportive (STSL Meeting). The team's findings suggest a need for improvements in the recording of staff performance and probationary review objectives with a view to ensuring that the interests and needs of staff and their managers are aligned with the University's strategic objectives. With regard to workload planning and management, the team considered that the work undertaken on an institutional workload planning proposal should help to promote greater clarity of understanding of workloading and consistency of approach across the University.

111 The Validation Handbook [023] demonstrates that the University's approach to new programme validation and revalidation involves external scrutiny of the details of staffing and individual staff CVs as part of the process, to enable expert judgements to be made about staff qualifications, expertise and experience. The example Validation Pack [055] provides evidence of this in practice. The team also noted from its review of PSRB letters and certificates [015] and the APM assessor report [048] that staff qualifications and their academic and professional expertise are generally considered appropriate by professional bodies in many areas of the University's portfolio.

112 The team noted that a local workload model had been established in response to a BPS condition relating to the need for a workload model for contracted staff in Psychology (June 2017), which has been met [049, 050]. Senior staff of the University confirmed that, although the development of an institutional workload model was delayed by changes in management and governance over the last two years, the BPS workload-related condition had been addressed by a psychology-specific workload model to accommodate the need for staff to have recognised research, development and scholarly activity time [SS Meeting]. Notwithstanding the assurance that a psychology workload model was in place, the team detected an apparent lack of staff awareness of a workload model currently in use within Psychology while also noting that staff were positive about the development of an

institutional workload model [STSL Meeting] which is being progressed by a working group [Workload Planning Proposal 219], applicable to permanent staff, and this group is reviewing other institutions' approaches. The review is to conclude in September 2020 with proposals to be presented to the Executive. It is intended that interim arrangements will be put in place from September 2020 onwards until full implementation of a new approach in early 2021. The Workload Planning Proposal [219] suggests some details which are likely to be featured in any new approach (research, scholarly activity, module leadership, professional development) and notes the need for potential contractual negotiations before implementation. Senior staff indicated that the University is on track to implement the new workload model in line with the planned timescale and that senior management are considering the nature of the consultation strategy given the contractual negotiations that will be required prior to implementation. In addition, there is a commitment to align the new workload model with the higher education national Framework Agreement, albeit with some adaptation, as appropriate, to the university context [SS Meeting].

113 While the team noted that contracted staff will not be covered by the Workload Planning Proposal, contractors who met the team indicated that they receive information about their teaching and assessment loads for each period of teaching and that the amount of work they take on is determined by their own preferences and availability. This was caveated with confirmation that managers consider what is likely to be realistic and manageable for each individual contractor. The team also noted that some managers informally consider an individual's additional activities (such as professional development) when allocating work. All staff (permanent and contractors) told the team that their workloads felt manageable and achievable even in the absence of a workload model [STSL Meeting]. The team considered that the new workload model, if implemented according to the current plans, will provide staff with a framework within which time will be allocated for appropriate development activities.

114 One of the KPIs by which the LTA Plan's objectives [065] will be measured is increased staff satisfaction as measured by staff surveys. Employee survey questions [162] and results of a survey carried out in April 2019 [163] show that, of the 91% of eligible staff who have had a performance review in the last 12 months, 37% did not feel that it was a useful conversation. Further analysis of the survey results indicates that the differences between satisfied and dissatisfied staff can be attributed to their responses to seven questions. Among these questions are those that relate to the effectiveness of the performance review process; whether they feel that the University fosters and promotes a supportive culture; whether they feel empowered to develop new and better ways of doing things; and whether they feel encouraged by their manager to take ownership of their role. A thematic analysis of the qualitative data gathered about staff dissatisfaction revealed the second most common reason for dissatisfaction (after salary) to be limited training, development and progression opportunities. The appraisal process and workload were fifth and seventh in the list. A PowerPoint presentation entitled HR Climate Survey Academic Overview & Actions) [221], which builds on an earlier HR Climate Survey April 2019 presentation [163], lists actions taken and next steps planned relating to staff benefits and pay, internal communications, the performance review system and staff engagement.

115 Staff who met the team showed a lack of awareness of staff survey activity and outcomes [STSL Meeting]. Senior staff told the team that actions taken in response to the survey's findings have been communicated to staff and suggested that any lack of awareness may be attributed to a lack of understanding of what the survey was called and the timing of the survey. The team heard that senior staff have held all-staff briefing sessions about the survey, its findings, and how actions are being taken to address them [SS Meeting]. The team noted that the views of the teaching staff who met the team did not reflect the survey findings, with staff expressing a high level of satisfaction with the University and commenting on the positive nature of their experience of the University. Staff

spoke of the use of mentors and teaching observations undertaken to support staff development, inform reflection of practice and share expertise and experience. Permanent staff and contractors alike considered themselves to be part of the University community and indicated that they found senior managers to be approachable [STSL Meeting].

116 The team noted that the initial set of job descriptions for academics provided [068] did not specify the minimum qualifications for academic roles, the required experience, or essential/desirable characteristics for the roles. The team also found that subsequent examples of job advertisements for academic posts [161] and job profiles [175] included anomalies and inconsistencies relating to required academic and teaching qualifications. However, teaching staff who met the team were all fully aware of the requirement to have a postgraduate qualification [STSL Meeting]. The team also noted that the Academic Interview Record Form [066] provides a competency-based framework for the evaluation of candidates' performance in a presentation and interview, mapped against key skills appropriate for a teaching role, particularly an online teaching role, including the delivery of taught sessions in classrooms and supporting students online outside of sessions, as well as marking and providing feedback on formative work and summative assessments. This demonstrates an approach to presentations and interviews in the recruitment process that is likely to ensure consistency and parity.

117 An Author Recruitment Process document [067] explains the stages that an applicant goes through before being appointed as an author (creator of online course/learning materials). Candidates are asked to submit a narrated presentation along with original learning materials they have created, and these are then evaluated against a set of key criteria appropriate for the evaluation of high-quality online teaching materials. This process demonstrates that, in the recruitment of authors (content developers), recruitment practices are likely to lead to the appointment of suitably qualified and skilled individuals.

118 The University's ID Reference Qualification Verification Procedure [217] indicates how the University establishes identity prior to offering posts to employees or contractors and the team reviewed examples to show how the procedure works in practice [210-216]. These demonstrate that the University's procedure is followed. Senior staff told the team that appropriate members of academic staff would be involved in the appointment process and that checks are made of a new employee's qualifications certificates against the stated minimum criteria and against claims made during the application process [SS Meeting]. The team concluded, on the basis of the evidence available to it, that any inconsistencies in recruitment documentation did not reflect a lack of understanding of the University's requirements and had not resulted in the appointment of staff who do not have appropriate qualifications for the level and subjects taught.

Conclusions

119 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular Annex 4.

120 The University has a clear sense of direction and purpose, underpinned by a suite of plans including the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan, Academic Staff Development Plan and the Research and Scholarly Activity Plan. The academic governance arrangements enable Academic Board to maintain oversight of progress being made in the areas covered by the plans. The University's strategic approach to teaching, learning, assessment and to research and scholarly activity demonstrates its commitment to staff development in support of the pedagogical effectiveness of teaching staff, their academic and professional qualifications and competencies, and their research and scholarly interests.

