

REGULATIONS AND CODE OF PRACTICE FOR EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

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Associated documents

Available at: www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/edpart/

- Policy Framework on Higher Education Provision with Others
- Process Maps
- Initial Proposal Form – New Educational Collaborative Arrangement
- Periodic Review and Reassessment Form for Educational Collaborative Arrangements

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University's requirements for educational collaborative arrangements are set out in these Regulations and Code of Practice ('the Code').
- 1.2 The Code provides a formal structure for the development and maintenance of educational collaborative arrangements within a quality assurance framework.
- 1.3 The parts of the Code where the text is in boxes are University Regulations. These regulations set out the core requirements that must be followed for educational collaborative arrangements.
- 1.4 There are a range of different educational collaborative arrangements supported by the University, covering a wide spectrum of activity: from student exchanges and placements in industry, to dual or joint awards (as permitted under the University's Charter), and Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs). Annex 1: Typology of Partnerships states the range of possible educational collaborative arrangements at the University, and the Partnerships Register lists the University's current active arrangements.
- 1.5 The Code covers the full range of the University's educational collaborative arrangements. Proportionality forms a significant aspect of these regulations. The procedures that apply to any particular arrangement will therefore vary according to its type and the level of associated risk.

2. Definition of an educational collaborative arrangement

- 2.1 An educational collaborative arrangement is a programme of study, or a part of a programme of study, that is delivered, supported or assessed with another organisation. An arrangement will fall within the scope of this Code if the achievement of the learning outcomes for a unit or programme is dependent on the collaboration.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">2.2 The Code applies to educational collaborative arrangements with any institution or organisation, within the UK or overseas, where the achievement of learning outcomes is dependent on the collaboration. |
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3. Key principles

- 3.1 Educational collaborative arrangements can produce effective and innovative programmes by combining expertise and resources. They must align with the University's vision and strategy in order to justify the associated risks and the resources required to deliver them successfully. The **Policy Framework on Higher Education Provision with Others** sets out the University's approach to educational collaborative arrangements.

3.2 Educational collaborative arrangements must be developed in accordance with the Policy Framework on Higher Education Provision with Others and this Code.

3.3 When considering whether to work collaboratively, the University needs to be assured that:

- There is a strong and clear rationale for the collaboration;
- the contribution of the potential collaborating organisation(s) to the University's aims is clear; and
- the infrastructure and other resources required for the collaboration is in place or will be in place.

3.4 Collaborating organisations should be highly-regarded organisations that share the University's educational or civic aims and values. The quality of the learning opportunities and the learning environment are crucial concerns. As a degree-awarding body, the University has ultimate responsibility for the academic standards of its awards and the quality of the learning opportunities provided for its students.

3.5 Educational collaborative arrangements need to be carefully developed to safeguard the student learning experience.

3.6 It is vital that arrangements give due attention to issues of academic standards and quality assurance. Clear agreement must be reached on the roles and responsibilities of each collaborating organisation.

4. The governance framework

- 4.1. The University Academic Quality & Standards Committee (UAQSC) is responsible for this Code and for embedding policy and processes for collaborative arrangements within the University's wider educational governance. It has a central role in the safeguarding of quality and standards. It oversees the Code, the Register and the types of arrangement supported by the University, all of which are reviewed annually. It scrutinises proposals for new educational collaborative arrangements and for the renewal of existing arrangements following periodic review, to ensure that these align with the University's regulatory, policy and quality assurance framework. The Committee's Terms of Reference and Membership are at: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/groups/uqsc/>
- 4.2 A Gateway Group comprising of a range of stakeholders with relevant expertise will review all proposals for new educational collaborative agreements and advise the Academic Quality and Standards Committee of any considerations or

