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Academic Regulations Collaborations and Partnerships

Section 15

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Collaborations and Partnerships

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Section 15: Collaborations and Partnerships

15.1 Purpose

The delivery of learning opportunities with others can bring many benefits. Nevertheless, there are inherent risks to both academic standards and quality whenever learning opportunities are not directly delivered and supported by the degree-awarding body making the award.

The fundamental principle underpinning all arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with others is that the degree-awarding body retains responsibility for the academic standards of their awards and for the quality of the student experience, regardless of where these opportunities are delivered and who provides them.

This section of the Academic Regulations sets out the general provisions on the approval, monitoring and review of Collaborations and Partnerships and the duties, roles and responsibilities of the University and Collaborations and Partnerships.

15.2 General Principles of Collaborations and Partnerships

- a) The University will only approve Collaboration and Partnership activities that fall within its own subject expertise and which are consistent with the University's strategy for UK and global engagement.
- b) The University is responsible for the academic standards of all credit and awards granted in its name, ensuring that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualification frameworks and are reasonably comparable with those achieved by other UK providers.
- c) The quality of learning opportunities must be appropriate to the achievement of the learning outcomes for the award and consistently met.
- d) The University shall make publicly available an up-to-date and authoritative record of its collaborations and partnerships.
- e) The University will not permit serial arrangements, whereby a collaborating body uses a collaborative arrangement with the University as a basis for establishing collaborative provision of its own with other parties, but offering the University's awards, whereby the other party delivers the course.
- f) The University may enter into partnerships with other bodies in the United Kingdom or overseas. Partnerships do not involve delivery of University awards.
- g) Collaborative provision is educational provision leading to an award, or to specific credit toward an award, of the University delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an agreement with a collaborating body. The University may

- collaborate with other bodies in the United Kingdom or overseas to offer courses or part of a course leading to an award of the University.
- h) In order for a collaborative partner to deliver academic provision of the University it must first be approved by the University as an organisation fit for this purpose. It is a requirement that all collaborating bodies recognised by the University undergo an approval.
 - i) At an early stage a new course proposal for collaborative provision must be approved in accordance with University procedures where applicable.
 - j) All courses are subject to validation and subsequent monitoring, review and revalidation, as set out in Section 13.
 - k) The University requires that all provision delivered by an approved partner is subject to the approval of delivery and subsequent re-approval.
 - l) The University shall make appropriate public information available to students on collaborative provision.
 - m) The University requires that all collaborative provision leading to an award of the University must satisfy the University's normal requirements for the conferment of an award.
 - n) There must be a written and legally binding written agreement or contract setting out the rights and obligations of the parties and signed by the authorised representatives of the University and the partner in respect of delivery, monitoring, review, enhancement and modification of the provision.
 - o) In the event of withdrawal from a collaborative agreement, the University has a duty of care to all students registered on collaborative provision to reasonably enable them to complete a course of study.
 - p) The University will maintain a register of Collaborations and Partnerships illustrating all arrangements (by type and category) for delivering learning opportunities with others that are subject to a formal agreement.

15.3 General Provisions

15.3.1 Guidance documentation - The University shall set out the requirements and processes in respect of collaborations and partnerships through a series of guidance documents available through Quality Assurance Services.

15.3.2 Due diligence - Prior to entering into a collaboration or partnership with a collaborating body in the United Kingdom or overseas, the risks of each arrangement must be assessed at the outset and reviewed on a periodic basis. Requirements for due diligence shall be proportionate to the type of activity sought.

15.3.3 Location of delivery by a collaborating body - The University may in some circumstances allow a collaborating body to deliver an element of a validated course

of study at a location other than the collaborating body's own premises. The process for this shall be detailed within University guidance.

- 15.3.4 New Partner Proposal - All proposals for partnerships and collaborative provision are subject to approval by the University Executive Team. The processes to be undertaken to achieve this are as set out in University guidance.
- 15.3.5 Expertise of staff - The University's procedures shall ensure that its own and partner staff engaged in delivering and supporting University awards (or credit contributing to award) under Collaborative Provision arrangements, are aware of their responsibilities and appropriately qualified for their role, and that both the University and the collaborating body have effective measures in place to guide, monitor, assure and seek to enhance the expertise of such staff.
- 15.3.6 Access to appropriate resources - The University shall ensure that students studying on courses delivered under collaborative and partnership arrangements shall have access to the appropriate resources to enable them to complete their studies.
- 15.3.7 Assessment - The University requires that all collaborative provision leading to an award or credit of the University is subject to arrangements for assessment in accordance with University regulations.
- 15.3.8 External examiners and advisers - The arrangements in respect of external examiners and advisers for collaborative provision shall comply with the University's requirements as set out in Section 14 of the Regulations. The University shall retain responsibility for the appointment and functions of external examiners and advisers for all collaborative provision. The University shall offer the same level of support and developmental opportunities to external examiners and advisers on collaborative provision as for awards offered within the University.
- 15.3.9 Professional or statutory regulatory bodies - The University shall as required notify any professional or statutory regulatory body, which has accredited, approved or recognised a course that will also be offered as collaborative provision. Prospective students shall also be notified of the status of the Course in relation to the professional or statutory regulatory body.
- 15.3.10 Certificates of award - The University has sole authority to produce certificates of award and associated transcripts for courses of study delivered through collaborative provision. The certificate of award or accompanying documentation will make reference to the name of the collaborating body and location of delivery and will take

