

INSTITUTE OF FOUNDATION STUDIES NEWSLETTER

WINTER EDITION 2022/23

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Welcome to the 2nd edition of the IFS newsletter!

We continue the good work my predecessor started and hope to make the newsletter a regular feature for both staff and students.

In this issue, we look at a range of topics to help you with your studies, including demystifying maths, how to manage your time effectively, and how to make the most of being a distance learner.

We also showcase some of the activities that have happened in the Institute of Foundation Studies this year, including introducing you to some of our new team members.

Towards the end of the newsletter you will find some useful contact numbers if you want to get in touch with the teaching team. You can also find out how you can get involved in future issues of the newsletter.

I hope you enjoy reading!



Dr Lucy Atkinson Director of the Institute of Foundation Studies



Need support or help?



For any module-related issues, your Module Lecturer is your first port of call—just drop them an email or ask questions in class.

For any other issues related to your study at Arden, you should contact the email address for your study centre:

Ealing

ealingstudentsupport @arden.ac.uk

Holborn

holbornstudentsupport @arden.ac.uk

Tower Hill

towerhillstudentsupport @arden.ac.uk

Leeds

leedsstudentsupport @arden.ac.uk



Birmingham

birminghamstudentsupport @arden.ac.uk



Berlin

berlinstudentsupport @arden.ac.uk



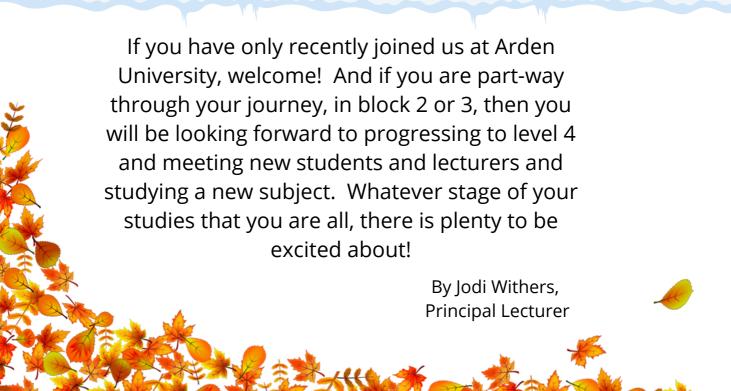
Manchester

manchesterstudentsupport @arden.ac.uk





Hopes and Fears The emotions of being a new student







Studying a degree is like a roller-coaster, with many exhilarating highs and some stomach-lurching lows in every block, but just like rollercoasters, at the end of each block you are always happy that you embarked on the ride.

Perhaps the most exciting (and nerve-wracking) part, though, is the start, when you don't really know what to expect.

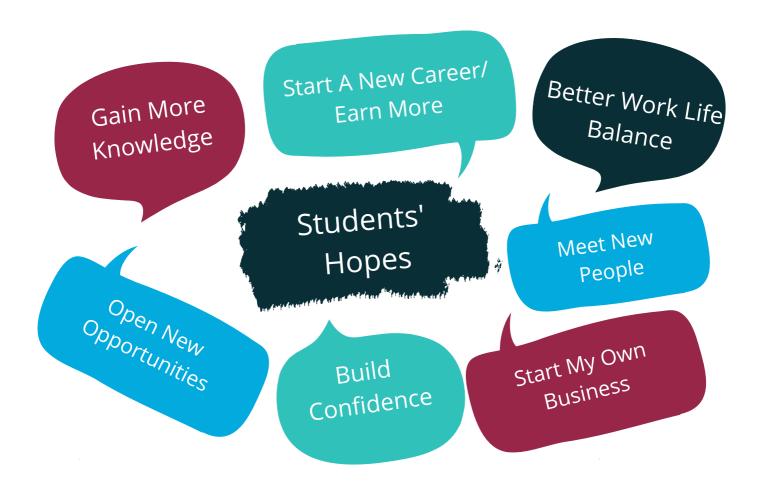
This is why, at induction, we do an activity called 'hopes and fears' – so that you can air all of your hopes and share your fears.



