



Arden University Students' Association Constitution

Purpose: *This document is the first governing document for the Arden University Students' Association and is an important part of the 1994 Education Act Section 22. This document delivers clarity for the Students' Association to move forward in growth, provides areas for development structurally with the University and enables a governance document that can be translated through the stages of becoming an independent Students' Union.*

Approved: December 2023

Introduction

- Arden University Students' Association (AUSA) has been set up to provide the best quality representation and advocacy for students at Arden University, under the governance & organisation of the University itself.
- Since inception in 2021, the Association has created a variety of offerings and opportunities for students, with little resource or infrastructure as a Students' Union.
- Arden University Students' Association is currently in development but is designed with the purpose to support representation at all levels and high quality advocacy for students, based on their changing needs and the world around them. AUSA play a pivotal role in partnership with all University colleagues, to effectively contribute to decision-making and influence in the University, through promoting student interests.
- This constitution is the first governing document of Arden University Students' Association. This document will be officially approved and accepted in university governance by Academic Standards and Ethics Committee (ASEC).
- Bylaws will provide further operational detail to this document as we develop, and some content within the first iteration may be moved to the bylaws or appendixes of the constitution.
- With the rapid growth of Arden University and development of the Students' Association, this constitution can be amended through approval by Academic Standards and Ethics Committee, or delegated powers to AUSA Advisory Board.

Members

- Membership of Arden University Students' Association is defined as having the ability to access all current Association-led activities or services. This is currently; student representative opportunities, student-led campaigning and running for Sabbatical Officer positions.
- All students registered on an Arden award (or exit award) are eligible to be members of the Arden University Students' Association, whether by distance or blended learning. A University exit award is defined as enrolled on a named academic programme leading to an Arden degree award.
- Where students are studying an Arden exit award at a franchise partner, we will provide support where required through appropriate Arden systems and student experience, but students will not be defined as members and have full access to all services. A full list of franchise partners who this currently applies to will be sourced from the International Office and regularly updated. In the future, we will strive to develop guidance and support in what our offer is for franchise partners in conjunction with relevant teams. (*Under consideration*)



- All eligible students will be informed of their Students' Association membership at the point of enrolment. This will take place from the launch of SITs. *(Under consideration)*
- All eligible members have the right to opt out of being a member of the Students' Association. Any student can do this by emailing studentvoice@arden.ac.uk, and we will process this information on their student record. *(Under consideration)*
- If a student opts out of membership, they will still be able to access any signposting or future developed free, independent, and confidential Advice.
- If a student breaches the Arden University Student Code of Conduct as deemed by the Complaints Policy, a student may be removed from the following in direct relation to the Students' Association; being involved in representative positions, engaging in organised communities, and participating in campaign activity organised by the Students' Association. However, access to support and advice will not be removed, as long as the student remains enrolled on their Arden exit award.

Officers

- The Student President is a major office holder for the purposes to fulfil the requirements outlined in the 1994 Education Act.
- Arden University Students' Association currently has one full-time salaried Sabbatical Officer entitled Student President. This position is elected by all student vote online, governed by clear rules to ensure the election is 'free, fair and accessible.'
- This position is the most senior representative for Student Voice at Arden University, and the representational figurehead of our student representative network.
- This position holds a 12-month term, currently from October to October, with the ability to re-stand for election for 1 further 12-month term, as outlined in the 1994 Education Act.
- The eligibility to stand as a candidate for the Student President role is outlined in our Election Rules document, which is updated annually (or where relevant). The main criterion to stand for elected office is being a current student on an Arden exit award during the time of nomination and voting.
- If a student is interrupting their studies to undertake a 'true' Sabbatical, they must receive clear written agreement from their Head of School and relevant Quality team member, to approve their interruption in studies. A student must be able to commit to the full-time position as a Sabbatical Officer.
- If a vacancy arises for any of our Senior Representative roles, depending on the time in the academic year or in the term of office, we will deliver an election for the role under the same governance. Prior to enacting this process, we will consult with the University and our Advisory Board.

