Dean
School of Psychology

JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

Reporting to	Provost and Chief Academic Officer
Leadership level	Senior Academic Leadership
Location	United Kingdom; travel across Arden locations and partner sites as required
Direct reports	Academic leaders and professional leads assigned to the School
Role status	Full-time, substantive leadership appointment

Role purpose

To provide strategic, academic and commercial leadership for the School of Psychology, securing excellent student outcomes, rigorous academic and professional standards, sustained British Psychological Society accreditation and responsible growth. The Dean will build a distinctive, market-responsive psychology portfolio while leading AI-enabled transformation in curriculum, assessment, research, academic practice and the student experience.

1 Strategic context

Arden University serves a diverse population of learners through blended and distance learning. Psychology is strategically important because of sustained learner interest, its relevance across health, education, work and society, and its potential to support progression into professional and applied careers.

The School requires a Dean who can translate market opportunity into high-quality, viable provision. Commercial growth must be disciplined: BPS accreditation, academic standards, ethical practice, student outcomes and the credibility of the discipline must not be compromised by pace or scale. The Dean will also ensure that AI transformation strengthens learning and professional capability without weakening psychological ethics, data protection, academic integrity or human judgement.

2 Principal accountabilities

Strategic and institutional leadership

- Translate University strategy into a clear School plan, operating model and annual delivery priorities, with measurable academic, commercial and organisational outcomes.
- Act as a senior academic leader of the University, contributing beyond the School to academic governance, institutional transformation and external reputation.

- Develop a distinctive identity and competitive position for Psychology, grounded in academic credibility, professional relevance and the needs of Arden's students.
- Advise the Provost and Executive on market opportunities, professional and regulatory developments, portfolio risks, investment priorities and workforce capacity.

Academic quality, standards and BPS accreditation

- Hold executive accountability for academic standards, quality assurance and the student academic experience across all School provision, wherever and however delivered.
- Lead the School's BPS accreditation strategy, including new accreditations, re-accreditation, programme mapping, evidence preparation, conditions and recommendations, annual monitoring and timely action closure.
- Ensure accredited programmes continue to meet the requirements for the relevant BPS standards and, where applicable, Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership, with accurate information provided to applicants and students.
- Maintain rigorous oversight of validation, modification, periodic review, assessment, external examining, research ethics, academic integrity and professional suitability requirements.
- Ensure compliance with Office for Students conditions, the UK Quality Code, consumer protection, equality and data-protection requirements and other relevant professional or statutory obligations.

Student outcomes and experience

- Own the School's continuation, completion, attainment and progression performance, with particular attention to differential outcomes between student groups, programmes, levels, study modes and locations.
- Set clear expectations for teaching quality, inclusive curriculum, assessment and feedback, research methods education, learning engagement, academic support and personal academic coaching.
- Ensure the curriculum develops psychological literacy, scientific reasoning, ethical judgement, employability and the ability to apply psychological knowledge responsibly.
- Use student voice and performance evidence to identify risk early, intervene decisively and demonstrate improvement.

Portfolio growth and commercial performance

- Develop and deliver a commercially ambitious but academically controlled portfolio strategy across undergraduate, postgraduate, conversion, specialist, professional, short-course and lifelong-learning provision.
- Use market intelligence, learner demand, employer need, professional requirements, competitor analysis and unit economics to initiate, reshape or close provision.
- Build credible business cases with explicit assumptions for demand, pricing, conversion, delivery capacity, accreditation, academic support, contribution and student outcomes.
- Diversify income through appropriate partnerships, professional learning, employer-facing provision and other opportunities that align with the School's expertise and reputation.
- Ensure growth does not outpace academic leadership, qualified staffing, research supervision, ethical oversight, placement capacity or student support.

AI transformation and leadership

- Lead significant AI-enabled transformation across the School, moving from isolated experimentation to governed, scalable and measurable change in education, research and operations.
- Develop a clear AI transformation roadmap covering use-case prioritisation, academic governance, staff capability, operating-model implications, adoption, evaluation and benefits realisation.

- Embed responsible, transparent and discipline-appropriate AI across curriculum and assessment, addressing bias, explainability, privacy, validity, research ethics, professional judgement and academic integrity.
- Build staff and student confidence in using AI critically and ethically, aligned with Arden's institutional AI-literacy ambition and relevant professional expectations.
- Evaluate AI-enabled change by its impact on learning, academic quality, workload, inclusion and student outcomes rather than by adoption activity alone.

