

POLICY

Collaborative Academic Arrangements Policy

Contact Officer

Deputy Head of Academic Quality (Collaborative)

Purpose

- 1.1 The University Strategic Plan (2013-2018) sets out commitments to develop and maintain strategic and regional collaborative partnerships to support widening participation and progression, and to develop international partnerships which will provide increased international recruitment and exchange opportunities. The University of Worcester (UW) recognises that partnership working brings significant benefits, whilst at the same time requires careful management of risks. This policy sets out the types of collaborative arrangements that the University supports, and the principles and criteria governing the establishment and management of collaborative academic provision.

Overview

- 1.2 Central to the University's partnership work is the development of collaborative arrangements. Our definition of collaborative arrangements is informed by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, chapter B10 Management of collaborative arrangements, as:

educational provision leading or contributing to academic credit or a qualification of a degree-awarding body, delivered, supported, or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation.

- 1.3 This includes all partnership arrangements (UK and international) involving collaborative provision leading to an award or credit of the University of Worcester (including admission with advanced standing), and partnerships where a course or part of a course is delivered off-site but with support provided by the partner organisation. It does not include student/staff exchange agreements, or recognition agreements with overseas higher education (HE) institutions and internationally recognised awarding bodies which indicate that applicants with specified qualifications may be considered for admission on an individual basis; these are dealt with under separate procedures. Similarly there are separate procedures relating to placements and work-based learning, although some partnerships with employers involving collaborative arrangements may fall under this policy; advice should be sought from the Academic Quality Unit. From October 2014 it does include recognition agreements (see below), which are developed, managed and maintained through Institutes and/or the International Recruitment Team.

Scope

The policy is for staff engaged in planning or initiating academic partnerships for collaborative arrangements.

2 Collaborative Arrangements Typology

- 2.1 The typology below gives brief definitions of the different types of collaborative provision arrangements the University supports, together with the key characteristics of each.
- 2.2 This typology is not definitive, and from time to time the University agrees to initiate other forms of collaborative partnership, and/or to vary the nature of the arrangement in order to take account of particular circumstances or needs. Such variations will always be considered and approved through the relevant executive and committee processes.

<p>Recognition Agreement: an arrangement whereby a named award delivered by another institution is formally recognised as appropriate for entry with or without advanced standing to one or more specified UW programmes, thereby providing a basis for <i>individual</i> applications to the course. There is no guaranteed entry through any recognition arrangement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University reviews key due diligence information regarding the institution and named award in order to ascertain that both are appropriate for the proposed arrangement. • A review of the curriculum of the proposed linked award is undertaken to ascertain that the curriculum and potential student achievements will provide a sound basis for entry, with or without advanced standing. • Progression to attend UW from overseas partners need to address United Kingdom Border Agency requirements. • Covered by a formal recognition agreement between the partner and UW for a specific period, normally 3 years. • Specific arrangements for monitoring, review and renewal of agreements set out in Principles and process for the approval and monitoring of recognition arrangements.
<p>Articulation Agreement: a partnership arrangement which recognises and grants guaranteed admission with advanced standing to a UW award from a programme undertaken at an approved partner organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University reviews the relevant programme at the partner organisation in order to ascertain that the curriculum, or a specified part of it, and student achievements, provide a sound basis for entry with credit or advanced standing (such as direct to Level 5 or 6, or to PG Dip) to a UW programme, i.e. exemption from some part of the UW programme. • The achievements gained by partner students are deemed equivalent to students entering into/progressing within the programme at the same stage. • Progression to attend UW from overseas partners need to address United Kingdom Border Agency requirements. • Covered by a formal agreement between the partner and UW for a specific period. • The continuing suitability of the partner’s provision is evaluated through monitoring of student performance as part of academic annual evaluation and periodic review. • Named UW contact to visit at least once per annum to discuss continuing validity of arrangement. • Partnership and articulation arrangement subject to annual review and report through Institute Quality Committees (IQC) and Externally Provided Programmes Sub Committee (EPPSC). • Monitoring of publicity material undertaken by Institute and reported on annually.

