

# Procedure for Institution-Wide Partner Status

## Introduction

1. The University is committed to the development of national and international partnerships as part of its Strategy. Collaboration in partner programmes is a key element of this strategy, whereby the University builds partnerships through the delivery of academic partnership programmes with trusted partners.
2. ‘Institution-Wide Partner Status’ facilitates the development of a number of programmes with the same partner in addition to other activities. This status also has the benefit of strengthening the relationship with the partner, allowing the provision of new programmes on a similar model. This document outlines the policy and procedure for this Institution-Wide Partner Status (IWPS).
3. The conferment of IWPS follows a detailed investigation of the partner and its quality assurance processes. Where the University has satisfied itself that the quality assurance processes are robust across the entire partner institution, the approval process for any new partnership programmes may be streamlined as set out in paragraph 17. IWPS will further act as a mechanism for the University to consolidate its collaborative activities.

## Selection process

4. For partner institutions to be considered for IWPS, they must normally meet the following criteria;
  - i. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) must exist between the University and the partner;
  - ii. A minimum of one partnership programme must already exist and have enrolled at least one cohort (This cohort does not necessarily need to have transferred to a Reading campus if transfer is part of the programme);
  - iii. The existing partnership programme must be operating well and in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA);
  - iv. A minimum of one further partnership programme must be under development and there should exist the strong prospect of further programmes.
  - v. The partner must operate similar taught and/or research discipline areas to the University to ensure sufficient scope for future expansion of a number of partnership programmes;
  - vi. The partner must have the capacity to deliver teaching and/or the supervision of doctoral research in English;
  - vii. The University and partner must have strong and effective relationships at both school and University level as well as a desire to expand the partnership; the partner must be able to demonstrate capacity and resource for expansion of the partnership.

## Approval process

5. The nomination for conferring IWPS can come from any one of a number of sources e.g. Programme Director, International Partnerships Team, the Global Engagement Strategy Board, a Teaching and Learning Dean (TLD) or a group of colleagues from across the University. Initial conversations should take place with the relevant TLD or, for Postgraduate Research Programmes, the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies<sup>1</sup>, who will in turn circulate the proposal amongst all TLDs to ensure all Schools are consulted and all subject areas interested in participating are contacted.
6. A lead, or sponsoring, TLD must be identified to act as the co-ordinator for the proposal and work with the Centre for Quality Support and Development (CQSD) to convene meetings with relevant colleagues across the University. This should include meetings with those Schools and Departments identified as potential programme partners.
7. An initial proposal for the IWPS should be compiled by the sponsoring TLD with the support of CQSD and the International Partnerships Team (IPT). The proposal should address the following considerations;
  - i. Partner's status and financial stability
  - ii. Political and Social Context
  - iii. Financial and Legal context of operating in the country
  - iv. Cultural and educational context including language
  - v. Compatibility with the University
  - vi. Other partnerships held by both the University and the proposed partner
  - vii. Existing University projects in the region including existence of another IWPS in the same region
  - viii. Details, including an evaluation, of the operation of the existing partnership programme
  - ix. Proposed programme structure and areas for development including any programmes under discussion including details of discussions undertaken with the subject areas identified for partnership programmes
  - x. Resources available at the partner and the University to support development
  - xi. Request for funds to conduct further investigations

The initial report should also highlight any areas which will require investment and/or particular consideration as part of the site visit.

8. The initial report should be submitted to the University's Global Engagement Strategy Board (GESB) which will consider the proposal from a strategic perspective. GESB will feedback to proposers and the University Board for Teaching and Learning (UBTL) one of the following options;
  - i. Approve the proposal
  - ii. Approve subject to amendments
  - iii. Request additional information on the proposal
  - iv. Reject the proposal.

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<sup>1</sup> Where the primary area of existing activity with a partner relates to postgraduate (doctoral) research, the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies will undertake the role ascribed to the sponsoring TLD and outlined in this policy

Proposers will make necessary adjustments or provide further information to GESB. GESB will be responsible for allocating funds for site visits and further investigations as appropriate. Where approval has been granted, the proposal and GESB's response will be reported to UBTL.