Hopes and fears The emotions of being a new student

Hopes

It is important to acknowledge your hopes, as we are often most motivated at the beginning of any endeavour, and it can be really useful to capture your hopes, as when you are lacking motivation, you can revisit them and remember what it was about the journey that excited you. We asked the lecturers who led the inductions to tell us what students' top hopes were and you can see the feedback below.





Hopes and fears -The emotions of being a new student

Fears

Why do we discuss fears, then? It would be foolhardy to pretend that doing a degree isn't intimidating. It is full of unknowns. Sharing our fears is also provides us with safety in numbers, in that it can be reassuring to hear that other students share your fears – and that to be nervous and worried is completely natural. Most importantly, once you have voiced your fears, you can tackle them head on, taking practical steps to overcome them.

Sometimes, even just saying them out loud can rob them of any power they may have had over you.

What about the fears that our students shared in their induction?

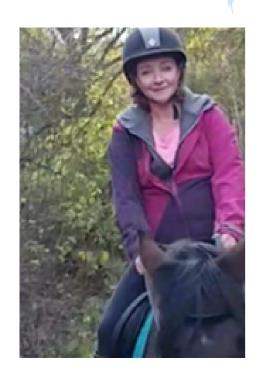
The most common fear was - not be able to complete on time. If something gets in the way of handing in your assignments on time, speak to your lecturer. You may be able to apply for an extension. Long term, ask a friendly success coach or academic skills tutor for support with time management.

After all - What does FAIL stand for?

First Attempt in Learning. 'Failing' is never easy, but it is often when we learn valuable lessons. However, seeking advice and guidance from your lecturers about any aspect of your study is a sure-fire way of building up your confidence that you are 'on the right track' with your studies.



Some top tips for making time for independent study!



Hacking your way to time management success!

My role as Senior Lecturer involves supporting students to complete their work and be successful in their studies. I want to share some tips around time management so that you can balance your university work with any other demands on your time that you may have, such as paid work, caring for others, spending time with friends and family, and looking after your mental and physical health. The ultimate aim is to keep on top of your studies and hand in assignments on time without stress

Time management can be linked to academic success, and it is suggested that students' ability to manage their time can vary between individuals (Powell et al, 2020). One of the hardest aspects of time management is procrastination. Procrastination is a behaviour that involves a delay in starting academic activities. Seventy percent of students report a delay in starting their study tasks (Nayak, 2019). So, if you find it hard to get started on assignments, you are not alone!

Here are three tips to help you avoid procrastination:

Tip 1: Don't wait until you feel like studying. If you wait until you fancy it, you might never start. Instead, commit to several study sessions per week, choosing times that fit in with your life. Write down these times (e.g. Tuesday 1pm-4pm, Thursday 10am—3pm). Then, at these times, sit down and work - no arguments!



Giving yourself no choice (and sticking to it) will help you to build discipline and the more your get into a study routine, the easier it is to stick to it.

Tip 2: Start a blank Word file for assignments in Week 1 of the study block. Whenever you read or hear something that could be relevant to your assignments, jot it down in the file. Then, when you are ready to start your assignment properly, you won't be starting with a blank page. Knowing this will make it much easier to start (and finish!) your assignments promptly.

Tip 3: Eat that frog! Eat that frog by Brian Tracy is a famous book about productivity. He argues that one of the reasons people put off doing a task is because they think it is going to be unpleasant (they become frogs). His advice is to break big tasks into smaller tasks, and then start each day by eating the smallest frog. You'll find that the frog isn't that bad after all, and it will spur you on to completing more tasks!

