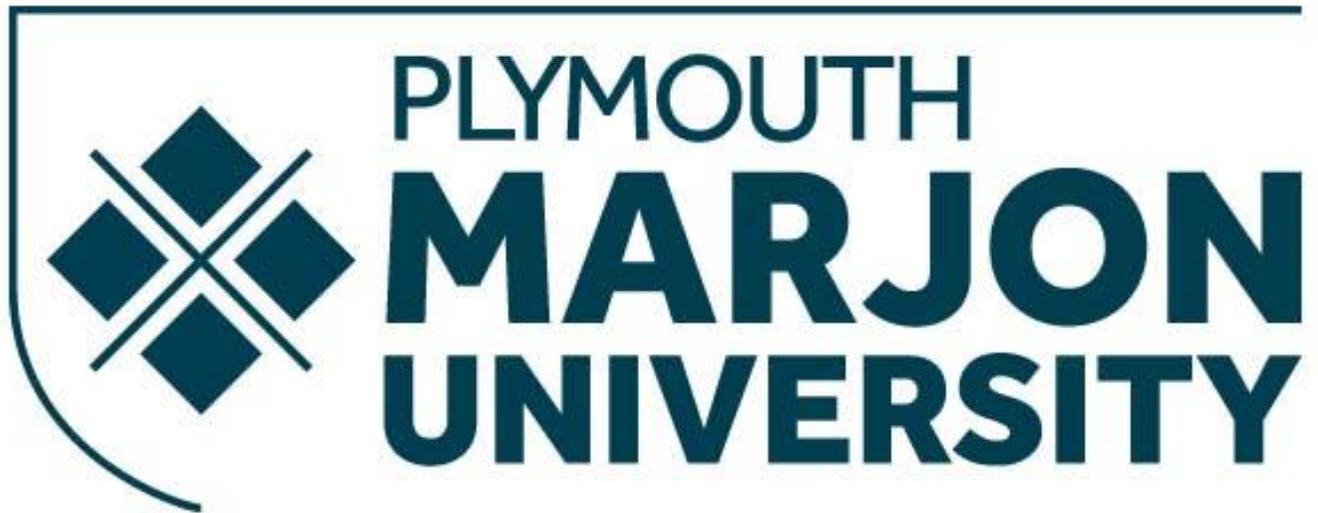


**PLYMOUTH MARJON UNIVERSITY**



**QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK:**

**COLLABORATIVE PROVISION  
REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES**

## COLLABORATIVE PROVISION REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

The QAA define a collaborative partnership as *'an arrangement between two or more organisations to deliver aspects of teaching, learning, assessment and student support. It refers to collaborative arrangements involving students and/or awards which include those involving guaranteed progression and sharing of services.'*

The University's Collaborative Provision Regulations and Procedures outline the processes for assuring the academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities in all programmes leading to University named awards, where these are delivered wholly or in part by an approved external partner and align to both the UK Quality Code and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

The University's approach to its collaborative provision is described in the following pages, together with Annexes which provide pro-forma and guidance to assist academic and administrative staff in the quality assurance of the University's collaborative portfolio.

Whilst these regulations and procedures and their relevant Annexes are discrete, they are not for use in isolation; rather they are part of a comprehensive system for the management of academic activities at the University.

### **1 COLLABORATIVE PROVISION: *Criteria and General Principles***

#### **1.1 Criteria For Collaborative Engagement**

Proposals for new collaborative developments will be considered against the following criteria:

- relevance of the partnership, and its compatibility to the University's ethos and strategic educational objectives and goals;
- whether the University has the relevant academic, cultural knowledge and experience to enter into such a partnership;
- prospects for provision of a high-quality student experience, underpinned by access to appropriate resources including staffing in terms of their qualifications, knowledge and experience;
- appropriate progression opportunities (where relevant);
- that the University has the ability to commit the resources necessary for the proposal, including the initial investigation, negotiation, approval, development and sustained oversight of arrangements;
- ability of the University to exercise effective oversight of quality and standards;
- accountability and transparency of arrangements with the collaborating partner;
- that the benefits of such a partnership outweigh potential/identifiable risks.

In addition, the following should be taken into consideration:

- sustainability of recruitment potential (minimum of 3 years);
- potential contribution to the University's widening participation agenda.

All proposals for collaborative work, whether related to establishing inter-institutional links or developing new provision, must satisfy these criteria.

## 1.2 Central Oversight of Collaborative Provision

The University demands the same high-quality teaching and student experience in its collaborative provision as it does in all of its other programmes. To this end central arrangements have been established to oversee relationships with partners.

The following aspects are included in these arrangements:

- communication with senior staff in partner institutions;
- due diligence procedures - a due diligence check must have been conducted at the initial stages of the proposal;
- once the partnership has been established due diligence enquiries to the same standard are refreshed annually and revised for any partnership change;
- establishment, maintenance and review of written agreements and contractual arrangements including appropriate student protection plan (or equivalent) clauses;
- venue and resource checks;
- partner and programme approval;
- periodic review of partnership arrangements;
- annual monitoring procedures (partner and programme);
- appointment of an Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT) from both partners.

Strong relationships between University staff members and their academic counterparts in the partner institutions are essential to the quality of collaborative provision.

## 1.3 General Principles

### 1.3.1. *Authority*

The authority to link with a new external partner for the collaborative delivery of academic programmes leading an award of the University lies with the University's Senate. The authority to commence delivery of a specific programme (or part of a programme) is delegated to the University Board of Studies, which reports its decisions to the Senate.

The authority to link with a new external partner which does **not** include the delivery of academic programmes or modules or any form of learning, teaching and assessment, lies with the University Board of Studies (with authority delegated from Senate).

### **1.3.2 Academic Standards**

The University is both responsible and accountable for the academic standards of all awards (and credits) granted in its name and must be able to satisfy itself that the quality of learning opportunities offered through any partnership is appropriate. All collaborative provision must align with the University's Regulations. In any circumstance where an exception to these Regulations is requested, a written request must be prepared and submitted to the University's Senate for approval.

### **1.3.3 Serial Arrangements**

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance: Partnerships notes that serial arrangements '*should be considered a greater risk than one with only one level of partnership*' (p6).

The University will, therefore, neither approve nor recommend approval of any partnership that would place the delivery of academic provision more than one "step" away from itself, as the awarding body.

