

Employer Advisory Board Policy

Classification – *Internal*

JUNE 2025



Introduction

This policy establishes a consistent framework for Employer Advisory Boards (EABs) across all faculties and schools of Arden University.

Through its External Advisory Boards, Arden University seeks to strengthen industry collaboration, enhance the quality and relevance of its curriculum, and improve student outcomes. EABs play a vital role in ensuring that programmes remain industry-relevant and responsive to evolving economic and technological trends. This approach also ensures alignment with higher education standards and regulatory expectations for external input in curriculum design and review.

EABs support compliance and best practice with:

- The **UK Quality Code** (QAA) requirements for external input into course design and review
- **Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB)** requirements for industry consultation
- The **Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)** criteria related to student outcomes and employer engagement
- **Office for Students (OfS)** priorities on employability, value for money, and graduate success

EABs are advisory and do not have formal governance or decision-making authority over Arden University, its finances, or academic programs. They provide insight, guidance, and recommendations without directing Arden University operations or curriculum.

About this policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with, amongst others:

- The Terms of Reference for Employer Advisory Boards.

Who is covered by the policy?

This policy applies to all Arden University staff members, as well as all members of the Employer Advisory Boards, including the Chairs. The policy applies to all existing and future EABs at any level (university, faculty, school, or program), defining their purpose, function, governance, and member expectations.

Definitions

- EAB – Employer Advisory Board
- Sponsor – The sponsor is responsible for the EAB's effectiveness. The board Sponsor is typically the Director of Employer Engagement and ensures advisory boards are established, and that the structure, terms of reference

and procedures are in place. The Sponsor also ensures an operational excellence and impact evaluation report is submitted to the Executive-level Employer Advisory Board annually.

- Chair – The Board Chair has additional leadership responsibilities. The Chair leads board meetings, supports agenda setting, and serves as liaison with the sponsor (Director of Employer Engagement). The sponsor ensures university action is taken where appropriate and closes the feedback loop with the Faculty and Education Committee. Once per year the Board Chair will also be required to attend the Executive-Level Employer Advisory Board as a member. This board is Co-chaired by the Provost and Deputy Provost.
- Deputy Chair - The Deputy Chair (typically a Dean) will provide relevant information about Arden University and programs, ensuring members are well-informed. They listen to and respond to the board's input, attending all EAB meetings and coordinating responses or actions based on recommendations. The Deputy Chair facilitates specific actions recommended by the board, oversees administrative needs, reviews board composition, and maintains membership records. Additionally, they champion the board within Arden University, advocating for its value and integrating industry contributions into Arden University's planning and quality assurance.
- EAB Coordinator - The EAB Coordinator is responsible for the overall administration of the EABs. They will receive and address questions, suggestions and/or concerns related to the operation of all EABs.

Policy responsibilities

- Our Academic Board has overall responsibility for ensuring this policy complies with internal and external regulatory requirements. The Academic Framework, Regulation and Policy Committee have delegated authority from the Academic Board for the approval and ongoing review of this policy.
- The Director of Employer Engagement has primary and day-to-day responsibility for developing and implementing this policy, monitoring its use and effectiveness, and the ongoing review of procedures to ensure they are effective.
- Management at all levels are responsible for ensuring those reporting to them understand this policy and how it applies to them.
- All colleagues are responsible for ensuring they understand this policy and how it applies to them.

Principles

Authority to Establish

Employer Advisory Boards (EABs) can be established at the faculty, school, or programme level when there is a clear rationale and alignment with institutional goals. The authority to establish an EAB lies with the Dean, Head of School, or a relevant member of the Arden University Executive Team, depending on the board's scope. The creation of a new EAB must be approved by the relevant senior academic (typically the Dean) and the EAB sponsor, the Director of Employer Engagement. For Arden University-level EABs, additional approval may be required from a senior executive body such as the Academic Board, Vice-Chancellor's Executive, or an equivalent authority.