<p>Validation: a partnership arrangement whereby a programme owned, developed and delivered either in its entirety by one or more partners, or jointly with UW, is validated as leading to a UW award.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme is designed, developed and owned by the partner (or jointly with UW). • Curriculum for the programme is expected to be designed in accordance with UW policies and regulations. • Approval process assesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the strategic rationale for the collaboration, including financial viability and sustainability - all aspects of curriculum design - the suitability/readiness of the partner to deliver the programme in relation to resources (including staffing), management and operational matters - staff development plan. • The University must assure itself that the quality and standard of the programme and its management are appropriate to contribute or lead to a UW award. • Covered by a formal agreement, between the partner and UW, which includes the financial arrangements. • Link tutor appointed. • Students are registered with the University. • Subject to academic annual evaluation and periodic review of programme(s). • Examination Board chaired by UW, and to include an External Examiner appointed by UW. • Publicly available information, including marketing material, to be approved by UW and monitored by Link Tutor annually and through partnership and periodic review.
<p>Franchise: a partnership arrangement whereby a course or part of a course owned, developed and delivered by UW is also delivered by one or more partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University 'owns' the programme and as such retains direct control of and responsibility for its content, the teaching and learning strategy, assessment and all aspects of quality assurance. • Approval process assesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the strategic rationale for the franchise arrangement, including its financial viability and sustainability - the suitability/readiness of the partner to deliver the programme in relation to resources (including staffing and staff development), management and operational matters. • Arrangements for overall management of the programme if delivered at UW and at one or more partners must be explicit, and considered as part of the approval process. • Covered by a formal agreement, between the partner and UW, which includes the financial arrangements. • Link tutor appointed, and may require liaison between module co-ordinators. • Students are registered with the University. • Subject to academic annual evaluation and periodic review of programme(s). • Student results (identified by partner) presented to UW Subject

	<p>Examination Board and External Examiner asked to specifically comment on results by partner in report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly available information, including marketing material, to be approved by UW and monitored by Link Tutor annually and through partnership and periodic review.
<p>Dual Award: the University, with one or more partner institutions, together provide a jointly delivered programme leading to separate awards being granted by both, or all, of them.</p> <p>See also section 3 below.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The University is responsible for assuring itself of the quality and academic standards of the overall programme of study leading to the UW award, and the arrangements under which the award(s) will be marketed, promoted and managed as a 'dual award'. The partner is responsible for assuring the quality and standards of its own award. Approval process assesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the strategic rationale for the 'dual award' arrangement partnership, including its financial viability and sustainability management, operational and quality assurance matters. Covered by a formal agreement, between the partner and UW, which includes any financial arrangements, and agreement as to certification of the award(s). Students are registered with the University for the duration of the period of time for which they are studying for a UW award. Named UW contact to visit at least once per annum to discuss continuing validity of arrangement. Subject to academic annual evaluation and periodic review of programme(s), which should comment on the partnership/dual award arrangements. Examination Board held and chaired by UW for UW award, and to include an External Examiner appointed by UW. Partnership and award arrangements subject to annual review and report through IQC and EPPSC. UW to approve marketing and promotional material; ongoing monitoring undertaken by Institute.
<p>Joint Award: a programme delivered by UW together with one or more degree-awarding institutions, leading to a single award made jointly by both or all partners.</p> <p>See also section 3 below.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The University is responsible for assuring itself of the quality and academic standards of the overall programme of study leading to the award. Students normally undertake a period of study at the University and a period of study at one or more partner organisations. Programme of study must be taught in English. Approval process assesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the strategic rationale for the collaboration, including financial viability and sustainability all aspects of curriculum design arrangements for recruitment, selection and registration of students academic governance and regulatory matters the suitability/readiness of the partners to deliver the programme in relation to resources (including staffing),