### **1.3.4 Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)**

The University will ensure that the necessary written approval has been obtained from the PSRB if a programme is the subject of a possible accreditation arrangement. It will also ensure that prospective students, and those enrolled on the programme, are made aware of the status of the programme in respect of PSRB recognition.

### **1.3.5 Approval and Management of Risk**

Each proposed partner and partnership arrangement are subject to formal approval in accordance with criteria and procedures agreed and approved by the University's Senate. Each partnership proposal must be subject to comprehensive due diligence enquiries and an assessment of academic, business and commercial risk. The University may vary the process of approval to take into account factors such as the maturity of the relationship with a particular partner, the nature and scope of the partnership, and the status of the partner (for example, whether the partner is a national government ministry, a Further Education College or a small private provider). The decision on the precise terms of an approval process will be made in each case by the University Board of Studies (UBoS) (see 3.4). The risks of each arrangement will be reviewed annually through the University's annual monitoring processes.

### **1.3.6 Formal Agreements**

All collaborative partnerships and arrangements must have a formal written partnership document.

For all partnerships which involve academic provision, leading to an award of the University, this would be a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), which is legally binding (see 2.4.2). The Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) makes explicit the

rights and responsibilities of all parties and sets out financial and administrative schedules. The Memorandum of Agreement is signed by the senior responsible officer of both partners. The Memorandum of Agreement is accompanied by an Annual Operational Agreement (AoA) which sets out the practical arrangements for the management of the partnership on an annual basis.

For partnerships which do not involve academic provision or any learning, teaching or assessment, i.e. those which do not lead to an award of the University, this would be a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) makes explicit the rights and responsibilities of all parties and sets out financial and administrative schedules (as appropriate). The Memorandum of Understanding is signed by the Executive Dean.

Memoranda of Agreement (MoAs) and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) are prepared and held centrally within the Quality and Academic Standards Unit. The nature and content of each may vary, depending on the type and complexity of the activity. Once the formal agreement or understanding has been signed by both partnerships, the activity is recorded within the Quality and Standards Unit. The University's published Collaborative Provision Register includes all partnerships for which MoAs have been signed.

#### **1.3.7 *Quality Assurance of Academic Provision***

The University requires its partners to employ quality assurance procedures that can be demonstrated to align with those approved by the University's Senate. This includes procedures for the approval and review of programmes, annual monitoring, and cyclical periodic review.

#### **1.3.8 *Collaborative Partner Staff Involved in Academic Provision***

The University is committed to ensuring that all academic staff members are appropriately qualified to deliver its programmes. Where partners are involved in the delivery of a programme (either partially or wholly), the University requires that all staff involved are approved by the University, as set out in the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), and that all staff changes are notified to the University without delay.

#### **1.3.9 *Resources for Learning***

The University will evaluate the physical and electronic learning resources of the partner organisation to ensure that they are of an appropriate amount and quality, and that they will enable the stated programme and module learning outcomes to be achieved by the students. Where partner organisations have access to University facilities and resources, these will be in accordance with any licensing agreement(s) that may prevail. The nature of such arrangements will be specified in the Annual Operational Agreement.

### **1.3.10 Admission and Registration**

The University will stipulate where responsibility lies, not only for decisions on admissions, but also for the joint management of the admissions process, and advise partners on the acceptability of their admissions criteria for collaborative programmes as necessary. This will include but is not limited to entry requirements and academic prerequisites, recognition of international qualifications and credits, arrangements for Accreditation of Prior Learning and English Language requirements. The Annual Operational Agreement will clarify the roles and responsibilities of the University and the partner organisation in relations to arrangements for admissions and registration. Where admission is delegated to the partner institution the University will ensure that the partner's admissions policies and procedures are consistent with those of the University.

All students studying on programmes leading to a University award or the award of credit will be registered with the University. In the event of the premature termination of a partnership, the University will operate agreed contingency arrangements to safeguard the interests of students and enable them to complete their programme of study.

### **1.3.11 Certificates and Transcripts**

The University is the sole authority for the award of certificates for provision leading to its awards or credits. The University will issue appropriate student transcripts for students on collaborative awards. An exception to this will be in the case of dual awards, and where a dual award is made this will be explicit on the certificates of both organisations. The certificate will include the name of the partner, the location of delivery and the language of study.

### **1.3.12 Assessment**

For the purpose of ensuring that outcomes of assessment for collaborative provision meet specified academic standards, the University requires that marking, moderation and feedback arrangements are in accordance with (or comparable to) its own regulations and procedures. Academic Liaison Tutors (ALTs) play a key role in ensuring that assessment regimes are appropriate, and External Examiners are central to the assurance of the quality of the academic standards of the awards. The University will therefore be responsible for the appointment, briefing and establishing the requirements of External Examiners. The assessment arrangements and responsibilities are set out in the Annual Operational Agreement).

### **1.3.13 Information**

The University requires all publicity and promotional material and teaching quality information generated by a partner organisation in relation to a University

award to be approved in advance (see 2.4.3). The University regularly monitors all information produced by the partner.

#### **1.3.14 *Language of Delivery***

As a UK higher education institution, the University's language of delivery and assessment is English. In the unlikely event that a departure from this is requested, this must be made in writing by the partner organisation for approval by the University's Senate prior to the commencement of the approval event. Such provision will require the risk register to be revised, and the partner will be wholly responsible for any additional costs incurred as a result of this.

## **2 Partnership models and approaches**

In any collaborative arrangement the University reserves the right to advise upon and, where necessary, alter the approval model status of any of its awards in line with prevailing UK Government requirements.

### **2.1 Collaborative Provision Arrangements**

There are two types of collaborative provision arrangements with partner organisations offered by the University, which are as follows:

#### **2.1.1 *Franchise***

The University authorises a collaborative partner to deliver and assess part, or all, of one of its own programmes.

#### **2.1.2 *Validation***

The University approves a programme developed and delivered by the partner organisation as being of an appropriate standard and quality to lead to one of its awards. This is also known as 'external validation'. Such provision must be presented in standard University format.

### **2.2 Awards**

The University is responsible for the academic standards of any awards granted in its name.

#### **2.2.1 *University award***

In most cases, collaborative programmes lead to a University named award, from among those listed in the University's regulatory framework, including credit achieved on modules which may lead to a University Certificate of Credit.

#### **2.2.2 *Dual award***

A partnership arrangement whereby two or more awarding bodies collaborate in the delivery of a single jointly delivered programme leading to separate awards. The academic standards of dual awards have to satisfy the requirements of both

the FHEQ and any national requirements of the partner awarding body.

