

## POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

### 1. Purpose of the policy framework

- 1.1 This policy framework has been produced in light of the expansion of the University's educational collaborative activities and in recognition of the benefits and opportunities derived from these collaborations. Its purpose is to set out the University's approach to educational collaborative arrangements in line with its *Vision and Strategy 2017-2023*.<sup>1</sup> While the focus here is on education, it is acknowledged that educational collaborations might also help to foster relationships that contribute to the aims of the Research and International strategies, and vice versa. In addition, it is recognised that the University's approach to different types of collaborative arrangement - educational, research and international – need to be mutually informing and strategically consistent. The Strategy was launched in 2016 and provides a roadmap that sets out the University's goals in six key areas. Here you will find a [timeline for implementation \(PDF, 16kB\)](#) and updates on progress as the strategy is put into effect over the next seven years.
- 1.2 The framework covers all educational collaborative arrangements where the achievement of learning outcomes is dependent on the collaboration. It should be read in conjunction with the *Regulations and Code of Practice for Educational Collaborative Arrangements* ([www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/edpart/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/edpart/)) and with Chapter B10 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, *Managing higher education provision with others* (2012).<sup>2</sup> Strategic fit is a significant factor in the approval of new collaborations, and so prospective new arrangements must be developed in accordance with this framework. Only arrangements that align with the University's priorities, and so justify the resources required to develop and run them, will be considered for approval.

### 2. The University's mission and values

- 2.1 The University's mission to pursue and share knowledge and understanding is expressed in the University Strategic Plan *Our Vision Our Strategy 2017-2023*.<sup>3</sup> A series of values underpin this overarching mission, including a commitment to excellence, innovation, collaboration and equity. The University is committed to

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/university/governance/policies/vision/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/quality-code-B10.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/university/strategy/>

exploring mutually beneficial educational collaborative arrangements – whether local, regional, national or international – that promote these values.

- 2.2 The *Education Strategy 2017-2023*<sup>4</sup> which highlights that students should reach their full potential in a research-rich, innovative, and inclusive environment. It stresses the need to provide an excellent education, which is relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for a talented and diverse student population. Collaborations with other organisations can play an important role in delivering this aim in various contexts through the combination of expertise and resources.
- 2.3 Educational collaborative arrangements must comply with equality legislation and with the University's *Equality and Diversity Policy*.<sup>5</sup> There are a number of Strategic Performance Indicators, linked to the University's *Vision and Strategy*, which focus on student diversity. In terms of enhancement, a collaboration that had the potential to enrich the cultural life of the University would be viewed positively.

### **3. The rationale for educational collaborative arrangements**

- 3.1 The range and volume of potential educational collaborations have grown as the sector increasingly participates in global higher education, engages in widening access, aims to enhance student employability, and explores new and innovative ways to support education. A trend in the external funding landscape towards more consortium-based grants, particularly at doctoral level, also encourages connectivity between different organisations. This expanding potential for collaboration is to be welcomed and offers a range of opportunities to enhance the student experience.
- 3.2 It is essential however that there is a strategic approach to the development of educational collaborative arrangements. From the wide range of potential collaborations, the University must maintain a focus on its priorities and must assure itself that its resources are deployed effectively. Therefore, proposals for new collaborations must be able to demonstrate a link to education, research or international priorities. In particular, only educational collaborations that have a clearly-articulated rationale linked to the *Education Strategy 2017-2023* should be pursued.
- 3.3 In terms of the *Education Strategy*, Priorities 1, 2 and 3 offer a good starting point when considering a potential collaboration. Priority 1 relates to attracting and retaining students from a wide range of backgrounds. Priority 2 specifies that the University provides a high-quality, research-rich education focused on the needs of its students to challenge and empower them to achieve their potential and to ensure students are engaged partners in their own learning.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/facultyadvice/policy/educationstrategy/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/policy.html>,

3.4 Priority 3, through the development of the 'Bristol Futures' curriculum, ensures that students have an intellectually stimulating experience that prepares them for employment within a rapidly changing world of work and other opportunities when they leave. Increasing student employability and entrepreneurship, as well as working with organisations to ensure that programmes continue to meet societal needs and that the accreditation of professional programmes is maintained are covered. Another aspect of this priority highlights the global focus and international constituency of the University and how skills and knowledge should be provided in an international context, including through the development of 'study abroad' and 'exchange' opportunities or through discipline-specific partnership arrangements.

3.5 The development of new educational collaborative arrangements within a School or Faculty should be consistent with, and informed by, the agreed plans and strategies of the School and Faculty, as articulated through the Integrated Planning Process.

