

# Academic Quality

## UPR AS17 version 16.0

### Policies superseded by this document

This document replaces version 15.0 of UPR AS17, with effect from 1 September 2023.

### Summary of significant changes to the previous version

This document has been amended to reflect the terminology used by the Office for Students in Condition B1 (see sections B1.1.9, B1.2.4, C2.2.3 and C2.3.1).

### Glossary

A glossary of approved University terminology can be found in [UPR GV08](#).

### Table of contents

A	Academic Quality Policies and Regulations – Overview .....	3
A1	Overview .....	3
A2	Key staff and committee structures .....	4
A3	Academic quality systems and procedures .....	5
A4	Collaborative provision .....	7
B	Development and approval procedures for new programmes of study .....	7
B1	Validation and Periodic Review .....	7
B1.1	Validation of new programmes.....	7
B1.2	Periodic review of programmes.....	10
B1.3	Approval of additional delivery locations for validated programmes (or elements thereof) .....	11
B2	Development and Approval Procedures for Modules.....	12
B3	Withdrawal and Suspension of Programmes.....	13
C	Ongoing Quality Assurance .....	13
C1	External Examiners .....	13
C1.1	Appointment of External Examiners .....	13
C1.2	Criteria for the Appointment of External Examiners.....	15
C1.3	Termination of External Examiner Appointments .....	17
C1.4	Receipt and Consideration of External Examiners' Reports .....	17
C2	Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation .....	18
C2.2	The Continuous Enhancement Planning (CEP) Process.....	19
C2.3	The Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report (AMER) process .....	21

C2.4	Annual monitoring and evaluation of Collaborative Provision .....	22
C3	Ongoing Developments of Regulations and Programmes .....	23
C3.1	Changes to programmes .....	23
C3.2	Major changes to programmes .....	23
C3.3	Substantial changes to programmes .....	23
C3.4	Minor changes to programmes .....	24
C3.5	Changes in assessment regulations .....	24
C4	Annual School Reports .....	24
D	Academic Quality Policies and Procedures in relation to collaborative provision ...	25
D1	Collaborative Provision overview.....	25
D2	Types of Collaboration and Summary of Relevant Procedures for Approval In Principle .....	26
D2.1	Types of collaboration.....	26
D2.1.3	Articulation Agreements.....	27
D2.1.4	Progression Agreements .....	28
D2.1.5	Academic Support Agreements .....	28
D2.2	Summary of approval in principle .....	28
D3	Approval of a New Partner Organisation as a Collaborative Partner of the University .....	29
D3.2	Preliminaries to approval .....	29
D3.2.2	Statement of Principles .....	29
D3.3	The approval process for a new Partner Organisation .....	30
D3.4	The approval process for a new Study Abroad Partner Organisation .....	31
D3.5	Re-approval of a Partnership .....	32
D4	Planning Meetings and the Approval of Programmes.....	33
D4.1	Planning Meetings .....	33
D4.2	Approval of Programmes .....	33
	FLOWCHART 1 - Summary of the approval of the ability of a Partner Organisation to deliver Programmes of Study.....	34
D5	Approval of the Standard of Collaborative Awards and the Ability of the Partner Organisation to Deliver Collaborative Programmes .....	35
D5.1	Introduction.....	35
D5.2	Approval visits to Partner Organisations: Stage I and Stage 2 .....	35
D5.2.3	Documents required for Stage 2 .....	35
D5.2.4	Composition of the Validation Panel .....	36
	FLOWCHART 2 - Preparation for Stage 2 validation visit* .....	37
D5.3	Follow-up to Stage 2 .....	38
D5.4	Changes proposed subsequent to validation but before ratification.....	38