Job Titles

- This section outlines the full-time salaried staff members who support the strategic and operational delivery of the Students' Association, whilst working with the senior representative of Student President. Staff members are currently employed by the University due to the structure of the Students' Association.
- Managing Director – responsible for strategic oversight and operations for the Students' Association including budget management and service creation. Key support staff for the Student President. Line manager for all full-time salaried staff members, outlined below.



- Representation Coordinator – responsible for day-to-day support, administration, and development of Student Representative Network. This role works closely with the Student President to provide support for volunteer representatives and developing change utilising student feedback.
- Administrator – responsible to provide support to Association operations, communication, and governance for the Students' Association. This role works closely with Student President and other staff members to provide day-to-day support with administration and organisation.

Advisory Board

- Reporting to Academic Standards & Ethics Committee, the Students' Association Advisory Board is the strategic committee to support the development of the Association. It has delegated powers to make proposed decisions or actions on the strategic development for the Association, provide input into service delivery and democratic principles development.
- Day to day decision making for the Students' Association is under the guidance and operation of the Managing Director.
- In addition, its purpose is to provide advisory support to enable the staff and representatives in the Association to gauge opinion and best support delivering the needs of students.
- The Advisory Board sits within the wider Arden University governance structure, and therefore must provide regular reporting items to the relevant committees.
- The Advisory Board has no powers to make financial decisions on behalf of Arden University.
- The full membership of the Advisory Board is outlined by the Terms of Reference but is made up of external members independent from Arden University, student representatives and University staff members. In addition, Association staff members are in attendance to undertake secretarial duties, present key information and to inform the discussion & decision-making of the Board. (*Under consideration*)
- The Chair of the Advisory Board is selected by Academic Standards & Ethics Committee based on criteria required for the position, and in support with the Managing Director and Student President of the Students' Association. (*Under consideration*)
- All external members of the Board will be appointed based on a selection process overseen by the University HR department, in conjunction with the Managing Director of the Students' Association and Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Quality & Standards. (*Under consideration*)
- Student and University representatives will be chosen based on the Strategic Plan, and in relation to the changing need of the Association to develop and function to best represent the strategic interests of the Students' Association. (*Under consideration*)
- The Advisory Board will meet once a quarter, as outlined in agreement with the membership, and in line with the University governance. These meetings will predominantly take place on Teams to accommodate our student membership, but may (where relevant), meet in person. (*Under consideration*)

Representatives



- Student representatives are a collaborative opportunity between the Students' Association and University to embed student voices, lived experiences and perspectives into decision-making at Arden University. Further information on this is outlined in the Student Voice Policy of the University, which is owned by the Managing Director.
- The Students' Association and University work in partnership to ensure student representatives have the best possible experience and support to empower them in their role of advocating for others.
- All student representatives, except the Student President, are volunteers whose role focuses on providing feedback from their cohort or specialist group, to enhance the academic experience at Arden.
- Their role is to provide authentic feedback on their cohort's experiences in their programmes or specialist areas, to enable positive change at the University. They work closely with Association Staff and elected representatives to make change, in collaboration with the University.
- All volunteer student representatives are currently recruited via an open online submission. This process can be reviewed and will be outlined in future bylaws.
- Upon starting as a representative, students must agree to the Student Representative Volunteer Agreement, which sets out their responsibilities, recognition, and time commitments. This document is owned within Student Experience.
- They will get a range of training and support to enable their role, and their position is outlined in the student representative agreement.
- This includes our voluntary Vice President positions which currently exist in the structure.

Removal of all Representative positions

- Any student representative role can be removed based on negative conduct, as outlined by the University code of conduct or complaints procedure.
- Any volunteer representative would require written evidence of any alleged breaches to be investigated.
- Whilst a volunteer representative is being investigated, their responsibilities in role would be paused during any investigation until an evidence-based decision was reached.
- If a volunteer representative is non-engaging over a period of a month, they can also be removed from position, pending written warning from Association staff to the student directly. (*Under consideration*)
- Any salaried student representative would need to be governed by the University Human Resources procedures regarding conduct.
- If a salaried student representative were not fulfilling the duties outlined in their role description from the point of election to the end of their contract, this could be investigated by Pro Vice-Chancellor Students Quality & Standards with support from Human Resources.
- Whilst a salaried student representative is being investigated, their responsibilities in role would be paused during any investigation until an evidence-based decision was reached.