Each EAB must operate under the Arden University defined Terms of Reference (ToR). The ToR outlines the board's purpose, membership composition, responsibilities, meeting frequency, and reporting lines.

All new EABs must be reported to their corresponding Faculty Board, and Education Committee as part of the regular updates to ensure institutional visibility, coordination, and consistency.

Each EAB is sponsored by the Director of Employer Engagement who ensures that board recommendations are communicated to relevant Arden University bodies (e.g. Education Committee) and aligned with institutional priorities.

The sponsor is responsible for the EAB's effectiveness, ensuring:

- Recommendations are shared with relevant Arden University bodies and considered in planning.
- Recommendations are shared across the Faculty and Schools and actions and proposals are considered and the implementation of any actions planned, recorded and evaluated.
- Focus remains on strategic, not operational, issues.
- Membership and advice align with Arden University priorities.
- EAB input supports program and industry relevance.
- An impact review to support operational excellence and effectiveness is carried out annually and reported to the Executive-Level Employer Advisory Board.

Reporting: Each EAB (Employer Advisory Board) provides advice to its associated Faculty. The outcomes and recommendations from EAB meetings are reported to the relevant Faculty Board for consideration. Key decisions and actions for noting are then forwarded to the Education Committee which is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the impact of initiatives influenced by EAB input. While EABs are not part of the formal governance structure, their insights serve as

a valuable and influential voice in shaping Faculty discussions and decisions, which are subsequently reported to the Education Committee.

In addition, EAB sponsors are required to submit an annual summary of EAB activities, performance, and outcomes to the Executive-level Employer Advisory Board. This overarching board includes the Chair of each EAB and is co-chaired by the Arden University Provost and Deputy Provost.

An annual summary of program-level activities and actions that have been considered and/or implemented should be included in the faculty's **Annual Monitoring Reports** as part of the Annual Monitoring Review process. This summary should evaluate changes, suggest improvements, and assess the impact on student outcomes and feedback. The involvement of the EABs and their members should be noted in this annual report.

Advisory Nature: EABs offer non-binding advice to inform decisions but do not replace academic governance. Arden University may restructure or disband inactive or misaligned EABs.

Student Voice: While students will not hold formal membership on the Employer Advisory Board, we fully recognise the value and importance of student lived experience in shaping meaningful and relevant educational and employment pathways.

To ensure that student perspectives are actively considered:

- **Student Voice will be a standing agenda item** at board meetings. This will provide a structured opportunity for student insights to be shared and discussed.
- **Students will be periodically invited to present** their experiences, feedback, and ideas directly to the board. These presentations may focus on curriculum relevance, placement experiences, employability support, or other pertinent topics.
- **Students may also contribute to the agenda** by submitting topics or questions through established channels prior to each meeting. These contributions will be reviewed and, where appropriate, incorporated into the board's discussions.

This approach ensures that the board remains responsive to the evolving needs and aspirations of our student community, while maintaining a governance structure that supports strategic employer engagement.

Membership Composition, Terms and Appointment

Composition and Membership Criteria: EABs must be comprised of external members from relevant sectors who have experience and insight into industry trends, workforce needs, and graduate employability, and who align with Arden University values. Members should demonstrate professionalism and ethical standards consistent with Arden University's values and be committed to upholding its mission of education and inclusivity. External members, who provide

advice and consensus, may include employers, alumni, professional bodies, public sector leaders, and entrepreneurs. Where possible, each board should include alumni representation to ensure the graduate perspective is represented. Internal members (e.g., Deans, Heads, academic leads) may attend in an ex officio or observer capacity.

Typical board size is 4–10 members, with at least one external advisor per department within the school, but may vary depending on the scope of the faculty or programme.

Appointment Process: EAB members are appointed by Arden University invitation. The Director of Employer Engagement and/or Chair identify candidates through industry outreach, nominations, and networks. Due diligence (e.g. interview, skills matrix, conflict and background checks) will be conducted.