121 The Academic Staff Development Plan includes learning and teaching enhancement opportunities designed for academic staff (both permanent and contracted staff) to develop and further enhance their practice, including assessment, feedback and moderation. The team noted that external examiners and the Student Submission confirm that the provision of assessment feedback to students is helpful and timely. The establishment of the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching and the launch of the Innovation on Learning, Teaching and Assessment Fund to support small-scale research projects linked to student success indicate how the University seeks to reconcile its strategic objectives and staff objectives in the interests of facilitating student learning and promoting shared learning across the University. The University is recruiting new staff with doctorates and there are school-level as well as university-level opportunities to engage in research activities. While, informally, staff research and scholarly activity may be taken into account when allocating work at a local level, the team noted that the University does not yet have a formally agreed institutional-level workload model and there is currently no time allocated for staff to engage in research or scholarly activity. The team welcomed the University's establishment of a working group to develop a workload planning model for the University and noted progress made to date on this initiative.

122 Staff who wish to obtain a teaching qualification or HEA Fellowship are supported to do so through, for example, financial support for tuition fees and Fellowship application fees. Research support is provided through centrally organised activities, school-level activities and research groups, as well as through funds to support doctoral study and research projects. Staff are developed informally in their role through peer support, informal guidance from their managers and regular internal team meetings. In addition to the staff development activities mentioned, the University has developed a range of materials such as the Author Pack on the presentation of online interactive learning materials and the Dissertation Supervision Handbook to support staff in different roles. Through all of these activities and guidance provided, the team considers that staff are appropriately supported and developed to support student learning.

123 An April 2019 analysis of responses to a staff satisfaction survey identifies a perceived lack of effectiveness of the performance review process and, notwithstanding the fact that staff who met the team confirmed that their experience of performance review had been constructive and objectives had been identified, the team found that there was a lack of clarity as to where individuals' performance review objectives are recorded. Teaching staff (including some who had joined the University relatively recently) who met the team appeared to be unaware of the results of the survey, and its findings did not reflect their own views, which were that annual, probationary, and informal performance reviews and evaluations are fair, transparent, and supportive. Contracted staff are not subject to formal performance review but teaching observations and informal evaluations by their managers allow for discussion of performance and development needs. In response to the staff survey, the University has devised and implemented a new performance review process and is planning to undertake a further survey in January 2021.

124 The April 2019 survey also highlighted the need for an institutional approach to workload planning and management to ensure that research, scholarly activity, professional development and other activities are formally considered when allocating work. A working group is currently developing a new workload model which is on track for implementation in early 2021. The team considered that the new workload model has the potential to impact positively on the ability of staff to engage in activities additional to teaching and assessment, to the benefit of the University and individual academic staff members. Staff at all levels are positive and optimistic about the benefits this will bring, and senior staff are committed to considering appropriate consultation channels and alignment with the higher education national Framework Agreement, as appropriate to the university context. The team considers

that these developments have the potential to provide a framework to support staff to engage in professional development activities.

125 Staff numbers have increased significantly in the period 2017-2020 and the team considered that the University's use of a combination of permanent and contracted staff ensures a sufficient number of staff to teach its students across the full range of disciplines, programmes, and contexts, including its fully online and blended delivery provision. The University has its own stated minimum criteria and requirements relating to staff's academic and teaching qualifications upon appointment. While these were not consistently articulated across recruitment advertisements and job descriptions, the team found that teaching staff are qualified in subjects relevant to the programmes taught. Where, on occasion, their academic qualifications do not meet the University's own stated minimum criteria for the level at which they teach, this is because requirements for practitioner expertise and input must be met. The team considers that these are appropriately balanced with the level of academic qualifications across an entire programme team. Evidence of academic qualifications is required and checked prior to the appointment of new staff. The University therefore ensures that staff are qualified to an academic level and in subjects appropriate to the qualifications being taught.

126 In considering its conclusion, the team noted the shortcomings relating to workload planning and the effectiveness of performance and probationary review processes, including lack of clarity regarding the location of recording objectives for staff. The team noted that the University has taken action to address these shortcomings. In the case of the former, interim arrangements are expected to be in place from September 2020 with full implementation of a new approach in early 2021. The impact of the revised performance review process implemented by the University has also yet to be felt. Overall, the team considered that the shortcomings identified do not individually or collectively present a significant risk to quality. In other aspects, for this criterion there is sufficient, valid, credible, and reliable evidence that demonstrates most of the evidence requirements/behaviours. The assessment team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Criterion D: Environment for supporting students

Criterion D1 - Enabling student development and achievement

127 This criterion states that:

D1.1: Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

128 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers, December 2019*.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

129 The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and Arden University's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes described in Annex 4 and 5 of this Guidance as follows.

Specifically, the review team considered or assessed the following.

- a To understand the University's strategic approach to enabling student development and achievement, the team considered a summary of the five-year strategic plan [005], LTC minutes [083] and the updated LTA Plan 2019-20 [127].
- b To understand how the Arden Learning Model (ALM) is enabling student development and achievement, tutor observation records [071, 072], the Arden Learning Model [093], an Adobe Connect screenshot indicating the availability of online tutorials [094], a tutor pack [095], guidance for authors [182] and lecturer induction and training materials [184, 185] were reviewed.
- c To understand how the University monitors and evaluates its library resources, a library service consultancy report [102], the LTA plan 2019-21 [127], Senior Academic Team meeting notes [187,188], a library usage report [190] and a library roadshow presentation for students [191] were evaluated.
- d To understand the University's approach to student induction and to establish students' views and experience of the induction process and the University's response to feedback received, the team considered induction tests [086, 087], learning development plan screenshots [088], an induction presentation to blended learning students [089], the University's online induction approach and content [090, 177], an external review of blended learning [113], the LTA plan [127] and student feedback on the induction process [178].
- e To understand the University's approach to managing, identifying and supporting the different needs of students, the team considered Learning Development Plan screenshots [088], a supporting education needs (SEN) process overview, detailed guidance and the SEN student register [092, 180].

- f To understand how students are supported and the rationale for the new developments which are being implemented, the approach to managing at-risk students [109], the health and well-being portal [110], the role of the academic skills tutors and LTA plan [127], recent development and key thinking notes [186], SMT meeting notes [187] and a report on student support services [195] were considered. Reports on student support usage across old and new student support systems [193, 196] and a record of students requesting support [194] were also reviewed to understand the University's approach to recording and monitoring student support usage.
- g To establish student performance across the key student characteristic groups and the intended approach to improvement, and to ascertain the level of information provided for further analysis and action by the University, the APP (2020-21) [004], and reports on NSS outcomes [020], progression [021] and student continuation [022] were reviewed.
- h To establish how the University is responding to poor blended learning student performance data, in particular, in relation to continuation, a report on continuation [022], LTC minutes [083] and external reports on blended learning delivery [113,114] were reviewed.
- i To understand the University's approach to support students' academic skills development and to understand the careers and professional support available to students, the team considered Learning Development Plan screenshots [088], an online tutorial example [094], the Careers Portal [111], the LTA Plan 2019-21 [127] and recent development and key thinking notes [186].
- j To understand the University's commitment to equity in student support and performance, the team considered the OfS-approved APP (2020-21) [004], the learning development plan [088] and a SEN process overview and detailed guidance [092].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

130 The team considered three examples of SEN process outcomes [181] to show how students are being supported, reflecting the University's commitment to equity in practice.