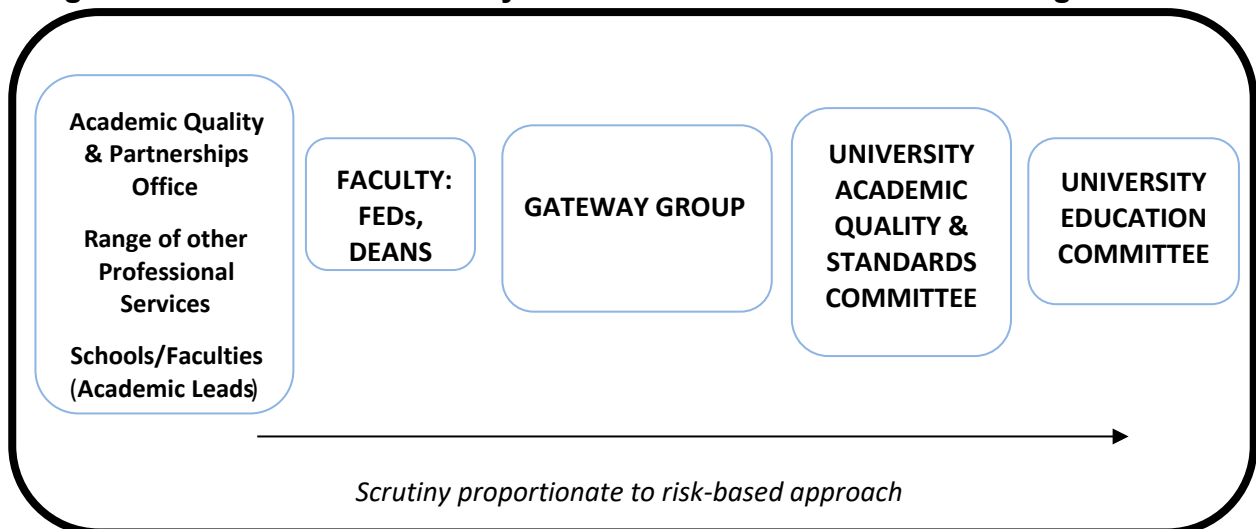
significant risks. The Academic Quality and Standards Committee is responsible for approving partnerships and reports to the University Education Committee.

4.3 University Education Committee is responsible for overseeing, on behalf of Senate, all educational collaborative arrangements. Detailed scrutiny will be undertaken by University Academic Quality and Standards Committee

4.4 The first point of contact for collaborative arrangements is the Academic Quality and Partnerships Office within the Education and Student Experience division. Other Professional Services that perform roles in the development and scrutiny of arrangements may include:

- Faculty Education Managers, in respect of Faculty administrative requirements
- Finance Services, in respect of finance and funding
- the Secretary's Office, in respect of legal advice
- Bristol Doctoral College (BDC) and Research and Enterprise Development, in respect of research
- the Education Administration Office, in respect of systems and reporting
- the International Office in respect of overseas partnerships
- Student Visa Services in respect of student visas and monitoring requirements
- and Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions in respect of student admission.

Figure 1: Governance Summary for educational collaborative arrangements



5 Safeguarding quality and standards

Institutional responsibility for Quality Assurance

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| <p>5.1 The University has ultimate responsibility for the academic standards and quality of its units and programmes, including those that are wholly or partly conducted by collaborating organisations. The Academic Lead must make prospective partners aware of the University's internal quality assurance procedures underpinned by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. These include the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree or Taught Programmes as relevant.</p> |
| <p>5.2 Responsibility for academic standards must be maintained in the context of educational collaborative arrangements. It must be ensured that standards reach the appropriate level in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and that the University's assessment regulations are applied, including appropriate arrangements for external examining and Examination Boards.</p> <p>5.3 The University's responsibility for quality assurance and the role of its quality assurance procedures must be clear to all collaborating organisations.</p> <p>5.4 It is not normally permitted for a collaborating organisation to sub-contract collaborative provision to a third party, or assign powers delegated by the University of Bristol through an arrangement of its own. Exceptionally, proposals for sub-contracted arrangements must be endorsed by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee in principle before proceeding.</p> <p>5.5 All students who are registered for a University of Bristol award that is delivered through an educational collaborative arrangement are considered students of the University of Bristol for external and internal quality assurance purposes. Regardless of where they are situated, these students must not be disadvantaged in terms of the quality of learning opportunities.</p> <p>5.6 In cases where the University is a partner in a collaborative arrangement led by another organisation, the arrangement must still be consistent with this Code, including suitable provisions for annual programme review and external examining. Any differences must be agreed as part of the approval process and explicitly stated in the written agreement.</p> |