account of external factors including Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) or in-country government requirements.

15.3.11 Contractual and financial arrangements - Contractual and financial arrangements pertaining to collaborative provision shall be discussed at School level, the content of which shall be determined and agreed in line with current University guidance. These shall form part of the written agreement.

15.4 Partner approval and review

15.4.1 Partner approval process - The approval process is proportionate to the type of collaboration or partnership and is in accordance with University guidance. The University's Executive Team is responsible for the conduct of the partner approval and review process.

15.4.2 Requirements for approved partner status for the delivery of collaborative provision - To approve a new partner proposal intended for collaborative provision, the University will need to be assured of the following, utilising the enhanced due diligence process:

- a) Legal impediment - That there is or continues to be no legal impediment to the institution delivering University courses.
- b) Financial viability - That the collaborating body has or has maintained good standing and is financially stable.
- c) Institutional mission - That the philosophy, mission and aims of the collaborating body are or remain acceptable to and compatible with those of the University.
- d) Legal requirements - That the collaborating body meets or continues to meet its legal requirements, specifically in relation to matters affecting students such as health and safety, data protection, equal opportunities and non-discrimination.
- e) Learning and teaching resources - That the collaborating body has or continues to have an infrastructure and learning resources adequate to ensure that the academic standards of the University's provision and the quality of learning opportunities are maintained and enhanced.
- f) Written agreement - That appropriate written agreements will be in place which specify clearly the mutual arrangements and obligations upon each other.

The requirements will be in accordance with the proposal under consideration and University guidance.

15.4.3 Duration of period of approval - The period of approval will normally be aligned to the University's academic cycle (i.e. 1 August – 31 July). An approved partner will be

subject to review within a maximum period of six years of commencement of that period.

15.4.4 Purpose of partner review - The purpose of reviewing the approved partner status is to assure the University that this status remains fit for purpose. In addition, this may be used as an opportunity to review the balance of responsibilities between the University and the Partner.

15.4.5 Revocation of period of approval - The University may at its own discretion revoke or shorten the agreed period of approval in the event of the following:

- a) The philosophy, aims and objectives of the University and Partner are deemed to no longer align.
- b) The terms of the agreement are not being achieved.
- c) The approved partner ceases to deliver collaborative provision before the end of the agreed period of approval.
- d) The written agreement under which collaborative provision is delivered is terminated before the end of the agreed period of approval.
- e) The status of approved partner will automatically be revoked if the period as defined in regulation see 15.4.3 runs out and re-approval has not taken place.

In all such cases the Vice Chancellor or nominee, shall inform the collaborating body of the revocation of this status.

15.5 Approval and review of collaborative delivery

15.5.1 Approval of collaborative delivery: definition – Approval of delivery is the process by which the University is assured that the quality of delivery of University courses offered in whole or in part by an approved partner is equivalent to that of comparable courses delivered solely by the University. A course approved for delivery may be designed and/or delivered by an approved partner alone or jointly with the University or solely by the University.

15.5.2 Approval - Any proposal for delivery of courses by an approved partner institution is subject to:

- a) Due diligence
- b) new course proposal as appropriate
- c) validation and revalidation
- d) approval and review of collaborative delivery

15.5.3 Process - The approval and review of collaborative delivery processes is as set out in University guidance. The University is responsible for the conduct of the approval and review of collaborative delivery.

15.5.4 Pre-requisites for approval of collaborative delivery - To approve or review delivery of a course by a partner, the University will need to be assured of the following:

- a) That the academic standards and quality of the course have been assured previously through the process of validation (or revalidation). Where any variance to the course is proposed, this must be in accordance with University regulations and guidance (validation, revalidation or modifications).
- b) That scrutiny of resources both physical and human of the proposed location of delivery has been undertaken as set out in University guidance.