Proposers should also consider the requirements of the [QAA Joint Degree Characteristic Statement](#).

## **2.3 Delivery Models Supporting Learning Opportunities**

Collaborative provision may involve University staff working with an approved partner in the delivery of University approved programmes, beyond University premises. Delivery may involve face-to-face teaching, distance teaching using on-line electronic formats, work-based learning, the provision of bespoke learning materials (print or electronic), local or on-line tutoring, or any combination of these. The partner may provide local premises, facilities and administrative support, and/or local tutoring and learner support, or may be approved to undertake teaching, local tutorials and assessments. The delivery model and the ways in which learning opportunities are supported will be set out in the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) and the different delivery models can be summarised as follows:

### **2.3.1 Model A *Delegated collaboration***

The partner delivers and assesses the programme (i.e. the partner deploys teaching and tutoring staff who have been approved by the University; the partner sets and marks assessments). Where Model A is adopted the Annual Operational Agreement will specify the roles and responsibilities of both the University and the partner in relation to assessment.

### **2.3.2 Model B *Supported collaboration***

Both University academic staff and partner academic staff deliver and assess learning (i.e. in collaboration) as set out in the Annual Operational Agreement.

### **2.3.3 Model C *University delivery***

The University delivers and assesses the programme in its entirety (i.e. University staff teach, tutor and assess face-to-face or on-line; the partner provides only facilities, administration and student support). (This is sometimes referred to as “Flying Faculty”.)

## **2.4 Types of Agreement**

All collaborative partnerships are subject to formal written agreements between the partners. These must be agreed and signed by both parties before the students commence their programme of study.

### **2.4.1 Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)**

The Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) is a formal, legally binding, institution-level contract between the University and a partner. It is signed for a defined period by the University’s Vice Chancellor and designated Senior Officer from the partner organisation. The Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) embodies the educational philosophy underpinning delivery, commits both the partner and the University to specific processes and practices, and outlines the overall rights and responsibilities of each partner in respect of the collaboration. The

Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) includes the date and mechanism for review and must be signed by both parties before the planned activity begins. At the end of the defined period the partnership will either cease or a new Memorandum of Agreement is developed and signed by both parties.

#### **2.4.2 Annual Operational Agreement (AoA)**

Each Memorandum of Agreement is accompanied by an Annual Operational Agreement (AoA) which typically includes the following sections:

- *Annex 1 – Financial Memorandum.* This sets out the arrangements for payment, funding formulae, the expected number of students and estimates regarding student retention, etc. for each programme, except where a universally applicable financial schedule has been agreed.
- *Annex 2 – Details of Approved Awards.* This confirms the name of the approved programme(s), any particular conditions of approval (e.g. entry requirements), and any agreed exceptions to Regulations
- *Annex 3 – Service Level Agreements.*
- *Annex 4 – Annual Agreement of Responsibilities*
- *Annex 5 – Annual Agreement of Student Support Responsibilities*
- *Annex 6 – Marketing and Promotional Information.* This provides guidance on the use of the University name and logo; allowable marketing and publicity materials; the process for sign-off of any publicity materials including where the authority lies for such approval; the programme approval process; and any relevant specified statements.
- *Annex 7 – Student Casework.*

### **3 Approval of collaborative partners**

#### **3.1 Proposals for New Partnerships**

Partnership proposals can arise from a range of sources, including those generated internally by University staff, or as a result of an approach from an external institution/organisation. However, they originate the University must be satisfied that for all academic collaborations the potential partner can provide an appropriate Higher Education environment and expertise for delivery of collaborative provision. The criteria set out in Section 1.1 provide the reference point for initial consideration of every collaborative proposal.

The case for all new partnerships is initially considered by the University's Senior Management Team (SMT) and the University Board of Studies (UBoS) (see Section 3.4); following the appropriate preparatory steps (see Sections 3.2 and 3.3). Where the partners are involved in academic delivery final formal approval is through Senate, following a recommendation from the University Board of Studies (UBoS).

### 3.2 Preliminary Steps

- Initial discussions between relevant University staff, the Director of School and the Executive Dean to consider whether or not the proposed partnership is appropriate (based on documentary evidence plus one or more ‘scoping’ visits to or from the external partner).
- Exchange of information with partner (outline of University processes, timetable for approval, costs etc.).

### 3.3 Preparation of the Proposal

The Director of School, in consultation with relevant University colleagues, is responsible for ensuring that the following documentation is assembled:

- Summary rationale for the partnership, and report of initial discussions.
- Institutional Visit Report based on a formal visit to the partner by a senior member of the University which clearly indicates the information which has been drawn from the prospective partner’s own documentation.
- A completed Risk Assessment (using the University’s Risk Assessment Tool).
- A Due Diligence Report completed in accordance with the expectations of the QAA’s UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

### 3.4 Consideration for Approval in Principle by the Senior Management Team (SMT)

Members of the University’s Senior Management Team (SMT) are provided with appropriate documentation in advance of a meeting convened to consider the proposal in the light of the criteria as detailed in Section 1.1 of these Regulations and the University’s Mission Statement and Strategic Plan. The proposal is presented by the Executive Dean. In order to inform its decision, the Senior Management Team have the option of requesting discussion with prospective partner representatives (using “virtual” means if geographical circumstances require) and may request further information and/or re-submission to a future meeting. The Senior Management Team will either grant Approval in Principle (AiP) or reject the proposal. If the proposal is rejected the Director of the relevant School is responsible for informing the partner.

If the proposal is approved, the University Board of Studies (UBoS) will authorise a Partnership Approval event and establish the precise terms of the approval event.

### 3.5 Partnership Approval Event

The partnership approval event must take place at the delivery site and will be organised by the Quality and Academic Standards Unit (QASU) in liaison with the key personnel at the proposed partner organisation and relevant University colleagues. The Quality and Academic Standards Unit (QASU) will be responsible for compiling a briefing pack which will include as a minimum:

- relevant regulations and guidelines, both internal and external;
- the documentation as stated in Section 3.3;
- an *aide memoire* of topics to be addressed during the event and recorded in the resultant report.

The Partnership Approval panel will typically comprise:

- the Executive Dean who will chair the event;
- a member of academic staff from the host School;
- at least one external academic (or in exceptional circumstances suitably qualified professional) with appropriate experience in/knowledge of collaborative provision and preferably with specialist knowledge of the proposed provision under review;
- the Quality and Standards Manager may also attend depending on the nature of the partnership event;
- an administrator nominated by the University.