9. UBTL will consider the proposal from an academic standpoint, taking into consideration the comments of GESB. UBTL will feedback comments and, if appropriate, its approval. UBTL will appoint the team to conduct the related investigations and site visit.
10. On approval from both GESB and UBTL, a site visit will be conducted by the sponsoring TLD and a member of CQSD. Where possible, this visit will coincide with the site visit for a programme that is under development with the partner.
11. Prior to a site visit, the following activities should take place:
  - i. the sponsoring TLD will write to the proposed partner expressing the wish to conduct a visit and the purpose behind it;
  - ii. the partner should provide supporting documentation to demonstrate its quality assurance processes and procedures; these documents will require translation where applicable. Such information should be verified during the site visit, and should confirm consistency of practice across the partner institution;
  - iii. the visit team should consider all documentation relating to the existing partnership programme including the initial business plan, site visit report, Annual Programme Reports, Partner Sub-Reports and Partnership Annual Review (Form 1); where co-supervision of doctoral researchers has been an element of the existing partnership, progress reports pertaining to these students should be considered;
  - iv. the visit team should meet with University staff, and students, to discuss and evaluate the existing partnership programme/s.
12. The purpose of the site visit will to be investigate the academic quality of the partner further and should cover the following areas;
  - i. Partner context including HE sector of the region
  - ii. Quality Assurance policies and procedure
  - iii. Programme Management
  - iv. Admissions, recruitment and marketing
  - v. English language support
  - vi. Teaching and Learning facilities
  - vii. Learning Resources
  - viii. Student support and welfare
  - ix. Examination and Assessment
  - x. Student representation
  - xi. Careers and Employability
  - xii. Staff Development and training
  - xiii. Future developments
13. As part of the site visit, the visit team should:
  - i. meet with members of the senior management and central administration, including representatives responsible for quality assurance and international partnerships;
  - ii. conduct a campus tour, including the library, English language support, teaching facilities, specialist teaching rooms and student services;
  - iii. meet with staff and students in relation to the programme already operating between the University and the partner;

- iv. hold further discussions with all academic departments that have been identified as potential areas for collaboration; this will provide an opportunity to identify consistent practices across the institution in line with policy and procedure;
  - v. meet with a group of student representatives.
14. The site visit team will compile a final report for submission to UBTL identifying whether IWPS should be granted and setting out any recommendations that need to be addressed prior to any new programmes being established. The final report should indicate for which types of programmes (e.g. progression, dual award) a site visit will not be required, based on the detailed investigations that have taken place.
15. If UBTL approve the IWPS for the partner, a confirmation letter will be sent from the Vice-Chancellor, or their delegate, to the Vice-Chancellor, or equivalent, at the partner institution or equivalent officer. This letter will confirm that IWPS has been granted and indicate the ways in which this will help the University work more closely with the partner institution. Additionally, an event may be organised to celebrate the designation of IWPS status.
16. CQSD will be responsible for maintaining a list of IWPS institutions and the programmes associated with the partner. Global recruitment and the IPT will be responsible for collating data pertaining to recruitment levels and partnership income.

## Variations on programme approval process

17. Taught Programmes being developed with an IWPS institution should follow the standard approval process, *Approval of a new programme*, with the following exceptions for those types of programmes as indicated in the final site visit report:
- i. Normally no further site visit will be required
  - ii. The IWPS final site report will be used in place of Section C-E of Annex 3; Business Proposal for the Approval of a new programme. It is expected that teaching staff would, in any case, continue to undertake visits to the partner in order to develop the curriculum and manage the relationship with colleagues at the partner. Details of these visits should be added to the Business Plan.
  - iii. However, as part of Section C-E and the Business Plan, programme teams will need to comment further on time sensitive information, and academic subjects specifics, including, but not limited to, the following:
    - i. Has the partner developed any new business interests and/or links with private or overseas providers?
    - ii. Has the partner got in place the suitable type and standard of facilities and resources need to meet their areas of responsibility for delivering the proposed programme?
    - iii. Has the partners profile changed in regards to: the QAA, the regional quality assurance body, the media, their other partners, the UK Border Agency?
18. Each programme conducted with an IWPS institution will be subject to its own contract.

## Monitoring and Review

19. Existing monitoring processes for partnership programmes will continue in relation to each programme, including:
- i. Partner Programme Sub-Reports

- ii. Annual Quality Assurance Reports<sup>2</sup>
  - iii. Partnership annual review (Form 1)
20. A cohesive summary monitoring an IWPS partner will draw of the documents mentioned above and be provided in the Annual Collaboration Quality Report.
21. Programmes delivered under the umbrella of an IWPS partner shall be included in the relevant Periodic Review.
22. IWPS will be effective for a period of six years and in the fifth year, the status will be subject to review. This review will be conducted in line with the *Procedure for partner programme review* with variations to the following elements;
- i. A site visit will be a compulsory and will consider the elements as outlined in paragraph 12:
  - ii. The self-evaluation document will be required from the Programme Directors of each programme being delivered at the Partner. An overarching summary may be included where relevant.
  - iii. A business plan including financial details may be required.
23. The outcome of the review will be communicated to the partner institution.
24. If the IWPS is not renewed, all programmes operating with the partner will conduct a full review in line with the *Procedure for partner programme review* in the fifth year of the contract.

For further information on IWPS, please contact the Centre for Quality Support and Development.

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<sup>2</sup> For doctoral research programmes, this will include progress reports pertaining to students undertaking those programmes