D5.5	Delayed Commencement of Collaborative Provision Programmes .....	39
D5.6	Marketing of programmes .....	40
D5.7	Collaborative programmes where there is little or no University discipline expertise .....	40
D5.7.1	Development and approval of the programme .....	40
D5.7.2	Ongoing monitoring processes .....	41
D5.7.3	Main attributes of external subject experts .....	41
D5.8	Programmes delivered in a language other than English .....	42
D5.8.1	Upfront approval processes .....	42
D5.8.2	Ongoing monitoring processes .....	43
D5.8.3	Main attributes of external bilingual subject experts .....	44
D6	Written Agreements .....	44
D7	Collaborative Partnership Leader (CPL).....	44
D7.1	General.....	44
D7.2	Core Activities of the Collaborative Partnership Leader .....	45
D8	Approval for a New Campus of an Existing, Approved Partner Organisation to Deliver a Collaborative Programme.....	46
D8.1	General.....	46
D8.2	Campus approval process .....	46
D8.3	External Examiners.....	46
D9	Management of Academic Standards.....	47
D10	Review and Revalidation of Collaborative Arrangements .....	48
D10.1	The aims and purpose of review and revalidation at programme level .....	48
D10.1.2	Review.....	48
D10.1.3	Revalidation.....	49
D10.2	Review or Revalidation outside the stated period of approval .....	50
D11	Terminating a Collaborative Agreement .....	50

## **A Academic Quality Policies and Regulations – Overview**

### **A1 Overview**

A1.1 This document provides a brief overview of the key features of the University's academic quality assurance systems, policies and procedures. Detailed policies and regulations are contained within subsequent sections.

The University ensures a high quality of provision through:

- i the terms of reference of the key staff and committees concerned with quality assurance;
- ii a comprehensive set of University Policies and Regulations (UPRs) and associated guidance, which are regularly updated;
- iii appropriate reporting structures for ongoing monitoring and evaluation;
- iv peer review of teaching and a standard Student Voice Questionnaire (SVQ);
- v processes for ensuring effective student engagement in educational enhancement and quality assurance;
- vi the provision of an appropriate infrastructure and support services.

There are also comprehensive policies and procedures relating to all aspects of staff appointment, induction, appraisal and development as outlined in the University Staff Handbook.

## **A2 Key staff and committee structures**

- A2.1 Deans of School (DoS) have executive responsibility for the day-to-day management of School staff who, in turn, are responsible for the development and operation of programmes and modules and the care of students. Each School is required to nominate a senior member of staff with specific responsibility for Academic Quality (the Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance) (ADoS)(AQA)), one with specific responsibility for Research (the Associate Dean of School (Research) (ADoS(R))) and one with specific responsibility for Learning and Teaching (the Associate Dean of School (Learning and Teaching) (ADoS(L&T))). Larger Schools are further organised into discipline-based Departments, with Heads of Department being responsible to the Dean of School for the management and development of the discipline. Titles reflecting different levels of responsibility, such as Programme Leaders and Year Tutors, indicate staff with allocated duties for the management of particular programmes, groups of programmes or modules and the care and support of groups of students.
- A2.2 The Academic Board reports to the Board of Governors and is the senior University committee concerned with the development, implementation and monitoring of all academic policies and procedures, including the admission, progression and assessment of students, the approval and conduct of programmes, the maintenance of academic quality, research and scholarship and the appointment of External Examiners.
- A2.3 The Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC), a committee of the Academic Board, is responsible for the student experience of all taught students (undergraduate and taught postgraduate). It ensures that the student experience is aligned with the University's Strategic Plan and Student Experience Strategy, and establishes mechanisms to foster good relations amongst all students and the integration of students into the learning community. The Academic Standards and Audit Committee (ASAC) is responsible for oversight of strategies for the assurance of academic standards and for ensuring the fitness for purpose and effectiveness of University processes and mechanisms for the establishment and maintenance of academic standards. It also audits compliance with UPRs and procedures relating to the University's academic provision, and disseminates findings of good practice.