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - management and operational matters - the overall management and quality assurance arrangements for the award - staff development plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covered by a formal agreement, between the partner(s) and UW, which includes any financial arrangements, and details arrangements for all aspects of quality assurance and management. • Arrangements for Boards of Examiners, including the arrangements for External Examiners, must enable the University to assure the quality and standards of its awards and are negotiated and set out clearly in the agreement. • Partnership and award arrangements subject to annual review and report through IQC and EPPSC, and to periodic review. • UW to agree marketing and promotional material; Institute to monitor on an ongoing basis.
<p>Off-Site Delivery (including Flying Faculty): UW credit-bearing modules or courses delivered by University staff outside University premises in conjunction with a partner who provides premises and equipment, learning resources, and/or student or administrative support that is integral to the student learning experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University owns and delivers the programme and as such retains direct control of, and responsibility for, its content, the teaching and learning strategy, assessment, and overall management. • Arrangements for student and/or administrative support, and the provision of resources will be agreed with the partner organisation. • If off-site delivery only (ie no other functions provided by partner organisation), approval is via a site visit by the Institute and an Information and Learning Services report considered through IQC. • Arrangements involving more than premises and access to learning resources, will be in consultation with the Academic Quality Unit. • Approval process assesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the strategic rationale for the arrangement, including its financial viability and sustainability - the suitability/readiness of the partner to provide the necessary support for the successful operation of the programme. • Covered by a formal agreement, between the partner and UW, which includes the financial arrangements, and sets out clearly the responsibilities of the partner. • Named UW contact responsible for all liaison. • Subject to academic annual evaluation and periodic review of programme(s) as part of normal processes. • Marketing material produced by UW. • Note: the University’s Quality Standards for Flexible and Distributed Learning (2012) may apply.

3 Policy with respect to Joint and Dual Awards

- 3.1 The University is committed to the principles of the Bologna declaration, in working towards greater compatibility and comparability of systems of higher education. It is also committed to providing opportunities for students to participate in international study opportunities. The University therefore supports the development of joint and dual awards where there is mutual benefit to students, the University and partners. Joint and dual awards normally involve a period of study at one or more overseas institutions, and therefore the partnership underpinning the arrangement normally involves at least one international organisation.
- 3.2 The University is aware that there are different models for joint and dual awards and does not prescribe any particular approach. The University will only consider entering into arrangements of this nature where:
- a) the partner(s) have the legal capacity to make the award
 - b) it is seen as mutually beneficial to students, the University and the collaborative partner or partners
 - c) the University and the partner(s) already have successful existing provision in the subject area and at the academic level of the proposal
 - d) the standard of the academic award(s) meets the expectations of the UK Quality Code for HE
 - e) learning resources and the learning environment are appropriate to support the programme of study
 - f) the standard and quality of the University of Worcester award and/or its institutional reputation is not put at risk by any arrangements entered into with the partner(s)
 - g) there is clarity with regards to the rights and responsibilities of the partners and of the students.
- 3.3 With respect to joint awards, as well as the general requirements set out above, the University will:
- a) ensure that all partners agree the regulatory framework that will apply and that this is consistent with that of the University of Worcester
 - b) ensure that the University of Worcester has full involvement in all assessment matters, including that related to assessment boards
 - c) agree to appropriate arrangements for the issue of transcripts and certificates which will make appropriate reference to all partners
 - d) ensure the programme is taught in English.
- 3.4 With respect to dual awards, as well as the general requirements set out above, the University will:
- a) ensure that the responsibility for the award of the University of Worcester qualification remains with the University
 - b) where two awards are to be made at the same level and on the basis of the same assessed student work by different partners, that full consideration has been given to matters of award titles, grade equivalence and classification
 - c) ensure that students may not double count credit awarded for successfully completed modules for credit accumulation and transfer purposes, normally by referring to the existence of the other award and awarding body on the transcript and certificate issued to students
 - d) ensure that normally no more than two thirds of the programme leading to the award is studied away from the University of Worcester and that normally the final part (equivalent to one third) of the programme is studied at the University.

4 Principles governing collaborative provision partnerships

The University has identified a set of principles to guide its partnership activity for collaborative arrangements:

