

Teaching Observation Policy

Classification – *Internal*

MARCH 2026



Introduction

This policy outlines Arden University's approach to fostering and maintaining teaching excellence, as well as supporting staff development through teaching observations. The approach is designed to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, thereby facilitating a holistic learning experience for all students which can be translated into positive student outcomes.

This policy ensures compliance with the Office for Students regulatory requirements, including B1, B2, and B4, thereby securing standards, in addition to ensuring we deliver a high-quality educational experience for students through teaching development and enhancement.

About this policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- [CELT Teaching Observations Sharepoint pages](#)
- [Continuous Professional Development Policy](#)
- [Associate Lecturer Policy](#)
- [Probation Review Policy](#)
- [Performance Improvement Policy](#)

Aims of this policy

The policy is designed to support colleagues at Arden University in engaging with teaching observation. This is so that:

- The quality of teaching at Arden University always facilitates a holistic learning experience for students
- The Arden University Teaching Excellence Standards are supported and used consistently across the University
- Opportunities for continuous professional development for staff are identified and accessed
- Staff development efforts are aligned with the university's priorities

- Outstanding practice is recognised, disseminated, and rewarded (e.g. via staff recognition awards, and other professional recognition such as categories of Advance HE Fellowship).

Overall, the policy provides a supportive system that enables recognition of outstanding quality¹ of teaching across the university; and encourages individual reflection, organisational learning, and ongoing improvement in teaching practice and environments.

Who is covered by the policy?

This policy applies to all staff working for Arden University on all campuses or remotely, who are directly involved in delivering teaching, learning, and assessment, as well as those in supporting roles, within Arden's blended and distance learning provision. This includes lecturers (all levels), associate lecturers, librarians who deliver or support student-facing sessions, academic skills tutors, , and research supervisors. Collectively, these individuals are referred to as "staff who support learning and teaching" throughout the policy.

This policy does not apply to these staff when they are teaching/supporting apprenticeship programmes. A specific teaching observation approach (Learner Experience Reviews) is in place for apprenticeships, which have a different regulator than other HE provision (Ofsted). Staff who teach/support learning and teaching in Faculties and on apprenticeship programmes should be aware that both the types of teaching observations in this policy and Learner Experience Reviews apply to them.

Where authentication of teaching practice by observation is required as part of a taught programme of study, the Developmental Guided Teaching Observation type specified in this policy will apply.

¹ Outstanding quality is based on definition offered in [Regulatory Advice 22: Guidance on the Teaching Excellence Framework](#). The focus of quality of teaching should influence student experience and translate into positive outcomes for all students at Arden University.

Definitions and terms

Teaching observation/observation of teaching: observation of colleagues involved in the delivery of teaching or support for learning during live teaching sessions in both blended and distance learning, for the purposes of university-wide teaching quality enhancement and supporting continuous professional development of the staff members being observed.

ALW: Arden Learning Walks

DGTO: Developmental Guided Teaching Observation

LER: Learner Experience Review

POT: Peer Observation of Teaching

TES: Arden University's Teaching Excellence Standards

Policy responsibilities

Responsibility for the policy. The Teaching Excellence Academy within the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching will ensure the policy is reviewed annually and before the start of each new academic year. The ultimate responsibility and accountability for implementation of teaching observation schemes lies with the Academic Board at Arden University.

Training for observers and staff being observed. The Teaching Excellence Academy will offer dedicated training sessions for all relevant colleagues involved in one or more type of teaching observations as indicated below in 2.1.4. The training sessions will be published on the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching homepage and updated regularly.

Policy delivery. All staff who support learning and teaching, including their managers or nominees, are responsible for ensuring they understand this policy and how it applies to them.