Jo Brown, Senior Lecturer



How to make the most of being a distance learner



By Louise Farmer, Senior Lecturer & Programme Leader for Distance Learning

For many, distance learning is a new way of learning. This form of study brings many advantages, flexibility being a key deciding factor. However, for some, it can present some initial challenges, such as taking ownership and balancing study with other commitments. Remember that you, as an individual, are accountable for the quality and time you dedicate to your studies. Here I present some top tips of embracing the online learning environment.

$oldsymbol{1}$ Create a positive study environment

One of the greatest advantages is that you can study from anywhere at any time. However, it is important that you manage this, to enable deeper learning. Take some time to look at your environment, how is your workspace setup? Consider creating a dedicated workspace and removing distractions. Can you leave you phone in another room? How about turning off your notifications for a period of time? This will help you with my next tip.

2 Reflection

You may have days, even weeks where your motivation may drop. You may not have followed your schedule or somethings cropped up and meant you missed a live session. Life has a funny way of throwing us unexpected curve balls now and again.

Don't let this dampen all the progress you have made. One thing I have learnt, is the value of taking time to reflect. Admittedly, it did take me some time to understand this and become comfortable in self-reflection. But whether it is in your professional or personal life, reflection is an excellent tool for self-development. Make sure you factor this in, to give yourself an opportunity to pause amidst the hectic world we live in. Always remember what motivated you to start your studies in the first place.

3 Building a study mode mindset

You may now have the perfect study environment,

but your mindset is still not focused. This is where I have found that creating yourself a study schedule will help. You have chosen this study mode for a reason, for most, it enables you to fit study in around your busy lives. A key part of taking ownership, is knowing that you need to have dedicated time each week to attend live sessions and complete your independent study. Make a list of all your key priorities, now start to map these out in a timetable. You must be strict with yourself here, yes each week may look very different, but ensure that you do not neglect your study time and make sure you factor in my following tip.

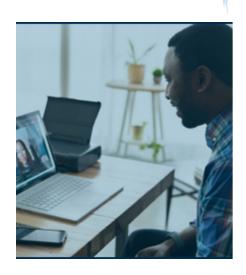
4 Get social

My final tip is to make the most of your online spaces. You may not have the same social interactions you have on campus but remember that you are not alone. Always take the opportunity to introduce yourself at the beginning of each module. Engage with the discussions taking place in your live sessions, iLearn session activities and make sure comment on your colleague's posts. Peer-to-peer feedback is a great opportunity to support each other's growth as well as generating new knowledge and ideas.



Your Academic Skills Tutors

Want to be an academic superstar? Your Academic Skills Tutors can help!



Acing assignments: 10 top tips ad more >

1 Plan your assignment

It is very important to plan your assignment before your start writing. Jot down the key ideas/concepts that you think need to be discussed on Post-it notes, and the you can move the Post-its around to decide on the best order to present them in the assignment. Each paragraph should focus on and discuss one key idea, and should start with a topic sentence and finish with a concluding sentence. Make sure each paragraph links to the next paragraph for good cohesion.

2 Understand the assignment brief

Ensure that you read the assignment brief very carefully so that you understand what it is asking you to do. A good test that you

have understood the task is to explain it in your own words to your lecturer – they will be able to confirm that you have accurately interpreted the brief.

3 Find academic resources

Use the Arden University online library (https://library.arden.ac.uk/) to search for high-quality academic sources. You can access EBSCO for journals and books, Browzine for journals, Ebook Central and Bibliu for books. Use the CRAAP test to check if your sources have Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy and have been written for a Purpose that is relevant to your needs.

4 Do not go off on a tangent

One common mistake is to veer off the topic or go off on a tangent in another direction. Make sure you answer the question in full and do not go off topic.

5 Manage your time

Time flies! Students underestimate how long it takes to write a good quality assignment, proof-read, use Turnitin and submit. However long you think it will take you to research and write your assignment, double it.

6 Ask for help if you need it

Please do not suffer in silence. Arden University has excellent support for all situations. We are here to help you, so please ask if you need any help. We have personal tutors, success coaches, student support, careers, academic skills tutors, not to mention your lecturers!

