

# Policy for the quality assurance of partnership programmes and working with other institutions

## Introduction

1. This policy provides an overview of the University of Reading's approach to and arrangements for the effective delivery of teaching and learning partnerships.
2. UoR works with other institutions in the UK and internationally to deliver programmes and enhance the student experience. Teaching and learning partnerships enable the University to deliver learning to students who may otherwise be unable to access a UoR degree in the UK, to enable students to experience study abroad opportunities and to draw on the expertise of partner universities to enhance the provision of the University's programmes.
3. At all times the University retains responsibility for the overall quality and academic standards of its partnership provision.
4. This policy is informed by the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education and in particular the Expectations, and associated guidance<sup>1</sup>, for partnerships:
  - a. Expectations for Standards. Core Practice: *Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.*
  - b. Expectations for Quality. Core Practice: *Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.*
5. All policies relating to 'working with others' and partnerships can be found in Section 11 of the [Guide to Policy and Procedures for Teaching and Learning](#).

## Scope

6. This policy primarily concerns itself with teaching and learning partnerships and working with other institutions to deliver programmes which result in an Award of a University programme or academic credit from the University.
7. The Centre for Quality Support and Development (CQSD) working with the Teaching and Learning Deans (TLDs), have primary oversight for the assurance of quality and standards and on-going enhancement of T&L partnership activity. Other Functions at the University have oversight for other partnership activity. For Guidance on the quality assurance relating to:
  - i. *Placements – contact the Placement and Development Manager*
  - ii. *Study Aboard – contact the Study Abroad Manager*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/advice-and-guidance>

iii. *Recruitment partnerships – contact the Senior Admissions Managers and the Senior International Partnerships Manager*

iv. *Research partnerships – Contact Research Enterprises Services*

8. There are many types of teaching and learning partnership and different ways that the University might work with another institution to deliver teaching and learning, this varies from provision of a partners facilities and non-academic support, asking a partner to teach a UoR programme (franchise), validating credit designed and delivered by a partner towards a UoR Award, or working with a Partner to jointly design and deliver a new programme. A typology of the different types of partnership activity the University undertakes can be found here: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/Typology.pdf>
9. In addition, CQSD supports the development of some non-credit bearing awards, such as partnership involvement in foundation year delivery, although this will usually be led by the International Partnerships Team (IPT). CQSD will also supports quality assurance arrangements for other types of partnerships and transnational Education (TNE), such as supporting quality and enhancement at Branch Campuses and having oversight for any 'recognition' of other's training<sup>2</sup>.
10. CQSD have published a number of guides and templates to help academic and support staff in designing, delivering and supporting partnership and transnational education activities and these can be found in Section 11 of the [Guide to Policy and Procedures for Teaching and Learning](#).

## Quality Assurance

11. The University's approach to quality assurance can be found in the [Enhancement-led quality assurance processes at the University of Reading](#) policy, which states that the purpose of the enhancement-led quality assurance system is to ensure that the University supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. The approach to quality assuring partnership activity aligns with this purpose with a focus on maintaining academic standards and driving forward the enhancement of teaching and learning and the students' experience.
12. As such, the University has in place policy and guidance for all stages of partnership provision, including development and approval of partnerships, on-going monitoring and review, and the closure of partnership programmes.
13. Policy and guidance for the development of new partnership programmes can be found in the [Programme Lifecycle Policies](#), this policy outlines a supportive and collaborative approach to the development of partnership programmes and a robust quality assurance and approval process, including appropriate due diligence processes for the partner, any new programme content and operational matters associated with the partnership; student feedback and input; external and internal scrutiny; and, relevant committee approval.
14. The Programme Life-cycle policy also outlines the processes required to close a Partnership Programme, which are also be governed by arrangement outlined in a formal agreement and will always include a teach-out or student protection plan.
15. All partnership activity is covered in a formal agreement (MoA) between the University and the Partner, outlining roles and responsibilities and the contractual obligations of each party.
16. Schools retain responsibility for the on-going T&L management and delivery of partnership programmes within their School, and this is overseen by the School Director for Teaching and Learning (SDTL) and the relevant Programme Director; for large partnerships, Schools may also appoint a Partnership Lead. Schools are supported by their TLD, CQSD and the IPT as well as other student support services in order to deliver a high-quality partnership programme.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/Policy\\_on\\_recognising\\_other's\\_training.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/Policy_on_recognising_other's_training.pdf)