The panel members will need to satisfy themselves about the proposed partner's:

- ability to provide appropriate resources (including staffing) to operate the partnership arrangements successfully;
- academic and/or professional capacity to deliver learning, teaching and support at the appropriate FHEQ levels;
- ability to provide an appropriate and safe working environment.

The outcomes of the partnership approval event will be recorded in a formal report and include any conditions and/or recommendations set by the panel and the date by which they need to be addressed. Once signed off by the Chair the Partnership Approval Report is presented to the University Board of Studies (UBoS) for discussion.

### **3.6 Outcomes of the Partnership Approval Event**

Following discussion of the Partnership Approval Report the University Board of Studies (UBoS) submits to Senate a recommendation either that the new partner should be approved (with or without conditions): that approval should be deferred: or that the proposal should be declined. If approved the University's Vice Chancellor and the authoritative Senior Officer of the new partner will sign a formal Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) setting out the terms of the partnership. Associated proposals for delivery of specific programmes in collaboration with this partner may then be confirmed by the University Board of Studies (UBoS) (see Section 4). As specific programmes are approved, details are added to the Annual Operational Agreement (AoA).

If Senate defers or declines the proposal, it will also agree how that outcome will be communicated to the partner and will receive an update at the next scheduled meeting on this.

### **3.7 Further Development of Partnerships (Supplementary Partnership Approval)**

In the case of proposals to extend the scope of a partnership, by adding to or changing aspects of the portfolio of programmes being offered collaboratively with the partner organisation, or by adding new locations, a supplementary approval event may be required. Situations requiring a supplementary approval event include:

- where the proposal is for a different delivery model to that covered by the existing approved arrangement;

- where the proposal is for the delivery of learning at a level higher than that covered by the existing approved arrangement;
- where the proposal is for a new and/or additional programme;
- where the proposal is for existing programmes to be delivered in a different location;
- where there is an identified need for additional specialised resources to deliver the proposed new programme(s).

Members of the Senior Management Team will consider the application for Approval in Principle for the additional proposed programme(s), or other proposals for the development of the partnership. If approved the University Board of Studies (UBoS) will confirm the scope of the approval event. The Supplementary Approval Event may be held at the University, at the partner organisation, or it may be convened virtually.

### **3.8 Review and Renewal of Partner Approval**

Partnerships are normally agreed for an initial period of 5 years with the option to renew, subject to renegotiation of terms, at the end of this period. Details of the period agreed, and the review dates are set out in the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA).

The links with each partner will be kept under continuous review through the University's normal annual monitoring processes, taking into account all relevant sources of information, including progression and retention data, programme monitoring and external examiner reports, Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT) reports, programme-level approval and review outcomes, and financial returns. Should any significant concerns be conveyed to the Vice Chancellor by the Executive Dean, the Quality and Standards Manager, the Head of Student Support, or the Registrar, the Vice Chancellor may request that the University Board of Studies (UBoS) authorises an additional review event (which would not be specified within the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)). Should such a review highlight concerns of such serious and grave nature that the reputation of the University may be jeopardised, the termination of the partnership may be recommended to the University's Senate and be presented along with a proposed Termination Action Plan.

## **4 Approval of collaborative programmes**

### **4.1 Authorisation to Proceed**

For each proposal, the Director of School of the relevant host School will arrange for a preliminary assessment to be carried out. Once satisfied that there is a *prima facie* case for the proposed collaborative programme(s), she/he will arrange for an Approval in Principle (AiP) form to be prepared and submitted to the Executive Dean. The Executive Dean will present the Approval in Principle (AiP) to the Senior Management Team (SMT) for discussion and approval. The Host School will also provide written confirmation, where necessary (for example for overseas collaborative provision), from the partner

organisation that the relevant national authority has given their approval for the collaborative programme to be offered by the partner.

The Senior Management Team (SMT) will consider the proposed Approval in Principle (AiP) and may request further information before the proposal can be fully discussed. Once the Approval in Principle is approved by the Senior Management Team (SMT) it will be expected that the process of approval will proceed as described in Section 4.2 below, unless reasons are identified to recommend a departure from this. Under such circumstances, the specific reasons will be clearly set out and recorded in the relevant Senior Management Team and University Board of Studies (UBoS) minutes.

#### **4.2 The Programme Approval Event**

Once a proposal for a collaborative programme has gained authorisation from the Senior Management Team (SMT) to proceed, the University's Quality and Academic Standards Unit (QASU) will arrange for a Programme Approval Event (validation) to take place in accordance with the University's Programme Approval Regulations and Procedures.

The Quality and Academic Standards Unit (QASU) will ensure that the nature of the event matches the status of the particular proposal, as set out below:

- *For the validation of the first programme proposed for delivery by a new partner* - the approval event should take place at the delivery site and the Validation Panel must have sight of all institution-level information originally scrutinised by the University. The Panel will take particular care to check that the institutional context, resources and facilities are appropriate and of a satisfactory standard for the specific programme under consideration. A new partnership and programme approval event can both take place on the same day. However, the partnership must always be approved before the programme. If this occurs the partner must be advised that if the partnership is not approved by Senate then the programme event could be irrelevant and that this is a risk the partner takes.
- *For a new programme to be delivered by a current and well-established partner* – The University Board of Study (UBoS) may advise that a “virtual” approval event, held with the use of appropriate technology, is acceptable.
- *For the validation of a programme to be delivered by a current and well-established partner* – University staff representation on the Panel must exhibit relevant expertise in the field to a level that satisfies quality assurance requirements.

If the University Board of Studies (UBoS) members have agreed that a supplementary partnership approval event (as described in Section 3.7) is required, this will be run in conjunction with the validation event.

In addition to collating the documentation required for the Programme Approval Event the Quality and Academic Standards Unit (QASU) will be responsible for providing the Validation Panel with an *aide memoire* of additional programme-specific topics to be addressed during the event. The Quality & Academic Standards Unit (QASU) will also provide any further guidance required to Panels, for example the delivery model and

how this may influence the focus of the event. The topics covered during the Approval Event are likely to include the following:

- The scope and nature of the programme (e.g. franchise, validation, dual award);
- The University's and the partner's responsibilities and arrangements for learning, teaching and assessment, admissions and student casework;
- Student support and access to learning resources;
- Opportunities for student feedback;
- Contingency arrangements.