- 4.1 Strategic objectives: the development of collaborative academic partnerships, both regionally and overseas, will reflect the values, commitments and objectives established in the Strategic Plan.
- 4.2 Academic standards and quality: the University is responsible for the academic standards of all awards and credit granted in its name and must be able to satisfy itself that the quality of the learning opportunities offered through any partnership is adequate to enable a student to achieve the standards required for the award.
- 4.3 Language of delivery and assessment: all programmes leading to an award or credit granted by the University of Worcester must be delivered and assessed in English.
- 4.4 Approval and risk: each proposed partner and partnership arrangement is subject to formal approval in accordance with agreed criteria and procedures agreed by the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee, together with an assessment of risk. The process for approving potential partnerships is designed to ensure that the University can satisfy itself about the good standing of a prospective partner and their capacity to fulfil their intended role in the partnership arrangement, and that the necessary commitment and resource implications have been considered in the planning of new partnerships and collaborative arrangements. Risk is reviewed on a periodic basis.
- 4.5 Academic and business planning: approval to commence planning a new collaborative arrangement must include a business plan, which sets out all costs (staff time, travel, resources, etc) to the University.
- 4.6 Funding arrangements: funding arrangements for collaborative arrangements will be agreed with partners and reviewed annually in accordance with the principles of openness, and bearing in mind the University's costs, including the cost of programme development and/or support, validation, registration, assessment and certification, and the oversight and maintenance of quality and standards.
- 4.7 Formal agreements: all collaborative partnerships must have a formal standardised written and legally binding partnership agreement, setting out the responsibilities and obligations of the University and the partner organisation, including the arrangements for termination or withdrawal from the partnership, and a financial schedule. Such agreements must accurately reflect the collaboration as agreed at validation and be signed by the relevant authorities prior to the commencement of the delivery of the provision. Agreements are prepared centrally and a central record of all partnership activity is maintained by the University.
- 4.8 Serial arrangements: partner organisations are not permitted to engage in 'serial' arrangements, whereby the partner offers the approved provision or assigns delegated powers elsewhere through an arrangement of its own.
- 4.9 Quality assurance: the University sets out quality assurance procedures for partnership arrangements to include: approval of partners, approval of programmes, annual monitoring and periodic review of programmes and collaborative partner arrangements. The University has established the role of Link Tutor to monitor and support collaborative programmes.

- 4.10 Assessment: the University ensures that the outcomes of assessment meet specified academic standards through moderation activity and/or the appointment of external examiners and involvement with examination boards. All partnership provision leading to a University of Worcester award or credit must be subject to independent external moderation, with student assessment outcomes confirmed by a University of Worcester Board of Examiners.
- 4.11 Certificates and transcripts: The University is the sole authority for awarding certificates for provision leading to a University of Worcester award or credit, and for issuing transcripts unless otherwise specified in the agreement with the partner organisation. Certificates and transcripts must include the name and location of the partner organisation (subject to any statutory or legal jurisdiction).
- 4.12 Staff: the University ensures that staff engaged in delivering programmes leading to its awards or credit are appropriately qualified, and that the partner has sound mechanisms to monitor and develop staff.
- 4.13 Information: all promotional material and public information generated by a partner organisation relating to a collaborative arrangement is subject to approval by the University.

5 Criteria for the selection of partners

The process for selecting and approving potential partners takes account of the following criteria.

- 5.1 The compatibility of the educational mission/objectives/ethos of the prospective partner organisation with those of the University of Worcester.
- 5.2 The clarity of anticipated benefits of the proposed partnership to all parties.
- 5.3 The clarity and appropriateness of the ownership, leadership, governance and management arrangements of the prospective partner organisation.
- 5.4 The public and legal standing of the prospective partner organisation in their own country (and the implications of this for collaborative programmes and/or recognition of the qualification to be awarded).
- 5.5 The standing of the prospective partner organisation in the UK (as determined by the experience of other UK institutions).
- 5.6 The financial stability of the prospective partner organisation.
- 5.7 The ability of the prospective partner organisation to provide the human, physical and learning resources to operate the programme successfully.
- 5.8 The ability of the prospective partner organisation to provide an appropriate and safe working environment for students on an intended programme.
- 5.9 The ability of the prospective partner to provide high quality learning opportunities for students.

6 Criteria for the approval of collaborative provision proposals

All initial proposals for new collaborative development will be assessed against the following key criteria.

Quality

- 6.1 Central to the University's mission is the provision of an outstanding student experience and excellent inclusive HE. This applies equally to collaborative provision.
- 6.2 The University therefore expects that proposals for new course developments or arrangements will be able to evidence quality in relation to:
- track record for quality provision in proposed discipline/vocational area
 - teaching staff with appropriate higher level qualifications
 - designated appropriately qualified and experienced subject/project leadership for the proposed course development who has familiarity with the UK Quality Code for HE
 - opportunities for relevant staff development and scholarly activity for those who will be delivering the programme
 - appropriate strategy for access to learning resources in relation to library/journal provision and information technology, and, where appropriate, specialist equipment, together with clear specific commitment for resource investment where necessary
 - appropriate teaching and learning environment to meet needs of the intended student market, including evidence of an HE culture where appropriate
 - where appropriate, evidence of existing employer engagement.

