Student Handbook

Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals

October 2015
Supersedes previous versions

Foreword

It is a pleasure to welcome you to Arden University and wish you well in your studies.

Arden University is at the forefront of distance learning provision, not only in the UK but also all over the World. It intends to maintain this position as a leader in supported open learning. This means combining appropriate communication technologies and knowledge media with personal tuition and counselling to ensure that you can learn effectively and enjoyably. In particular, Arden University is making investment into new administrative mechanisms to ensure first class customer services are in place to provide you excellent support.

Arden University takes its obligations to each of its students very seriously. You have registered for an Arden University Higher National programme with particular personal goals in mind, and all the staff want to help you achieve those goals successfully.

The purpose of this handbook is to describe the procedures and policies that are an essential element in sustaining an effective relationship between Arden University and its students. These policies make explicit the expectations on both sides. I advise you to familiarise yourself with the contents pages and to read any sections that are of interest to you. The handbook should then be kept for more detailed consultation as particular issues arise. Most of the questions you have about Arden University practices will be answered in these pages.

I trust that you will find your association with Arden University a stimulating and rewarding experience.

Dr Philip Hallam
CEO
Arden University

Contents

Welcome from Arden University

Welcome to the programme; you have joined one of four intakes: February, May, August or November. Our aim is to provide you with the opportunity to establish a firm foundation for a successful career in your chosen discipline.

You will be studying alongside students from a variety of backgrounds. Though you are expected to invest time and effort into your studies you should also take every opportunity to have fun and enjoyment. We hope that you will find your learning experience to be productive, enjoyable and successful.

Purpose of this Handbook

The purpose of this Handbook is to introduce students to online distance learning study through Arden University, and to lay down the standards that Arden University requires from students and set out the criteria by which we operate.

Key themes are outlined and initial guidance is given regarding various key personal skills (such as effective reading and writing), which underpin effective study and also contribute directly to good working practice.

Section 1. General Information

1.1 Introduction to Arden University

Arden University (formerly RDI) has been working with various Universities and Professional Bodies, providing distance-learning programmes to high-achieving students for over 20 years. We are dedicated to providing you with a high standard of tutor and administrative support throughout your studies and always listen to the comments of our students in order to ensure the learning process is a satisfying and rewarding experience for all involved.

1.2 Relationship with Pearson

Pearson is the Awarding Body that has validated and approved the programme on which you have enrolled. As such, Arden University is responsible for making sure that the quality of provision meets their prescribed levels and standards.

To enable quality to be monitored, Pearson appoint External Examiners to approve assessment procedures and results, as well as seeking feedback from students on the programme.

1.3 Change of details

It is important that we keep your student record up to date. If your personal details or contact information change please ensure that you notify Arden University by e-mailing registry@arden.ac.uk.

2.   Useful Contacts

Student Support Team: Carolyn Rowland Jackie Gibbons	Tel: **+44 (0)24 76 515 700** Email: **pearsonsupport@arden.ac.uk**
Paula Reilly Programme Leader – Business **Hugh Smith** Programme Leader – Travel and Tourism **Rob Manderson** Programme Leader - Computing	Email: preilly@arden.ac.uk Email: hsmith@arden.ac.uk Email: rmanderson@arden.ac.uk
John Vaughan Academic Director	Tel: +44 (0)24 76 515 700 Email: jvaughan@arden.ac.uk
Dr Philip Hallam Arden University CEO	Tel: +44 (0)24 76 515 700 Email: phallam@arden.ac.uk

2.1   Key Support Roles

Student Support Team
The role of the Arden University Student Support Team is to ensure that you are progressing well in your studies and they will assist you throughout your programme with any administrative query relating to your studies. At the start of the intake your Student Support Co-ordinator will help to ensure that you are familiar with processes, procedures, rules and regulations and will support you with working through the Induction Module on Ilearn. After completion of your Induction Module your co-ordinator will be in regular contact to support and guide you. They will also email you reminders of upcoming deadlines.

The Student Support Team also supports all students whose programme of study is financed through Student Finance England/Student Finance England (EU) and all students with a declared disability.

The Team can be contacted at pearsonsupport@arden.ac.uk
Student Finance queries should be directed to studentfinance@arden.ac.uk

Tutors

Each module you study has a dedicated module tutor. All tutors appointed are senior academics and subject specialists approved by Pearson. They will help you by facilitating your academic progress and to this end they will set tasks and activities in the appropriate discussion areas of ilearn, Arden University's virtual learning environment.

The primary means of support will be delivered online through ilearn. Where appropriate, tutors may also provide support by other means, e.g. by email.

The tutoring process is viewed as an essential aspect of development and support for students. It is informally based and designed to encourage two-way communication, either peer-to-peer or student-to-tutor.

Your module tutors will provide you with academic advice and guidance and answer your questions of an academic nature. For all other queries you are encouraged to contact your Student Support Team at Arden University directly for support at pearsonsupport@arden.ac.uk.

Programme Leader

The Programme Leader has overall responsibility for the structure and delivery of the programme.

3.   Learning Support

3.1   Induction

Before you commence study on the programme you are required to undertake an Induction Module which contains all the information you need to get you started on your study and an interactive quiz to consolidate your understanding of the processes and procedures you will encounter during your studies. The aims of the Induction are for you to:

- Get to know staff and fellow students
- Gain a comprehensive understanding of various aspects of your programme of study.
- Access a range of resources to support your study
- Ask questions relating to any aspect of the learning experience.
- Become acquainted with Pearson and Arden University procedures and policies.