The Academic Lead

- 5.7 The operation of collaborative arrangements is owned at Faculty and/ or School level and must be effectively managed. An Academic Lead with appropriate delegated authority to manage an educational collaborative arrangement for the length of the agreement must be appointed. If the Academic Lead leaves the institution or otherwise steps down from their role, a suitable alternative person must be appointed to the role to ensure the ongoing delivery and the Academic Quality and Policy Office (AQPO) informed.
- 5.8 It is the responsibility of the relevant Dean or PVC Education (for institutional or cross-Faculty arrangements) to ensure that suitable Academic Leads are appointed, that they have appropriate knowledge and skills, and that they have time to carry out their obligations. Academic Leads must be a member of academic staff holding an open contract of employment at the University of at least 0.5 FTE. Staff wishing to act as an Academic Lead must declare any perceived or actual conflict of interest in relation to the partner institution(s) before an appointment decision is made.
- 5.9 The Academic Lead is responsible for leading on the proposal for a new educational partnership; liaison with equivalent role-holder(s) at the partner institution(s) to ensure the successful development and maintenance of the partnership; overseeing the management and regular monitoring of the educational partnership once established; contributing as required to the periodic review/ renewal of the educational partnership; overseeing the orderly termination of/ withdrawal from the educational partnership, if applicable.
- 5.10 The University must be able to satisfy itself that the terms and conditions that were originally approved continue to be met, and that educational collaborative arrangements maintain adequate leadership.

The central Register

- 5.11 The University maintains a central Register of its educational collaborative arrangements. The Register provides an accurate and up-to-date record of educational collaborative arrangements, and forms part of the oversight of these activities.
- 5.12 Academic Leads are responsible for ensuring that accurate and timely information on approved arrangements is provided to the Academic Quality and Partnerships Office, which is responsible for maintaining the Register.
- 5.13 The Register is reviewed annually, and the Academic Quality and Standards Committee reports the updated Register to the University Education Committee.

Documentation and the central repository

5.14 The University expects that the documentation related to educational collaborative arrangements is accurate, complete and readily accessible.

5.15 The central repository for Collaboration Agreements establishing or renewing educational collaborative arrangements is held by the Academic Quality and Partnerships Office.

5.16 The Academic Lead is responsible for ensuring that all other records which are stored locally (e.g., operational documents) are accurate, complete and readily accessible.

6 A risk-based approach

6.1 The University uses a risk-based approach to approve, manage and review educational collaborative arrangements. All potential arrangements are subject to the risk assessment framework.

6.2 The risk based approach assists in mitigating the inherent risks of working with other organisations. Procedures for the approval and review of arrangements are tailored and proportionate to the risks of the collaboration.

6.3 An assessment of the risks of a potential collaboration is undertaken by the University at the start of the approval process. Assessment is based on a grading system that takes account of the complexity of the collaborative arrangement, the resources available for the collaboration, and the status of the collaborating organisation(s), amongst other factors. The full risk assessment framework is available from the Academic Quality and Partnerships Office.

7 Developing new educational collaborative arrangements

7.1 New educational collaborative arrangements will originate from either University strategic initiatives or from within Faculties and Schools.

7.2 In all cases, the key principles outlined in Section 3 – including strategic fit, the compatibility of potential collaborating organisations and the quality of learning opportunities – must be considered when developing new educational collaborative arrangements.

7.3 The **Policy Framework on Higher Education Provision with Others** is of particular relevance when developing a new arrangement. All proposals will be scrutinised in the context of these key principles in combination with the risk-

based approach set out in Section 6. It is therefore essential that these factors are considered when developing educational collaborations.

7.4 If an arrangement is being developed that does not fall into one of the permitted categories set out in Annex 1: Typology of Partnerships, advice must be sought from the Academic Quality and Partnerships Office before submission to the initial assessment stage (see Section 8.3).

7.5 Support for the development and negotiation of proposed new collaborative arrangements is provided by the Academic Quality and Partnerships Office. Support may also be provided by other central Professional Services Teams as required (see Section 4.4). Academic Leads should also seek early support for any new proposal from the relevant School and Faculty. Faculty Education Managers can advise on local role holders within schools and faculties.

7.6 The Academic Lead is responsible for the development of new proposed educational collaborative arrangements, which includes seeking advice and support from relevant Professional Services.

7.7 During the development stage, timely consideration should be given to how the requirements of any Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) will be met to secure accreditation of programme(s) that are to be delivered through the proposed collaborative arrangement.

7.8 Where PSRB accreditation is sought, proposals for new collaborative programmes must include a timetable, and the roles and responsibilities with regards to securing professional recognition at the appropriate stage.