1. Principles

- Growth orientation: teaching observations have a developmental focus to enhance the quality of teaching, and to identify opportunities for organisational learning.
- Clarity and transparency: teaching observations have clear criteria and standards alongside which staff will be observed.
- Support for development will be offered institutionally; and where required, will be tailored to the specific needs and requirements of the staff engaging with teaching observation.
- Access to data for quality enhancement: The data collected will be shared with relevant stakeholders to ensure regular monitoring of practice, and there will be a clear purpose and necessity for this.
- Data confidentiality: this policy follows Arden University's data retention policy and is compliant with GDPR requirements.
- Arden University's SPARK values are applied to teaching observations to: develop and recognise teaching excellence (*Resourceful* and *Stand-out*); encourage innovation and scholarship in teaching (*Progressive*); and provide a supportive, developmental approach for colleagues who are being observed to help them to thrive in their role (*Kindness* and *Accessible*).

2. Policy Detail

2.1 Teaching observation roles and activities

1. All staff who directly support learning and teaching at Arden University will have their teaching/support for learning activity observed according to the types, frequency and timing of observations specified in this policy.

2. Line managers or an appropriate nominee will manage and carry out observations of teaching according to the type or types that are relevant for the members of staff they manage/are responsible for. This includes identifying and communicating which type of observations each staff member requires each academic year, and identifying appropriate peer-observation pairs as required.
3. All observations of teaching must take place by the observer attending in person at the time of delivery, in both blended and distance learning sessions. Recordings of taught sessions should not be used instead of live attendance to ensure all the resources and student engagement in the real-time learning environment can be considered by the observer. Only if significant extenuating circumstances occur should a recording be used, as it could disadvantage the colleague being observed.
4. All staff who will be observing (DGTOs, POTs and ALWs) must attend relevant observer training prior to observing and the completion of the appropriate form that captures observation data in the Teaching Observations Dashboard. DGTO observers must undertake observer training and standardisation annually. ALW training may be revised for each iteration dependent on the focus of that round and must be attended by observers prior to each round of ALW observations.
5. Where staff members are observed both according to this policy and through LERs for apprenticeships, line managers should clarify with their reporting staff if a recent LER has taken place when scheduling DGTOs or POTs to avoid over-observation within a short time-period.
6. Observed staff members must keep their line manager informed of when they have undertaken POT or been observed with a LER to enable appropriate scheduling of any other observations and to provide valuable evidence for their Quarterly Development Reviews.
7. Where staff members are required to have their teaching observed for the purpose of authentication of practice for a taught programme or qualification via a DGTO, line managers should ensure that staff are not

subject to multiple DGTO observations within one academic year unless there is a clear performance or development requirement. Where the staff member is due to undertake POT, the observation for authentication of practice observation meets policy requirements, though additional POT observations are encouraged.

8. The Teaching Excellence Academy will: provide training, resources and support for all parties involved in teaching observation; report to the Teaching Observations Review Meeting and other committees as required; and provide support for line managers or their nominee when requested if issues of performance arise during an observation.

2.2 Types of Teaching Observation

This policy covers four types of teaching observations in use at Arden University. They are illustrated in Figure 1 and briefly described in Table 1. Our Arden colleague is at the centre of the overall approach. They will all have an initial micro-teaching experience during New Academic Staff Orientation (NASO). This is followed by use of a Developmental Guided approach of observation. As a continuous enhancement opportunity, staff will engage in Peer Observation of Teaching. Arden Learning Walks will offer high level, whole-university snapshots of quality of teaching and the learning environment.