What the evidence shows

131 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

132 The new five-year strategic plan [005] includes specific elements focusing on enabling student development and achievement. The plan outlines where the University believes future student demand will be and its strategic response to this demand, in particular, a digital first philosophy outlining complementary learning environments, student support and careers support, in addition to more flexible access and study modes. The strategy is in development and therefore its manifestation and influence on specific policies and approaches is not fully evident at this time. However, the new LTA Plan [127] has elements of its content which are informed by the outline strategy and this provides evidence that the University takes a strategic approach to how it determines and evaluates student development and achievement approaches and these areas are central and evident in the emerging strategy.

133 The LTA Plan [127] reflects five interconnected themes: student success; staff development; quality enhancement; flexibility and innovation; and sustainability. In relation to

student development and achievement, it has a number of specific elements: a review to assess the effectiveness of student skills development; enhanced induction; a review of study skills modules on all programmes; the introduction of academic skills tutors and personal tutors; approaches to increase students' digital literacy; module development; student engagement; improvement to the learning environment; teaching quality; and research. The Plan, which has been through a process of development, consultation (with senior staff, academic staff and student support teams with consultation planned with students through the Student Representative President) and committee consideration, was presented to LTC in February 2020 [LTC Minutes 083]. It is comprehensive and clearly linked to the University's five-year strategic plan. The University intends to prioritise implementation of critical activities over the next six months and all others are to be completed within 24 months [083]. While the minutes of the LTC meeting did not identify the critical activities, a review of the LTA Plan and timescales identifies a range of activities which are to be completed within the six-month window. These include enhancing programme monitoring and evaluation, governance review, enhancing student feedback, actions to improve student success and the learning environment. LTC is to monitor the plan and report to the Academic Board. The LTA Plan is a crucial document for the University and its successful implementation will be key to improvements in performance in student development and achievement. While it is recent and therefore too early to measure the impact of the plan, it outlines a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determining and evaluating how the University enables student development and achievement.

134 The Arden Learning Model (ALM) [093] drives strategy, operations development and delivery across the University. The model is based on a personalised learning pedagogy, which intends to provide transparency of the learning process for the student, with articulated learning goals leading to a student-centred approach [182]. Its four stages (gathering, engaging, consolidating and moving forward) are intended to inform and shape lesson design and delivery. The ALM is central within the guide for creating learning materials [182] where the module structure and content is clearly aligned to the ALM. Training and induction presentations for new and existing academic staff [184,185] also provide evidence that the ALM is central to the development and delivery of learning. A tutor pack [095], outlining lesson and activities plans on a weekly basis and covering teaching materials, teaching schedule and activity guides, is provided to tutors who deliver and provide online support for modules. The tutor pack [095] adheres to the key principles of the ALM, thereby ensuring consistency of approach to delivery for students across the different delivery modes. Online tutorials/forums [094] are also available and are used by tutors to tailor student learning and development. Observations of lessons given by tutors are conducted for both distance learning and blended learning delivery as an approach to ensuring consistency and supporting further evaluation and improvement [071, 072].

135 Academic Board discussed poor student feedback relating to library resources through the NSS 2019 results [191] and the findings of an external review of library provision (January 2020) [102] in September 2019 [059]. The external review highlighted that library resources and technology were significantly below sector average; the actual spend was well below benchmark; and the need for an additional librarian to be appointed. The University's response is largely contained within the new LTA plan [127] which outlines the appointment of a Director of Library Services, increased investment in texts and resources, enhanced induction and study skills sessions to ensure students know how to use the online library, and updating of module and programme reading lists. The former was also discussed and progressed through SAT meetings [187, 188].

136 Student feedback on library provision and overall usage statistics were outlined in the annual library report [190]. This comprehensive report also indicated the need to improve the means and focus of student feedback across this area as it was considered that existing

mechanisms did not enable easy identification of specific feedback on library resources. In addition, student roadshows were utilised in the study centres to improve student awareness of the e-resources available [191]. The above outlines how the University has responded to specific NSS feedback on library resources; however, focused reviewing of internal data and enhanced student feedback through internal processes would have alerted the University earlier to this specific issue. Although targeted and significant changes in response to student feedback are now in the process of being implemented, it is too early to tell the impact these will make on operations and the student experience. There would appear to be sufficient data collected and analysed to enable the University to be able to monitor the impact of any changes and investments it makes, as evidenced by reports such as the library resource review (September 2019) [190]. However, ensuring this data, in addition to specific student feedback, is reviewed in a timely and regular manner will allow the NSS to be a measure, rather than a driver, of evaluation.

137 The key induction tool utilised by the University is the induction module through the ilearn platform, to which all students have access. The online induction approach and content is similar for blended learning and distance learning students [090, 177], with additional face-to-face support for the blended learning students [089], which has recently been improved following an external review of blended learning [113]. The new LTA Plan [127] includes clear approaches to enhance students' knowledge through the induction process. The content is appropriate for the nature of study, which is either all or partly online and is comprehensive, providing students with information covering the approach to learning; academic reading and writing; critical thinking and analysis; engagement expectations; support services available; key contacts and specific programme and module information. The online module is available to students to refer back to over the duration of their studies. The University also requires both blended and distance learning students to pass the induction quiz [086, 087] before they can start the first module, thereby ensuring engagement at an early stage.

138 In addition, students are able to take a diagnostic test, where the outputs are used to create and populate a learning development plan [088]. This information can be used by tutors in one-to-one meetings to support students. The self-assessment document indicates that student support staff also call distance learning students to discuss development needs and students are offered online support covering the systems they have to use and programme-specific information. Specific programme information and structure are also provided to students to help them prepare for the start of their studies during the induction process [089]. Overall, the assessment team found that there is a clear, well-designed and comprehensive approach to induction which has recently been subject to improvements based upon student feedback [178] and, in future, there will be further improvements through planned initiatives which are a component of the new LTA Plan [127]. The induction process should prepare students for online learning and academic study in advance of their programme starting, should they choose to take advantage of the range of support available. The process also differentiates and provides for the different study modes (blended learning and distance learning) and there is clear evidence of student feedback being collected, considered and actions taken, where relevant, on induction.

139 A clear Supporting Education Needs (SEN) process [092] is in place to guide staff and students. The process overview provides information for students on how to access the process (information and signposting for specialist support and advice) and additional learning support such as speech dictation and text reading software, for example [092]. It also gives guidance to tutors who are provided, through a central register of SEN students [180], with the details of students on their module so allowances can be made in line with stated guidelines. The SEN examples provided [181] demonstrate the different means by which students are supported. The process and guidance [092] are clear, well organised and allow for both students and staff to be aware of, and engage with, the process as required.