At the start of your intake, you will receive your username and password for ilearn, Arden University's Virtual Learning Environment. You will access your Induction module by logging onto ilearn.

If you join the induction module before the formal intake start date (the last day of October, January, April or July), there will be a number of tasks already available for you to work through. You will be given access to your interactive quiz on the intake date. A reminder notice will be posted on ilearn on this date. It is important that you complete and pass the quiz within 28 days of the study period starting. After 28 days has elapsed, access to the interactive quiz will be revoked. If you have not passed the quiz by this time, you will have to wait until the start of the next Study Period to complete your Induction and progress onto your first module; this could be up to three months away!

Once you have successfully passed the Interactive Quiz, you can activate your first module on ilearn. If you experience difficulties during this process, please contact the Student Support Team.

3.2   Learning Materials

You will access your entire core learning material for the programme via ilearn.

The module learning materials are designed to facilitate your learning and to allow you to achieve the learning outcomes for each module. The material is interactive and contains practical activities, which have been designed to enable you to apply theoretical principles and frameworks.

Try to use your own background when completing the activities and draw the best ideas and solutions you can from your own experience. To get the best out of your learning experience, you are encouraged to discuss your ideas with other students or your colleagues; this will make learning much more stimulating. Remember, if in doubt, or if you have any questions about the modules or how to study, just ask your tutor.

If you wish to purchase your own textbooks, suggested reading is included within each module descriptor.

A range of online library resources are made available to Arden University students, which supplements the learning materials within ilearn. Resources may be provided by your awarding body.

Arden University's resources include libraries of electronic books (e-books). Arden University aims to provide a copy of the core text for each module, although students should be aware that the availability of books in electronic form is subject to publishers' permissions. In the event that a core text book cannot be provided in e-book format, suitable alternatives may be available. There are occasions when students may wish to purchase the hard copy of a core text book, in the event that it is not available in the Arden University library.

3.3   ilearn

ilearn is an online facility designed to enhance your learning experience and help you through your studies. It provides access to:

Your module learning materials	Assessment Area
Discussion forums	Online electronic resources
News forums	Programme Information
Group Learning Space	E-mail/Messaging facility
My Learning Space	Links to Rules and Regulations

You will find a detailed explanation of the key functions of ilearn and how to use them during your Induction. The site will be updated regularly with new and relevant information as it becomes available. Tutors may make announcements or add notes to relevant sections or engage with you in discussion forums.

There is also a page for your own personal profile and photos. You are encouraged to add information about yourself, as other students may find it interesting.

ilearn will be our principal way of communicating with students registered on this programme so it is essential that you visit ilearn on a regular basis.

3.4   How will students support each other through the programme?

We believe success on the programme will be enhanced through the development of a supportive learning community. We will achieve this through facilitated online discussions on ilearn where you will have the opportunity to undertake group tasks with other students.

3.5   How to access ilearn

You can access ilearn from Arden University's homepage www.arden.ac.uk

1. Click on the Student Login link and select ilearn
2. Enter your username and password and click 'Login'.
3. Select the relevant Module from the "My Modules" menu.

Alternatively you can access the ilearn site directly by entering the following web address in your web browser: www.ilearn.rdi.co.uk

4   Staff/Student Obligations

4.1   Learning Contract

By embarking on this programme of study, you confirm your commitment to Arden University's **Learning Contract** (Annex 1).

This learning contract is a 'partnership' between you, the student, and Arden University as your learning provider to help you understand the roles and responsibilities of each party during the learning process.

As you read through the Learning Contract, you will note that there is a specific regulation about plagiarism. This describes the penalties that apply when students cheat in written assessment or present someone else's material for assessment as if it were their own (this is called plagiarism). In order to avoid plagiarism it is imperative you reference your work appropriately.

Very few students commit such offences, but Arden University believes that it is important that all students understand why academic honesty is a matter of such concern and why such severe penalties are imposed. Please see Section 6 of this handbook for further information.

4.2   What you can expect from your Tutor

The tutor will provide learning support and advice to learners in the following manner:

- Providing a welcome forum post at the start of the module
- Providing a response to your email, wherever possible within 2 working days (Monday – Friday).
- Initiating tasks and discussions via the module discussion forum on ilearn.
- Moderating discussion boards and inputting as required.
- Live online chat sessions, where appropriate.
- Monitoring student participation and progress.

4.3   Student Representation

Student representation is a mechanism that helps Arden University ensure that the student voice is fully represented in decision making. Representation provides opportunities for students to feed directly into not only Programme related developments, but also the wider activities of Arden University. Becoming a Student Representative is not only a great opportunity to make a positive difference to your learning experience and that of your fellow students, but it is also great for your CV.

Find out how you can become a Student Representative in Section 7.7 of this Handbook.

Find out more about Arden University's policy on Student Engagement in Section 7.6 of this Handbook.

4.4 Student Feedback and Questionnaires

Arden University is committed to providing you with the best possible service and we believe the best way to improve is to listen to your views.

We value your feedback and encourage you to pass on your comments, compliments or concerns. There are a number of ways you can do this.

If your comments relate to a particular module, the best way to provide feedback is by completing the *End of Module Online Survey*. This will appear on your module page just before your assessment deadline.

We also encourage you to provide feedback to your Student Representative via the *Student Feedback Forum* which you will find on the Induction module page. The Student Representative will present feedback on behalf of the student body to Arden University's quarterly course committee meetings.

You can also provide feedback at any time to the Student Support Team.