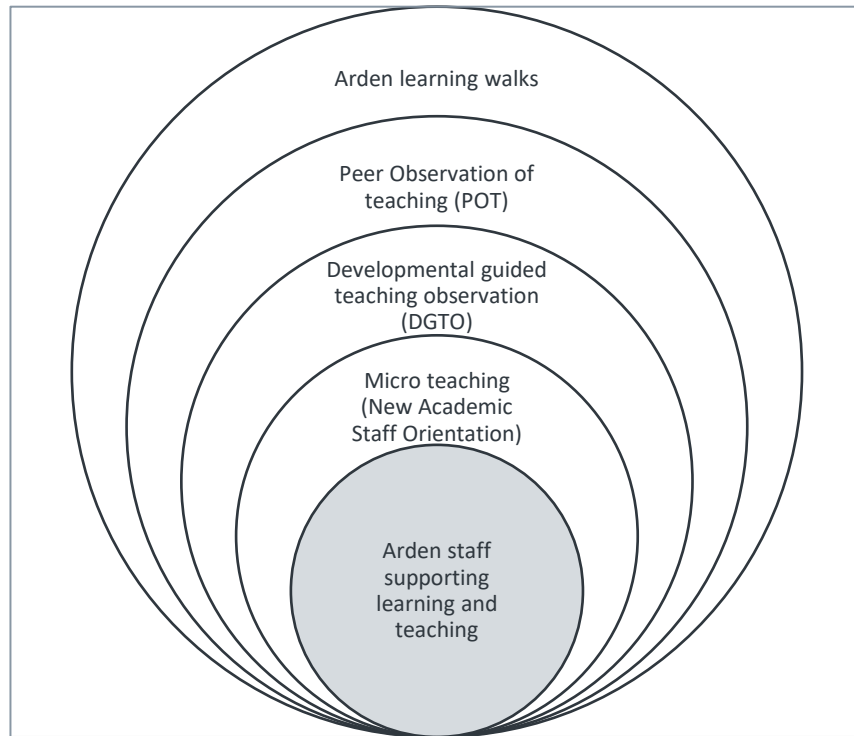


Figure 1: Types of teaching observations. Staff supporting teaching and learning will be introduced to the Arden Teaching Excellence Standards during the micro-teach and will continue to develop practice through DGTO & POT. ALW will offer high level snapshot of university teaching quality.

Teaching Observation Type	Purpose	Use	Frequency and Timing	Evidence
Micro-teaching for new teaching staff during NASO	To orientate new staff to Ardens' teaching and learning approach, and to commence their development with us	Developmental observations take place during NASO and are led by the Teaching Excellence Academy (TEA). Micro-teaches enable participants to gain support for, and confidence in, their practice. New colleagues identify their developmental needs to support probationary reviews as they settle into Arden University.	Micro-teaching will take place during new staff orientations. These orientations are scheduled for the start of a new semester.	Staff submit a digital form with developmental goals. A copy of the form will automatically be emailed to the line manager and the colleague. TEA maintains a central dashboard that logs the forms that have been submitted.
Developmental Guided Teaching Observations (DGTO)	To develop and guide individuals, to support the quality of teaching at Arden University	Observation of teaching practice is conducted by a line manager or experienced colleague from the University who has completed observer training through the Teaching Excellence Academy (TEA). TEA provides training for observers, and guidance for staff being observed, before the observation.	For all teaching staff during an academic year, and then usually within a 3-year cycle as a minimum. For new staff joining Arden, DGTO should take place in the first three months of probation. For associate lecturers this would normally be in their first teaching semester. Line managers can conduct more than one DGTO (usually no more than 2 in any one year, with no less than 3 months between them) for staff for one or more reasons, such as: • Rating of a four, more than once • students have raised specific concerns • the end of module data • as a part of an NSS action plan • to support professional development (e.g. a fellowship application, a PgCert requirement etc). In addition, a line manager or the colleague being observed should request another observer be used for subsequent observations. This may be someone outside the local team and nominated by CELT/TEA.	The digital form is submitted after a discussion between the observer and the staff observed. This contains observations and agreed next steps. Where inadequate or problematic practice is observed repeatedly, that is: after two instances of completed DGTO, with a development plan that has been followed, where the staff still scores a four in two or more standards, the line manager will consult with CELT to seek additional tailored support (which may include additional DGTOs). A central dashboard is maintained that logs the form submitted and holds the data.