The outcomes of the Approval Event will be recorded in a written report that clearly details any conditions and/or recommendations set by the Panel and the date by which they need to be addressed. It will also record any specific arrangements which are to be incorporated into the relevant Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) and/or Annual Operational Agreement (AoA).

#### **4.3 The Programme Approval Panel for Collaborative Provision**

Panel membership follows the University's Programme Approval Regulations and Procedures and for collaborative provision normally includes the following:

- the Executive Dean or Director of School from a School not directly involved in the proposal, who will Chair the event;
- the Quality and Standards Manager or Quality Assurance Officer;
- a member of academic staff from the proposing School who is not directly involved in the proposal;
- a member of academic staff nominated by a Director of School not directly involved in the proposal;
- at least one External Panel Member (or in exceptional circumstances suitably qualified professional) in the specialist area of the proposed programme appointed in accordance with the University's Criteria for the Appointment of External Panel Members;
- a nominated member of the Quality and Academic Standards Unit will be in attendance and act as secretary to the Panel.

#### **4.4 Following the Programme Approval Event**

Following the Programme Approval Event, the report compiled by the Validation Panel is submitted to Senate which considers the outcomes of the event in accordance with the University's Programme Approval Regulations and Procedures.

#### **4.5 Programme level Memoranda of Agreement**

Once programme level approval processes are complete, the Annual Operational Agreement will be updated. This must be signed by the Executive Dean and an equivalent Senior Officer of the partner organisation before students can be admitted onto a programme.

#### **4.6 Monitoring**

An Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT) is appointed by the University to monitor academic standards and the quality of provision. An Annual Report by the Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT) forms part of the University's annual monitoring process. The provision will be subject to the normal process of periodic review and revalidation. Further information on monitoring can be found in Section 8.

#### **4.7 Modification to Approved Provision**

Modifications to approved provision follow the University's regulations and procedures. For University programmes, the Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT) will notify the partner organisation of any proposed modifications to the programme prior to submission of these and include confirmation that they have been consulted on this with the modification request. Once the formal processes have been completed the Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT) will provide the partner organisation with updated definitive documents.

For partner organisation programmes which have been validated by the University, including dual awards, the partner organisation procedures may be used. However, the partner organisation must notify the University of any proposed modifications to the programme in advance of approval by the partner organisation. The Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT), in association with the Quality and Academic Standards Unit, will review the proposed modification to ensure that it still aligns with University requirements and that the programme aims and learning outcomes are still met. A standard template will be completed to confirm and record this. Once modifications have been formally approved by the partner organisation the partner is responsible for providing the University with updated definitive documents (module descriptors and programme specification) prior to implementation.

All modifications must be recorded within the Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT) Annual Report.

### **5 Articulation arrangements with partner organisations**

An articulation arrangement is the process by which the University approves a programme (or part of a programme) owned, delivered and assessed by a partner organisation, as appropriate for entry to a named University programme following an evidenced mapping exercise of the partner programme onto the University programme. Therefore, students who have satisfied academic criteria on the partner organisation programme are automatically entitled to be admitted to a subsequent stage of a named University programme.

### **5.1 Articulation Agreements**

The Executive Dean is responsible for establishing an Articulation Agreement. Under a University Articulation Agreement, the partner institution is responsible for:

recruitment and selection of students, registration and regulation of students (including student casework procedures), programme design, delivery, quality of the student experience, academic standards, and financial matters.

The University is responsible for ensuring that the programme provided by the partner organisation is at an appropriate level and that the standards set and achieved by students are equivalent to those set and achieved by the University's student cohort that the articulating students will join. Assessments related to qualifications awarded by a partner organisation will not contribute to the classification of the University's final award, unless special arrangements around Accreditation for Prior Learning have been agreed.

### **5.2 Approval of Articulation Agreements**

Articulation Agreements can be initiated either internally from Academic Schools or senior managers, or externally from individual organisations or consortia. In each case the Director of the relevant host School will conduct a preliminary assessment of the proposal, for appropriateness and viability within the University's Strategic Plan and current resource arrangements.

An Articulation Proposal Approval in Principle (AiP) Form should be completed and submitted to the Executive Dean with all relevant documentation. This will include evidence of the proposed partner institution's status and the equivalence of its qualification against the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). Also included will be evidence that the outcomes of the qualification have been mapped against the pre-requisites for the proposed level of entry to the University programme. If the qualification concerned cannot be benchmarked, e.g. against the British Council publication, NARIC, or similar, then a thorough scrutiny of the standards achieved by prospective candidates must be conducted prior to submission of the Articulation Proposal.

The Executive Dean will consider the Articulation Proposal in the light of the University's Strategic Plan and against the relevant School's Academic and Business Plan. Upon acceptance the Articulation Proposal will be recorded by the Quality and Academic Standards Unit (QASU). The Executive Dean is responsible for communicating approval to the partner and will indicate the period of approval of the articulation arrangement, which is normally three years, and the processes for monitoring and review.

### **5.3 Renewal**

Renewal of an Articulation Agreement will normally take place at three yearly intervals and will be subject to a review of provision, scrutiny of progression data. It will also involve an updated mapping exercise to ensure that the standards of the award remain

appropriate. The Quality and Academic Standards Unit (QASU) will advise the Executive Dean of the requirements for the renewal process.

#### **5.4 Monitoring**

The performance of students progressing to study at the University from the partner organisation will be considered in annual monitoring reports and periodic reviews of the relevant School.

## **6 Management of collaborative provision**

The University will, wherever possible, use its existing organisational structures to manage collaborative provision, as set out below.

### **6.1 The Executive Dean**

The University's Executive Dean is responsible for the operational management of collaborative provision including its strategic development, resource allocation and quality assurance.

#### ***6.1.1 Strategic Partnership Board***

For each partnership leading to a University award, there will be an annual Strategic Partnership Board. This will involve senior members of staff from both the University and partner institution with the primary objective of reviewing the overall operation and effectiveness of the partnership. The Strategic Partnership Board will follow the University's terms of reference and will be chaired by the University's Executive Dean.