15.5.5 Requirements for approval of collaborative delivery - To approve or review collaborative delivery of a course, the University will need to be assured of the following:

- a) Quality of learning opportunities - That the collaborating body is able to and continues to provide learning opportunities equivalent to that of comparable courses delivered by the University. This will where appropriate include consideration as to whether the staffing body is appropriately qualified and able to deliver the course to the standard of the award.
- b) Quality assurance – That appropriate arrangements are in place for the collaborating body to fulfil the quality assurance, monitoring, review and enhancement requirements.
- c) Student support - That the staffing body is appropriately qualified and able to deliver the required level of support to students and that the level of support required is appropriate to the achievement of the learning outcomes for the award.
- d) Written agreement - That appropriate written agreements will be in place which specify clearly the mutual arrangements and obligations upon each party.
- e) Provisions for the admission of students - That the arrangements for the admission of students onto collaborative provision are subject to the provisions of Section 2 of the regulations.

15.5.6 Duration of period of approval of collaborative delivery - The period of approval of collaborative delivery will normally be aligned to the University's academic cycle (i.e. 1 August – 31 July). A course approved for collaborative delivery will be subject to review within a maximum period of six years of commencement of that period.

15.5.7 Purpose of re-approval of collaborative delivery - The purpose of the re-approval of collaborative delivery is to assure the University that the quality of the course offered at an approved partner remains equivalent to those of comparable courses delivered at the University and that the collaborating body has met and continues to meet its obligations as set out in the written agreement.

15.5.8 Revocation of period of validation and/or approval of collaborative delivery - The University may at its own discretion revoke or shorten the agreed period of validation and/or approval of collaborative delivery in the event of the following:

- a) The status of the approved partner is revoked in accordance with item 15.4.5.
- b) The approved partner ceases to offer collaborative provision before the end of the period of approval.
- c) The written agreement under which collaborative provision is delivered is terminated before the end of the period of approval.
- d) The approval will automatically be revoked should the period of approval run out without a re-approval taking place.

In all such cases the Vice Chancellor or nominee, shall inform the collaborating body of the revocation of this status.

15.6 Monitoring, annual review, enhancement and modification of Courses approved for collaborative delivery

This will be undertaken in accordance in Section 13, Approval, Validation, Monitoring and Review.

Mutual review

Purpose of Mutual Review - To provide Academic Board with the assurance that arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with others are implemented securely and managed effectively.

Form of Mutual Review - Mutual Review; specific to collaborative delivery with or by a collaborating body is conducted in the first year of a partner's operation. Our University reserves the right to invoke Mutual Review in subsequent years of operation, in accordance with the following criteria:

- a) Substantial or potential changes and/ or additions to a partner's portfolio or the model of delivery;

- b) Significant concerns raised by one or more stakeholders e.g. University; External Examiner, Student, School, Partner
- c) Concerns related to one or more of the following:
 - non-compliance with quality management process;
 - non-compliance with regulatory or contractual requirements;
 - operational delivery;
 - recommendation of a collaborative approval panel.

Participation - Mutual Review requires engagement by the collaborating body.

Reporting - The outcomes of mutual review and associated plans for continuous improvement will be presented to Academic Quality and Standards Committee.

15.7 Written agreements

15.7.1 Legal agreement - The mutual arrangements specific to collaborative provision as described in these regulations as agreed between the University and the partner or collaborating body will be specified clearly in a legally binding written agreement. Agreement templates shall be available as set out in item 15.3.11.

15.7.2 Content - The written agreement must, as a minimum, cover the following:

- a) aspects of the collaborations and partnerships concerned with the relationship between the University and the collaborating body including roles and responsibilities assigned to each party;
- b) aspects of the partnership or collaborative provision concerned with the course(s), where applicable;
- c) arrangements to ensure that the University retains overall responsibility for approving the criteria for admission and clearly specifies the roles and responsibilities in relation to admission decisions;
- d) arrangements to ensure that the academic standards of any course(s) are equivalent to those of comparable courses delivered at the University;
- e) arrangements to ensure that the quality of learning opportunities offered at the approved partner is equivalent to those offered by the University for comparable courses, where applicable;
- f) arrangements to ensure that the monitoring, annual review and enhancement activity is conducted in accordance with University regulations;
- g) arrangements in the event of early termination or arbitration;
- h) provisions to enable the University to suspend or withdraw from the agreement if the other party fails to fulfil its obligations;

- i) residual obligations to students, where applicable;
- j) the responsibilities of each party in respect of quality assurance and academic standards, with reference to any applicable external reference point;
- k) a defined commencement and termination date which clearly set out the duration of the agreement;
- l) arrangement in respect of payments between the parties, where applicable;
- m) the law under which the agreement is governed, in addition to the judiciary system which will hear and determine any suit, action or proceedings, and to settle any disputes, which may arise out of or in connection with that agreement;
- n) arrangements for flow of information and deliberative and executive reporting structures, where applicable;
- o) arrangements to ensure the accuracy of public information relating to the course(s) offered as part of the collaborative provision, where applicable;
- p) arrangements for review and possible renewal of the agreement.