7 Get formative feedback from your lecturer

Your lecturer is the key to passing your module. They are the subject specialists and know how to guide you to pass the module. They will offer feedback on your drafts, and you will have formative assessments that you hand in during the module and get feedback on. You can use this feedback to help you complete your final assignment to a high standard.

8 Proof-read your assignment

You must proof-read for errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation and formatting (presentation of your work e.g. font, line spacing) before you submit your work. This can take time, so make sure you allocate enough time to proof-read your work before submitting.

9 Use Turnitin

Turnitin is your friend, it is there to help you check your similarity score, which means the percentage of your work that is similar or identical to previously submitted or published works. You should only present other people's work word-for-word in your assignment when you are quoting it. Your similarity score should therefore be quite low. Turnitin will highlight where your work is identical - if this is the case, then paraphrase the text (rewrite it in your own words), providing the full reference of the source you are discussing. If you need more help with any of these skills, make an appointment with an Academic Skills Tutor - we can talk you though it!

10 Understand your feedback

The only way to improve is to learn from our mistakes. We cannot keep doing the same thing and expect different results. The lecturer spends time writing advice and feedback in order for you to improve your future assignments. Make sure you understand the feedback and how, more importantly, how to put it into action in the future.

Martin Margurie, Academic Skills Tutor



More About the Academic Skills Tutors



Key links:

University library website: https://library.arden.ac.uk

Book a one-to-one academic skills appointment here: https://library.arden.ac.uk/academic-skillstutor-appointments

Useful videos about all things academic skills: https://library.arden.ac.uk/recordings

Who are the Academic Skills Team? https://library.arden.ac.uk/academic-skillstutor-appointments

How can the AST team help?

Your Academic Skills Tutors are available to work with you on a one to one basis and can help you develop your academic skills, such as academic writing, structuring assignments, literature searching and much more.





Academic Skills



Demystifying Mathematics: Lessons Learned from Two Nineteenth Century Science Greats

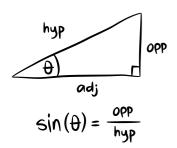


By Danny Marshall Module Leader & Lecturer

In this newsletter piece, I attempt to draw lessons from the mathematical struggles of two prominent nineteenth century scientists, with the hope of bettering our roles as students and lecturers to acquire a greater comprehension of mathematics. I aim to myth-bust the notion that understanding maths is for the chosen few and that, in fact, many successful people (such as yourself) use mathematics every day, despite not feeling confident in the subject.

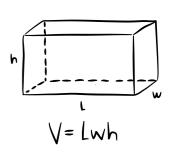
Perhaps you believe that you struggle with mathematics, whilst being able to interpret quantitative data. Maybe you find adding two integers by column addition difficult but can add in the binary system fluently. Perhaps you're able to construct a well-accepted theory which hinted at how we came to be on this planet but find the initial process of learning algebra 'repugnant'. The latter describes the friction that the world-class biologist and scientific great, Charles Darwin, had with studying mathematics. In his autobiography, Darwin (1887) details his lack of confidence in understanding algebra. He postulates that this derives from him "not being able to see any meaning in the early steps of algebra" (chapter 1, para. 4).





Could this be the reason why so many of us struggle with abstract concepts? Is it our job as teachers to contextualise these abstract ideas? Is it our role as students to seek conceptualisations of these ideas to aid our understanding and improve our confidence? Darwin felt ashamed about his lack of persistence in learning Mathematics, stating that he "deeply regretted that [he] did not proceed far enough at least to understand something of the great leading principles of mathematics, for [those] thus endowed seem to have an extra sense" (chapter 1, para. 4).

Lessons can be learned from Darwin's plight to understand mathematics. Firstly, he never thought he would be any good at the subject because he believed that he couldn't visualise it. Secondly, he regretted that he didn't spend more time trying to understand it. It stands to reason that, as teachers and students, we should spend more time conceptualising aspects of mathematics which we do not understand.