- A2.4 At School level, School Academic Committees (SACs) carry the major responsibility for the validation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes within the School. Each programme has a Programme Committee, including student representatives, which is responsible for the ongoing operation and development of the programme, monitoring performance and reporting annually. In addition, at least one open student forum meets each Academic Year for developmental discussion between students and staff concerned with the delivery and management of the Programme. Student representatives and School Community Officers (SCOs) are offered training for the role through programmes managed by the Hertfordshire Students' Union and the University's Human Resources (HR) Development Unit.
- A2.5 Other individuals with major responsibilities in relation to academic quality include the Director of Academic Quality Assurance (DAQA) (and Deputy Director plus Associate Directors), the Director of Learning and Teaching (DLT) (and Deputy) and the Director of the Doctoral College (previously Director of Research Degrees). Other committees of the Academic Board with responsibilities in this area include the Academic Development Committee (ADC) and the Research Degrees Board (RDB).
- A2.6 All matters associated with quality assurance in programmes come under the general remit of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience), who is supported by the Director of Academic Quality Assurance (and Deputy) and Director of Learning and Teaching (and Deputy). Quality Assurance procedures are managed through the Centre for Academic Quality Assurance (CAQA), Academic Services (AS) and the Student Administration Service.

### **A3 Academic quality systems and procedures**

- A3.1 The key policies and regulations relating to academic quality assurance for programmes are set out in this UPR (UPR AS17) which is circulated widely within the University and reviewed regularly. UPR AS17, associated guidance and other University documentation include, among other things, detailed procedures for:
- i the development and approval of new programmes. These include preliminary approval at University level by ADC; programme development, including external consultation on issues such as curriculum, assessment and resources; Programme Specifications (PSs); Definitive Module Documents (DMDs); programme handbooks; and a final recommendation for approval by the Academic Board;
  - ii the criteria to be applied in the appointment of External Examiners, their rights and responsibilities and for the training of External Examiners. All programmes leading to University awards are required to appoint one or more External Examiners with appropriate experience and expertise, who are required to submit annual reports on the quality and standards of the programme and the students and who may also write direct to the Vice-Chancellor in the event of any major concerns. External Examiner nominations are made through Schools and are subject to the approval of the Director of Academic Quality Assurance (DAQA) on behalf of the Academic Board. Training workshops are held for new External Examiners and are mandatory for those with no previous experience. External Examiner reports are received and scrutinised by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) (or nominee) and routinely considered as part of annual monitoring by Programme Committees and SACs (SACs may establish working groups to scrutinise collaborative partner Annual

Monitoring and Evaluation Reports of which External Examiner Reports form part. It is implicit that such working groups will report any issues of concern to the relevant SAC at the earliest opportunity);

- iii the monitoring and evaluation of programmes and modules. All programmes are required to submit an Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report (AMER) which includes a review of their operation, responses to student feedback and External Examiner reports and action plans for the following year. Additionally, a discipline area may prepare an Annual Subject Monitoring and Evaluations Report (SMER) to provide a critical review of issues pertinent to the delivery of an academic subject. These reports are considered at School level, with an overall summary report presented annually within the School's Annual Report to ESEC and ASAC;
- iv the consideration of statistical management information such as student entry qualifications, progression rates, module grade profiles, award profiles and results of the SVQ;
- v the periodic review of all programmes, conducted on a six (6) year cycle aligned, where possible, with external quality assessment or inspection timetables;
- vi the submission of Annual School Reports to ESEC and ASAC against defined templates. These are required to include details of: staff and resource management; staff development activities; teaching and learning developments; and programme monitoring and review activities (all in the context of the previous Academic Year) and an action plan of priorities for the following year.

The associated guidance can be found on the Centre for Academic Quality Assurance (CAQA) website.

- A3.2 Generic structure and assessment regulations are in place for programmes across the University, to facilitate consistency and parity of treatment for all students.
- A3.3 Student feedback mechanisms are in use across the University and allow year-on-year and cross-University comparison. In addition to specific feedback on the quality of all modules in the SVQ, national surveys such as the National Student Survey (NSS) and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) cover a wide range of topics relating to learning and teaching activities, assessment practices, infrastructure and learning resources. Data from these questionnaires are fed back to Deans of School, to other officers responsible for particular programmes, to individual staff, and to those responsible for central services and student support.
- A3.4 A consistent University-wide system of peer observation of teaching is in place. Staff are trained as observers and a common feedback form is used.