15.8 Accreditation of Provision Designed and Delivered by Other Organisations

Accreditation of learning delivered by other organisations - The University may wish to accredit provision delivered at other organisations.

Mapping of curriculum - The University shall be satisfied that any provision to be accredited maps appropriately to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, other National Qualifications Frameworks and where appropriate any antecedent, concurrent or subsequent University course that leads to credit of or an award of the University and is quantifiable in terms of academic level outcomes and volume of credit. In the case of credit imported for study abroad, credits may be awarded in accordance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), or other national credit systems where appropriate.

15.8.1 Any proposal for accreditation is subject to:

- a) Partner Approval
- b) Mapping of the curriculum
- c) New course proposal
- d) Accreditation by Academic Planning and Collaborations Group

15.8.2 Process - The process for accreditation will be informed by University guidance and appropriate external oversight.

15.8.3 Accreditation Process – The Accreditation process will ascertain the following:

- a) Quality of learning opportunities - The School will ensure through scrutiny of resources that the proposed location for delivery and access to the facilities and resources required for successful completion of the course or credit are appropriate in relation to the quality of learning opportunities.
- b) Quality assurance - That appropriate arrangements are in place for the collaborating body to fulfil the quality assurance, monitoring, review and enhancement requirements.
- c) Mapping of the curriculum - That the curriculum-mapping process has been carried out appropriately.
- d) Assessment - That appropriate arrangements are in place for assessment, achievement of credit and award to be undertaken in accordance with the University regulations.
- e) Written agreement - That appropriate written agreements will be in place which specify clearly the mutual arrangements agreed in respect of the use of the facilities and resources of the collaborating body.

15.8.4 Duration of accreditation - The period of accreditation will normally be aligned to the University's academic cycle (i.e. 1 August – 31 July). Accredited provision will be subject to review of that approval within a maximum period of six years of commencement of that period.

15.9 Dual awards with other degree-awarding institutions

15.9.1 Definition and key characteristics: Dual awards are a collaborative arrangement whereby two or more awarding bodies collaborate in the delivery of a single jointly delivered course (or courses) leading to separate awards (and separate certification) being granted by both, or all, of them. Key characteristics are as follows:

- a) Both the University and each collaborating body are responsible for the content, delivery, quality and standards of its own provision and makes its own award;
- b) Students must be registered at each participating institution either concurrently or sequentially for the duration of the jointly delivered programme;
- c) Awards that are based on a single course and the same assessed student work are mindful of the University regulations for admission and registration;
- d) Students participating in an award through a credit based structure are offered non-transferable credit for assessment undertaken at the collaborating body(s) towards their University course of study to ensure that credit for a module successfully completed is not multiplied.

The development of dual awards is complex in nature and consideration of a range of regulatory requirements must be addressed in the initial stages of course approval. Quality Assurance Services must be consulted in order to ensure that the University retains responsibility for the academic standards of each course.

- 15.9.2 Assurance of standards - Both the University and the collaborating body deliver, assess and support provision and each awarding body makes its own award, under its own degree awarding powers. There may be one award title agreed between the University and the other awarding body/s. The University and the collaborating body are responsible for ensuring that its own academic standards are maintained irrespective of the requirements of the collaborating body.

The University will ensure that the standards and quality of our University's awards are not jeopardised by the arrangements entered into with partners. Responsibility for each separate award, and its academic standard, remains with the body awarding it.

In the case of dual awards, partners determine which of them is responsible for the management of the admissions process (or how responsibilities are shared) and the obligations of respective parties are recorded in the written agreements.

The University retains oversight of assessment and standards irrespective or not as to whether the student has attended the awarding body. This will be recorded in the written agreement (see 15.7.2).

The University will ensure, utilising existing quality assurance processes, that the standards and quality of all dual awards will not be compromised by the arrangements entered into with partners including any elements delivered at a collaborating body institution.

The University retains full responsibility for every element of the programme, since every part of a student's contributed programme of study may contribute to the University's award.

Normally, a minimum of one third of the credit contributing to the University award must be taught and assessed by the University. Any variation to this principle must be approved by the University's Academic Board.