

Personal Academic Coaching Policy

Academic Policy

Policy information	
Policy owner	Provost and Chief Academic Officer
Responsible department	Academic Affairs
Approval body	Academic Board
Policy reference	QA106
Version	1.0
Effective date	Date approved by Academic Board
Review cycle	Annual, or earlier where required
Next review	Twelve months after approval

1 Purpose and status

This policy establishes Personal Academic Coaching as Arden University's institutional framework for proactive academic guidance. It defines the minimum requirements, responsibilities and controls through which every student in scope has access to a named academic who supports engagement, academic development, continuation, progression and completion.

Personal Academic Coaching is part of the University's academic model. It complements teaching, assessment and specialist student services; it does not replace them. Operational guidance, service standards and implementation arrangements sit beneath this policy and must remain consistent with it.

The policy supports the University's academic and student success strategies, Access and Participation commitments, and its responsibilities for academic quality and student outcomes, including relevant Office for Students conditions and the Teaching Excellence Framework.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all registered Arden University students, irrespective of programme, level, location or mode of study, and to all staff with responsibilities for Personal Academic Coaching, its leadership, delivery, support or assurance. Its application within collaborative provision must be reflected in the relevant partnership agreement and quality arrangements so that students receive an equivalent and clearly communicated form of academic coaching.

The requirement to allocate a named Personal Academic Coach applies in accordance with the University's approved implementation plan. Transitional arrangements may determine the order in which cohorts enter the model, but may not dilute the requirements of this policy for cohorts within scope.

3 Definitions

Term	Meaning
Personal Academic Coaching	A structured, developmental academic relationship that supports a student's engagement, reflection, academic progress and increasing independence through regular guidance, constructive challenge and timely intervention.
Personal Academic Coach or PAC	An academic member of staff assigned a defined student caseload as part of their wider academic role. The PAC continues to undertake teaching and other academic duties.
PAC Team Leader	The academic role responsible for day-to-day coordination, consistency and quality assurance of PAC delivery within an academic area. The role reports through the relevant Head of Department or equivalent.
Academic coaching	Purposeful conversations and agreed actions that help students understand their progress, respond to feedback, prepare for academic milestones, address barriers to engagement and develop as independent learners.
Specialist services	University services with expertise beyond the PAC remit, including wellbeing, disability and inclusion, safeguarding, academic skills, careers and employability, finance, immigration advice and independent student advice.

4 Policy principles

Personal Academic Coaching will be governed by the following principles:

- Every student in scope has equitable access to a named Personal Academic Coach.
- Coaching is proactive, developmental, inclusive and proportionate to student need.

- The relationship promotes student agency, academic confidence, belonging and increasing independence.
- Interventions are informed by evidence and professional judgement; learning analytics support, but do not replace, human judgement.
- The PAC role complements teaching and specialist services and operates within clear professional boundaries.
- Responsibilities are incorporated transparently into academic workload planning.
- A common institutional framework secures consistency while permitting appropriate flexibility for discipline, programme, cohort and mode of study.
- The quality and impact of PAC are evaluated through student feedback, equitable student outcomes and continuous enhancement.

5 Institutional requirements

- 5.1** The University will allocate each student in scope a named PAC and provide clear information about the PAC's identity, remit, contact route and the support available.
- 5.2** Faculties will seek to provide continuity of the coaching relationship. Where a PAC changes or is unavailable for a sustained period, an alternative arrangement must be made and communicated promptly.
- 5.3** Coaching will combine planned contact at relevant points in the student lifecycle with responsive and risk-informed contact where engagement, attendance, assessment or progression concerns arise.
- 5.4** Minimum service standards for contact, response, recording and escalation will be specified in approved operational guidance. Faculties may enhance, but must not fall below, those standards.
- 5.5** PAC activity must be accessible across blended and distance learning modes. Reasonable adjustments must be made where required, and students must not be disadvantaged by location, disability, protected characteristic or pattern of study.
- 5.6** Coaching interactions, significant concerns, agreed actions and referrals must be recorded promptly in the approved University system to support continuity, accountability and appropriate follow-up.
- 5.7** Where a student does not respond, the PAC will make proportionate further attempts in line with operational guidance. Persistent or material concerns must be escalated through the appropriate academic or specialist route.