Demystifying Mathematics: Lessons Learned from Two Nineteenth Century Science Greats



One of the greatest scientific discoverers of all time" (Rao, 2000, p.281), accredited with the invention of the first successful electric motor and generator, was also plagued with mathematical uncertainty, and had struggled with trigonometry and algebra. Michael Faraday is the forefather of electromagnetism and is famous for laying the foundation for Maxwell's equations (which are a set of equations that describe the behaviour of electric and magnetic fields in specific circumstances). Faraday (1846) made his discoveries through observation, observing real world effects and translating them into proposed physical concepts.

Faraday's lack of confidence in mathematics did not stop him from communicating his findings. From this, it may be interpreted that you need not be well-versed in all areas of mathematics to carry out your role effectively. Like Faraday, you may even inspire future mathematicians whilst still being not confident with the subject itself: Faraday was stated to have been "in reality a mathematician of a very high order – one from whom the mathematicians of the future may derive valuable and fertile methods." (Maxwell, 1890, p.360)



There we have it – two Science greats that share a difficulty with mathematics. Darwin struggled with algebra and keeping up with 'long trains of abstract thought', whilst being able to construct an explanation for the origin of species. Faraday was able to utilise his knowledge of Physics to produce explanations for his findings, even though he struggled with trigonometry. In the case of Darwin, contextualisation is key to helping learners succeed in mathematics, particularly when it comes to abstract concepts.

Moreover, Faraday's achievements have taught us that understanding every aspect of mathematics isn't the be-all and end-all to success. Don't put yourself down because you struggle with certain areas of mathematics. Human beings that are career-focussed, and as such have high levels of self-efficacy, are superb at overcoming their weaknesses when it is for the purpose of their careers (Rudolph et al., 2017; Schwarzer, 2008).





Demystifying Mathematics: Lessons Learned from Two Nineteenth Century Science Greats



I would encourage you to think about how you use mathematics in everyday life. Are you quicker at adding up than you are interpreting a graph? Are you a better pattern-spotter than you are an equation-spotter? Mathematics encompasses a broad range of topics – please don't write off your mathematical capabilities just because you believe you struggle with certain aspects of Maths. Humans tend to focus on the negatives, dwelling on the things we struggle with, and perhaps that should change.

As a final note, in my experience as a teacher at Arden, students learning the Numeracy module on the Foundation Year programme expressed great disdain to me about the subject during our initial session, with such choice quotes as "I can't do Maths" and "I was never very good at this at school". However, the summative results of the module suggested otherwise – boasting a high pass rate across all the centres nationally. This is in part due to the excellent teaching across the module by some lecturers who they themselves have disclosed to me that same nervousness around the subject. So, why do we fear Mathematics? Why is it that, when we are in a role that uses Mathematics, we can put the fear aside for the sake of our careers?



In the next newsletter piece, we shall investigate why some feel a certain hatred towards mathematics and I shall reveal my top tips for quashing maths anxiety.

References:

Blaikley, A. (ca. 1849) Portrait of Michael Faraday [oil painting on canvas]. Available from: https://pictures.royalsociety.org/assets/object_images/8/41/6148/v0_rsweb2.jpg [Accessed 8 February 2022]

Darwin, C., (1887) The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin. London: John Murray.

Faraday, M., (1846) On the Magnetization of Light and the Illumination of Magnetic Lines of Force. Journal of the Franklin Institute, of the State of Pennsylvania, for the Promotion of the Mechanic Arts; Devoted to Mechanical and Physical Science, Civil Engineering, the Arts and Manufactures, and the Recording of American and Other Patent Inventions (1828-1851), 11(2), p. 139.