Please note that all feedback will be dealt with in strictest confidence and wherever possible anonymity will be maintained. Your feedback will be considered at Arden University's quarterly course committee meetings, following which an update will be posted to the Student Feedback Forum on ilearn.

4.5 Annual Monitoring

At the conclusion of each year, academic departments are invited to reflect on the strengths/weaknesses of the previous year through the Annual Monitoring process. An important part of the process is the consideration of the student feedback provided by the Course Committee and the module evaluation questionnaire. Other reference sources considered include: External Examiners' reports, students' module results, students' registration, retention and completion statistics, and the action plan from the annual monitoring report of the previous year.

The views of students are considered extremely important to the successful running of your specific programme and of our Pearson programmes as a whole. Your input is, therefore, very important and may significantly influence both the content of our programmes and the processes by which they operate.

Arden University is committed to providing the highest quality of education possible within the limits imposed by the resources available, to ensure that you benefit from the academic, social and cultural experience. Where candidates feel that their legitimate expectations are not being met, whether it is an academic or non-academic matter, they have the right of access to the (**Complaints Procedure** and **Academic Appeals Policy.)** See section 7 although it is hoped that most complaints can be settled at a local level.

4.6   Registration and Annual Re-registration

Once you have received your log-in details to ilearn, you will be required to complete an initial registration process online. It is both compulsory and important that you complete this process. Please note that you will also be required to complete a re-registration process annually with Arden University and will receive a reminder of this prior to the anniversary of your initial enrolment.

5   Programme Information

5.1   Module Descriptions

Details of the programme structure can be found in the Programme and Module Handbook. You will also find detail of each of your individual modules including the module aims, overview, learning outcomes and assessment details.

5.2   Maximum Programme and Module Registration Timeframes

Each Pearson programme has an expected completion time which is shown in the table below. Additionally, the programme Regulations specify maximum and minimum periods of registration for each of their programmes.

Award	Total Credit for Award	Expected Duration	Minimum Period of Registration	Maximum Period of Registration*
HNC	120	1.5 years	1 year	Up to 4 years
HND	245	3 years	2 years	Up to 4 years

*HNC/D Business and themed routes - please note that the certificate end date is 31/12/19. Students enrolling from the November 2015 intake onwards will need to successfully complete all modules by August 2019.

Please note if you register for the HNC qualification and later decide to continue to complete the full HND, your maximum registration period of up to 4 years will apply from the date of your original registration on the HNC.

6   Study and Assessment

6.1   Activating your Modules

There are four module start dates during each calendar year: February, May, August and November.

Access to modules will be given on the start date of each new study period as long as any prerequisites for those modules have been satisfied. You will be required to activate your module on ilearn to begin studying.

In order to benefit from the full schedule of module activities, you should activate your module as soon as possible on or after the official module start date. You will have up to **four weeks** from the official module start date in which to activate your module. Please remember that if you miss this deadline you will have to wait to join the module at the next study period. Unfortunately no exceptions can be made to this rule.

It is normally expected that you activate and study 30 credits at a time. Each module (with the exception of projects) will normally have a credit value of 15 credits so this means you may study two modules at a time. Details of credit values for each module can be found in your **Programme and Module Handbook**.

The maximum number of credits you may have active at any one time is 60 credits. This is called the 'active module credit limit'. The active module credit limit will include modules whose status is 'attempted' but not yet 'completed'. Once a module's status is 'completed' (i.e. you have passed your assessment and received your confirmed grade from the Examining Board) you will be able to release a further module (or modules) at the start of the next available study period.

6.2   Assessment

Once you activate a module at one of the official start points, **you will be automatically registered to take your assessment(s)** at the next scheduled assessment deadline. This will normally be around 10 weeks after the start date of the module.

A timetable of assessment dates can be found on your module page on ilearn. Please check the assessment timetable before you activate your module to ensure that you will be able to meet the assessment deadline.

If you know of a reason why you will not be able to meet the assessment deadline, you are advised to delay the activation of your module until the next module start date. If you have already activated your module and find yourself in this position, please refer to the section on deferral.

Assessment briefs will normally be released on ilearn at the start of the study period. Please note, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct question for the study period/submission deadline is being answered. If in doubt, please contact the Student Support Team.

The assessment briefs will contain the following information:

1. Module title, Assessment title, submission date, word count
2. Submission instructions
3. Learning Outcomes that are being assessed
4. Assessment brief/tasks detailing what the candidate needs to do
5. Student Guidelines where applicable to assist you in your understanding of the exact requirements of the assessment.
6. Specific performance criteria mapped against the grading structure

Assessments normally change each study period. It is the student's responsibility to ensure you submit the correct paper *for the current submission period.* Failure to complete the correct paper may result in a referral grade.

6.3   Assessment word count

The assessment briefs give clear guidance of the expectations for the volume of work to be produced. Please be aware that if an assessment is submitted which is in excess of the permitted maximum word count it will be returned and you will be allowed a short time in which to edit the work to reduce the size. In the event that the submission is still regarded as excessively long then Arden University will be unable to accept it for marking. In these circumstances the assessment will be classed as a non-submission and will receive a Refer grade.

6.4   Submitting your assessment

Your assessment brief will include instructions on how to submit your assessment.

Normally, you will be required to submit your assessment electronically to the assessment submission area on your module page on ilearn by following the submission link.

By submitting your assessment you will be agreeing to the Student Declaration, which confirms that the work you have submitted is your own original work. You will also be agreeing for your work to be scanned through Arden University's plagiarism detection system. It is Arden University's policy to scan all assessments through the Turnitin plagiarism detection system.