17. In line with the University's approach to the quality assurance for all programmes, the University has in place effective processes to maintain the quality and academic standards, and on-going enhancement, of its partnership provision, for the duration of the partnership activity. This can be divided into two areas of activity:
- a. Annual monitoring  
Alongside the Schools' annual monitoring and enhancement process (School Teaching Enhancement Action Plan - STEAP), the Programme Directors for each Partnership programme will be asked to complete a [Partnership Annual Monitoring Form](#) and (where relevant) the partner is asked to complete a [Partner Programme Sub-Report](#). These form the basis of an annual reflection by the School to consider all areas of their partnership provision, from recruitment to delivery, assessment and student outcomes and the student experience, as well as operational matters with the Partner. These evaluative forms are submitted to the relevant Autumn term Board of Studies and Student Experience for discussion. They are also submitted to CQSD who will compile an Annual Overview Report on Collaborative Provision, which explores themes across the University's collaborative provision and is submitted to Sub-committee for the Delivery and Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (DELT) alongside the Schools Teaching Enhancement Action Plans and other annual T&L evaluative data sets in the autumn term.
  - b. Partnership Review  
Before the renewal of a partnership agreement (MoA), and at least very six years, a review of the partnership activity will be undertaken by a TLD and CQSD, to ensure expected standards and quality continue to be met and to make recommendations to further enhance the partnership provision.  
The process for this is outlined in the [Procedure for partnership programme review](#). The School involved in delivering the partnership programme will be asked to reflect on their provision and produce a [self-evaluation document](#) (SED). This will form the basis for further investigations and evaluative discussions with academic and support staff at the University, staff at the partner and with current students and alumni. A Partnership Review Report, completed by CQSD and the TLD, and the SED will be submitted to the University Programme Board (and any other relevant committees) to seek approval for the continuation of the Partnership provision.

## Governance

18. The Pro Vice Chancellor International (PVCi) has strategic oversight for all international partnership activity at the University. The PVCi Chairs the Global Engagement Strategy Board which develops and oversees the Global Engagement Strategy including partnership activity, and works with the International Partnership Team to investigate and develop new potential partnership opportunities.
19. New partnership opportunities are also often formed through existing academic relationships and the IPT works closely with CQSD to advise on new partnerships and to develop any new partnership programmes.
20. The University Programmes Board has oversight for the approval, development and review of all of the University's credit-bearing provision, and as such all new partnership programmes must be approved by UPB prior to any Agreements being put in place. In addition, any changes to partnership programmes and the review and renewal of a partnership programmes must be approved by UPB.
21. As noted above, annual monitoring and the enhancement of partnership activity is overseen by DELT. DELT will make recommendations for the enhancement of partnership programmes based on the evidence presented at the annual T&L monitoring meeting in the autumn term.  
In addition, DELT has oversight of and responsibility for the review of all policies relating to T&L (including partnership provision), and will report its findings to UBTLSE.

22. CQSD, works with the TLD to retain oversight of all quality assurance and enhancement processes related to partnership provision and working with others. CQSD maintains the [Guide to Policies and Procedures for Teaching and Learning](#), including Section 11 (working with other institutions).  
CQSD also has responsibility for retaining records for all partnership activity, including the internal partnership database, copies of all current and archived MoAs for partnerships and for maintaining the [Register of Collaborative Provision](#).
23. As noted above, Schools retain responsibility for the delivery of partnership provision and are supported by their TLD, CQSD and IPT in all partnership matters arising.
24. In addition, partnership activity is supported by a range of expertise across the University in a variety of support services and functions, including Admissions, RISIS (Student Records), Support Centres, the Library, Digital and Technical Services, Technology Enhanced Learning, Visa and Immigration Services, the International Study and Language Institute and the Study Abroad Office amongst many others.  
On a termly basis the International Operations Group meets to discuss operational matters for TNE, including partnerships.

Keeper	Reviewed	Approved By	Approval Date	Version
CQSD		UBTLSE	3/11/2021	1.0 – new policy