Foundation Year - Student Representatives



Foundation Year Student Reps

In November, you were all invited to apply to be Student Reps with the Student Association. Well, we were very impressed to learn that over 40 of you applied! Those of you who applied, the Student Association will be in touch very shortly with the outcome.

The student reps play a really important role in helping the university understand what works for students and what we can work on to give you the best possible experience. Keep a look out in the Spring for details of your new student reps. In the meantime, if you have any feedback on your course, please feel free to contact Jodi Withers (Principal Lecturer) jwithers@arden.ac.uk. Also - don't forget we have a mid-module survey in week 5 of every block where you can share your thoughts about your learning.





We want to hear from you!

Do you want to feature in future issues of the Institution of Foundation Year newsletter?







We are looking for contributions on all sorts of topics around being a Foundation Year student, studying for a degree, being an Arden University student, your interest in your studies, the list goes on.

This could be in the form of a short article (up to 300 words), you could be interviewed about something you have achieved, or you could write a short letter, even a poem: please be as creative as possible! You can send us your writing, or if you have an idea you would like to talk through, just drop us an email at: FYseniorteam@arden.ac.uk





Good news stories in the IFS



We Love Good News at Arden & We Have Plenty To Celebrate Recently

Asraful was Conference Coordinator for the 5th Global Conference on Business & Technology 2022. (4 and 5 Nov 2022) 146 participants. Keynote speaker was PROFESSOR MOHAMED ABDEL-MAGUID, Pro. VC. Canterbury Christ Church University GCBT Conference | The Global Conference for academics, startups, entrepreneurs, investors, professionals and research students

Congratulations to Lecturer Asim, who has completed 2 years as a permanent member of the IFS team and is approaching his 5-year anniversary since joining Arden University.

Congratulations to all colleagues who commenced the PGCert in Digital Pedagogies and Practice as part of the October cohort and will also achieve Fellowship of the HEA upon completion.

Programme Leader
Stefan presented his
research paper at the
European Conference
on e-Learning called
'Engagement
challenges in a hybrid
classroom:
Reflections of a
higher education
tutor'.

Principal Lecturer Nav
has been appointed
by the AUA to lead
their Equality &
Diversity Network and
presented a paper
called "How to use
data effectively to
enhance the student
experience" at the
Autumn Conference.
He has also been a
Speaker for the
BAMEed Network.

Distance Learning Programme Leader Louise Farmer has been appointed as External Examiner for Business Foundation Year, Aston University Director of the IFS Lucy Atkinson has been appointed as External Examiner for Foundation Year, University of Suffolk and Keele University (a new FY belneded programme) Congratulations to
Marzia and Louise who
have successfully
completed their first
year working at Arden!



Our IFS Team is Expanding

In 2022 we welcomed 13 new lecturers, senior lecturers and principal lecturers to the team.





We have new Programme Leaders
(who are also Senior Lecturers):
Shamsun Choudhury - BL BNM
Louise Farmer - DL
Jo Brown - BL SCC
Stefan Overton - BL SCC

Our newest Lecturers, all based in London, joined in November: Stephen McShane Nafesa Hamid Tracey Celestin Radix Michelle Kempson



We are also continually recruiting and will be a team of 60 permanent Foundation Year academics this time next year. We have new roles this year including an academic administrator, student engagement/programme advisor and assistant lecturers.



Our IFS Team is Expanding (Part 2!)

Welcome

Our New Lecturers

As the Institute of Foundation Studies grows, we have wonderful new lecturers join us! In this issue, we will focus on the lecturers who have joined us at our London study centres in November 2022: Michelle, Tracey, Stephen and Nafesa. Look out for them in our Tower Hill, Ealing and Holborn Study Centres and say hello if you see them!