Before your assessment submission deadline, you are advised to upload a draft assessment to ilearn. You will then be able to view the Originality Report generated by Turnitin, which will show any matches in your work to external sources that have not been correctly referenced. Please allow 24 hours for the Turnitin report to be generated by the system and become available to you, particularly when you re-upload for a second time or more. To view your Turnitin originality report, click on the percentage 'similarity index score' which will appear next to your assessment once the report has been generated by the system.
Please ensure that the title page of your assessment includes the following information:
- Awarding body
- Title of course
- Module title
- Assessment title

- Student number (don't include your name)
- Tutor Name
- Word count (less the standard exemptions)

If you experience difficulties uploading your work to ilearn, you should contact the Student Support Team immediately.

6.5 Help with Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism

You must ensure that you carefully read the information on plagiarism provided within the Induction module on ilearn and complete the Plagiarism Quiz before commencing your first module. You can return to this quiz later in your study to refresh your understanding of key definitions relating to unfair practice and referencing.

You must also ensure you have read and understood Arden University's Unfair Practice Policy (Section 7.5 of this Handbook).

Staff involved in the assessment process will use a range of techniques along with their academic judgement, knowledge and experience to assist them in the detection of unfair practice. One of the tools that Arden University utilises to help staff identify potential unfair practice is Turnitin. The Turnitin system allows your Tutor to check your work for improper citation, incorrect or inadequate referencing or potential plagiarism by comparing your work against its continuously updated databases. All assessments submitted for formal assessment will be scanned through the Turnitin software.

Before formal submission of your assignment to ilearn, you can upload your draft assignment to Turnitin via the submission portal. This will enable you to view the draft originality report generated to Turnitin and thus you will have the opportunity to make corrections to your assignment before making your final submissions. You can find instructions on how to do this in section 6.10 below. In addition a guide is available on ilearn to help you review your Turnitin originality report and identify any problem areas. It is essential for you to read this information before you start planning for your first assessment.

Please remember that the Turnitin report is just one of the sources of evidence that will be considered when investigating suspected cases of unfair practice. It is important to understand that a Turnitin originality report showing a match to an external source may be used as evidence during the investigation of suspected cases of unfair practice. However, an originality report that shows a low or even a 0% match cannot and will not be accepted as evidence that no unfair practice has taken place.

6.6 Failure to Submit

If you fail to submit your assessment, and have not been granted a deferral, you will automatically receive a refer grade. If you are entitled to reattempt the module (i.e. you have a referral opportunity), your next submission will be capped at a Pass. You will also be required to complete the new assessment for the new assessment period.

6.7   Deferring your Assessment

The course is designed to be as flexible as possible, so you can study in your own time, and ensure it fits into your life pattern. If you decide that you are not able to submit your assessment at the scheduled deadline, you may have an opportunity to defer your assessment to the next available assessment period. Please note you may only defer your assessment once.

Please note that if you defer your assessment you would be expected to work on the new paper for the relevant study period. As assessments normally change each study period, it is the student's responsibility to ensure you submit the correct paper *for the current submission period.* If in doubt, please contact the Student Support Team

To arrange a deferral you must self-defer through ilearn no later than **7 days** before your scheduled assessment date. Deferral deadline dates are published on the assessment timetable which can be found on ilearn.

6.8   Leave of Absence

In exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Student Affairs Committee you may apply for a 'leave of absence' of up to 12 calendar months during the maximum course registration timeframe. Requests must be due to serious, long-term circumstances affecting a minimum period of 6 months that were not known at the time of module release.

You will be required to provide full details of your exceptional circumstances along with supporting evidence.

It should be noted that an authorised leave of absence will not extend the maximum course registration period.

If you would like to apply for a leave of absence, please contact the Student Support team via pearsonsupport@arden.ac.uk .

6.9   Notification of Assessment Grades

Arden University normally returns grades and feedback forms directly to students within six weeks from the official submission date. You will receive your provisional grade and comments from Arden University via email.

All grades are subject to ratification by a meeting of the Examining Board. Grades are therefore provisional and subject to change until they have been confirmed by the Examining Board. Where marks have not yet been confirmed by the Examining Board, the feedback will indicate this.

Examining Boards will consider and confirm students' progress and final awards. They are a key part of the quality assurance process monitored by Pearson to ensure the effective standardisation of assessors and verification of assessor decisions.

6.10   Referred Assessments and Re-submissions

If you are referred in a module (i.e. you do not achieve a pass grade) you will have one further opportunity to be re-assessed in the module. You would normally be given the opportunity to re-work and re-submit the same paper unless otherwise stated on your assessment feedback
If you have already released your next module you would normally be required to wait until the following study period to retake the assessment.

If you fail your resubmission of the assessment, you may be permitted to re-study the module and to be granted two further re-assessment opportunities. However please note that this is subject to the discretion of the Examining Board.

If you have no further reassessment opportunities in a module you will be contacted by your student support co-ordinator to discuss your options.

The maximum grade that can be awarded for any re-assessment including re-taken modules is capped at a pass grade.

Please note that fees will apply for module re-takes, please contact the Student Support Team for details of the current fees.

As assessments change at every assessment period, please note that it is your responsibility to ensure you submit the correct paper. If in doubt, please contact the Student Support Team.

6.11   Module Grading Structure

Each successfully completed module will be graded as a pass, merit or distinction. A pass is awarded for the achievement of all outcomes against the specified assessment criteria. Merit and distinction grades are awarded for higher-level achievement.