140 The self-assessment document reports that the student support structure is led by the Director of Student Experience. Student Support Managers manage and lead the support team in each centre covering both centre-based and allocated distance learning provision. Consideration has been given to significantly increasing the scope and volume of services covering both student support and wellbeing services. For example, in response to poor continuation rates and to decrease cases of academic misconduct, academic skills tutors, part of the LTA Plan [127], are being introduced from March 2020 to support students through a rolling programme of academic skills sessions in study centres, online and through interventions and one-to-one support [Recent Developments and Key Thinking 186]. Other examples include student success coaches (from September 2019 for blended learning provision and from October 2020 for distance learning). The coaches are assigned to students deemed to be at risk in line with identified criteria (including academic or student support referrals, poor attendance and students referred in modules or undertaking numerous assessment attempts) [109]. The self-assessment document indicates that their specific role is to act as a link between the student, lecturers and relevant support services to ensure a student's needs are recognised and appropriate coordination and communication occurs. The University took this approach to address low levels of engagement and to provide support to students experiencing difficulties [Recent Developments and Key Thinking 186, SAT minutes 187], demonstrating effective monitoring to identify areas where additional support and resourcing is required.

141 Student wellbeing services are also being enhanced by the introduction of a health and well-being portal covering lifestyle and dealing with stress and anxiety [110] (from January 2020). From March 2020, students have access to the Big White Wall (BWW), which is adopted by a number of universities, to provide additional online well-being support and advice for students. A strategic decision was taken to move to the BWW from the existing system (StudentLine) to provide more and better services to students as demand and requirements increase [BWW SMT Paper 195]. The University monitors student support usage [193, 196] and keeps records of support by student [194] which allows additional action to be taken, such as internal and external referrals to counselling services or Citizens Advice or Shelter. Overall, this is a strategically driven area of activity, partly through the new LTA Plan [127], which is organised against specific themes and also includes specified actions and timelines against each theme, which should allow for the effective monitoring of implementation.

142 The review of reports available to the team (including a series of reports on key student metrics, NSS results and progression and continuation [020, 021, 022]), have been produced to a significant level of detail and provide a good foundation for further analysis and action. The data is well formatted, provides clarity and contains significant data splits covering location, gender, and level in relation to continuation [022]. The NSS 2019 Analysis [020 Appendix 3] report on NSS results contains a similar level of analysis at programme level in addition to qualitative comments and national comparisons on the key question categories. The APP 2020-21 [004] also contains a considerable amount of student data and analysis [004], while a proportion of this will have been provided in a dataset by the OfS, the data analysis undertaken on this supplied data and the additional 'local' data are indicators that the administrative support systems are capable of providing student data to a good standard to allow analysis, evaluation and specific actions to be identified and included within the APP submission.

143 The University has recognised that there is an issue with the progression and performance of its blended learning students [022, 083] and it has set a new key performance indicator target of a minimum of 75% for continuation rates in all subject areas. It commissioned two external reviews [113, 114] to consider how blended learning delivery could be improved. The more substantial report [113] made a series of recommendations for consideration, including student induction, data reporting and the delivery model.

144 The latest improvements in student support are driven by the development and implementation of the LTA Plan [127] and the recent appointment of a PVC (Academic) [186]. The Plan, which is in various stages of implementation, contains actions aimed at improving the experience and performance of blended learning students. It identifies a number of objectives relating to student study skills development and academic and pastoral support, including a review to assess the effectiveness of student skills development; enhanced induction; a review of study skills modules on all programmes; the introduction of academic support tutors; the introduction of personal tutors; and approaches to increase students' digital literacy. The LTA Plan [127] refers to new academic skills tutors, improvements to the induction process, improvements to data reporting and furniture and resources at the study centres. These aspects of the LTA Plan are in addition to the opportunities that currently exist for academic skills developments, including those offered at the induction phase; online tutorials/forums [094] which are intended to be used by the tutor to tailor learning and development; online delivery of academic study skills (mini modules) available to students and also referenced by tutors in feedback on assessed work (mentioned in the self-assessment document); the utilisation of learning development plans [088]; and the introduction of student success coaches (mentioned in the self-assessment document) to aid at-risk students and improve communications. It is too early to understand the impact of these changes on student performance, but the above outlines that the university leadership has recognised significant problems with performance in this area, has undertaken analysis (externally informed) to seek to improve the problem and has agreed a clear way forward in terms of actions (some within the new LTA Plan) which it is in the process of implementing. Overall, the team found that a range of integrated support mechanisms are in place to support student learning from induction and throughout their studies. There is also a recent coordinated and strategic approach, driven by senior management, to enhance the support for students. The team considers that these initiatives will contribute to providing more and better opportunities in support of students' skills development.

145 Personal and professional skills opportunities are provided largely through the operation of the careers portal [111] which is in operation and supports students up to three years after graduation. It includes a comprehensive range of content covering employability self-assessment tools, CV builders and interview preparation tools. The careers portal is accessible to all students on both study modes. The portal provides a focused resource for students to use, even if they are already in employment, but are looking to their next career move after graduation. In addition, as the University increase the proportion of full-time students through the operation of the blended model, this resource will become an essential development and support tool as they seek employment. Through the implementation of the LTA Plan [127], the University is also seeking to improve student employability through (i) the design of student assessments, where applicable, to develop student employability skills through collaborative projects, and work-informed assignments and (ii) the establishment of an Employer Forum to review programmes for their content and development of employability skills.

146 The University's students are in the main mature, 55% Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and over 92% are from one or more of the OfS access and participation target groups. The OfS-approved APP [004] gives details of the University's mission and belief in relation to access to higher education, and the focus on reducing the gaps between student outcomes. The key areas of focus are on BAME students, students from low participation neighbourhoods and disabled students, and on access, continuation and employment. The approach taken through online provision and delivery and through blended learning provides support for all students. Furthermore, where appropriate and required, the SEN process [092] provides the framework and processes to identify students who need additional support and advice, which should enable them to effectively engage with their learning. The production and implementation of student learning development plans [088]

also contributes to an ethos of equity, which seeks to support students to succeed whatever their individual circumstances. However, the team noted that undertaking the diagnostic test and the production of a learning development plan as part of student induction is not compulsory. Overall, through these existing approaches, the intended actions outlined in the APP and its overall mission to make 'higher education more accessible and beneficial to all' [004] is evidence that the University's collective approach is guided by a commitment to equity.

Conclusions

147 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment* by QAA, October 2019, in particular Annex 4.

148 Overall, enabling student development and achievement is an area of recent significant change and development within the University, building on existing approaches. It is clear that the university leadership is responding to outcomes in student performance (particularly continuation rates and blended learning delivery issues) and student feedback and is investing to improve the situation through strategic and operational change. Key examples include (i) key interventions relating to library provision, (ii) improvements to the physical environment of the Blended Learning Centres, (iii) a strategic LTA Plan and (iv) other actions outlined in this section, including improvements to induction processes, the introduction of the BWW and the creation of Student Success Coaches. Some of these initiatives are still to be fully implemented and therefore their impact cannot be measured at this time. However, there is clear evidence that the University takes a strategic and operational approach to enabling student development and achievement, which also reflects its commitment to equity as outlined in the latest Access and Participation Plan, where BAME students and those from low participation areas and disabled students are a key focus. The University monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the support arrangements, resources and services it has in place. Students receive a comprehensive approach to induction and are enabled to develop their academic and professional skills as they progress through their studies. The assessment team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Criterion E: Evaluation of performance

Criterion E1 - Evaluation of performance

149 This criterion states that:

E1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths.

