

Policy on Higher Education Provision with Others

1. Definition

1.1. The provision of Higher Education with others is defined at the University of Bristol as being an arrangement between two or more organisations to deliver aspects of teaching and learning, assessment, supervision or student support. It is where the achievement of the learning outcomes for a unit or programme are dependent on the arrangement made with another delivery organisation or support provider.

1.2 All students who are registered for a University of Bristol award that is delivered through an educational partnership arrangement are considered students of the University of Bristol. Regardless of where they are situated, these students must not be disadvantaged in terms of the quality of learning opportunities, academic experience and provision of support mechanisms.

2. Principles

2.1. The University supports a range of collaborative arrangements, covering a wide spectrum of activity, definitions are set out in **Annex 1 to the Regulations and Code of Practice for Partnerships - Typology of Partnerships**.

2.2. 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 or with collaborating organisations and for any awards granted in the University's name. The University's regulations will apply to all provision offered as part of a collaborative arrangement.

2.3. The University will only consider collaboration with partner organisations which have an appropriate level of academic standing (if they are providers of higher education); an acceptable financial standing to sustain the partnership; and the legal standing to be able to commit to a contract to successfully deliver programmes to appropriate academic standards.

2.4. Collaborating organisations should be highly regarded organisations that share the University's educational aims and values. The academic standards of awards delivered through partnership arrangements must be of an equivalent standard to comparable awards offered by the University.

2.5. The University uses a proportionate and risk-based approach to approve, manage and review different types of arrangement. Proposals which are deemed to be of higher risk shall necessarily require increased scrutiny and higher-level approval.

2.6. Educational collaborative arrangements must clearly contribute to the strategic and student experience plans of the University and/ or Faculty and have clear benefits to those that are involved.

2.7. A written agreement is required for arrangements with other providers. It should be put in place before the arrangement commences and be signed by the authorised representatives of the University and the partner organisation.

2.8. In cases where the University is a partner in a collaborative arrangement led by another organisation, the arrangement must still be consistent with this policy. Any differences must be agreed as part of the approval process and explicitly stated in the written agreement.

2.9. A collaborating organisation is not permitted to sub-contract collaborative provision to a third party, or assign powers delegated by the University of Bristol through an arrangement of its own.

3. Developing a new collaborative arrangement

3.1. The provision of Higher Education with others must have the appropriate level of approval and due diligence must have been undertaken on the proposed partner before the arrangement can commence. The level of approval required will vary according to the type of collaboration being proposed and the risk level.

3.2. The University Academic Quality and Standards Committee (UAQSC) has overall responsibility for the academic approval of proposals for new and the re-validation of existing educational collaborative arrangements. For some types of collaborative provision, UAQSC may delegate scrutiny and approval to a subgroup of the Committee or to Faculty level. The University Research Committee (URC) has responsibility for approval of strategic partners in order to establish institutional framework-based PGR partnerships. The University Education Committee (UEC) has responsibility for approval of strategic partners for all other provision.

3.3. Different types of collaborative arrangement are listed in **Annex 1 of the Regulations and Code of Practice for Partnerships** with a summary description. Further detailed policy guidance documents for common types of educational partnerships are also included as annexes to **the Regulations and Code of Practice for Partnerships**. These provide information specific to each type of collaboration including the indicative risk level and the approval route that must be followed. The approval process is designed to be proportionate to the complexity of the arrangement and the associated risks.

3.4. Each proposal must have a designated University of Bristol Academic Lead, who is a named individual appointed by the School or Faculty, and who will take full responsibility for overseeing the development and delivery of the partnership and for liaison with the partner. When setting up a new partnership arrangement, the Academic Lead is responsible for coordinating the production of the proposal and for

providing supporting information so that the relevant Professional Services staff within the Academic Quality and Policy Office (AQPO) can complete the required due diligence checks on the partner. If the Academic Lead leaves the institution or otherwise steps down from their role, the School or Faculty must appoint a suitable alternative person to the role to ensure the ongoing delivery and inform the AQPO.

3.5. The Academic Quality and Policy Office can provide general advice and guidance on creating, approving and operating Educational Collaborative Arrangements. The Bristol Doctoral College (BDC) can provide dedicated support for partnerships related to postgraduate research students.

3.6. For both Taught Programmes or Research Programmes with a 'taught' element, following approval to establish an educational collaborative arrangement, the University's normal programme and unit development processes should be followed. Where Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (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.

3.7. Upon approval, a written agreement to support the arrangement will be put in place, with input from the University Secretary's Office. The University's responsibility for quality assurance and its quality assurance procedures must be made clear within the written agreement.

3.8. Documentation related to Educational Collaborative Arrangements should be complete, accurate and readily accessible before being presented for approval. Formal documents establishing or renewing arrangements are held by the Academic Quality and Partnerships Office. Detailed records on the operation of an agreement are held locally and are the responsibility of the Academic Lead.

3.9. The current collaborative arrangements in place at the University of Bristol are recorded in a Partnerships Register, which is maintained by the Academic and Quality and Policy Office and available to all Staff on SharePoint.

4. Delivery

4.1. Once a written agreement has been signed by all Parties, the collaboration can begin. Staff in Schools and Faculties will manage the operation of the collaboration in line with the written agreement and in accordance with normal University procedures. Collaborative arrangements are owned at Faculty and School level and must be effectively managed by the appointed Academic Lead.

4.2. The relationship of the student to the University and to the other collaborating organisation(s) must be clear, in particular for visa sponsorship for international students.

4.3. Applicants and students must receive timely information clarifying the relationship to the organisations involved in the collaborative arrangement, including what regulations and procedures will apply to them, complaints, and appeals procedures and how to access relevant services and support.

4.4. The University of Bristol is responsible for the award certificates and transcripts issued in its name. For Joint Awards, responsibility for issuing a single award certificate is shared with the partner institution. In this type of arrangement, the party that will be tasked with issuing a transcript of marks and producing the final award certificate will be detailed in the specific partnership agreement.

4.5. Any proposed changes to an arrangement must be discussed with the Academic Quality and Policy Office as soon as possible, who will advise on the appropriate approval mechanism and liaise with the Secretary's Office where necessary.

5. Review

5.1. The quality of the provision and of the student experience related to provision delivered with others should be regularly monitored by the relevant School and Faculty.

5.2. All provision of the University (including collaborative provision) undergoes an annual review as part of the University Quality Team annual review process and will be subject to the University Periodic Programme Revalidation process.

5.3. Most collaborative arrangements will be subject to a wider review ahead of any renewal, which will normally be initiated around 12 months before the expiry of the legal agreement. This process may include refreshed due diligence checks and the reassessment of risk.

6. Termination

6.1. The provisions for terminating an ongoing educational collaborative arrangement must be included in the written agreement.

6.2. Where an ongoing 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.