Peer Observation of Teaching (POT)	To support reflection and growth via collaboration with peers	A developmental opportunity for peers to observe one another's teaching. Prior to their participation, TEA provides training for both partners so they can both observe and be observed.	To be undertaken every year when DGTO is not scheduled. Peer observation should involve different pairings of colleagues in each POT cycle. Staff are encouraged to undertake a number of Peer Observations of Teaching every year to support collaborative practice enhancement and innovation, including during a DGTO year.	A digital form is submitted after peers have observed each other and engaged in discussion agreeing on actions and next steps. A central dashboard is maintained that logs the form submitted and holds all the data.
Arden Learning Walks (ALW)	To establish organisational baselines for quality of teaching within our learning environments	10-15 mins of snapshot observation. A holistic observation of teaching and learning across the university to support and evaluate strategic interventions. ALWs are managed by CELT with appropriate staff identified to conduct them. Standardisation training meetings scheduled before each walk support consistency between observers.	3-4 times per academic year. The schedule and focus is determined by CELT and university priorities. Staff who are rated with a four in any standard will be supported and may be asked to participate in a DGTO (this is because the ALW is a snapshot of practice within a context). Advance notice is given of the dates for ALWs, but not for which sessions will be observed.	A digital form is submitted for each ALW observation. A central dashboard is maintained that logs the forms and data submitted by ALW observers.

Table 1: Teaching Observation types, use, frequency, and timing.

2.3 Relationship of Teaching Observations and apprenticeship Learner Experience Reviews

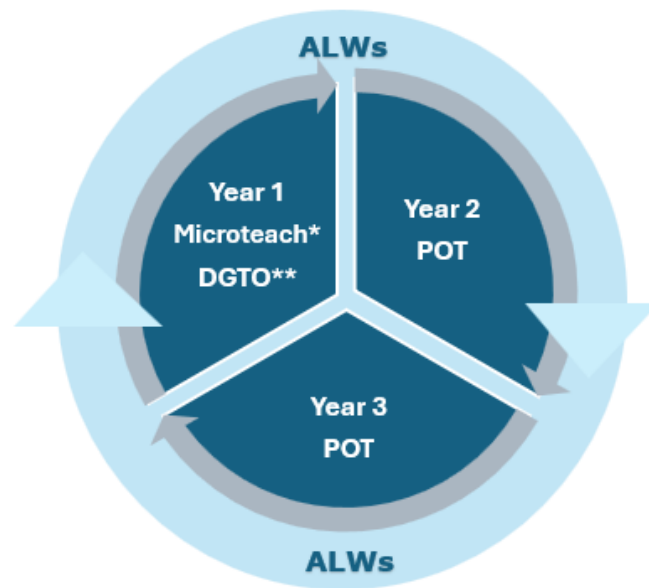
Learner Experience Reviews (LERs) are a further type of teaching observation at Arden University but are not within scope for this policy. LERs apply specifically to observation of teaching on apprenticeships only and the data from LERs is captured in a separate dashboard.

The Teaching Excellence Academy and the Apprenticeships Quality team will liaise regularly to share learning from the two observation schemes to support university-wide insights into teaching quality and to inform the CPD that is developed or to direct staff who support learning and teaching on apprenticeships to appropriate CPD opportunities.

LER observation updates will be presented at Teaching Observation Review Meetings (TORM) that take place quarterly to disseminate key data to Faculty and campus leadership teams.

2.4 The three-year teaching observation cycle for individual staff who support learning and teaching

The cycle of teaching observations as they occur for an individual member of staff who supports learning and teaching is as follows:



*Microteaches happen once only, when a new staff member joins the university.

**DGTOs happen once every three years as a minimum but may take place more often.

Figure 2 The three-year cycle of Teaching Observations

In year four the cycle begins again without a microteach and continues through each staff member's employment in a role that involves direct activity supporting learning and teaching.

ALWs are continual but intermittent throughout the cycle; they are focused on the university-wide picture not an individual's practice and development.