#### ***6.1.2 Strategic Partnership Board Terms of Reference***

The Terms of Reference for Strategic Partnership Boards are as follows:

- To review the overall operation and effectiveness of the partnership.
- To review partner institution performance and activities, and discuss strategic issues affecting the relationship between the University and the partner institution including the partner institution's HE strategy, development plans, resources and finance.
- To share relevant institutional level developments, and other matters of common interest that might impact upon the partnership, with a view to identifying opportunities for further collaboration.
- To ensure that there are adequate resources to manage and enhance the partnership, including effective administrative systems.
- To monitor the quality of the student experience, utilising available resources such as Annual Monitoring Reports, Assessment Board minutes, External Examiner reports, student feedback and retention, progression and achievement data as appropriate.
- To discuss and agree any actions arising from quality assurance activities including partnership approval, programme validation and revalidation and periodic review.
- To review the admissions and marketing arrangements applicable to the partnership.

- To review proposals from the partner institution and consider how these might affect the portfolio of awards offered by the University and its other partner institutions.
- To consider policy changes imposed by government and/or other external bodies, as they might affect the partnership, with a view to facilitating a consistent response.
- To contribute to policy and practice as it relates to the operation and development of the University's institutional partnerships and provide an opportunity to meet and exchange practice and operational intelligence.

Minutes of Strategic Partnership Boards are received and discussed at the University Board of Studies (UBoS) and will inform the Annual Monitoring Report for the School.

### ***6.1.3 Nature and Frequency of Meetings***

Boards will normally meet once each academic year, either physically or virtually. Meetings will normally be organised and hosted by the University.

## **6.2 Programme Leader / Programme Area Leader**

Collaborative programmes, as other University programmes, are managed by a Programme Leader / Programme Area Leader. Where a programme is delivered entirely and solely within a single partner organisation, this role will normally be held by a member of staff at the partner institution. In such partnerships the Programme Leader appointment may be nominated by the partner institution and this nomination will be confirmed by the Executive Dean. Where a programme is taught in part by University staff, the Executive Dean will decide whether the Programme Leader / Programme Area Leader will be a member of partner institution staff or drawn from University staff.

## **6.3 Academic Liaison Tutor**

Each collaborative programme will have an Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT). Where a cognate group of programmes is involved with a partner, a single Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT) may oversee all of these. The Executive Dean will approve an appropriate member of University staff to act as Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT), who will normally be the Programme Leader, or Programme Area Leader, with responsibility for the discipline area of the collaborative provision. The Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT) role will focus on assuring that the partner is maintaining appropriate quality assurance procedures and academic standards and adhering to University requirements. She/he will also be first in the line of responsibility for the day-to-day management of the collaborative link and the initial point of referral for all academic issues and routine programme management. If, for any reason, an Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT) is not appointed, the University Programme Leader / Programme Area Leader will assume that role.

## **6.4 Academic Liaison Arrangements**

### ***6.4.1 Operational Partnership Board***

Partnerships leading to a named University award may be the subject of an Operational Partnership Board which should sit no less than once per academic year. Normally the Operational Partnership Board will be chaired by the Academic Liaison Tutor but, where this is not possible, a senior member of the

University may be co-opted. Operational Partnership Boards are normally organized at School level but can be organized centrally, by the Quality and Academic Standards Unit, where provision extends across more than one School.

#### **6.4.2 *Operational Partnership Board Business***

Since partnerships can vary in extent and scope, the business conducted by each Operational Partnership Board will vary in practice. However, they will invariably include:

- to provide a forum in which to discuss operational issues affecting the University and the partner institution;
- to review marketing and promotional activity relevant to the partnership;
- to identify solutions to operational problems affecting the partnership and ensure these are embraced in appropriate plans for action;
- to develop and enhance the partnership;
- to identify aspects of good practice that might be disseminated to other University partnerships.

Minutes of Operational Partnership Boards are received and discussed at the University Board of Studies (UBoS) and Strategic Partnership Boards (SPBs) and will inform the Annual Monitoring Report for the School.

#### **6.4.3 *Nature and Frequency of Operational Partnership Board Meetings***

The character and frequency of meetings will be determined by the Executive Dean in consultation with the Quality and Standards Manager and staff from the partner institution. Meetings should be held with sufficient frequency to enable the quality of the programme to be effectively monitored.

For UK partnerships, meetings will normally be held at the Partner Institution unless there are strong reasons, in the view of the Executive Dean or Quality and Standards Manager, to the contrary. In the case of international partnerships, the meeting will be held at the partner institution, and wherever possible at a time which coincides with a visit of the Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT). Meetings may involve the deployment of appropriate technologies, such as video conferencing and Skype, to reduce environmental impact and costs of maintaining the partnership.

Student representation on Operational Partnership Boards is an expectation, though it is accepted that students might not always be able to attend in person. However Operational Partnership Boards benefit from receiving student feedback in the course of routine quality assurance, enabling Boards to comment more authoritatively on the quality of the student experience.

### **6.5 Student Feedback and Representation**

In order to facilitate effective engagement with students, all students on collaborative programmes must have the opportunity to provide regular feedback on their

programme / unit of study and be involved in quality assurance processes. All partner organisations should have a Staff Student Liaison Committee or equivalent for student discussion.

## **6.6 Promotion, Publicity and Marketing of Collaborative Programmes by Partners**

All promotional, publicity and marketing materials for collaborative programmes must be approved by the University prior to dissemination, as set out in the Annual Operational Agreement. This includes advertisements, prospectuses, brochures, leaflets, folders, posters, web pages and any other form of printed or electronic communications, which refer to the partner institution's connection with the University, and are used to recruit students or staff or to attract funding or other support from public or private sector sources.

Partner institutions must forward draft electronic versions of all promotional materials to the Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT), who will refer these as necessary to the University's Registrar to check for regulatory accuracy and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Success) to check the style. The Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT) will communicate any necessary changes to the partner institution prior to publication.

## **6.7 Recruitment of Students**

**6.7.1** Details of the process for recruitment of students on collaborative programmes will be clarified in the relevant Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) and Annual Operational Agreement (AoA). Regulations and specific arrangements for all students will normally be dealt with by the University's Registry Services.

**6.7.2** Decisions on the minimum and maximum student numbers for each collaborative programme will be agreed by the senior management of the two institutions, taking any limitations imposed by allocation of student numbers into account. Where a partner recruits beyond an agreed upper limit it will be required to pay all related fines and fees. Details of this are set out in the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA).

## **6.8 Admissions and Registration**

**6.8.1** Admission to all University programmes, whether based at the University or in partner institutions, is governed by the University's Admissions Policy and Procedures. The University will determine admission requirements and acceptable entry qualifications for students joining its programmes and, unless alternative arrangements are put in place at the time of approving a new programme, these will also govern recruitment to collaborative programmes. The Registrar, who oversees the Admissions function of the University, is responsible for the admission of students. Specific arrangements may govern the admission of part-time students.