6 The role and boundaries of the Personal Academic Coach

6.1 Core responsibilities

A PAC is expected to:

- establish a constructive academic relationship and explain the purpose and limits of the role;
- support transition, goal setting, reflection, assessment readiness, progression planning and increasing academic independence;
- review relevant engagement and performance information and use professional judgement to identify emerging academic risk;
- make timely, proportionate contact and agree clear actions with the student;
- help the student understand academic feedback and identify how to act on it, without editing or pre-marking assessed work;
- refer students to the appropriate specialist service where needs fall outside the PAC remit;
- follow up the academic implications of a referral while respecting the specialist service's responsibility for its casework; and
- maintain accurate, relevant and professional records.

6.2 Matters outside the PAC remit

A PAC must not:

- replace programme or module teaching, marking, formal feedback or academic skills provision;
- make decisions reserved for assessment boards, fitness to study processes, complaints, appeals, disciplinary procedures or other formal University processes;
- provide counselling, clinical, disability, safeguarding, legal, immigration, financial or other specialist advice unless separately qualified and formally authorised to do so;
- undertake ongoing case management that properly belongs to a specialist service;
- promise absolute confidentiality; or
- use coaching information for an unauthorised purpose.

6.3 Referral and escalation

Referral does not transfer responsibility for the student's overall academic relationship. The PAC should, where appropriate and lawful, confirm that the student has been connected with the relevant service and consider any academic actions arising from the situation. The specialist service retains responsibility for its advice, intervention and records.

A disclosure indicating an immediate risk of harm, a safeguarding concern or another serious risk must be escalated without delay under the relevant University procedure. The PAC must explain the limits of confidentiality and share information only with those who need it to act. Urgent or emergency matters must use the University's designated emergency routes rather than routine coaching channels.

7 Workload, caseload and allocation

Personal Academic Coaching is an academic responsibility and must be incorporated into the academic workload model. It must not be added to an already full workload. PACs will continue to contribute to teaching, assessment, scholarship and curriculum activity in accordance with their role and workload allocation.

Each PAC must have a defined and visible caseload. The University will not apply a single fixed caseload ratio across all provision. Heads of Department, supported by PAC Team Leaders, must determine allocations using evidence of student need and delivery context, including cohort risk, study intensity, programme level, mode and location, points of transition, reasonable adjustments, the complexity of the cohort and the staff member's other duties.

Caseloads and workload must be reviewed regularly. Where the volume or complexity of a caseload prevents the service standards in this policy from being met, the Head of Department must rebalance the allocation or provide additional capacity. Module leadership and other substantial responsibilities must be considered when making allocations.

8 Roles and accountability

Role	Accountability
Academic Board	Approves the policy and receives assurance on the quality, effectiveness and academic impact of the PAC framework.
Provost and Chief Academic Officer	Acts as Executive sponsor and ensures alignment with academic strategy, student success priorities and regulatory responsibilities.
Academic Affairs	Owens the institutional framework and operational standards; coordinates implementation, data definitions, evaluation, annual assurance and policy review.
Deans	Are accountable for Faculty implementation, resourcing, performance and improvement, and for securing consistent provision across programmes and modes.