## **A4 Collaborative provision**

- A4.1 The University has developed collaborative arrangements with a range of Partner Organisations in the UK and overseas, under which programmes leading to University awards are delivered wholly or partly at the Partner Organisation by their staff. There are particularly close relationships with the four (4) Further Education Colleges in Hertfordshire (Hertford Regional College, North Hertfordshire College, Oaklands College and West Herts College) which operate with the University as the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium (HHEC) and are designated as Associate Colleges of the University. Further information and guidance is available in the Consortium Quality Handbook.
- A4.2 In the majority of cases, University programmes are ‘franchised’ for delivery at a Partner Organisation, sometimes with minor modifications to meet local needs. Alternatively, University programmes may be ‘University validated’ for delivery by a Partner Organisation to University-registered students. Programmes designed by a Partner Organisation may also be ‘externally validated’ by the University as being of acceptable standard to lead to a University award. Additionally, Academic Support Partners may provide local academic support to a University-delivered programme and External Providers of credit-rated short courses may be accredited by the University. Approval procedures typically require financial and institutional audit of any new Partner Organisation, in addition to detailed consideration of staffing, resources and the learning infrastructure available to support the programme and a formal Legal Agreement. All such programmes are subject to the requirements of this document (UPR AS17).

## **B Development and approval procedures for new programmes of study**

### **B1 Validation and Periodic Review**

#### **B1.1 Validation of new programmes**

Guidance on the application of these regulations can be found on the Centre for Academic Quality website. The relevant sections are referenced in the following text. Further guidance is also available from Academic Services (AS), the relevant Associate Director of Academic Quality Assurance (ADAQA) or the (ADoS(AQA)).

- B1.1.1 These regulations apply to the development of all new programmes leading to University awards. They also apply where major changes are to be made to existing programmes. For programmes to be offered in collaboration with Partner Organisations, see section D.
- B1.1.2 All proposals for new programmes must be supported, in principle, by a Dean of School as part of future academic provision. In the case of a joint development with a substantial input from two (2) or more Schools or Partner Organisations, all Deans of the collaborating Schools must support the proposal.

- B1.1.3 Initial approval (approval in principle to proceed to validation) must be sought as early as possible in the programme development process from the ADC. Initial approval is given for the stated award title and any subsequent proposal to change the award title must be approved by the ADC before final approval may be ratified. All new programmes are required to comply with UPR AS11 'Schedule of Awards' and UPR AS14 'Structure and Assessment Regulations - Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes', unless specific exemption is sought and agreed by the Office of the Vice-Chancellor (OVC). For guidance on submissions to ADC, refer to the Centre for Academic Quality website.
- B1.1.4 At the outset, a Planning Meeting will be convened to agree the development and validation process. It will be chaired by the ADoS(AQA), formally minuted by AS and a copy of the confirmed minutes will be circulated by AS. The meeting will be attended by the Chair of the Programme Development Committee, senior representatives of the School(s) concerned, the Student Administration Service Manager and the relevant Associate Director of Academic Quality Assurance (ADAQA). For guidance on Planning Meetings, please refer to the Centre for Academic Quality website.
- B1.1.5 A Programme Development Committee will be established and chaired by the appropriate member of academic staff, for example, an Associate Dean of School or Programme Leader designate. Membership should reflect the needs of the development, including appropriate representation as required. The ADoS(AQA) has the right of attendance at meetings of the Programme Development Committee, can request all papers relating to the work of that committee and is available for consultation throughout the development process.
- B1.1.6 External advice must be sought at appropriate stages in the development and approval of a new programme. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Programme Development Committee, acting with the ADoS(AQA), to ensure consultation with appropriate independent experts at relevant times in development. For guidance on external consultation, please refer to the Centre for Academic Quality website.
- B1.1.7 A validation event is conducted, chaired by a senior academic from another School and including a representative of the DAQA and one (1) or more external members with appropriate subject expertise, at least one (1) of whom will be from another University. Further external Panel members may be included and they may be from an academic, professional, business or industrial background. Current External Examiners for any University programme are not acceptable in this category.
- B1.1.8 In all cases, the validation event will be organised and clerked by AS in consultation with the School.
- B1.1.9 The remit of the validation event is to make a recommendation to the Academic Board in relation to programme approval. In so doing, the Panel should ensure that all aspects of the proposed programme have been considered, including:
- i aims, learning outcomes and programme specification;
  - ii curriculum design, currency of content and organisation;
  - iii learning, teaching and assessment strategies including the effectiveness of the proposed form of delivery of the curriculum;