150 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers, December 2019*.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

151 The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and Arden University's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes described in Annex 4 and 5 of this Guidance as follows.

Specifically, the review team considered or assessed the following.

- a To understand how the University critically reviews its higher education provision to enable it to take effective and timely action to address identified weaknesses and build on its strengths, the team considered Academic Board's Terms of Reference [011], QSC's Terms of Reference [013], Academic Board Minutes, December 2019 [019], QSC's 2018-19 annual report to Academic Board [020], Quarterly Report on Student Progression [021], Continuation Report to Academic Board [022], Annual and Monitoring Review Pro Forma Template [027], Course Committee Terms of Reference [035], Annual External Examiner Review and Effectiveness [042], Academic Board Minutes, September 2019 [059], the Academic Committee Structure [136] and the Revised Annual Monitoring Process [140].
- b To establish the University's plans to address weaknesses and build on strengths identified, the team reviewed the Summary of Strategic Direction [005], Academic Board Minutes, December 2019 [019], Continuation Report to Academic Board [022], the LTA Plan Updated [127] and Academic Board's Quality Enhancement Plan Updated [128].
- c To demonstrate how the University draws on ideas and expertise from within the University (including staff and students) and from external stakeholders to inform the development of its higher education provision, the team considered a thematic review of blended learning 2017 [091], an Arden University Library Service Consultancy Report [102], an Arden Centre specification [112], a review of the Arden University Blended Learning Delivery Model [113], an Arden University Blended Learning Review [114], the LTA Plan Updated [127] and a Workload Planning Proposal [219].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

152 No sampling was undertaken as the team had sufficient evidence on which to base its judgement with regard to this criterion.

What the evidence shows

153 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

154 Academic Board, supported by its subcommittees, is responsible for establishing and overseeing the operation of the University's Regulatory Framework, ensuring the delivery of higher education within the University in accordance with the requirements of this Framework and/or the regulations of any partner awarding bodies, relevant legislation and external benchmarks relating to the delivery of higher education in the UK. It is also responsible for approving the conferment of all awards of the University [011]. A number of subcommittees, each with specific terms of reference, report to the Board [136]. The Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) is the main subcommittee as it is responsible for monitoring and scrutiny of programme provision on behalf of the Board. QSC's Terms of Reference [013] are appropriate and cover the areas expected: 'developing, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of Arden University's Regulatory Framework'; 'managing on behalf of Academic Board the approval of new and changes to existing programmes'; 'maintaining oversight of the health of programmes'; considering outcomes of programme monitoring and review' and 'advising Academic Board on the outcomes of this activity' [013]. QSC receives reports from course committees which are responsible for ensuring course delivery in accordance with the aims and objectives defined at validation; monitoring and dealing with programme delivery-related issues. Course committees provide a discussion forum for matters affecting course operation and continuous programme development through monitoring stakeholder feedback and programme statistics, informing the production of AMRs [035]. These reporting arrangements enable Academic Board to exercise effective oversight of its higher education provision. Academic Board minutes from September 2019 and December 2019 [059, 019] provide evidence that the Board receives and discusses reports/information to allow scrutiny of academic quality and standards and, where relevant, agree actions to respond to inherent performance or process weaknesses. Key examples include:

- review and approval of changes to the Regulatory Framework [019, 026, 059]
- discussion of a range of annual, quarterly and issue-specific reports [Academic Board Minutes, December 2019 [019], QSC Annual Report 020 (including external examiner feedback, student representation and engagement, NSS performance, annual monitoring and review, retention, library resources, validation and periodic review), Student Progression Report 021 and Continuation Report 022]
- new programme approval [019]. An MBA validation report was received, discussed and endorsed by the Board which also required that programme teams foregrounded innovation in the assessment strategy in future events
- discussions relating to the development of an employer engagement strategy and the development of a mechanism for the reporting of responses to validation outcomes [Academic Board Minutes, September 2019 059].

155 The University keeps its regulations under review and responds when general updating is required or when changes are needed not to disadvantage students. The changes to the Regulatory Framework, which are to come into force in September 2020, include required updates to definitions and level of awards, progression and deferrals and changes on module retakes to accommodate blended learning students [026]. The University has recently identified the need for change in the annual monitoring [140] and external examining [042] processes. The University noted that the current annual monitoring process does not provide evidence of regular and focused monitoring by academic teams, that the AMR template does not facilitate effective evaluation and that the targets for

improvement need to have more clarity [140]. A range of changes have been proposed which include a continuous mode of evaluation, staff development, a greater focus on data and increased academic engagement. At present, the University is seeking to introduce the new approach from November 2020 to ensure any action required is identified and implemented to resolve issues in a shorter timeframe.

156 An AMR-specific template [027] has been developed for use by programme teams to support consistency in academic programme performance monitoring. It is designed to enable staff to reflect on the effectiveness of actions taken through the annual monitoring and review process; comment on enhancements to student achievement or experience as a result of initiatives introduced; review module and programme statistics by delivery mode and location; discuss student feedback and steps to be taken to address issues raised; review external examiners' reports; and reflect on engagement with PSRBs and other external stakeholders, as applicable. Programme leaders produce summaries and corresponding action plans and present reports at the QSC. In 2019 this occurred in November with identified actions at programme and institutional level [020]. The minutes and outcomes were also discussed at Academic Board in December 2019 [019, 020]. QSC's Annual Report to Academic Board [020] demonstrates appropriate consideration, through presentation and discussion, of approval and annual monitoring reports. Programme annual monitoring and review processes are clear and examples considered by the team confirm compliance with the University's requirements. Improvements to the processes have recently been agreed with a view to improving responsiveness and effectiveness (see Section B2 for details).

157 As noted in Section B3 of this report, the University takes very seriously its use of external examiners. The current external examining process was discussed in QSC's annual report to Academic Board [020]. It outlined that the current system could result in reports that were brief and lacked criticality and that, while external examiner reports were usually positive, they gave little detail of feedback for improvement. In addition, a lack of a template to record interim feedback could result in programme leaders and external examiners resolving issues by email and therefore not capturing the issues in their formal report as they had already been resolved. At institutional level, QSC considers a summary of all external examiners' reports which includes a 'red amber green' rating of the judgements and a categorisation of comments where development or improvements are needed, which are forwarded and discussed at Academic Board [020]. The University has recently considered the introduction of changes to the external examiner process/approach to improve the criticality and content of external examiner reports [020, 042]. These include the introduction of an interim template to capture feedback and issues, additional training for external examiners, and an ilearn page with information on the University's policies and expectations.