To achieve a merit grade you will need to meet all of the requirements for a pass grade and achieve all of the merit grade descriptors. To achieve a distinction you will additionally need to meet all of the distinction grade descriptors.

The generic merit and distinction grade descriptors below describe the learner's performance over and above that for a pass grade.

Merit grade

Merit descriptors	Exemplar indicative characteristics
In order to achieve a **merit** the learner must:	The learner's evidence shows for example:
• identify and apply strategies to find appropriate solutions	• effective judgments have been made • complex problems with more than one variable have been explored • an effective approach to study and research has been applied
• select/design and apply appropriate methods/techniques	• relevant theories and techniques have been applied • a range of methods and techniques have been applied • a range of sources of information has been used • the selection of methods and techniques/sources has been justified • the design of methods/techniques has been justified • complex information/data has been synthesised and processed • appropriate learning methods/techniques have been applied
• present and communicate appropriate findings	• the appropriate structure and approach has been used • coherent, logical development of principles/concepts for the intended audience • a range of methods of presentation have been used and technical language has been accurately used • communication has taken place in familiar and unfamiliar contexts • the communication is appropriate for familiar and unfamiliar audiences and appropriate media have been used.

Distinction grade

Distinction descriptors	Exemplar indicative characteristics
In order to achieve a **distinction** the learner must:	The learner's evidence shows for example:
• use critical reflection to evaluate own work and justify valid conclusions	• conclusions have been arrived at through synthesis of ideas and have been justified • the validity of results has been evaluated using defined criteria • self-criticism of approach has taken place • realistic improvements have been proposed against defined characteristics for success
• take responsibility for managing and organising activities	• autonomy/independence has been demonstrated • substantial activities, projects or investigations have been planned, managed and organised • activities have been managed • the unforeseen has been accommodated • the importance of interdependence has been recognised and achieved
• Demonstrate convergent/lateral/ creative thinking	• self-evaluation has taken place, ideas generated and decisions taken • convergent and lateral thinking have been applied • problems have been solved • innovation and creative thought have been applied receptiveness to new ideas is evident • effective thinking has taken place in unfamiliar contexts.

6.12   Calculation of Qualification Grade

Once you have successfully completed all of your modules, the Examining Board will calculate your overall qualification grade. You will be awarded an overall pass, merit or distinction based on your performance across modules using the rules detailed below.

Pass Qualification Grade

Students who achieve the minimum eligible credit value (120 credits for the HNC and 240 credits for the HND) will be awarded the qualification at pass grade

Qualification grades above pass grade

Learners will be awarded a merit or distinction qualification grade by the aggregation of points gained through the successful achievement of individual modules. **The graded section of both the HNC and the HND is based on the learner's best performance in modules at the level or above of the qualification to the value of 75 credits.** The number of points available is dependent on the module grade achieved and the credit size of the module (as shown in the 'Points available per credit at specified module grades' table below).

Points available per credit at specified module grades

Points per credit		
Pass	**Merit**	**Distinction**
0	1	2

Qualification Grades

Points Range	Grade	
0-74	Pass	P
75-149	Merit	M
150	Distinction	D

The grade achieved in modules from an appropriate HNC may contribute to an HND grade. If a learner moves from HNC to HND then credits from both the HNC and HND can contribute to the best 75 credits of the overall HND grade.

6.13   Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment (leading to the award of credit) that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a module through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and so do not need to develop through a programme of learning.

RPL enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any valid assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given module or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting a module, modules or a whole qualification. Evidence of learning must be valid and reliable and is subject to scrutiny and approval by the

programme leader. Full guidance about Pearson's policy on RPL can be found on the Pearson website (www.edexcel.com).

7 Policies

7.1 Academic Appeals

Arden University have established an appeals procedure for candidates wishing to appeal against an academic decision. Students should note that appeals against the academic judgement of examiners cannot be accepted. Please refer to the appeals policy on ilearn for full details of the appeals process.

7.2 Mitigating Circumstances Guidelines

A claim for mitigating circumstances will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances. A successful claim for mitigating circumstances will normally be based on evidence of circumstances that satisfies the criteria below. Namely that the circumstances are: *non-academic; unexpected; significantly disruptive; arising from matters beyond a student's control; likely to have affected the student's academic performance to an extent that is material.*

In order to be admissible, evidence submitted in support of a claim for mitigating circumstances should satisfy as many as possible of the following criteria: the evidence should be objective (for example medical certificate, death certificate or evidence from a counsellor), verifiable, and relevant. Self-certification will not normally be admissible.   The burden of proof is on the student to establish the claim and to submit supporting evidence.

Claims for mitigating circumstances will normally be limited to:

(a) serious personal Illness which is not a permanent medical condition in the run-up to an assessment deadline, or during an examination;

(b) acute personal or emotional trauma, e.g. acute anxiety or depression, family breakdown, breakdown of close personal relationship;

(c) the death or serious illness of a family member, or other person with whom the student had a close relationship, before the date of the assessment;

(d) significant and unplanned changes to employment circumstances or patterns of employment (EXCEPT Full Time study students);

(e) traumatic event (e.g. being assaulted, or witnessing an accident or assault);

(f) Domestic upheaval (for example fire, burglary or eviction);

(g) impact of natural disaster, civil disruption or other major hazard.