- iv student guidance and student support;
- v learning resources and facilities;
- vi quality management and enhancement.

B1.1.10 Where a franchised programme is being validated, the Panel will focus on aspects iii to vi in section B1.1.9, above.

B1.1.11 The nature of the validation event will be tailored to the size and complexity of the development but is expected to include the opportunity for external members to view specialist resources, for the Panel to engage in dialogue with appropriate staff teams and for the Panel to meet student representatives, where appropriate.

B1.1.12 A submission document will provide the basis for the development team's proposal. Guidance on the submission document can be found on the Centre for Academic Quality website. A Programme Specification must be produced in compliance with the standard University template available on the Centre for Academic Quality website.

B1.1.13 The outcome of the validation event will be a report with a recommendation to the Academic Board on programme approval. The draft report will be circulated to all those present at the event for comment prior to confirmation by the Chair. Approval will normally be for an indefinite period subject to compliance with the outcomes of annual monitoring and periodic review within a specified period (normally six (6) years). Collaborative programmes are subject to revalidation within a specified period not exceeding six (6) years. The recommendation will be subject to standard requirements and may, additionally be subject to specific conditions to be met within prescribed timescales. The report will be submitted through AS to the Vice-Chancellor as the formal recommendation to the Academic Board for final approval of the programme. The conclusions and recommendations will be extracted and presented to the Academic Board.

B1.1.14 At the conclusion of a validation, an AQ3 approval form (or AQ4 approval form for collaborative programmes) should be completed by the School, with the appropriate documentation for ratification and signature by the Chair of the validation event, the relevant ADAQA, the Chair of ESEC and, finally, the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Academic Board. Recommendations for approval of new programmes must be made no later than:

- i 24 December for all awards advertised and applied for through UCAS;
- ii 31 March for University-delivered and UK collaborative partner-delivered awards which are advertised and marketed through alternative means, including Master's awards;
- iii 30 June for awards delivered by overseas collaborative partners, closed courses, Higher Apprenticeships and Degree Apprenticeships.