Elections

- Our current platform to deliver elections for representational roles is Unitu, which is an external third-party platform delivering services for Arden University.
- The election process is 'first past the post' which enables the most popular candidate to win an election, pending on how many roles are available.
- We have only delivered one full student election for the full-time Student President role but will be seeking to deliver further elections to embed democratic principles into our representational model.
- Only students with Arden student status will have access to Unitu and must have signed up for their account to participate (nominate and vote).
- Basic eligibility for elections includes full student status, completing any election specific tasks and engagement in first milestone of study. (*Under consideration*)

Social Media & Communications

- The Students' Association has responsibilities for owned platforms of communication, to adhere to the Freedom of Speech Act for Higher Education.
- We work closely with the University Marketing Team in all large-scale communications, and to get support in development of our own channels which will move into the function of our incoming staff roles.

Complaints

- Arden University has a Complaints Policy which is applicable for all students to engage with on a range of topics.
- However, the Students' Association has a separate Complaints Policy which is relevant only for conduct related to Students' Association staff members or service delivery owned by the Association. (*Under consideration*)
- Depending on the nature of the complaint, a student will be redirected accordingly, if the content is not specifically applicable to the Association. In addition, if a complaint is regarding to student conduct, the Student Code of Conduct will be used to inform the decision-making.
- The Students' Association Complaints Policy has a tiered approach to ensure there is no conflict of interest for the individual overseeing the process. An initial complaint can be directed to the Managing Director via Microsoft Form.
- If the complaint is regarding the Managing Director, instead should be directed to the Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Quality & Standards.
- All complaints must be written via email, with any relevant information and evidence to inform the decision-making process.
- All complaints will receive a written response within 7 working days, depending on the nature of the query and information provided.
- If a student would like to appeal any decision from this process, they can contact the Pro Vice-Chancellor of Student Quality & Standards.
- The full Complaints Policy will be outlined in future bylaws to provide further information to students.

Affiliations



- Arden University Students' Association has no affiliations to any professional bodies at present.
- Any future affiliations must comply with the relevant legal and financial procedures at Arden University.
- At such point the Students' Association and its members seek to create affiliations, we must comply with Section 22 of the Education Act 1994 regarding the process to do so.

University Relationship

- Arden University Students' Association, as a formal and legal part of Arden University, relies on a positive and collaborative working relationship with colleagues and formal structures.
- The Students' Association provides a channel of communication between its members and the University Management Team.
- If a serious dispute or conflict were to arise, whether as an organisation or through personnel, Arden University Board of Directors would appoint an investigating panel to explore the relevant issue. If the issue is informal, this can be locally managed with the Managing Director and Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Quality & Standards. *(Under consideration)*
- The Students' Association takes part in the annual budgeting process at the University and will work with relevant colleagues to successfully and positively create a relevant budget submission.
- Outside of the formal budget process, the Students' Association can bid for additional funding based on specific projects, like any other department of the institution.
- The budget will be overseen by the Managing Director with oversight from the Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic Standards & Quality.

Student Communities

- We currently do not have any Students' Association created or owned communities. If student interest seeks to create new organised and structured activity, we would look to create clear governance for this.
- At present, we provide support to spaces where student communities exist at the University through our best practice guidance document.

Amendments to the Constitution

- Once approved, the constitution will be reviewed at least every year within the development phase of the Students' Association, and in line with university governance.
- In addition, we will look to develop a set of bylaws which can be more regularly updated to reflect the service implementation of the Students' Association. *(Under consideration)*
- All documents will be approved by ASEC, but regular updates to the bylaws may be delegated to the Advisory Board, pending ASEC approval.