A student may not claim extenuating circumstances on the grounds that:

(a) lack of preparation at an assessment event;

(a) s/he considers the marks given to be too low;

(b) s/he did not understand or was unaware of the programme regulations;

(c) s/he misread or missed the published assessment timetable;

(d) normal assessment stress or anxiety experienced running up to the assessment (unless corroborated by medical evidence as a chronic condition and undergoing treatment);

(e) non-serious domestic or personal disruptions (for example moving house, change of job, holidays, weddings, normal job pressure, failed travel arrangements);

(f) study related circumstances (equipment failure or lack of suitable equipment) including failure to have taken back up copies, bunching of deadlines, poor time management).

(g) uploaded wrong assessment

The examples detailed in both lists are not exhaustive, and are intended only as a guide. In all cases, the convening Board has the ultimate authority to use its discretion, taking into account the full circumstances of a particular case.

Requests for consideration of mitigating circumstances should normally be submitted within 14 days of the date of the assessment affected. If you believe you have mitigating circumstances you should contact your Programme Co-ordinator and ask for a *Mitigating Circumstances Application form.* This should be completed and returned along with any supporting evidence.

7.3   Complaints Procedure

Introduction
1.   This procedure applies to:

- Complaints arising from a student's educational experience, other than disputes relating to assessment and examinations (see below);
- Complaints in respect of academic and/or administrative support or other services provided by Arden University or at an Arden University study centre;
- Complaints regarding alleged harassment by staff of Arden University or an Arden University study centre;
- Complaints arising from alleged discrimination by staff of Arden University or an Arden University study centre in relation to gender, race, disability, sexual orientation or otherwise.

2.   This list is not exhaustive. Complaints falling outside those listed above will be considered and investigated at the discretion of Arden University.

3.   This procedure does not apply to:

- Candidates wishing to appeal against an academic decision; separate procedures exist for such appeals. Candidates should also note that appeals against the academic judgement of examiners cannot be accepted.
- Disciplinary matters; these will be dealt with in accordance with separate procedures in place within Arden University.

STAGE ONE: INFORMAL RESOLUTION

4.	Wherever possible, Arden University would wish to see any complaint resolved as close as possible to its point of origin, and with a minimum of formality. If a student is not satisfied with the conclusion of the informal resolution or where informal resolution is not possible or appropriate, he/she should refer to Stage Two: Formal Complaint (point 5 below).

STAGE TWO: FORMAL COMPLAINT

5.	Formal complaints should be submitted in writing to the Head of Student Support (please see Student Handbook for contact details).

6.	Arden University will confirm receipt of the complaint to the student, normally within two working days.

7.	The Head of Student Support may request additional information or evidence from the student, in which case the student will be notified in writing and given five working days to respond.

8.	A formal meeting will be convened by the Head of Student Support to consider the complaint, normally within five working days of receipt of the complaint.

9.	If the Head of Student Support is unable to reach a conclusion, the complaint will be deferred to the Chief Operating Officer, and a further meeting will be convened to discuss the issues, normally within five working days.

10.	A response will normally be provided to the student within ten working days of receipt of the complaint. If there is a genuine need for a response to be provided in a shorter timescale than this, the student must make this clear, including the reason, at the point of submitting the formal complaint.

11.	The outcomes available are as follows:

- That the complaint be upheld in whole or in part;
- That the complaint be rejected

12.	The student will be issued with a formal letter confirming the outcome of the investigation into the student complaint. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome, he/she should refer to Stage Three: Review of Outcome (point 11 below).

STAGE THREE: REVIEW OF OUTCOME

13. If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage Two investigation of the complaint, he/she may request a review of the outcome within ten working days of the written confirmation received following Stage Two: Formal Complaint.

14. A request for review may be on limited grounds, including but not confined to:

    - A review of the procedures followed at the formal stage;
    - Consideration of whether the outcome was reasonable in all the circumstances;
    - New material evidence which the student was unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.

15. The request for review should be submitted in writing to the Quality Manager within ten working days of dispatch of the Stage Two: Formal Complaint outcome letter. Students should provide full details on the grounds on which the review is being requested and indicate within their correspondence why the outcome of the Stage Two: Formal Complaint was not satisfactory.

16. The Quality Manager, or his/her nominee, will acknowledge receipt of the complaint normally within five working days. Where appropriate, the Quality Manager may consult with the Student Support Manager, Head of Student Support or Chief Operating Officer to obtain evidence of facts relating to the complaint.

17. Requests for review will be considered by the Complaints Review Panel. The Complaints Review Panel will be chaired by the Chief Executive Officer and will include the Head of Academic Affairs and one external member of the Academic Board. The Quality Manager or his/her nominee will act as Secretary to the Board. The meeting may be held in in person or remotely via telephone or videoconference if necessary.

18. The Complaints Review Panel may request additional information or evidence from the student, in which case the student will be notified in writing and given five working days to respond.

19. The outcomes available are as follows:

    - That the complaint be upheld in whole or in part;
    - That the complaint be rejected

20. The student will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review within ten working days of the meeting of the Complaints Review Panel.

21. In the event of a complaint being upheld whole or in part, recommendations should be made in respect of remedial action required. A report on the matter and any actions arising will be referred to the next meeting of the Quality and Standards Committee.

22. The decision of the Complaints Review Panel is final. In the event that the student is not prepared to accept the decision, the student will be advised, via the outcome letter, that he/she has the right to take his/her complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education.