8 The approval process

8.1 Scrutiny of proposals for new collaborative arrangements includes those where the University is a partner in a collaborative arrangement led by another organisation. The level of scrutiny is proportionate to the nature and complexity of the arrangement and the level of risk involved. University-level scrutiny is carried out by the University Academic Quality and Standards Committee with oversight by the University Education Committee. Academic Leads submit an Initial Proposal form for New Collaborative Arrangements to AQPO giving sufficient notice of proposals to allow for the approval process and a written contract to be developed. Process Maps are available on the AQPO website: www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/edpart/.

8.2 All proposals for educational collaborative arrangements are subject to an initial assessment stage. This is designed to (i) confirm that there is a strategic fit and (ii) assign risk to the proposed arrangement using the risk assessment

framework. Proposals for educational collaborative arrangements must subsequently follow the formal programme approval process, which is either standard or augmented depending on the outcome of the initial assessment.

8.3 Appropriate legal, financial and academic due diligence checks must form a key part of the approval process. AQPO will coordinate these checks based upon information provided by the Academic Lead, the partner or in the public realm.

8.4 Proposals will be reviewed by a Gateway Group (see 4.2) before review by the University Academic Quality and Standards Committee. Higher risk proposals may also require approval by either the PVC Education or the PVC Research and Enterprise.

8.5 If a proposal for a new taught programme includes a partnership element, approval of the educational collaboration is required separately through the partnership approval process. Consideration should be given to the timing for this; it is recommended that this partnership approval is submitted in parallel to Business Case submission for the overall programme before detailed work begins on the Academic Case stage.

8.6 If the proposal relates to a bid process for an externally-funded arrangement such as the establishment of a new CDT or DTP, the initial risk assessment and strategic approval stage must be completed before the bid is signed off to ensure that appropriate scrutiny has taken place before an institutional commitment is made.

9 The written agreement

9.1 Once a proposal for an educational collaborative arrangement has been approved, a written agreement must be put in place before it becomes active. A written agreement is required for all arrangements.

9.2 The type of agreement required will depend on the nature of the arrangement and the Secretary's Office have a range of templates for use. For collaborations where the University of Bristol is not the lead partner, the lead partner would normally draft the written agreement in dialogue with its collaborators (including Bristol).

9.3 Where Bristol is not the lead, the Academic Lead must still ensure that the content set out in this Code is included in the written agreement.

9.4 The written agreement will cover, as applicable, among other things: the responsibilities of the collaborating organisations; regulations and quality assurance processes; arrangements for the admission and registration of students; assessment requirements; award arrangements; financial

arrangements; data protection obligations; ownership of intellectual property; and provisions for withdrawal or termination of the agreement, including the discharging of obligations to students in those circumstances.

- 9.5 Student admissions and registration arrangements are fundamental to all educational collaborative arrangements. Responsibilities for admissions decisions and management of the admissions process, and with which organisation students will be registered, must be, where applicable, set out in the written agreement.
- 9.6 All educational collaborative arrangements must be fully costed and accounted for comprehensively with adequate safeguards and contingency plans against financial or other considerations that might compromise academic standards or the quality of learning opportunities. A detailed Financial Memorandum should form part of the written agreement where applicable.
- 9.7 Expectations concerning the involvement of collaborating organisations in the University's quality assurance procedures must be set out in the written agreement.
- 9.8 The written agreement must make clear which organisation is responsible for issuing award certificates and transcripts. The University of Bristol must retain control of award certificates and transcripts issued in its name. For joint awards, responsibility for issuing a single certificate is shared. Further information on certificates and transcripts is included in Sections 10.9 and 10.10.
- 9.9 Arrangements for terminating a collaborative arrangement must be included in the written agreement.
- 9.10 Collaboration Agreements are put in place for a specified period and must be reported to the University Education Committee.

10 Implementation and delivery

The responsibility for delivery

- 10.1 The Academic Lead has responsibility for overseeing the delivery of an educational collaborative arrangement in accordance with the written agreement. Where a Collaboration Agreement is in place, this should include an annually-updated operating agreement.

Registration, transfer and exit arrangements

- 10.2 Under certain collaborative arrangements, principally those involving joint or dual awards, students may be registered concurrently with more than one awarding body. For postgraduate research arrangements, Section 4.2 of the

Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes (www.bris.ac.uk/academic-quality/pg/copresearch-degrees.html) is relevant.