- B1.1.15 A proposed programme cannot be marketed until it has been approved in principle to proceed to validation by ADC. UK-based undergraduate degree programmes also need to obtain a UCAS code before they can be marketed. Following approval in principle by ADC, any promotional material for the programme must include the caveat 'subject to validation'. Once the validation of the programme has been ratified by the Academic Board then it can continue to be marketed and 'subject to validation' removed from any promotional material.
- B1.2 Periodic review of programmes
- B1.2.1 It is a fundamental principle of the University that all taught provision is subject to periodic review, within a period not exceeding six (6) years. Detailed guidance on these regulations can be found on the Centre for Academic Quality website.
- B1.2.2 Periodic review may be implemented on a programme or subject area basis and may be arranged in relation to the timing and scope of external audit and assessment by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies and/or quality assurance agencies.
- B1.2.3 Following an initial analysis of the performance of the programme, a Planning Meeting will be convened to agree the development and periodic review process. It will be convened and chaired by the ADoS(AQA) and formally minuted by AS. The meeting will be informed by an initial analysis of the programme, using student data from the most recent three (3) years. For guidance on Planning Meetings, please refer to the Centre for Academic Quality website.
- B1.2.4 The remit of periodic review will be to consider all aspects of the provision including:
- i aims, learning outcomes and programme specification;
  - ii curriculum design, currency of content and organisation;
  - iii learning, teaching and assessment strategies including the effectiveness of the proposed form of delivery of the curriculum;
  - iv student guidance and student support;
  - v learning resources and facilities;
  - vi quality management and enhancement, including annual monitoring and evaluation, SVQ outcomes, etc.
- B1.2.5 Where a franchised programme is being revalidated, the Panel will focus on aspects iii to vi in section B1.2.4, above.
- B1.2.6 If the programme to be reviewed is franchised to Partner Organisations, representatives of those partners should be involved in the review process. For detailed guidance refer to the Centre for Academic Quality website.
- B1.2.7 Periodic review will be informed by a review document based on operational experience and development over the previous six (6) years. The review document will collate issues raised in AMERs and review the operation of the programme/subject area over the previous six (6) years. Guidance on the review document can be found on the Centre for Academic Quality website.

- B1.2.8 There will be a periodic review event chaired by a senior academic member of staff from another School and to include one or more external Panel members, with appropriate subject expertise, at least one (1) of whom will be from another University (current or recent External Examiners are not permitted to serve in this category of membership). Further external Panel members may be included and they may be from an academic, professional, business or industrial background. The Panel membership will be agreed at the Planning Meeting and may be subject to the approval of the DAQA (or Deputy) and will reflect the size of the provision being reviewed.
- B1.2.9 The nature of the review event will be tailored to the size and complexity of the provision being reviewed but is expected to include opportunity for external members to view specialist resources, for the Panel to meet student representatives and for the Panel to engage in dialogue with appropriate staff teams.
- B1.2.10 The outcome of the review will be a report of the review event with a recommendation to the Academic Board that the programme(s) either:
- i continue in indefinite approval, subject to compliance with the outcomes of annual monitoring and further periodic review within a specified period (normally six (6) years);  
or
  - ii continue in fixed term approval for a specified period; or
  - iii be not approved for further intakes.

The draft report will be circulated to all those present at the event for comment prior to confirmation by the Chair of the Panel. The recommendation will be subject to standard requirements and may, additionally, be subject to specific conditions to be met within prescribed timescales. All recommendations to the Academic Board must be submitted no later than 24 December (by 30 June for overseas collaborative programmes), unless otherwise agreed by the DAQA.

- B1.3 Approval of additional delivery locations for validated programmes (or elements thereof)
- B1.3.1 The intention to deliver a validated programme (or elements thereof) at an additional location should be noted and endorsed at ADC, and in the case of collaborative programmes also requires the prior approval of (i) the International Advisory Board (IAB) for any additional overseas locations or (ii) the UK Collaborative Provision Advisory Group (UKCPAG) for any additional UK locations (for the approval of a new campus of an existing partner, see also section D.8). All proposals for new delivery locations must be supported, in principle, by the relevant Dean of School as part of future academic provision. There is an expectation that the same staff are involved in delivery at all approved locations.
- B1.3.2 The School is required to undertake a visit to the new location, to review the physical resources. However, where approval is being sought to deliver the programme at a location where there are no subject-specific learning resource requirements, this visit may be delegated to the collaborative partner.

- B1.3.3 A report of the visit, along with a description of staffing arrangements, student support and programme management arrangements should be submitted to the School. The combined report should clearly indicate whether approval of the new location is recommended or not.
- B1.3.4 The report and any other relevant evidence are considered by the ADoS (AQA) and the relevant Associate Director of AQA. The ADoS (AQA) must confirm in writing a recommendation for approval or non-approval of the new provision. Any conditions of approval must be clearly identified.
- B1.3.5 Where approval is recommended and the ADoS (AQA) has confirmed that any conditions of approval have been satisfied, form AQ3 (or form AQ4 for collaborative programmes) and a revised PS should be completed and signed-off. A recommendation for approval will not be ratified until both documents are passed, together, to Academic Services.
- B1.3.6 Approval will be noted at the SAC.
- B1.3.7 At the following periodic review of the programme (or revalidation in the case of collaborative programmes), all delivery locations should be reviewed and re-approved together.