Role	Accountability
Associate Deans and Heads of School	Provide academic leadership and assurance within their areas, challenge inconsistency and ensure that improvement actions are completed.
Heads of Department	Hold operational accountability for student allocation, staff workload, delivery against service standards, performance review and escalation of unresolved risks.
PAC Team Leaders	Coordinate day-to-day delivery, caseload allocation, staff support, quality monitoring and risk escalation. They report through the relevant Head of Department or equivalent.
Personal Academic Coaches	Deliver proactive academic coaching, maintain appropriate records, make referrals and escalate concerns in accordance with this policy and operational guidance.
Programme and module teams	Provide accurate academic information and work with PACs where programme engagement, assessment or progression concerns require coordinated action.
Professional Services	Provide specialist advice and intervention within their remit and maintain effective referral and information-sharing arrangements. Learning Advisors remain professional-services staff and are not line-managed by PAC Team Leaders.
Students	Engage constructively where possible, respond to communications, reflect on guidance, act on agreed actions and raise concerns or support needs promptly. Students remain responsible for their academic decisions and compliance with University regulations.

9 Data, records and confidentiality

PACs may use approved engagement, attendance, assessment and progression information where relevant to academic coaching. Data must be interpreted in context, and no consequential decision about a student may be made solely by an automated indicator or risk score.

Records must be factual, proportionate, relevant and written on the basis that they may be accessed under applicable law or University procedure. Sensitive personal information should be recorded only where necessary, and duplication of specialist case records must be avoided. Access, retention and disposal must comply with the University's privacy notices, records management requirements, Information Governance policies, the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Information may be shared only where there is an appropriate basis and a legitimate need to know. Confidentiality is subject to safeguarding, risk, legal and regulatory obligations.

10 Staff capability and professional standards

Staff must complete the required PAC induction before, or as soon as practicable after, taking responsibility for a caseload. Mandatory preparation will cover the coaching model, inclusive practice, professional boundaries, referral and escalation, safeguarding, use of learning analytics, record keeping, data protection and the approved systems.

PACs are expected to maintain their capability through continuing professional development, calibration and reflective practice. PAC Team Leaders and line managers must address identified gaps through support, development and, where necessary, the University's performance processes.

11 Student access, feedback and concerns

Students are entitled to:

- know who their PAC is and how to contact them;

- receive clear information about the purpose, boundaries and confidentiality of coaching;
- access coaching in an appropriate format, including reasonable adjustments where required;
- provide feedback on their experience; and
- raise a concern about access, conduct or the coaching relationship through the published escalation route, including a request for the allocation to be reviewed where there is a substantive reason.

Concerns should normally be addressed first by the PAC Team Leader or Head of Department. This does not limit a student's right to use the University's formal complaints, safeguarding or other applicable procedures.

12 Quality assurance, monitoring and enhancement

Faculties must monitor delivery against the institutional service standards and take timely action where provision is inconsistent or ineffective. Academic Affairs will coordinate an institutional evaluation and provide Academic Board with assurance at least annually. Material risks must be escalated through the University's academic governance arrangements when identified.

Evaluation will draw on an appropriate balance of evidence, including:

- the proportion of students allocated and informed of a named PAC;
- student access, contact, engagement and agreed-action data;
- the timeliness and quality of interventions and referrals;
- credit achievement, continuation, progression and completion, considered by relevant student characteristics and delivery context;
- student feedback and complaints;
- staff workload, capability and quality review evidence; and
- evidence of completed Faculty and institutional improvement actions.

Allocation coverage is an implementation measure, not evidence of educational impact. The University will avoid attributing changes in student outcomes solely to PAC and will consider wider programme, teaching, assessment and student-support factors when evaluating effectiveness. Individual PAC performance will be judged through a balanced evidence base rather than a single outcome measure.

13 Equality, diversity and inclusion

Personal Academic Coaching must promote equality of opportunity and inclusive participation. The University will make reasonable adjustments, monitor access and outcomes across relevant student groups, and use equality impact assessment to identify and address unintended disadvantage. Coaching must respect students' identities, circumstances and educational aspirations while maintaining consistent academic expectations.

14 Related policies and documents

This policy should be read alongside the current versions of:

- Academic Regulations and Assessment Regulations
- Student Engagement Policy
- Fitness to Study Policy
- Student Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Data Protection, Information Governance and Records Management policies
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Complaints and Appeals procedures
- Academic Workload Planning Model
- PAC Operational Framework and Service Standards

- Academic Strategy and Student Success Strategy