158 Academic Board discussed and supported the intention to introduce a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) [128] in December 2019 [019] as a means of providing the Board with visibility of overarching academic and operational developments, enabling it to identify and monitor university-level issues relating to academic quality and student success largely, but not totally, as a result of outputs from the AMR process. The QEP also has a focus on improving student outcomes, in particular continuation rates. It contains three sections (i) AMR 2018-19 actions (specifically, data accessibility and presentation, process for ongoing monitoring of actions to enhance student success and changes to periodic subject review), (ii) Student Success (data related to student outcomes, KPIs and analysis and Examination Board matters) and (iii) Student Satisfaction (NSS, module evaluations and internal surveys). The QEP contains actions, outcomes, responsibilities, completion dates and Academic Board updates in most cases. The focus on student continuation rates has been a consistent theme within the University as a detailed report to the Academic Board [022] contained detailed data on student continuation, proposed a new KPI target based upon OfS thresholds, and a series of proposed actions to improve continuation rates, which will have

informed this area's inclusion in the QEP. This is a new mechanism for Academic Board and the team believes that, in time, this could be a useful tool for Academic Board to provide continuity of focus and oversight, and allow for the updating of key actions across the University.

159 At institutional level, a number of examples confirm that self-assessment is evident in how the University operates. The LTA Plan [127], which is aligned with the University's vision and summary of strategic direction [005], is intended to create an overarching and integrated approach through five interconnected themes (staff development, student success, quality enhancement, flexibility and innovation, and sustainability), to improve student experience and outcomes through an extensive range of actions and initiatives. The Plan also has five objectives covering structures and processes, student success, learning environments, innovative LTA and research and scholarly activity. Each objective is divided into a number of subareas, each with specific actions and relevant timeframes. The Plan is still in the implementation phase which is expected to take some 24 months, but it is a key example of the University undertaking self-assessment of its approach to teaching, learning and assessment, in the broadest sense, in response to monitoring and feedback from sources such as the NSS, student performance and feedback.

160 The Validation Handbook [023] indicates that validation panels include both internal (Chair and two others) and external (two - either academics or industrialists) members. Members' roles and responsibilities are set out in a validation panel pack [055]. Panel decisions (reports) are considered by the QSC before a recommendation is made to Academic Board, which will also review and, if appropriate, approve the programme. Academic Board minutes [019] show discussion of a report of a recent MBA validation [043] which was approved following discussion of the panel's recommendations and a particular comment on ensuring the innovation in assessment was more strongly represented in programme documentation in future. QSC's annual report to Academic Board [020] also provides an overview of all validations and issues over the previous 12 months. Scrutiny of the periodic review process [046] mirrors the validation process in terms of panel composition and approval. Additional external expertise and oversight is also provided when a programme was seeking/reapplying for PSRB recognition. PRSB reports [116, 117, 118] indicating that external expertise has contributed to, and influenced decisions on, personal tutoring, staffing, as well as dissertations in the case of the BPS [116, 117] and centre operations in the case of CMI [118]. The review schedule for course approval/re-approval for 2020-21 [045] contains clear details relating to timeframes for planning, document submission and review events. Overall, the mechanisms and arrangements for assessing and improving institutional and programme performance through validation and annual monitoring processes [023, 025], the externality provided by external examiners [041, 159] and the resulting actions forthcoming from each, coupled with reporting and review at Academic Board and subcommittee level [019, 020], provide evidence of self-assessment and actions in response to internal and external monitoring at academic programme level.

161 The University has identified academic staff workload as an issue and is taking steps to address this. It has no institution-wide workload model in place currently which covers the spectrum of activities that an academic would be expected to undertake but it has established a working group to develop a workload model for academic staff. The group's findings were expected to be presented to the University Leadership in September 2020, with full implementation expected in early 2021. The Workload Planning Proposal [219] includes areas of activity, such as research and scholarly activity and professional development. Discussions with academic staff indicated that changes of this type, where more than allocations for teaching and assessment are included in their workload model, would be positively received.

162 There has been an ongoing process of reviews and actions to improve the performance of blended learning students at the University's study centres [091, 113, 114], resulting in a significant set of actions either implemented or to be implemented [127]. These actions include revisions to the student induction process and information, upgrading and development of the learning and teaching spaces and the academic delivery model relating to module phasing and delivery. A Study Centre Specification [112] outlines a uniform approach to developing student learning environments across the University's delivery sites that are appropriate for higher education learning and study, including room layouts and associated arrangements. The self-assessment document outlined a two-stage approach with the first stage being completed in August 2019, ensuring that teaching rooms, layout, breakout spaces and paintwork and furnishings were changed in line with the specification. The second stage, to be completed by August 2020, is focusing on the review of teaching spaces in line with the learning and teaching strategy. The Student Feedback and Actions on Study Centres report [160] also outlines how the University collects and responds to student feedback on their learning environment across the different delivery sites. A review of the University's library provision, involving the commission of an external report [102] leading to actions included in the LTA Plan [127] following poor NSS 2019 results, has led to the appointment of a Director of Library Services, increased investment in texts and resources, enhanced induction covering how to use the online library and updating of module and programme reading lists.

Conclusions

163 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*, in particular Annex 4.

164 The University has demonstrated that it undertakes critical self-assessment of its higher education provision through its programme quality related processes (AMR, external examiner operation, and programme validation, monitoring and review), the subsequent Board reporting/monitoring of each and through a range of specific plans and initiatives in response to internal and external monitoring. Clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision through the quality processes and through the Academic Board and subcommittee operating structure. The University makes use of input and expertise from within and outside the University, including PSRBs where relevant, in its arrangements for programme validation and re-approval, as articulated in the Validation Handbook. Scrutiny of student performance and programme delivery are provided through the AMR process and externality is also provided by external examiners. The University is seeking to further improve the nature and quality of feedback provided by external examiners through the provision of new templates for their reports, including an interim template and additional training, and it is making changes to the AMR process to provide a foundation for action monitoring. The assessment team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Full Degree Awarding Powers overarching criterion

165 The Full Degree Awarding Powers overarching criterion is that 'the provider is a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems'.

Conclusions

Self-critical, cohesive academic community

166 The Academic Development Plan, policies and regulations support the University's higher education mission, aims and objectives. The University has undertaken a systematic review of its performance to ensure that its regulations, policies and procedures align with sector practices and has identified the need for review and refinement of a number of procedures and produced comprehensive proposals for improvement. Not all proposals are consistently expressed as yet, for example, the University's stated requirement for staff to have or be willing to obtain a teaching qualification was not always apparent from the evidence available to the team and it was unclear how the University promotes a shared understanding of this requirement across the staff body since it does not appear to be embedded in the University's contractual arrangements or in developmental review processes.

167 Improved coherence and functioning of academic governance has further clarified lines of accountability and is expected to facilitate greater engagement and communication with students. Staff (academic and professional), students and external stakeholders are represented through the University committee structure and membership, ensuring their formal inclusion in the development and communication of policies and procedures. This demonstrates the University's commitment to stakeholder engagement in its academic governance arrangements and oversight of its higher education.

168 The University has demonstrated that it undertakes critical self-assessment of its higher education provision through its academic programme quality related processes. These include the monitoring of its provision through the annual monitoring and review (AMR) process, the externality provided through the use of external examiners and other external stakeholders, as appropriate, and the processes for programme validation. These specific processes, and the subsequent Academic Board and subcommittee oversight, require the input and involvement of the academic community. As a result, ideas and expertise from within and outside the University are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval delivery and review. The University has indicated that it is seeking to further improve some of its key processes (AMR and external examining) to increase criticality and effectiveness. Student development and achievement is another area where the University has been self-critical of its existing approaches and processes. A number of key interventions relating to library provision, blended learning centre operation and a comprehensive Learning, Teaching and Assessment Plan are in the process of being implemented in response to feedback, analysis and review.

