



## **Strategic rationale for engaging in collaborative partnerships**

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## 1. Rationale statement

### 1.1

Plymouth Marjon University (“the University”) engages in collaborative partnerships to advance its mission to end social inequity through life-changing teaching, learning, research and knowledge exchange. The university has a committed vision to deliver outstanding education that will contribute to social mobility, community wellbeing, regional, national and international skills development. Marjon 2030 confirms our intent to be a beacon of opportunity and possibility, a generous and ethical partner of choice and a role model for sustainability.

This document outlines the intent of the university to engage with partners and reflects the core priorities focused on student success, through widening access, strengthening teaching and preparing students for modern, socially responsible careers. The university seeks to form collaborations that support research and knowledge exchange to address real-world problems in public services and community sectors. In addition, it emphasises place and social purpose, aiming to reduce inequality, support regional demands and to act on climate change. These priorities are supported by key enablers, to help the University grow its impact and remain sustainable.

### 1.2

This document sets out the University’s strategic intent for partnership activity in accordance with the requirements of the Office for Students (OfS) Condition E8. It ensures that partnership activity is aligned with the Marjon 2030 Strategy and is subject to appropriate oversight, monitoring and review.

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## 2. Purpose and Scope

### 2.1

This strategic intent applies to all collaborative arrangements where the University awards, franchises, validates or jointly delivers higher education programmes.

### 2.2

The University intent ensures that partnership activity is purposeful, strategically aligned and compliant with regulatory expectations outlined in the Quality Assurance Framework: Collaborative Provision Regulations and Procedures.

### 2.3

This intent should be adopted by all staff involved in the development, approval, management or oversight of partnership activity.

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### 3. Strategic Intent (OfS E8.1, E8.2)

#### 3.1

The University's partnership activity is guided by the Marjon 2030 Strategy, which commits the institution to widening participation, strengthening community wellbeing, advancing social justice and supporting regional, national and international skills needs.

#### 3.2

Partnerships will be pursued only where they contribute to the University's mission and reflect its values of humanity, independence, curiosity and ambition. Partners will align to these and demonstrate their commitment to sharing the university's approach to student-centred learning and will adopt the pedagogic principles of the University's curriculum framework.

#### 3.3

The University will enter partnership arrangements where they:

- extend access to higher education for hard-to-access learners (barriers to provision) or place-based learners (access to learning is limited by geographical location)
- reflect and enhance the University's academic strengths and specialist subject areas
- support innovation in curriculum design and delivery
- contribute to institutional sustainability without compromising academic standards
- strengthen and impact on regional, national or international development
- align with long-term strategic priorities

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### 4. Types of Partnership (OfS E8.3)

#### 4.1

The University may engage in partnerships that are UK-based or international (Transnational Education - TNE). The following forms of partnership are possible:

#### **4.2 Franchised Provision**

Franchised (sub-contracted) provision is when the University authorises a partner to delivery and assess part or all of one of its programmes. Franchising (sub-

contracting) arrangements will be pursued where they widen participation, support place-based skill development, or enable delivery of specialist provision aligned to community or employer needs.

### **4.3 Validated Provision**

Validated provision is when the University approves a programme developed and delivered by a partner organisation as being an appropriate standard and quality to lead to one of its awards. Validation will be pursued where a partner brings subject expertise and community reach or innovation that complements the University's academic strengths.

### **4.4 Transnational Education (TNE)**

TNE partnerships will be pursued where they enhance global engagement, support intercultural learning, and reflect the University's values and commitment to ethical internationalisation.

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## **5. Principles for Selecting Partners (OfS E8.4)**

### **5.1**

The University will collaborate only with partners who demonstrate:

- the ability to comply with the OfS regulatory framework
- a strong commitment to academic quality, integrity and student welfare
- the capacity, governance, staffing and resources required to deliver higher education to UK standards
- prioritising of student needs beyond any financial benefit, upheld through responsible governance and a shared obligation to reinvest resources in ways that advance student success and the University's mission.
- ethical practice and alignment with the University's values
- the ability to support positive student outcomes
- transparent and compliant recruitment practices
- a culture that supports inclusion, equity and student success.

### **5.2**

These principles apply to all new partnerships and to the continuation or renewal of existing partnerships.

## 6. Risk Appetite (OfS E8.5)

### 6.1

The University maintains a low tolerance for regulatory, academic, financial or reputational risk in partnership activity.

### 6.2

The University will not pursue or continue partnerships where:

- non-compliance with the University's admissions policies, sector codes of practice, legal obligations to fair access and equality is not met
- there is evidence of poor and unethical admissions practice inclusive of misleading recruitment approaches and the failure to provide accurate information to prospective students
- partners demonstrate continued poor student outcomes including low continuation, progressions or completion rates
- there is poor financial integrity and sustainability through a lack of financial transparency; misuse, misallocation or inappropriate handling of public funds; financial instability or unsustainable business models
- there is weak or ineffective governance and unethical leadership practice results in a failure to maintain appropriate control and risk management necessary to meet regulatory compliance
- the partner cannot demonstrate the ability to meet UK quality and standards and regulatory expectations and to continue to maintain these.

### 6.3

Assessment of risk will be undertaken at approval, during operation and at renewal.

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## 7. Oversight, Monitoring and Assurance (OfS E8.6)

### 7.1 Due Diligence

Comprehensive academic, financial, legal and reputational due diligence together with assessment of risk will be undertaken prior to the approval of any partnership.

### 7.2 Contractual Arrangements

All partnerships will be governed by written agreements that clearly define responsibilities for:

- quality and standards

- outreach and admissions
- assessment and academic integrity
- student support and wellbeing
- data reporting and regulatory compliance
- financial arrangements

### **7.3 Ongoing Monitoring**

The University will monitor:

- student recruitment and admissions practices
- continuation, completion and progression outcomes
- assessment standards and external examiner feedback
- student experience and wellbeing
- quarterly financial flows and sustainability
- compliance with OfS conditions and the UK Quality Code.

### **7.4 Annual Review**

Each partnership will undergo an annual review to evaluate performance, risk and alignment with strategic intent through attendance at the strategic partnership board (SPB).

### **7.5 Governance Oversight**

Partner associated risk will be monitored via the partnership operational risk register by the Academic Partnership Committee.

Reports will be submitted to:

- Academic Strategy Planning and Partnership committee (ASPPC)
- The Executive Leadership Team (ELT)
- Senate
- Board of Governors

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## **8. Review of Strategic Intent (OfS E8.7)**

## 8.1

This document will be reviewed annually to ensure continued alignment with:

- OfS Condition E8
- the Marjon 2030 Strategy
- evolving regulatory expectations
- the University's risk appetite and strategic priorities

## 8.2

Revisions will be approved through the University's governance structures.

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# 9. Responsibilities

## 9.1

The Chief Academic Officer is the Executive Lead for partnership activity.

## 9.2

The Academic Registrar and Quality and Academic Standards Office is responsible for operational oversight of partnership approval, monitoring and review.

## 9.3

All staff involved in partnership activity must comply with this intent document.

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# 10. Training

## 10.1

Staff involved in partnership development or oversight will receive appropriate training for:

- regulatory requirements
- due diligence processes
- quality assurance expectations
- contractual responsibilities

# 11. Document Control Information

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