Tracey

- I love travelling to Iceland (it is my favourite place to visit in the entire world)
- I have lived in the Caribbean Island of St Lucia
- I have a love for gemstones and make my own jewellery I am a former fashion journalist



Stephen

- I love to travel and my favourite place is Japan
- I have a 13yr old bichon lake
 - I love watching movies and reading.
 - My favourite sport is F1



Michelle

- I paint in my spare time, and have sold a few paintings over the years
- Libraries are one of my favourite places to visit, and my husband proposed to me at the British Library in London My favourite book is Alice in Wonderland



Nafesa

- I have a 9 year old American Akita called Simba
- My favourite book is 1984 by Orwell
 - I have lived in China and Qatar!



2022 Highlights

Here are some of our many highlights

2022

We held focus groups to

find out what you think

assessment drop ins and module clinics

We held resit classes to help those of you who need to resit assignments

Fabour Our Plans for the Foundation Year in the We increased the number of full-time students continuing to their degree programme (at Level 4) to 72.1%.

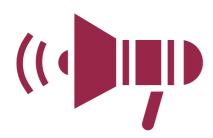
We piloted personalised tutoring for our May 2022 BL SCC cohort of students

We added assessment workshops to every class, so You are supported in tackling

We made our classes more interactive, ensuring that you have lots of opportunities for debates and discussions, and to relate what you learn in the classroom to real-life



Updates!



Some updates to be aware of...

Our Senior Lecturers are leading on some action research sets with a team of lecturers. The action research sets were designed by Jodi Withers, our Principal Lecturer.

In the action research sets, our lecturers are carrying out research to come up with ideas to make sure students experience great teaching and learning, through the design of innovative and exciting initiatives.

They will be rolled out in Feb 2023, and with some evaluation - and may become a permanent fixture on the FY programme in due course.



- Reducing non-submissions/supporting students with resits
- Supporting our Associate Lecturer colleagues
- Developing students' digital capabilities
- Improving attendance and enhancing engagement





We are working on developing a new Foundation Year programme, modules and curriculum. The programme includes preparation for university success, subject modules, advancing academic and digital skills, planning for future self and an innovative project module. We are using the newly launched Inclusive Curriculum in our design of the programme.

We are submitted two innovation fund project bids

More updates to come in the next newsletter...



More about the Senior Management Team of the IFS



Dr Lucy Atkinson is Director of the IFS.

We are the team who manage the IFS. We are all extremely passionate about students who enter HE through Foundation Year and have many years' experience of teaching on FY and leading FY programmes. We believe that everyone has the potential to succeed at university and it is our job to help you gain the skills and knowledge to move on to levels 4, 5 and 6 with confidence.

Our Senior Lecturers and Principal Lecturers



Principal Lecturer Towella Ngambi Operations and Learning/Teaching



Principal Lecturer
Quality and Standards
Nav Ahmed



Principal Lecturer Student Experience and Curriculum

Jodi Withers



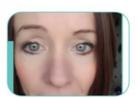
Senior Lecturer Shamsun Choudhary



Senior Lecturer Louise Farmer



Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader for your course Stefan Overton



Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader for your course Jo Brown



If you want to contact us, please feel free to email us at fyseniorteam@arden.ac.uk



You said, we did...



In every module we ask you your thoughts about the learning, teaching and assessment you have received. We thank you for taking the time to complete the surveys. Here are some of the statistics and comments you made as well as the changes we have made as a result of your feedback...

Academic Skills Practice: 96.2% of you definitely or mostly agreed that you were satisfied with this module

(May 2022 block)

91.3% of you said that you definitely or mostly agree that Introducing Research Skills is enhancing your academic ability

(May 2022 block)

An Introduction to Numeracy,
Data and IT
80% of you said this module
challenged you to achieve your
best work
(Nov 2022 block)

Ethics, Working Collaboratively and Values: 82% of you said that support on your module was good Nov 2022 block)

A big change we have made as a result of your feedback:

We have changed how we will carry out your formative feedback from November 2022 - you will be able to hand in one draft of your assignment task and then have a one-to-one tutorial with your module lecturer.

You will only also have ONE formative task for every module which will be to hand in a draft of your final assessment.