Employability, professional pathways and partnerships

- Strengthen progression into employment, further study and professional training through embedded careers learning, authentic assessment, applied projects and relevant work-related learning.
- Build productive relationships with the BPS, employers, professional training providers, public services, third-sector organisations, alumni and other partners.
- Ensure students receive accurate information about accredited status, professional pathways, further training requirements and the limits of any award in conferring practitioner status.
- Maintain robust academic and operational oversight of collaborative activity, placements and external partnerships, including due diligence, student protection and quality assurance.

People, culture and academic performance

- Lead, inspire and hold to account the School leadership team, establishing a culture of high expectations, inclusion, collaboration and evidence-led improvement.
- Ensure the School has the disciplinary expertise, professional credibility, research-methods capability, leadership capacity and workforce plan required by its portfolio and accreditation commitments.
- Raise teaching capability and professional recognition, including delivery of the University target for at least 90% of eligible teaching staff to hold a HESA-returnable teaching qualification or recognition.
- Lead complex change effectively, securing engagement, addressing resistance and ensuring new structures, systems and practices are embedded and sustained.
- Manage individual and team performance promptly and fairly, recognising strong contribution while addressing persistent underperformance.

Research, scholarship and external profile

- Develop a focused plan for applied research, scholarship and knowledge exchange that enriches teaching, supports staff development, builds partnerships and strengthens reputation.
- Maintain robust research governance and ethical review, particularly for sensitive data, vulnerable participants and AI-enabled methods or analysis.
- Increase the School's external profile through credible thought leadership, professional engagement, collaborative projects, events and appropriate dissemination.

Financial and operational stewardship

- Own the School budget and delivery of agreed income, contribution, cost and efficiency targets, working with Finance, Recruitment, Marketing, Academic Resourcing and Timetabling.
- Align staffing, module allocation, supervision, teaching capacity and specialist resources with validated demand, accreditation requirements and the academic calendar.
- Maintain accurate forecasts and a clear line of sight from recruitment assumptions to cohort viability, teaching cost, student support and academic outcomes.

- Deliver value for money without using cost reduction as a substitute for sound academic design, adequate staffing or effective student support.

3 Leadership relationships

Reports to	Provost and Chief Academic Officer.
Internal	Vice-Chancellor, Chief Executive Officer, Executive and senior leadership colleagues; Deans; Quality and Standards; Student Experience; Registry; CELT; Academic Resourcing and Timetabling; Finance; People; Recruitment; Marketing; Careers and Employability; Digital and Technology.
External	British Psychological Society; employers; professional training providers; public and third-sector organisations; delivery and validation partners; external examiners; alumni; and relevant academic and professional networks.
Governance	Member of relevant University committees and boards as determined by the Provost; accountable for high-quality School reporting, assurance and action closure.

4 Person specification

Qualifications and professional standing

- Doctorate or equivalent high-level professional standing in Psychology or a closely related discipline.
- Appropriate academic and professional standing within Psychology; BPS membership and Chartered status, or eligibility for an appropriate equivalent, are advantageous.
- Teaching qualification or recognised fellowship of an appropriate professional body, normally at Senior Fellow level or above, or a clear commitment to secure equivalent recognition.
- Evidence of continuing professional and scholarly engagement with developments in Psychology, higher education and AI.

Senior leadership and transformation experience

- Substantial successful leadership at Dean, Head of School/Department or comparable level in a complex higher-education or closely related environment.
- Significant and demonstrable BPS accreditation experience, including leading successful accreditation or re-accreditation, preparing and assuring evidence, responding to conditions or recommendations and maintaining ongoing compliance across accredited provision.
- A strong record of growing an academic portfolio commercially through evidence-led product development, recruitment, partnerships or new income while protecting academic standards and student outcomes.
- Significant experience of leading AI-enabled transformation at institutional, faculty or enterprise scale, including strategy, governance, implementation, workforce capability, adoption and benefits realisation.
- Substantial change-management experience in a complex, multi-stakeholder environment, with evidence of building commitment, overcoming resistance and sustaining new ways of working.

- A demonstrable record of improving student outcomes, academic quality and the student experience across a significant portfolio.
- Experience of leading leaders, building effective teams and addressing underperformance.