2.5 Criteria for teaching observation

Within each type of teaching observation in this policy the criteria for evaluation (DGTO), and development (ALW, POT, micro-teach) are premised on Arden University's Teaching Excellence Standards. How each colleague who supports teaching and learning would apply these in practice is summarised in Table 2 below, with further details available here: [Teaching Excellence Standards](#).

Standards	Description
Planning and Adaptation	Effectiveness of lesson planning and adaptation
Positive Educational Relationships	Fostering supportive classroom interactions
Subject Knowledge	Depth of knowledge and its application
Teaching and Learning Strategies	Use of innovative and effective teaching methods
Resource Utilisation	Effective use of resources, including technology
Formative Assessment and Feedback	Monitoring progress and providing feedback
Equality and Diversity	Promoting inclusivity and respect for diversity
Reflective Practice and Research	Applying reflection and research to improve teaching
Professionalism	Demonstrating professional conduct and engagement.

Table 2 The Arden Teaching Excellence Standards

The nine Teaching Excellence Standards represent a holistic overview of what is expected and required as the baseline standards to which staff teaching (or supporting learning) for students at Arden University will work towards.

From a regulatory and quality enhancement perspective, the nine standards are aligned to Teaching Excellence Framework criteria, namely: student outcomes and student experience; Office for Students (OfS) B conditions (Quality and Standards); and Professional Standards Framework (PSF) (Advance HE), respectively.

All nine standards have descriptors of practice to support transparent and objective observation feedback. The descriptors are given a rating of 1 to 4 to enable aggregation of the data in the dashboard, with 1 indicating the most effective practice and 4 indicating practice that requires considerable

improvement. The criterion grid can be accessed here: [Teaching Excellence Standards Criteria](#).

Any standard that the observer is not *intentionally* observing will not receive a rating from the observer. An observer will indicate when they are observing to evaluate practice for a standard even if they do not see evidence of it, as this is a likely indication of an area of improvement for the observed staff member. The follow-up questions in the observation form provide a space to articulate the nature of the improvement(s) required.

Teaching Excellence Standards observed		
DGTO	POT	ALW
All 9 standards	3 standards identified from discussion between the two academic partners	As many standards as are evident in the time observed, or specified standards if the ALW round has a focus

Table 3 Teaching Excellence Standards observed during each type of teaching observation

2.6 Responding to observed excellence and practice that requires improvement

- If a staff member being observed receives a rating of 1 for any standard, and is demonstrating excellent teaching within the observation, the observer will document the detail and make recommendations for the sharing of the excellent practice via the MS Form submitted.
- If a staff member being observed receives a rating of 4 for any standard in DGTO or ALW, and thus improvements must be made, the processes to support the staff member concerned are indicated in Table 1, depending on which type of observation has been undertaken. Line managers are responsible for this, and the CELT team is available to support them on request.

2.7 Records of teaching observation feedback

All feedback for observations will be recorded using a digitised form. The data will be collated in a central dashboard for organisational, campus and faculty quality monitoring purposes. The forms can be accessed here:

- [Developmental Guided Teaching Observations](#) (live form)
- [Peer Observation of Teaching](#) (live form)
- [Arden Learning Walks \(ALW\)](#) (exemplar October 2025 live form)
- [Micro-teaching \(within new staff orientations\)](#) (live form)

2.8 Compliance, access to data, and monitoring

Data from teaching observation will comply with Arden University's Data Protection Policy. This policy process connects personal data to evaluation. To ensure all impacted staff are informed about data protection in Teaching Observations, a Privacy Notice is provided in line with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act (2018). The Privacy Notice clarifies the collection, use and storage of the public task data. This will be linked to the Arden University Data Protection Policy. The statement is provided on the Teaching Observations homepage, and at the top of each teaching observations form that is submitted post-observation.