Qualified candidates are assessed for fit, diversity, and balance. Selected individuals are formally invited by the Provost, with details on the role, term, and expectations, along with the Terms of Reference and policy. Once accepted, members are formally appointed and welcomed. Appointments may be announced internally or publicly to acknowledge their contribution

Members serve voluntarily and are not paid, though reasonable meeting-related expenses (e.g. travel, parking) may be reimbursed per Arden University policy. The primary benefit is the opportunity to support education and future workforce development.

Term of Membership: To ensure continuity and fresh perspectives, EAB members are appointed for a defined term. The standard term of service is two 2 years, with the possibility of renewal for additional term(s). In many cases, a three-year term may be used for convenience; in practice, 2-3 year terms are common. This should be specified in the appointment. Members may be re-appointed for consecutive terms, typically up to a maximum cumulative period of service (e.g. no more than 6 years consecutively). After serving the maximum period (such as two consecutive 3-year terms), a member would normally step down for at least one term before being eligible to rejoin, unless an extension is approved due to exceptional need. Time served as the Board Chair may be counted separately (for example, if a member becomes Chair, their term as Chair might not count against their term as a regular member).

To maintain momentum and knowledge within the board, terms of members should be staggered. Staggering means not all memberships expire at the same time; instead, a portion of members will roll off each year or each cycle. This approach preserves continuity (experienced members remain while new members come on board) and prevents the loss of the entire board's institutional memory at once. The sponsor or coordinator should track term dates and plan rotations accordingly.

A member may resign before the end of their term by notifying the Chair or sponsor. Arden University may also end a member's term early if necessary – for example, due to a change in the member's role that creates a conflict of interest,

persistent non-attendance, or conduct that violates Arden University policies. All members serve “at the pleasure” of Arden University, meaning Arden University (through the sponsor or relevant executive) can remove or replace members if warranted. Removal would typically be preceded by discussion (for instance, if a member is not participating, they might be asked if they wish to continue) and a formal thank-you for any contributions made.

Chairperson (Chair): Each EAB is led by a Chair, typically an external industry representative to reinforce the board's external focus. The Provost appoints the Chair, often selecting a respected industry figure or a long-serving board member with demonstrated leadership. At Arden University level, an external Chair is preferred or required. At the faculty or school level, an internal Chair (e.g., the Dean) may be appointed, if necessary, but an external Chair is preferred to maximise the board’s independent viewpoint. The Chair’s term may coincide with their board membership term (e.g., a 2-year term, renewable). A Deputy Chair will assist the Chair and act as Chair on occasion in their absence.

Appointment of Chair: The Provost invites a member to serve as Chair. If accepted, the member takes on additional responsibilities. If an external Chair cannot be identified initially, the Deputy Chair (typically the Dean of the Faculty) or another senior staff member may serve as interim Chair, intending to hand over to an external Chair once identified.

Administrative Support (Coordinator): The sponsor assigns a Employer Advisory Board Coordinator (often a faculty executive officer or administrative assistant) to support EAB operations. The coordinator handles logistics: scheduling meetings, distributing agendas and documents, taking minutes, tracking membership terms, and maintaining records. They ensure a current list of members and contact information is maintained and may update any central registry of advisory boards. The coordinator serves as a point of contact for administrative needs and helps the Chair and Deputy Chair execute meetings effectively

Roles and Responsibilities of Board Members

Board members act as strategic advisors, advocates, and ambassadors. Responsibilities include:

- **Providing expert insight:** Share knowledge on emerging industry trends, skills demand, and future workforce needs.
- **Offer strategic guidance:** Advise on program content, curriculum design, and learning outcomes for new program development, program reviews and program changes.
- **Support Employability initiatives:** Actively support initiatives that improve student employability. This can include identifying internships, live briefs, mentorship, or job opportunities for students and graduates at the members’ organisations or networks.