7.4   Equal Opportunities Policy

Introduction

Arden University is committed to providing equal opportunities for staff, external contractors and students and will not tolerate any discriminatory behaviour with respect to any of the following:

- Colour
- Ethnic origin
- Gender
- Creed
- Marital status
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Other

Aims

Arden University will continually develop strategies and procedures to tackle the varying forms of discrimination, which may occur. These will broadly fit into the following categories:

- Direct discrimination – where a person in not treated equally due to any of the categories listed above.
- Indirect discrimination – where a requirement, situation or condition, which is applied for all groups, has an adverse effect on one or more groups.
- Harassment – where someone is subjected to unwanted conduct, i.e. unwelcome sexual attention or racial harassment.
- Victimisation – where someone is treated less favourable due to action taken against others.
- Segregation – where someone is segregated due to his or her beliefs, attitudes or opinions.

Roles and responsibilities

It is the duty of all individuals and groups associated with Arden University to avoid discriminatory practices themselves to condone and discourage discriminatory practices from others.

Arden University will encourage those who wish to report instances of discrimination and provide a confidential process by which all discriminatory matters can be dealt with by means of the formal Grievance Procedures.

A designated Arden University senior manager who will be responsible for equal opportunity monitoring and the point of contact for those who may wish to discuss any discriminatory practice informally in the first instance.

Arden University will take action against anyone who is in breach of the Equal Opportunities Policy.

Students

Arden University will offer equality for access to all its courses and will encourage the recruitment of students from the widest possible audience both nationally and internationally. Arden University will also offer flexibility of access to the curriculum by enabling students to enrol for both modules of programmes and full awards. This will be reinforced by:

- Marketing literature, which is produced for all courses.
- An admissions process, which is sensitive and supportive to the needs of all students, includes an enrolment process and provides for assessment of learning support for those students who may have special needs.
- The course review process will monitor the curriculum, student progress and achievement to ensure that equality of opportunity has taken place.
- All materials used for distance learning study and assessment will be subject to evaluation prior to issue to make sure that they do not contain anything which could be considered discriminatory or offensive to individual students or groups.

Statistical Analysis

Equal opportunities statistical information will be provided to monitor Arden University provision and will focus primarily on:

- Comparing equal opportunities statistics of those who register for Arden University courses.
- Data for analysis will be taken from the enrolment form.
- Documentation relevant to Equal Opportunities.
- Admissions Procedures.
- Induction Procedures.
- Assessment Policy.
- Grievance Procedure.
- Complaints Procedure.
- Staff Development Policy.
- Accreditation to Prior Learning (APL) Procedures.
- Module Evaluation Forms.
- Academic Appeals Policy.

7.5   *Unfair Practice*

Attempting to or actually carrying out any malpractice activity is not permitted by Pearson. The following are examples of malpractice by learners; this list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice may be considered by Pearson at its discretion:

- plagiarism by copying and passing off, as the learner's own, the whole or part(s) of another person's work, including textbooks, articles, journals, artwork, images, words, computer generated work (including Internet sources), thoughts, inventions and/or discoveries whether published or not, with or without the originator's permission and without appropriately acknowledging the source

- collusion by working collaboratively with other learners to produce work that is submitted as individual learner work. Learners should not be discouraged from teamwork, as this is an essential key skill for many sectors and subject areas, but the use of minutes, allocating tasks,

agreeing outcomes, etc are an essential part of team work and this must be made clear to the learners

- impersonation by pretending to be someone else in order to produce the work for another or arranging for another to take one's place in an assessment/examination/test

- fabrication of results and/or evidence

- failing to abide by the instructions or advice of an assessor, a supervisor, an invigilator, or Pearson conditions in relation to the assessment/examination/test rules, regulations and security

- misuse of assessment/examination material

- introduction and/or use of unauthorised material contrary to the requirements of supervised assessment/examination/test conditions, for example: notes, study guides, personal organisers, calculators, dictionaries (when prohibited), personal stereos, mobile phones or other similar electronic devices

- obtaining, receiving, exchanging or passing on information which could be assessment/examination/test related (or the attempt to) by means of talking or written papers/notes during supervised assessment/examination/test conditions

- behaving in such a way as to undermine the integrity of the assessment/examination/test

- the alteration of any results document, including certificates

- assisting learners in the production of work for assessment, where the support has the potential to influence the outcomes of assessment, for example where the assistance involves centre staff producing work for the learner

Any alleged incident of malpractice brought to the attention of Arden University will be fully investigated. Please refer to Arden University's Unfair Practice policy on ilearn for full details of the procedure for dealing with suspected cases of Unfair Practice.

7.6   Student Engagement Policy

Introduction

Arden University is committed to ensuring that the student voice is fully represented in decision making. This occurs through both feedback and representative activities.

Feedback is achieved through completion of module and Course surveys. The latter is an annual event but modules are reviewed after each delivery iteration. Information from these surveys is taken to Course Committee; Joint Board of Studies; and Arden University's Academic Board. Students are also provided with contact details of named staff from Arden University's Student Support Team who can deal with specific problems as and when they arise.

Representation provides opportunities for students to feed into the wider activities of Arden University. It has to be recognised that the distributed nature of the student body is less conducive to conventional meetings and that therefore focused use is made of on-line communications to achieve the desired outcomes.

Arden University will comply with the requirement to have in place a staff student liaison committee and appointed student representatives in order to ensure that students have the opportunity for formal input into the management of the Courses. Students will receive details of the student representative process as part of their induction and in their Student Handbooks. The principles outlined by the University and set out below will be adhered to.

Purpose of Student Representatives
Student representatives will be required to:

1. provide a student voice at all levels of Course management;
2. voice problems suggestions or requests raised by members of the student body;
3. act as representatives on relevant course committees;
4. feed back to the student body on issues discussed during relevant meetings
5. provide student involvement in the planning and development of Courses.