Proven commitment to assurance of standards

169 Academic structures have been reorganised to clarify differentiation of function and responsibility and the University has developed comprehensive and transparent regulations relating to the award of academic credit and qualifications supported by appropriate policies and procedures which it operates within a coherent committee structure. The University has produced a schedule of delegation: quality assurance and academic standards to further clarify where key decisions are made in relation to the academic standards and quality of its awards and to whom these decisions have been delegated.

170 The University has clear mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its awards, specifying awards that the University may make, and the relationship between these and student achievement and credits gained through the achievement of learning outcomes. Programme approval and monitoring arrangements are robust and are kept under review for continued relevance to the nature of the University's programmes and students. Validation panel members are required to ensure that all awards meet the requirements of the FHEQ and align with relevant external reference points. Programmes meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ. The setting and maintaining of academic standards takes appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise. External reviews by QAA, PSRBs and validating partner universities since the University was granted degree awarding powers in 2015 confirm that the University meets expectations for the quality and standards of its academic provision and has demonstrated an ongoing ability to manage academic standards and to develop and enhance the quality of its taught courses. There is thus a proven commitment to the assurance of standards.

Effective quality systems

171 Academic Board's role in establishing and overseeing the implementation of policies ensures that the policies supporting the University's higher education mission, aims and objectives are consistently applied. Academic Board reports and minutes provide evidence of the University's scrutiny of performance and student outcomes through its committee structure and its recognition of the need for a greater focus on enabling the delivery of successful outcomes for all the University's students, which are recognised and valued by employers and/or enable further study.

172 Effective quality systems are evident in the design and approval of programmes, in the learning and teaching strategy and operation, in assessment practices, including the moderation of student work and supportive and punitive schemes associated with poor academic practice, and in complaints and appeals systems. There is good use of external examiners, though there is inconsistency in the issuance of considered and timely responses to external examiners' comments and recommendations.

Annexes

Evidence

Reference number	Evidence description
000	Evidence List.pdf
	Arden University Self Assessment Document.pdf
	Arden University TDAP Student Submission 2020.pdf
001	RDI TDAP Order.pdf
002	Arden University Programmes.pdf
003	ARU Exit Plan.pdf
004	Access and Participation Plan.pdf
005	Summary of Strategic Direction.pptx
006	Governance Handbook.pdf
007	Memorandum of Understanding.pdf
008	ASEC ToR.pdf
009	DfE reconfirmation of DAPs and UT.pdf
010	DfE Reapproval of Institutional Designation.pdf
011	Academic Board ToR.pdf
012	SMT ToR.pdf
013	QSC ToR.pdf
014	Schedule for the Review of QC Mappings 2020 .pdf
015	PSRB Letters and Certificates.pdf
016	RDI Letter of non objection to University Title.pdf
017	SSLC ToR.pdf
018	Example Annual and Monitoring Review Pro Forma Business UG.pdf
019	Academic Board Minutes December 2019 unconfirmed.pdf
020	Annual Report of QSC AB.pdf
021	Quarterly Report on Student Progression.pdf
022	Continuation Report to AB.pdf
023	Validation Handbook.pdf
024	Programme spec with Subject Benchmark Statement.pdf
025	Arden University Regulatory Framework.pdf
026	Summary of Regulatory Updates to AB.pdf
027	Annual and Monitoring Review Pro Forma Template.pdf
028	LTC ToR.pdf
029	Admissions Committee ToR.pdf
030	Data Governance Board ToR.pdf
031	Access and Participation Committee ToR.pdf
032	Partnership Committee ToR.pdf
033	Research Committee ToR.pdf
034	Awards and Progression Board ToR.pdf
035	Course Committee ToR.pdf
036	Example Programme Handbook KBMBA.pdf
037	Examination Regulations.pdf
038	Exceptional Mitigating Circumstances Policy.pdf
039	External Examiner Report.pdf
040	External Examiner Annual Report Template.pdf
041	External Examiner Handbook.pdf
042	Annual External Examiner Review and Effectiveness.pdf
043	Example Programme Approval at AB.pdf

044	Example of External Examiner Report and Response.pdf
045	Draft Validation and Periodic Review Schedule 2020.pdf
046	Periodic Review Handbook.pdf
047	Module Survey Analysis Blended and Distance.pdf
048	APM Arden University Academic Accred Assessor Report 2019.pdf
049	BPS UG Visit Report.pdf
050	Response to BPS UG Visit Report.pdf
051	New Course Proposal Template.pdf
052	Stage Gate Process for New Course Development.pdf
053	Example of New Course Approval Process.pdf
054	Example Programme Handbook LLB.pdf
055	Example Validation Pack to Panel KBMBA.pdf
056	Student Handbook DL.pdf
057	Student Handbook BL.pdf
058	Validation Pack for Foundation Pathways.pdf
059	Academic Board Minutes Sep 2019.pdf
060	Collaborative and Agent Register.pdf
061	Admissions Committee Minutes Jan 2020.pdf
062	Admissions Policy.pdf
063	APL and APEL Policy and Procedures.pdf
064	Student Protection Plan 2019 2020.pdf
065	LTA Plan.pdf
066	Academic Interview Record Form.pdf
067	Author Recruitment Process.pdf
068	Job Descriptions for Academics.pdf
069	Screenshot of online induction for Academics.pdf
070	Tutor Induction Session.pptx
071	Blended Learning Lesson Observation Record.pdf
072	Distance Learning Lesson Observation Record.pdf
073	Dissertation Supervision Handbook.pdf
074	Dissertation Training.pptx
075	Author Pack.pdf
076	Academic Staff Development Plan .pdf
077	Teaching Qualifications and HEA Recognition.pdf
078	Research Plan.pdf
079	Outline of Centre for Innovation Learning and Teaching.pdf
080	Research Assistant JD.pdf
081	Research Committee Minutes Nov 2019.pdf
082	Research Committee Minutes Jan 2020.pdf
083	LTC Minutes Feb 2020.pdf
084	Academic Conference Agenda.pdf
085	List of Publications Research and Scholarly Activity.pdf
086	Screenshot of Induction Quiz BL.pdf
087	Screenshot of Induction Quiz DL.pdf
088	Learning Development Plan Screenshots.pdf
089	Induction Presentation BL.pptx
090	Screenshot of Online Induction DL.pdf
091	Thematic Review of BL 2017.pdf
092	SEN Process Overview.pdf
093	Arden Learning Model.pdf
094	Adobe Connect Screenshot.PNG
095	Sample Tutor Pack.pdf
096	New Authoring Tool.pdf