- **Advise on Student Performance:** Provide feedback on student performance, graduate success, and Arden University reputation within key employment sectors.
- **Foster Partnerships:** Championing Arden University programmes externally and promoting industry-university collaboration

The board **Sponsor** is typically the Director of Employer Engagement and ensures advisory boards are established, and that the structure, terms of reference and procedures are in place. The Sponsor also ensures an operational excellence and impact evaluation report is submitted to the Executive-level Employer Advisory Board annually.

The **Board Chair** has additional leadership responsibilities. The Chair leads board meetings, supports agenda setting, and serves as liaison with the sponsor (Director of Employer Engagement). The sponsor ensures university action is taken where appropriate and closes the feedback loop with the Faculty and Education Committee. Once per year the Board Chair will also be required to attend the Executive-Level Employer Advisory Board as a member. This board is Co-chaired by the Provost and Deputy Provost.

The **Deputy Chair** (typically a Dean) will provide relevant information about Arden University and programs, ensuring members are well-informed. They listen to and respond to the board's input, attending all EAB meetings and coordinating responses or actions based on recommendations. The Deputy Chair facilitates specific actions recommended by the board, oversees administrative needs, reviews board composition, and maintains membership records. Additionally, they champion the board within Arden University, advocating for its value and integrating industry contributions into Arden University's planning and quality assurance.

The EAB Coordinator is responsible for the overall administration of the EABs. They will receive and address questions, suggestions and/or concerns related to the operation of all EABs.

Meetings and Operations

Arden University standard is that EABs will conduct two-three meetings per year, with documentation of meetings and follow-up of EAB recommendations according to AU procedures outlined below.

1. The Education Committee ensures EABs are established and there are procedures to support their operation.
2. Membership management:
 - a. Through the Deputy Chair(s) (Deans), schools are responsible for ensuring the suitability of EAB candidates and have the right to appoint or terminate a member.
 - b. A Membership List will be kept up to date by the EAB Chair or EAB Coordinator.

- c. If the board reached a consensus on a suggestion, it should be documented in the meeting minutes.
- d. Orientation: as new or reappointed members join, they will receive the Welcome Package from either the EAB Chair, Deputy Chair(s) or Sponsor.
- e. Terms: membership terms are typically two years (they may be extended to a maximum of six consecutive years) and are reviewed annually based on participation and program needs.
- f. Ethical Conduct of Meetings: The Chair and sponsor are responsible for upholding these standards during meetings. If a member's behaviour is disruptive or unethical, the Chair should address it (possibly with a warning or private conversation). Continued issues could lead to the sponsor removing that member from the board. All members should foster a culture of honesty and mutual respect, where industry and academic perspectives are valued equally.

3. EAB management:

- a. The Arden University standard is that EABs will conduct two-three meetings per year. As a minimum board must meet once a year. They can be held in person, via teleconference or virtual meetings, or a blend of those listed. Minutes will be recorded regardless of the format of the meeting. Quorum is 50% of external members.

4. Document management:

- a. Approved templates and documents are provided for the consistent operation of EABs. The templates must be used as outlined to support consistency and information sharing at Arden University.
- b. Reports will be provided to the members prior to or during the meeting. All documents are considered confidential unless otherwise noted.
- c. EAB Coordinator will save and manage files in line with Arden University's Record Retention Policy.
- d. A Sub-committee or the formation of a Task and Finish Group (if required), its purpose, and approximate conclusion date should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which it is formed.

5. EAB involvement:

- a. Program reviews: members will contribute to continuous quality improvement at Arden University through input during applicable annual program reviews, as defined in Arden University's EAB policies and procedures.
- b. Major program changes: all major program changes, as they relate to vocational content, will be presented and discussed, and such discussions will be noted in writing through minutes of the meetings or email confirmation.
- c. New program development: where program affinity exists, the appropriate EAB will be consulted in the concept and development phase of the new program design.