Volume and Sustainability

- 6.3 The costs of setting up and supporting delivery of a new course are substantial both for the partner and the University. In order to justify this investment, the University must be assured that recruitment will meet certain minima and that recruitment will be sustainable for at least three years.
- 6.4 The University has therefore agreed in principle that it will normally expect new courses to have a target recruitment above 15 students (including all modules to have a recruitment of 15 or more). The University will therefore expect that forthcoming proposals for new course developments will be able to evidence sustainability by:
- demonstrating demand from potential students/employers
 - providing analysis of competition from other providers in region
 - demonstrating perceived need for course and graduates of the course
 - outlining intended promotional strategy for the course.

Strategic fit with Partner and University mission and objectives

- 6.5 It is expected that proposed course developments are consistent not only with partner organisation's own development strategies, but also with those of the University. The University has a strong commitment to widening participation for under-represented groups and also to increasing participation in HE within the region, and making a contribution to meeting the region's higher skills agenda. The University is also committed to internationalisation. These objectives often underpin much collaborative provision. In this context the University views collaborative provision as providing important progression opportunities for individuals who might not otherwise enter HE, opportunities to support international student recruitment and promote cultural diversity, as well as making a significant contribution to the development of higher level skills and qualifications in the region and further afield.
- 6.6 The University will therefore expect forthcoming proposals for new course developments to be able to demonstrate:
- how the course fits into the partner's own development strategy
 - how the course complements the UW Institute's portfolio of course provision and fits with its

- development plans
- how the proposed course contributes to the widening participation/
internationalisation/higher level skills agendas
- proposed progression opportunities to the University.

7 Monitoring and termination of partnerships and collaborative academic arrangements

- 7.1 The University ensures that there are designated University named contacts in relation to each approved collaborative arrangement, (eg link tutor or named contact) with responsibility for communications, advice, guidance and oversight of the quality assurance and operational processes for the arrangement.
- 7.2 All collaborative academic arrangements are subject to the normal quality assurance processes concerning formal approval of modifications and changes, annual evaluation and periodic review. These are set out on the Academic Quality Unit webpages. In addition the University has in place arrangements for annual monitoring and periodic review of collaborative academic partnerships. These vary as to the size and scope of the partnership, but normally involve an annual meeting between the University and partner organisation managers to consider the operation of the partnership. Partnership reviews are carried out every five years and involve a reassessment of risk and an evaluation of strategic and operational effectiveness.
- 7.3 In the event that a partner does not fulfil its obligations, or if there is a change of ownership or status of the partner, that compromises or jeopardises the collaborative partnership, the University has the right to suspend or withdraw from the partnership.
- 7.4 In the event that the University or a partner wishes to withdraw from a collaborative arrangement, the University ensures that there is an orderly discontinuation of the partnership or arrangement which protects the interests of the students registered for, or accepted for admission, to the collaborative programme or other arrangement. Full details of the principles governing termination of a partnership are set out in the partnership agreement, and/or the course agreement.

8 Contact details

- 8.1 Proposals for the establishment of new collaborative academic partnerships should be discussed at the earliest opportunity with the Director of Regional Engagement, and the Head of Collaborative Programmes.

Date Policy Approved	<i>October 2012</i>
Approval Authority	<i>Academic Board</i>
Date of Commencement	<i>11/10/2012</i>
Amendment Dates	<i>List the dates the policy has been amended (Day/Month/Year)</i>
Date for Next Review	<i>30/10/2015</i>
Related Policies, Procedures, Guidance, Forms or Templates	<u>Partnership Approval</u>
Policies/Rules Superseded by this Policy	<i>Version 2</i>

Revision History

Committee	Date	Change
ASQEC	24 th September 2014	Para 2.1 updated and para 2.2 inserted, plus entry on the subsequent table, all relating to the status of Recognition Agreements