097	Unfair Practice Annual Report.pdf
098	Student Charter.pdf
099	Tracker Screenshots.pdf
100	Student Feedback Summary.pptx
101	Library Usage Report.pdf
102	Arden University Library Service Consultancy Report.pdf
103	Director of Library Services Job Description.pdf
104	DLE Capability Mapping.pdf
105	Baseline State Student Application Model.pdf
106	Future State Student Application Model.pdf
107	Sample output from Strategic Digital Exploration Day.pdf
108	Student Engagement Activity Reports.pdf
109	Coach Risk Criteria.pdf
110	Wellbeing Portal Screenshot.pdf
111	Career Portal Screenshots.pdf
112	Arden Centre Specification.pdf
113	Arden University BL Academic Delivery Model Review.pdf
114	Arden University Blended Learning Review.pdf
115	ASEC Minutes Jan 2020.pdf
116	BPS 2018 Visit Report.pdf
117	Response to BPS 2018 Visit Report.pdf
118	CMI Centre Quality Report Arden University Jan 2020.pdf
119	Academic Governance Review at ASEC.pdf
120	2012 MoU between Academic Board and Board of Directors.pdf
121	AU AB Schedule of Delegation.pdf
122	Example of Partnership Monitoring.pdf
123	Latest PC Minutes.pdf
124	ASEC ToR March 2020.pdf
125	Paper on BL Model at SMT.pdf
126	Extract from SMT Minutes 201219.pdf
127	LTA Plan Updated.pdf
128	Academic Board Quality Enhancement Plan Updated.pdf
129	Paper at AB on Academic Governance Review.pdf
130	AD 02 Admission of Students v10 Jan 20 formerly QA5.pdf
131	QA 02 Procedure for the Production Publication and Amendment of Student Handbooks.pdf
132	QA 20 Guidelines for Moderators.pdf
133	QA 21 Arden University Policy on Internal Moderation.pdf
134	QA 23 Unfair Practice in Assessment.pdf
135	QA 24 Academic Appeals Process.pdf
136	QA 42 Academic Committee Structure incorporates formerly QA 39.pdf
137	QA4 Procedure for the Production Approval and Revision of Module Learning Material.pdf
138	Periodic Review Schedule and SED Template.pdf
139	Record of Study Process and Examples.pdf
140	Revised Annual Monitoring Process.pdf
141	Completed Annual Monitoring Form Business.pdf
142	ASSIST Module and Development.pdf
143	Abbreviations Used in the Unfair Practice Annual Report.pdf
144	QA 48 Student Complaints Procedure.pdf
145	Annual Review of Complaints and Appeals at AB 2019.pdf
146	Annual Review of Appeals at AB 2020.pdf

147	Annual Complaints Review at AB 2020.pdf
148	Example of Student Appeal and Student Complaint.pdf
149	APL Quarterly Report.pdf
150	APCL Example.pdf
151	Assessment Marking Team Procedures.pdf
152	Examples of Student Work and Moderation.pdf
153	Own Academic Monitoring.pdf
154	Academic Skills Team Induction Session.pptx
155	AST Introduction and FAQs.pdf
156	AST Student Appointments.pdf
157	Study Skills Module AST.pdf
158	Student Record of Appointment with AST.pdf
159	External Examiner Reports and Responses.pdf
160	Student Feedback and Actions on Study Centres.pdf
161	Examples of Academic Posts.pdf
162	Employee Survey.pdf
163	HR Climate Survey Results.pptx
164	Matrix Roles of DCILT and DSE.pdf
165	CV of Director of Student Experience.pdf
166	Director of Student Experience JD.pdf
167	CV of Director of the Centre for Innovation Learning and Teaching.pdf
168	Director of the Centre for Innovation Learning and Teaching JD.pdf
169	Academic Staff Development Plan Feb 20.pdf
170	Example of Workloading HPL.pdf
171	Employee CPM and Pay and Feedback.pdf
172	Annual Development Review Template 2019.pdf
173	HEA Fellowship Resources and Guidelines.pdf
174	UKPSF Webinar.pptx
175	Job Profiles.pdf
176	Good Practice into Staff Development and Continuous Improvements.pdf
177	Contents of the Student Online Induction.pdf
178	Summary of Student Feedback on Induction.pdf
179	SEN Process Overview.pdf
180	SEN Registers and Additional Resources.pdf
181	SEN Examples.pdf
182	Guidance for Authors Creating Online Learning Materials.pdf
183	Active Learning Events.pptx
184	April Lecturer Induction.pptx
185	Discussion Forum Training Slides for Participants.pptx
186	Recent Development and Key Thinking.pdf
187	SAT Meeting 13th August 19.pdf
188	SAT meeting 27th August 19.pdf
189	Student Feedback Online Learning and Support.pdf
190	Library Usage Report.pdf
191	Library Roadshow.pptx
192	Student Feedback Welfare Services.pdf
193	Student Line Usage.pdf
194	Welfare Services Requested.pdf
195	Big White Wall SMT Paper.pdf
196	BWW and Arden University Monthly Report March 2020.pdf
197	PAYE and Contractors July 2020
198	Annual Development Review Template 2019
199	Employee CPM Pay and Feedback.pptx

200	Performance Management Recognition Based Pay and Giving Feedback Templates.pdf
201	Performance Management Recognition Based Pay and Giving Feedback Workbook.pdf
202	Probation Review Process Guidelines for Managers.pdf
203	Probationary Review Form.pdf
204	Academic Staff Probation.pdf
205	3 month Probationary Review.pdf
206	3 month Probationary Review Form Signed Off.pdf
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209	Research Focused Staff Development Opportunitites.pdf
210	Contractor Example 1.pdf
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212	PAYE Example 1.pdf
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218	Academic Staff Development Statement and Plan.pdf
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220	Process for Determining Work Load for Permanent Lecturers.pdf
221	Engagement Survey.pptx
222	LTA Plan Updated July 2020.pdf
	Additional Documentary Evidence List for QAA 1 Day Visit.pdf
	Additional Evidence Request List and Responses.pdf

Meetings

STSL	Staff involved in teaching and supporting learning
SS	Senior staff

Glossary

ACCA	The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
AMR	Annual Monitoring Report
APB	Awards and Progression Board
APC	Access and Participation Committee
APCL	Accreditation of prior certificated learning
APL	Accreditation of prior learning
APM	Association for Project Management
APP	Access and Participation Plan
ARU	Anglia Ruskin University
ASEC	Academic Standards and Ethics Committee
ASSIST	Arden Study Skills Intervention Support and Training
AST	Academic Skills Tutor
AULM	Arden University Learning Model
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
BLMG	Blended Learning Management Group
BoD	Board of Directors
BPS	British Psychological Society
CILT	Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching
CIPD	The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CMI	Chartered Management Institute
CPD	Continuing professional development
DGB	Data Governance Board
FHEQ	The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
GUS	Global University Systems
KPI	Key performance indicator
LLB	Bachelor of Laws
LTA	Learning, Teaching and Assessment
LTC	Learning and Teaching Committee
NSS	National Student Survey
OIA	Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
PDG	Programme Development Group
PMG	Programme Management Group
PSRB	Professional, statutory and regulatory body
QSC	Quality and Standards Committee
SAT	Senior Academic Team
SDSG	Systems Development Steering Group
SEN	Supporting education needs
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound
SMT	Senior Management Team
SSLC	Staff Student Liaison Committee
UKPSF	UK Professional Standards Framework
VLE	Virtual learning environment

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