- **Named members of the TEA, and the Director of CELT** will have central access to all dashboards, to ensure monitoring, prompt identification and responses towards continuous enhancement.
- **Directors/Deans, Heads of Schools and Departments** will have access to data in ALW, DGTO and POT dashboards only for their respective areas, to support monitoring.

On submission of the relevant MS Form, automated emails send PDF copies for each scheme to the following:

- DGTO: observer and colleague being observed
- POT: both partners

- Micro-teach: the colleague being observed and their new line manager, after successful completion of New Academic Staff Orientation.

ALWs: no copies of ALWs observation forms will be emailed as the observation is a snapshot of practice and the purpose is organisational learning. CELT will share aggregated versions of pseudo-anonymised² data with Deans and Heads of Schools/Departments as required.

2.9 Impact evaluation

Based on the above, pseudo-anonymised data may be monitored by course teams and faculties against module feedback, NSS, and overall programme data to design, deliver, and evaluate staff development opportunities. Data from the dashboard can be used for the purposes of annual monitoring reviews.

CELT will evaluate the organisational picture of teaching quality evidenced through the dashboard data and provide reporting through TORM on this. CELT will also use data to evaluate the impact of the CPD provided by CELT in response to previous reports, and the extent to which it is driving teaching quality improvements.

3.0 Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out for the Teaching Observations Policy in 2024. As the observation types and processes have not been changed in this revised policy, it has been confirmed that the existing EIA applies to the revised policy (V3).

² 'Pseudo-anonymised here indicates that data is provided without the names of the individuals concerned, but other features could identify them if traced back to timetables, module taught, location, time etc.

APPENDIX 1 Learner Experience Reviews supporting information

LERs are observations of the learner experience in apprenticeships, and as such come under the regulatory requirement of Ofsted rather than the Office for Students. LERs are overseen by the Apprenticeships Quality Team, not the Teaching Excellence Academy. There are distinct criteria for evaluation of teaching and supporting learning in a LER observation, and a separate dashboard to capture the data, which supports evaluation, monitoring, quality assurance and enhancement of the learner experience on apprenticeship programmes in line with Ofsted regulatory requirements.

There is a need to recognise LERs within the Teaching Observation Policy as there is a relationship between the different types of observations that take place across the university. While the regulatory frameworks are different, and therefore the processes and criteria for observations also differ, there is valuable organisational learning to be drawn from sharing data and insights between the two observation schemes. These are the key features of LERs:

Teaching Observation Type	Purpose	Use	Frequency and Timing	Evidence
Learner Experience Reviews (LER)	The purpose of LER is not to make any overall judgement (or grading) about the performance of an individual, but to observe the quality of experience our apprentices receive and how this impacts the progress they are making.	Learner Experience Review observations are conducted by a member of the Apprenticeship Quality Team or a Senior Academic from the University who has completed LER training through the Corporate Learning Team. These observations are used to review all learner touchpoints, ensuring that the learner experience remains of consistent high quality. The touchpoints observed include induction, progress reviews, coaching sessions, and tutor sessions.	All delivery staff are subject to a minimum of one live observation per year. For new staff joining Arden, an observation will be conducted using the LER criteria within the first 3 months. Additional live observations may take place based on the result of initial observations. No notice observations may be conducted as part of a deep dive, internal verification, or learning walk, subject to factors including apprentice/client feedback and regulatory changes	The observation evidence is captured on the LER observation App and a digital form is submitted after a discussion between the observer and the staff member observed. This form includes observations and agreed next steps. A copy of the observation form is shared with the staff member and their line manager, with the actions used to inform the individuals development plan

Table A: Learner Experience Review purpose, use, frequency, and timing

Staff who teach or support learning on both faculty degree programmes and apprenticeship programmes will be observed under both the observations in the Teaching Observations Policy, and the Learner Experience Reviews. Line managers should make sure that their reporting staff are aware of this where they teach on both types of provision.

Further information on LER observations is available in this document: [Policy, Procedure and Guidance for Higher Apprenticeships](#), see sections 27.5-27.7, page 28.

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