**6.8.2** Where responsibility for student recruitment falls upon members of staff in partner institutions, normal University recruitment procedures should be

followed. Any programme-specific arrangements will be outlined in the relevant Programme Specification and the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA). Any student offered a place on a programme must, where appropriate, be informed that the offer is subject to references and confirmation of academic achievement. They should also be clearly informed wherever entry requirements include satisfaction of other criteria, such as health checks or Disclosure & Barring Service checks.

- 6.8.3** For overseas students on collaborative programmes, who may be undertaking part of their study in the UK, any requirements of the UK Borders Agency points-based visa system for immigration must be observed. Further information can be found on the UK Borders Agency website.
- 6.8.4** Where a partner institution has undertaken the recruitment and admission process for a collaborative programme, the University will require the partner to collect appropriate enrolment data as determined by the University, including dates of birth, details of previous qualifications and information needed for the monitoring of equal opportunities. The Registrar will provide the partner with a proforma spreadsheet detailing the information required.
- 6.8.5** Admission to all University programmes, whether based at the University or in partner institutions, is governed by the relevant University Policy with regard to Safeguarding. The University determines the safeguarding requirements for any programme involving contact with children and/or vulnerable adults in line with current legal criteria. The Registrar is responsible for the adherence to safeguarding requirements and the subsequent admission of students.
- 6.8.6** Partner institutions must inform the Registrar at the University, without delay, of any change to a student's pattern of study, including change of programme, pathway or course, withdrawal, interruption, change of mode or substitution of modules. Programme Leaders and Academic Liaison Tutors (ALTs) must conduct data checks at an appropriate frequency to ensure the currency of data.

## **6.9 Data Protection**

The Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) pertaining to each partnership will require that personal data relating to University staff or students anywhere in the world will be handled in accordance with UK legislation, and University policies and procedures.

As a consequence of the Data Protection Act 2018, partner institutions should issue a fair processing notice which must inform students that they may share data with partner institutions where this is necessary to deliver a course collaboratively. Students should be further informed that the partner institution may be required to pass the information to external bodies and principally the Office for Students, as required.

### **6.10 Library and ICT access**

Rights of students on collaborative programmes and partner staff with respect to library access and ICT resources will depend on the terms agreed in the relevant collaborative agreement. These rights will be set out in the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA). Access to both hard-copy literature and electronic resources will be subject to any restrictions imposed by prevailing Licensing Agreements.

### **6.11 Assessment of Students**

All assessment on collaborative programmes leading to a University award is governed by the University's Assessment Policy and the Student Regulations Framework. The outcomes of assessment for a programme provided under a University collaborative arrangement must meet the specified academic level of the award as defined in the UK Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, in the context of the relevant subject benchmark statement(s). Arrangements for assessment and moderation will be specified in the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) and Annual Operational Agreement (AoA). Programme teams manage the day-to-day arrangements for assessment within these procedures. Information on assessment and deadlines is set out in relevant sections of the University's Student Regulations Framework.

### **6.12 External Examiners**

External Examination arrangements on collaborative programmes align with those of the University. The appointment of all External Examiners is the responsibility of the University, which will oversee the provision of appropriate briefing and guidance required for External Examiners to fulfil their roles effectively. The Handbook for External Examiners and Moderators is available on the [University website](#).

### **6.13 Graduation and Award Ceremonies**

The Registrar is responsible for determining the eligibility of candidates for graduation and award ceremonies relating to collaborative programmes.

### **6.14 Student Casework**

For all collaborative programmes, arrangements relating to student casework (appeals, complaints, misconduct, fitness to practice and extenuating circumstances) are normally expected to align with those of the University, even when responsibility for administering those procedures resides with the partner institution. Where responsibility resides with the partner institution, students may normally request, by way of a representation in writing to the Academic Standards Officer, that the University conducts a review of the application of procedures in their particular case. If it is established that procedures have not been correctly administered, the case may be reheard as directed by the University. The relevant procedures are set out in the Student Regulations Framework.

## **6.15 Certification of University Awards**

**6.15.1** The University's Registrar is responsible for the issue of all student transcripts and award certificates relating to University programmes and awards, regardless of the location or the mode of study. The certificate will record:

- the name of the University
- the name of the Partner
- the location of study
- the name of the student
- the award conferred
- any classification of the award (where appropriate)
- the date of the award
- the signatures of the officers of the University responsible for conferring the award
- an endorsement referring to the existence of a transcript that is required by University Regulations or a body responsible for the quality assurance of higher education in the UK or elsewhere.

**6.15.2** For dual awards, the University certificate clarifies that it leads to a dual award and includes the name(s) of other partner awarding body (is) involved.

**6.15.3** The University certificate and/or transcript will record the principal language of instruction if it is not English and the language of assessment if it is not English.

**6.15.4** Subject to any overriding statutory or other legal provision in any relevant jurisdiction, the University certificate and/or transcript will record the name and location of any partner organisation engaged in delivery of the programme of study.

## **6.16 Support for Staff and Staff Development**

The University encourages staff at partner institutions to attend staff development sessions identified as necessary and available for the programmes to which they contribute or deliver. The University runs an annual programme of varied staff development activities and members of staff in partner institutions are welcome to attend the majority of these. Information can be obtained from the University's Human Resources Department.

For overseas partners, staff development may be provided by the partner institution, through visits by University staff to the partner, through visits by overseas staff to the University or by electronic means, such as video conference or Skype.

## **6.17 The Register of Collaborative Provision**

**6.17.1** The University holds a central record of all collaborative provision undertaken in its name. Notification to the Quality and Academic Standards Unit of any association or agreement is therefore essential in order to maintain an accurate

and current record of all collaborative activity. Memoranda of Understanding

and articulation agreements are also recorded by the Quality and Academic Standards Unit.

**6.17.2** The University's Quality and Academic Standards Unit holds and maintains the Register which is updated annually and when a new partnership is approved by Senate. The University Board of Studies (UBoS) will receive the Register on an annual basis.

## **7 Quality assurance of collaborative programmes**

**7.1** The University recognises that the reputation of its programmes, their academic standards and the quality assurance requirements associated with them underpins all partnerships. On all collaborative programmes the quality of student opportunities for learning and academic achievement must be comparable to programmes directly provided by the University. As the awarding institution, the University seeks to assure delivery of an educational experience that appropriately reflects the demands, standards and outcomes appropriate to the level of the award.