10.3 When setting the admissions and registration processes pertaining to a collaborative arrangement, timely consultation must take place with the relevant Professional Services - including Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions, the Academic Quality and Partnerships Office, and the Bristol Doctoral College for doctoral arrangements - to ensure that these processes are practicable and align with University regulations and procedures.

10.4 It must be clear throughout the programme of study which collaborating organisation has ultimate responsibility for the student, as distinct from the organisation where the student is based at any one time (and where visiting registration arrangements may be made to enable the student to access appropriate facilities).

10.5 It must be clear with which degree-awarding body a student is registered. The University permits that a student may be registered with more than one awarding body, or transfer registration for different stages of their programme of study, where appropriate under particular collaborative arrangements. In all such cases, the relationship of the student to the University and to the other collaborating organisation(s) must be clear - for example in terms of visa sponsorship for international students - and provision must be made for appropriate exit routes for students.

Information requirements

10.6 Public information on educational collaborative arrangements, and information for both prospective and current students, must be clear and accurate. This must include details on the roles of the collaborating organisations in terms of teaching, supervision, facilities and other aspects of programme delivery. There must also be an explicit statement on which collaborating organisation will be granting the award and, if required, the status of PSRB accreditation. The responsibilities for producing, approving and monitoring information must be clearly set out.

10.7 Current students must receive timely information clarifying their relationship to the organisations involved in the collaborative arrangement; which regulations and procedures apply to them, including for complaints and appeals; their entitlements; and how to access relevant services and support.

10.8 Students undertaking a programme delivered at a collaborating organisation that leads to a University of Bristol award must be made aware in all programme and publicity material that they are University of Bristol students and are therefore subject to the University's Rules and Regulations for Students.

Award certificates and transcripts

- 10.9 If a programme leads to a dual or joint award, this must be specified on the award certificate and the certificate and/or transcript must name both awarding bodies.
- 10.10 If the principal language of instruction and/or assessment is not English this must be recorded on the certificate and/or transcript. If information about the language of study or the name and location of the collaborating organisation(s) is recorded on the transcript only, the certificate must refer to the existence of the transcript.

11 Monitoring requirements

- 11.1 All programmes delivered through educational collaborative arrangements are subject to the University's Quality Framework assurance procedures.

- 11.2 The Academic Lead is responsible for ensuring that quality assurance procedures for educational collaborative arrangements are in place, and that collaborating partners are appropriately involved in these procedures.
- 11.3 All programmes delivered through educational collaborative arrangements are subject to Annual Programme Review (APR), Education Action Planning (EAP) and to review by the University Quality Team (UQT).

- 11.4 An annual review must be carried out for all UG, PGT and PGR programmes including those delivered as part of a Doctoral Training Entity (DTE). Actions arising from the annual review are recorded and monitored in the school's Education Action Plans. Further information on conducting the annual review of programmes is available from: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/facultyadvice/progreview/>.

12 Periodic review and renegotiation/renewal

- 12.1 All educational collaborative arrangements are subject to a periodic review process. This process must include refreshed due diligence checks and the reassessment of risk. Arrangements can only be renewed once the review has been satisfactorily concluded.

- 12.2 The Academic Lead should contact AQPO no later than 12 months before the agreement for the collaboration reaches the end of its term to initiate the review process. Ahead of renewal, all Academic Leads for educational collaborative arrangements will submit to AQPO a review using the **Review and Reassessment Form** (www.bristol.ac.uk/academicquality/edpart/). Arrangements will then be reviewed by the University Academic Quality and

Standards Committee before the renegotiation/ renewal of the arrangement can take place. The University Academic Quality and Standards Committee may require any additional information about the arrangement that it deems necessary in order to satisfy itself that renewal can be authorised. This may involve a meeting with the Academic Lead to consider issues and any conditions of renewal.

12.3 In the case of an externally-funded arrangement, the initial review must be completed before any re-bid is signed off. Any additional scrutiny required by the University must also be undertaken by the University Academic Quality and Standards Committee before a renewed institutional commitment is made.

13 Termination of educational collaborative arrangements

13.1 The provisions for terminating an educational collaborative arrangement must be included in the written agreement. Proposals for termination or non-renewal of arrangements must be scrutinised by University Academic Quality and Standards Committee before being confirmed.

13.2 Where a collaborative arrangement is being terminated, appropriate provision must be made for students, staff and resources during the final year(s) of its operation. This provision must be set out in an exit strategy, which describes how suitable support and guidance will be given to students.

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