Principles for the Appointment and Role of Student Representatives
Arden University has:

1. Published guidelines for the selection and appointment of student representatives (including provision for appointments to be made by the student body);
2. Published terms of office for student representatives including:
    a. Details of the duration of office and any payment and/or reimbursement of expenses;
    b. Duties of the role (a role description) including reference to required attendance at relevant meetings;
    c. Information on the benefits of being a student representative;
    d. Details of what training and/or induction a student representative should expect to receive.

Course Management Committee
The Course Management Committee (also referred to as a Course Committee) provides an opportunity for staff and student representatives to meet together for discussion and consultation about validated schemes of study and other matters relating to the quality of students' academic experience will be held on a quarterly basis for each validated Course. This will be held on-line through a discussion forum. In some cases where appropriate multiple Courses will be considered at the same meeting.

Composition:
The Course Management Committee will include the student representative(s) and designated members of Arden University Academic/Administrative staff. All members will have the right to submit items for inclusion on the agenda and raise items for discussion. A Chairperson and Secretary will be appointed by the Committee and full minutes should be kept of each meeting including a note on items requiring action.

Items for Discussion/Agenda:
These will include, inter alia:

1. discussion of matters raised by students, and matters on which Arden University wishes to seek student views;
2. the outcomes of student evaluation of schemes (via module evaluation forms) and Arden University responses; and
3. consideration of proposals for new schemes and any changes to current schemes.

Academic Board
There will be one student representative on Academic Board. Individuals nominated for this post must be existing student representatives from across Arden University's courses. Where there is more than one nomination he/she will be elected by the student body.

7.7   Guidelines for the Selection and Appointment of Student Representatives

Why is student representation important?
Students are a key stakeholder in everything that Arden University does. Through student representation Arden University ensures that the student voice is heard when making decisions about the learning experience of over 7,000 students. Representation gives students the opportunity to share their opinion not only on their programme developments, but also the wider activities of Arden University.

The role of the student representative
Student representatives are members of Arden University's Course Committee which meets every 3 months to consider programme-related issues. The student representative's role is to gather feedback from fellow students on what works well with the programme, areas for improvement and any concerns to be addressed. Arden University gives student representatives all the tools to collect this information effectively. Student representatives will then highlight and present key findings to Arden University's Course Committee for consideration.

In addition to this, one student representative will also be made a member of Arden University's Academic Board which again meets every 3 months to make decisions on a wide range of issues, such as new programmes and also reviews Arden University's provision to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

And one student representative will also be a member of Arden University's Learning and Teaching Committee which meets quarterly to develop the Arden University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

What are the benefits of becoming a student representative?
Becoming a student representative is an opportunity to gain valuable skills that look impressive on your CV, while networking and engaging with peers and academic tutors. That aside, becoming a student representative allows you to communicate the important views of your student community to senior members of staff at Arden University; ensuring your voices are heard and changes are made in the right places.

Making the student representative role a convenient and positive experience for you

The good news is that student representatives normally attend the meetings via Skype. So location is not an issue and there is little inconvenience when participating. Being a student representative can also demonstrate your dedication to learning and ability to work with fellow students and bring their views to a new audience.

How student representatives are appointed

Representatives are elected to represent all students from a programme (or group of programmes). Any active student can nominate him/herself as a student representative for that programme when the election period has been announced.

The programme discussion board will inform students every year when nominations are open and will include clear instructions on how nominations can be made and how the online voting system works.

How you can become part of this

To be considered for the role, you will need to respond to the call for nominations with a short statement about yourself, why you believe you will make a good student representative and why students should vote for you.

Voting will then be opened to the student body for a limited period of time using online survey mechanisms.

The student representative sitting on the Academic Board and the Learning and Teaching Committee will be elected by the student body from existing programme representatives following a similar nomination and election process.

How you can contact your current student representative today

We encourage students to discuss with their student representative any ideas for improvement or feedback about their programme. You can do this by posting on the *Student Feedback Forum* which can be found on the Induction page, or by sending a direct message to your student representative through ilearn.

We will let all students know when the next period of nominations will be open.

We hope you can join the debate

8 Annexes

Annex 1 – Learning Contract

This learning agreement is a 'partnership' between you, the student, and Arden University. To help you understand the roles and responsibilities of each party during the learning process, please take the time to read this Learning Contract and to confirm you commitment to the contract to Arden University.

By embarking on this programme of study you agree to:
- Abide by Arden University rules and regulations.
- Be responsible for your own learning.
- Participate in the discussion for a, making posts which add to and advance the quality of the discussion/s.
- Be respectful of diverse perspectives and refrain from making inappropriate comments in module discussions and personal interactions
- Utilise the tutoring system when required to do so via ilearn.
- Utilise the student support mechanisms whenever you need guidance or advice.
- Retain copies of the assessment feedback sheets.
- Submit your own work and not plagiarise the work of others.

We Arden University, agree to:
- Give you advice and guidance regarding all aspects of your programme of study.
- Provide you with the necessary learning and resource materials to enable you to undertake the learning process.
- Give you regular feedback via the tutorial system regarding your progress on the course, including assessments.
- Respond to queries normally within two working days.
- Return grades and assessment feedback to students normally within six weeks of the official submission date.
- Provide you with tutorial/learning support via ilearn.
- Provide feedback and comments in module discussions and personal interactions with students that are appropriate and respectful of diverse perspectives.