

## **Academic Staff Development Policy**

This policy applies to all Arden University tutors irrespective of employment status. Responsibility for monitoring staff development processes resides with the Academic Board.

### **Appointment of Academic Tutors**

Arden University appoints suitably qualified individuals to tutor roles in conjunction with partner institutions. Successful candidates will normally be able to demonstrate:

1. Possession of a relevant qualification at least at the level at which they are applying to tutor and preferably at a higher level; or
2. Extensive industrial or practitioner experience within the relevant subject area; and
3. Experience of teaching and assessing at the appropriate level within one or more UK Universities; and
4. An appreciation of demands of online distance learning.

Tutors joining Arden University will always have appropriate subject expertise. They will normally have experience of delivery within a UK HEI. Most tutors will have some expertise in on-line delivery. In all cases where tutors are engaged on delivering modules validated by a partner HEI approval will be sought from the partner before the individual is assigned to a module.

### **Induction and Probation**

On joining Arden University, staff will undergo an induction process. This will introduce them to the relevant procedures that they need to be aware of and give information about the programme and modules they will be engaged on. (NB Arden University is working with colleagues at the US parent Capella on the development of on-line modules to deliver this more effectively.)

All tutors will be issued with a contract setting out the terms of their agreement with Arden University. This will include an appendix showing their responsibilities in respect of module delivery. This is supported by Tutor Guidance notes that set out in more detail expectations of the tutor.

Tutors new to working in the on-line environment are provided with a mentor. This also applies to those colleagues who have limited HEI experience (i.e. if they have come in through the practitioner route). In this case a more experienced colleague will work with them and provide advice and support on student engagement and assessment. (NB Capella has mandatory on-line modules that must be taken by all new staff. It is likely that a similar process will be followed by Arden University in the future.)

Following initial delivery a new tutor will be assessed to determine whether or not his/her contract should be confirmed. This will utilise information from a variety of sources such as: records of tutor

engagement; student feedback; module results; and moderator feedback. Where issues are identified the tutor will be provided with support to remedy them if appropriate.

## **Tutor Development**

Tutor development can be divided into three areas:

### Systems

This is dealt with during induction to ensure that tutors are able to utilise ilearn and i-System capabilities. Where updates are made then these are fully communicated with appropriate documentation and help desk facilities provided. This would also cover the technical issues of adding content such as podcasts to the ilearn site and use of chat rooms, bulletin boards, etc.

### Pedagogic

On-line delivery has similarities with conventional delivery but there are significant differences of which tutors need to be aware. The setting and grading of assessments follows what might be termed 'normal' HEI practices in that there is an expectation that assessments will meet the requirements of module descriptors; be of an appropriate level; and meet all learning outcomes. Grading needs to be appropriate and consistent with supportive and constructively critical feedback. Colleagues who require support for these elements of activity will receive it through the mentoring process.

The techniques used to maintain student motivation and engagement will vary between modules and while the goal is an 'Arden University way' of working it is not intended that this be prescriptive, rather that the module experience is equivalent as regards the extent of tutor support. Staff development in this area revolves around the identification and dissemination of best practices allied to our minimum expectations. This is achieved through tutor development days (mandatory for all staff) and through feedback obtained through the peer review process.

As stated above, on-line skills modules for tutors are under development to complement existing induction activity covering key elements of module delivery.

The issues of on-line pedagogy are also of relevance to those producing online learning content. Writers engaged to develop content are given support through a dedicated Project Co-ordinator and relevant IT specialists in converting material into an appropriate format. Arden University has a 'house style' and uses a prescribed set of formative activities that provide a template for writers. (NB There is a robust signing off system that incorporates external scrutiny and, where applicable, partner approval.)

## Subject

On joining Arden University, tutors will be subject specialists with the requisite academic knowledge and professional awareness. In common with their colleagues in other HEI's, the tutor agreement with Arden University is a 'professional contract'. There is therefore an expectation that individuals will maintain subject currency through their own scholarly activity and professional updating, as occurs in other institutions. It should also be noted that many Arden University tutors see their work for the company as part of a broader portfolio and that their work for us may represent only a small proportion of their overall workload.

Subject development in HEI's tends to come about through discussion around programme development and module updating, where colleagues share ideas and consider trends within their areas. This happens within Arden University in exactly the same way. It also occurs through the sharing of staff and student research, which is not something that has been formalised at Arden University. We therefore intend to create an on-line space where colleagues can post work that they have completed. This space will be divided into subject groupings that align with the existing cluster groups. Subject to their agreement, sections of student dissertations of note can also be added and colleagues will also be encouraged to upload links to recent articles of interest.

## **Identifying Staff Development Needs**

This happens in two ways.

### Individually

Arden University operates an annual appraisal scheme that asks colleagues to state what they have achieved over the preceding year and to look forward to the next. An element of this is that there is an opportunity to identify any developmental needs. In such a case there is a staff development budget that can contribute to these where appropriate. The scheme is mandatory for all tutors. Beyond this there is considerable information that is routinely analysed and that can identify issues that require addressing, for example poor feedback. Individual support would be provided in such a case.

### Collectively

From October 2012 a peer review process will be adopted. A key element of this will be to disseminate good practice and to identify any consistent deficiencies for development activities. Data will be anonymised by an individual not part of the management team before it is seen by managers. The reporter would consider the data submitted through the reviews to comment on: the process; elements of good practice; and tutor development needs. Reports would be considered in by Learning and Teaching Committee and Academic Board.