Academic, professional and sector expertise

- Strong understanding of UK higher-education regulation, academic governance, quality assurance, assessment, external examining, research ethics and consumer protection.
- Deep understanding of BPS accreditation and professional pathways, including the distinction between an accredited academic award, Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership and eligibility for further professional training or regulated practice.
- Credible knowledge of contemporary Psychology, inclusive curriculum, research methods and the ethical use of data and AI in psychological education and research.
- Evidence of successful employer, professional-body or practice partnership and a practical understanding of graduate employability and progression.
- A record of research, scholarship, knowledge exchange or professional practice appropriate to the role.

Capabilities and behaviours

- Combines academic judgement with commercial acumen and can reject growth that creates unacceptable quality, accreditation, ethical or regulatory risk.
- Uses data critically, asks incisive questions and converts analysis into timely intervention and measurable improvement.
- Communicates with authority and clarity to students, academics, executives, governors, professional bodies and external partners.
- Works across organisational boundaries, influences without relying solely on hierarchy and remains accountable for delivery.
- Demonstrates integrity, inclusion, sound judgement and the confidence to challenge constructively.
- Operates effectively in ambiguity and at pace without compromising due process, academic standards or staff and student wellbeing.

5 Executive KPI scorecard

The Dean's objectives should be confirmed annually against an approved baseline and School plan. Performance should be evaluated by programme, level, study mode, location and student characteristic where material; aggregate improvement must not conceal areas of weak performance.

KPI	Core measures	Recommended standard
1 Student outcomes and equity	Continuation, completion, attainment, progression, module pass and credit achievement, and outcome gaps between student groups.	Meet or exceed approved School targets and regulatory thresholds; deliver agreed year-on-year improvement; no programme below threshold without an approved recovery plan, named owner and monitored milestones.
2 Academic quality and BPS accreditation	Accreditation status, conditions and recommendations, external-examiner assurance, assessment quality, academic integrity, research ethics and closure of quality actions.	Maintain all agreed accreditations; submit complete and timely accreditation evidence; close conditions, recommendations and material quality actions by deadline; no repeated major finding.

KPI	Core measures	Recommended standard
3 Portfolio growth and commercial performance	Recruitment, conversion, retention, net growth, new-product delivery, income diversification, portfolio viability and contribution.	Deliver the approved student-number, income and contribution plan within academic capacity; launch approved provision to time, quality and business case; complete annual portfolio review and act on underperformance.
4 Student experience	NSS and internal student-experience measures, teaching quality, assessment and feedback, academic support, complaints themes and student voice.	Achieve approved improvement targets; evidence timely action and closed feedback loops; demonstrate sustained improvement in agreed priority measures.
5 AI transformation and leadership	Delivery of the School AI roadmap, curriculum and assessment change, staff capability, responsible-AI governance, adoption and evidenced benefits.	Deliver agreed transformation milestones; map and assess relevant AI capability and ethics across all courses; demonstrate measurable educational or operational benefit with no material breach of academic integrity, ethics or data protection.
6 Employability and professional relevance	Graduate outcomes, progression to further study or professional training, employer and BPS engagement, applied learning and careers integration.	Deliver agreed progression improvement; ensure every course has current professional or employer input and authentic applied learning; provide accurate professional-pathway information across the portfolio.
7 People, capability and culture	Staff engagement, leadership effectiveness, performance management, succession, workload compliance, disciplinary expertise and teaching qualifications.	At least 90% of eligible teaching staff hold a HESA-returnable teaching qualification or recognition within the agreed timeframe; all staff have objectives and timely reviews; critical capability and succession gaps are actively managed.
8 Financial and operational performance	Budget control, teaching cost, staffing efficiency, forecast accuracy, timetable and delivery reliability, supervision and resource capacity.	Deliver approved financial targets within agreed tolerance; maintain credible forecasts; meet delivery standards without deterioration in student outcomes, accreditation or quality.
9 Research, partnerships and reputation	Research and scholarship outputs, knowledge exchange, external income, strategic partnerships, professional engagement and profile-building activity.	Deliver agreed outputs and external value; demonstrate clear benefit to curriculum, students, staff, partners or School reputation.

6 General responsibilities

- Act consistently with Arden University's values, policies, academic governance and delegated authorities.
- Promote equality, diversity, inclusion, wellbeing, freedom of speech within the law, and a safe learning and working environment.
- Protect confidential, personal, research and commercially sensitive information and ensure appropriate information-security practice.
- Undertake other duties commensurate with the seniority and purpose of the role, as reasonably required by the Provost.

This job description defines the principal accountabilities of the role. Objectives and measures may be refined annually to reflect University priorities, professional and regulatory requirements and the maturity of the School.