**7.2** Unless there are specific exemptions agreed by the University's Senate, the procedures followed in assuring the quality of students' learning opportunities and securing the standards of awards on collaborative programmes will be those employed on all other University programmes, as specified in relevant documents.

**7.3** The day-to-day responsibility for the effective operation of collaborative programmes lies with the Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT). In particular, the Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT) is charged with ensuring that robust moderation processes are in place for assessed work. Nevertheless, a general responsibility is imposed upon all University staff involved with collaborative provision to ensure that an appropriate level of communication and support is offered to partner institutions. Expectations on both sides must be clearly conveyed, in particular so that the University's quality assurance requirements are understood and met.

## **8 Annual monitoring**

**8.1** Review of programmes defined as collaborative provision will follow existing University procedures in respect of annual monitoring, with programme reports informing reporting at School level. School and Academic Liaison Tutor reports are subsequently considered by the University Board of Studies (UBoS). In addition, reports on collaborative programmes should comment on the suitability of the venue where the collaborative provision is delivered.

**8.2** Collaborative programmes will be included in operational planning by the relevant Director of School, who will, where appropriate, establish target numbers and financial arrangements.

- 8.3** Director of Schools will consider and address issues arising from Annual Programme Monitoring Reports. Any issues beyond the remit of the School will be referred to the University Board of Studies (UBoS) in the first instance.

## **9 Periodic review of collaborative programmes**

Periodic review of collaborative programmes will take place during the normal revalidation cycle of programmes, which for collaborative provision is five years.

The Quality and Academic Standards Unit will be responsible for determining specific arrangements which will be subject to confirmation by the University Board of Studies (UBoS).

## **10 Review and renewal of collaborative partnerships**

- 10.1** The overall relationship with an external partner will be appraised at intervals of normally no more than five years. The outcome of such appraisals will allow Senate to decide whether or not approval should be renewed.

No less than twelve months before the expiry of the original Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), the Executive Dean will liaise with the partner institution and the Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT) to establish whether or not both parties wish to renew the Agreement. If renewal is mutually desired, a full review of the partnership and its collaborative programmes will be undertaken. The review process is flexible, and each review will be organised in a manner that recognises both the scale of the partnership and the nature of the provision.

- 10.2** The review will enable the University to:
- assure itself that the partnership and associated programmes continue to operate at the required standard;
  - monitor the efficacy of the arrangements made in the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)
  - evaluate the benefits and costs of the partnership;
  - identify and evaluate any additional contingent risks and develop appropriate strategies to deal with these;
  - determine, in light of the above, whether or not the arrangement should be renewed for a further period, and on what basis.
- 10.3** The review will enable the partner to:
- evaluate the benefits, costs and risks of the partnership for the institution and its students;

- identify proposals for enhancements to the partnership; consolidate its own approach to a Higher Education strategy;
- determine, in light of the above, whether or not the arrangement should be renewed for a further period, and on what basis.

**10.4** The review will enable both the University and the partner to consider proposals for the development and enhancement of the partnership.

**10.5** Any interim reviews carried out by the Executive Dean in accordance with guidance provided by the Quality and Academic Standards Unit (QASU) will be discussed by the University Board of Studies (UBoS). Where there are concerns, these will be reported in writing to the University Board of Studies (UBoS) and the outcome of discussion and recommendations for action conveyed to Senate. Should there exist any dispute that cannot be resolved this should be clearly outlined in the report.

At the renewal point, a Partnership Review Panel will be appointed by the University Board of Studies (UBoS). It will always include an external panel member, with additional members as appropriate to reflect the developing nature of the collaboration.

- 10.6** The review may be held virtually, and the Partnership Review Panel will:
- consider an overview of the operation of programme(s) during the term of the Agreement, including arrangements for teaching and assessment; resources for learning; admissions and student casework; student support and entitlements; progression and retention data; annual monitoring and external examiner reports; programme approval and review outcomes, and financial information. This aspect will be a largely paper-based exercise conducted prior to the meeting, with any issues identified by Panel members in advance and discussed at the meeting;
  - discussions with key staff identified by the partner;
  - review of the programme and institutional facilities;
  - discussions with students studying on the University's collaborative programme(s);
  - review of the existing Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) to identify any aspects that will require revision and/or updating in the light of the review, including contingency arrangements.

The Final Report of the Panel will include:

- identification of any issues affecting the partnership;
- identification of aspects of good practice;
- suggestions for enhancement of the partnership;
- reference to the quality of the student learning experience and/or the standard of the relevant awards;
- agreed revisions to the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), including timescales for further review;
- agreed actions for both the University and the collaborative partner.

**10.7** After the Partnership Review Panel visit, the report will be compiled and submitted by

the Chair of the Panel to Senate. Any dispute that cannot be resolved should be clearly outlined in the report.

The report may recommend:

- That the partnership be re-approved with no conditions or recommendations.
- That the partnership be re-approved with conditions and/or recommendations. Conditions and recommendations may be set with deadlines. Where the report raises a particular area of concern, this may not necessarily prevent the renewal of the partnership. However, the partner may be informed that failure to deal with the matter within the period specified in the report will lead to prohibition on recruitment to one or all of the programme(s) concerned in the following year. The Chair of Senate will ensure that there is a formal response, detailing the actions that have been taken, by the date specified in the report.
- That the University does not continue its partnership with the institution.

- 10.8** The Executive Dean will be responsible for informing the partner institution of outcomes, notifying decisions on partnerships to relevant University staff and ensuring that the University Board of Studies (UBoS) agrees an appropriate monitoring mechanism for a renewed partnership.

## **11 Termination of collaborative provision**

- 11.1** The details of notice to terminate an arrangement are as set out in the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA).
- 11.2** Responsibility for termination of a collaborative partnership or a particular programme offered by a collaborative partner ultimately rests with the Vice Chancellor of the University, as Chair of Senate, or the person so delegated.
- 11.3** Details of termination of an approved partnership are normally agreed after discussion between the University's Vice Chancellor, or person so delegated, and the Chief Executive of the partner organisation, or person so delegated. When termination is agreed, the University immediately formally notifies the partner organisation and implements a Termination Action Plan.
- 11.4** Monitoring of the Termination Action Plan is through the relevant Strategic Partnership Board; the University Board of Studies (UBoS) and Senate.

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