#### **4. The types of educational collaborative arrangement permitted at the University of Bristol**

4.1 The University has a strategic approach to the types of educational collaborative arrangement that are permissible. Only types of collaboration that are deemed to be acceptable can be pursued for new arrangements. This covers a range of collaboration types that fit with the University's Vision and Strategy and that are compatible with its risk management approach.

4.2 Only applications related to the following types of educational collaborative arrangement will normally be considered for approval. Full definitions are included in the Glossary of Terms in Annex 1 of the *Regulations and Code of Practice for Educational Collaborative Arrangements* ([www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/edpart/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/edpart/)).

- a) Clinical Academies
- b) Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs)
- c) Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs)
- d) Dual/Cotutelle Doctoral Awards
- e) Collaborative PhDs (Joint/External Supervision, Split-Site PhDs)
- f) Joint Awards (taught or doctoral)
- g) Delivery/Service Provision
- h) Jointly Delivered Programme (under a Collaboration Agreement)
- i) Placement/Work-based Learning (including study in industry)
- j) Student Exchanges
- k) Study Abroad
- l) Flying Faculty

4.3 The Academic Quality and Policy Office must be contacted in the first instance for further advice regarding any potential educational collaborative arrangement that is not of a type included in the above list, in order to ensure that time and resources are not spent on the development of proposals that would not be approved for strategic reasons. Any educational collaboration involving a sub-contracting arrangement will require exceptional approval (see the *Regulations and Code of Practice for Educational Collaborative Arrangements* section 5).

## 5. The contribution of collaborating organisations

- 5.1 Collaborating organisations, both in the UK and internationally, must contribute to the quality and breadth of educational opportunities by providing resources and/or expertise that complement the University's own provision. Collaborating organisations will be highly regarded, of good academic standing, and share the University's aims, ethos and values. The University expects that collaborating organisations will not damage its reputation, while arrangements that have the potential to enhance its reputational standing are particularly welcomed. Due diligence with regards to the academic, financial and legal status of potential collaborators forms part of the approval processes.
- 5.2 Priority 5 of the *Education Strategy* requires a high quality learning environment both physical and digital, that is enhanced or complimented by a potential collaborator and offer student-focused support structures. This includes using the most appropriate technology and the provision of the best available learning environment in terms of learning spaces and resources, such as library and IT systems.
- 5.3 Student-focused priorities form a significant part of the *Education Strategy*. Priority 3 highlights the need to provide learning and skills opportunities that enhance student employability and personal development. The Bristol Skills Framework requires students to assess and record their skills development in a Personal Development Plan (PDP), students are able to demonstrate a rounded set of graduate attributes to future employers.<sup>6</sup>
- 5.4 Priority 4 is an important aspect for collaborators to consider. The University has prioritised the provision of sport, exercise, health, and mental health programmes and initiatives that are accessible to all students to help promote student well-being. A potential collaborator would be expected to contribute to these aspects of the student experience.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.bris.ac.uk/university/experience/bristol-futures/>

## 6. The requirement for appropriate infrastructure

- 6.1 The University must ensure that there is appropriate infrastructure to support collaborations and to mitigate the associated risks of working with other organisations. It is therefore imperative that proposed structures, systems, resources and staffing levels are viable. Confidence that a suitable collaborative infrastructure has been scoped out, both at the University and at its proposed collaborator(s), is required before an arrangement can be approved. Due diligence checks covering resource and staffing needs will be undertaken, and appropriate planning for the required infrastructure will form part of the approval process. For arrangements linked to externally-funded bids, institutional approval on the resource implications must be obtained before an external application is made. In all cases, the approved resources must be in place before the arrangement in question comes into effect.
- 6.2 An appropriate infrastructure is essential to the development of potential collaborations both in terms of the physical and digital environment. Priority 5 of the *Education Strategy* highlights the need to support student learning as well as teaching excellence. A robust quality assurance framework guarantees the quality of students' learning opportunities (2.2). Overall, any educational collaborative arrangement must offer parity for the student in terms of learning opportunities and in student support arrangements.
- 6.3 The resource implications and the sustainability of a potential collaboration must be considered as part of its strategic fit. When a collaborative arrangement is developed, due regard must be given to contingency planning to minimise the impact on students in the event that a partner withdraws from a collaborative agreement (see also section 9.6 of the *Regulations and Code of Practice for Educational Collaborative Arrangements* - [www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/edpart/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/edpart/)).

University External Partnerships Review Group  
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*Subject to approval by University Education Committee and Senate*