6. Review and Continuous Improvement:

- a. An annual summary of program-level activities and actions that have been considered and/or implemented should be included in the **Annual Monitoring Reports**. This summary should evaluate changes, suggest improvements, and assess the impact on student outcomes and feedback. The involvement of the EABs and their members should be noted in this annual report.
- b. In addition, each EAB must:
 - i. Contribute to an annual report coordinated by the sponsor, the Director of Employer Engagement, summarising an annual self-review of performance, focus and value-added. This will be reported to the Executive-level Employer Advisory Board for review.
 - ii. Participate in periodic feedback and member evaluation processes
 - iii. Review membership composition and ToR annually

7. Conflict of Interest:

EAB members must act in the best interests of Arden University's mission and programs, avoiding situations where personal, professional, or financial interests conflict with their advisory role. Members should disclose any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest to the EAB Chair or sponsor at the start of their service and regularly thereafter.

- a. To ensure that all EAB business is conducted in a fair and unbiased manner, the following procedures will be followed:
 - i. Membership of a EAB will be reviewed to guard against known conflicts of interest through the nomination and review process.
 - ii. Conflicts must be managed according to Arden University policy, often requiring the member to recuse themselves from discussions or recommendation on the affected topic.
 - iii. The EAB agenda should include a standing item at the start of each meeting to identify any conflicts with agenda items. If a conflict is noted, it should be recorded in the minutes, and the member should abstain from related discussions.
 - iv. Should circumstances of a member's employment change during their term and concerns regarding conflict of interest be identified, the Sponsor will address this with the EAB Chair for further discussion with the member.

7. The sponsor can recommend the disbanding or suspension of a EAB to the Board.

8. Questions, suggestions or concerns regarding an individual EAB or the advisory boards in general will be directed to the EAB Chair or EAB Coordinator.

Confidentiality and Conduct

All board members must:

- Sign a contract with Arden University and pass background checks in line with Arden University's recruitment practices.
- Declare and manage any potential conflicts of interest

- Abide by Arden University's Code of Conduct and values
- Engage respectfully, professionally, and collaboratively in all interactions

Members serve as independent advisors, not as representatives of their organisations, and must act in the best interest of Arden University and its students.

Review and Continuous Improvement

Each EAB must:

- Undertake an annual self-review of performance, focus, and value added
- Contribute to an annual report coordinated by the sponsor
- Participate in periodic feedback and member evaluation processes
- Review membership composition and ToR annually

Arden University monitors the impact of EABs on programme development, quality assurance, and industry engagement. Contributions are formally acknowledged, and outgoing members may receive recognition for their service.

Arden University will review this policy every three years or as required.

Strategic and Regulatory Alignment

EABs directly support Arden University's strategic aims for external engagement, graduate employability, and curriculum innovation. They help ensure programmes are industry-aligned and responsive to economic and technological change.

EABs also support compliance and best practice with:

- The **UK Quality Code (QAA)** requirements for external input into course design and review
- **Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB)** requirements for industry consultation
- The **Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)** criteria related to student outcomes and employer engagement
- **Office for Students (OfS)** priorities on employability, value for money, and graduate success

Oversight is provided by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor or equivalent. Faculties and schools must maintain up-to-date records of EAB activity and demonstrate how employer input informs academic delivery and quality enhancement.

Adherence to Policy

All faculties, schools, and departments must follow this EAB Policy to ensure consistency and compliance. Non-compliance could expose Arden University to reputational or regulatory risks and will be addressed by the policy owner. Arden University is committed to enforcing this policy as it reflects our educational philosophy and compliance obligations.

This Employer Advisory Board Policy embodies Arden University's commitment to academic excellence through partnership. By involving employers and industry experts in decision-making, we enrich our programs, enhance student success, and meet oversight expectations. EABs help Arden University stay responsive, accountable, and forward-looking in a changing world of work. Adhering to this policy and collaborating with faculty and industry advisors ensures our educational offerings meet the needs of students, employers, and society, upholding the highest standards of quality and relevance.

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