## **B2 Development and Approval Procedures for Modules**

- B2.1 Modules are normally approved as part of the process of validation for the programme(s) to which they contribute.
- B2.2 All modules must comply with the definitions and requirements of the University's structure and assessment regulations (see UPR AS14 'Structure and Assessment Regulations - Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes').
- B2.3 A new module may be initiated by a Programme Committee, by a group of staff or by an individual member of staff. Schools are responsible for the approval of modules and may exercise discretion in determining an appropriate approval process in each case. Schools should ensure that initial approval to develop a new module has been sought from the Dean or ADoS (AQA) and the relevant Programme Committee(s) for the programmes on which the module will be taught.
- B2.4 Where staff from several Schools contribute to the design of a module, quality assurance responsibility lies with the School responsible for the subject area predominant in the module. Modules relating to a particular subject area may not be approved without reference to the relevant ADoS (AQA)s.
- B2.5 DMDs are identified by a module code. All requests for new or revised module codes must be received by Academic Registry no later than **31 October** of the preceding Academic Year. Notes for Guidance on the completion of a DMD are available from the Centre for Academic Quality website.
- B2.6 All modules at Level **5** and above are required to have a Module External Examiner associated with them. Where modules at Levels **0** or **4** contribute to a final award, Module External Examiners are also required. External Examiners must be consulted about any extension or change to their responsibilities and must receive a copy of the approved DMD for each of the modules for which they are responsible.

- B2.7 At completion of the module design process, the DMD must be formally signed-off. The full approval process must be completed for any DMDs linked to periodic review and validation activity by 20 December, and for any other DMDs by no later than 31 January (30 June for modules offered within collaborative programmes) for a module to be offered in the following Academic Year.
- B2.8 Any changes to existing approved modules must be made in accordance with DMD guidelines on the same timescale as above and are subject to approval by the appropriate Programme Committee and Associate Dean(s) of School (Academic Quality Assurance).

### **B3 Withdrawal and Suspension of Programmes**

- B3.1 Proposals for withdrawal and suspension of undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes or award titles must be submitted to ADC. Withdrawal of programmes should be submitted no later than 31 December of the previous Academic Year to ensure that applicants for the following September entry are informed in good time.
- B3.2 Deans of School are responsible for initiating proposals to withdraw programmes from the University's portfolio.
- B3.3 In the case of joint programmes, the Dean of School with quality assurance responsibility must ensure that agreement to withdraw has been given from other relevant Schools. In the case of collaborative provision, see section D.11.
- B3.4 It is the responsibility of Schools to ensure that:
- i this is identified on form AQ3 (or form AQ4 for collaborative programmes);
  - ii where a programme is being withdrawn, the withdrawal form AQ5 should be fully completed and signed off by the Dean of School;
  - iii where a programme is being withdrawn, Schools must specify when the last cohort will complete.
- B3.5 Where Schools wish to suspend recruitment to a programme for one (1) year only, without withdrawing the programme, Form AQ7 must be completed and the procedure for the suspension of programmes followed.
- B3.6 Guidance on the withdrawal and suspension of programmes is available on the Centre for Academic Quality website.

## **C Ongoing Quality Assurance**

### **C1 External Examiners**

#### **C1.1 Appointment of External Examiners**

**(Note for guidance:**

- A** The criteria for the appointment of External Examiners are set out in section C1.2.

**B** Terms of reference for External Examiner appointments at Module and/or Programme Board of Examiners level are set out in UPR AS14 'Structure and Assessment Regulations - Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes'.)

C1.1.1 Schools, in conjunction with the Student Administration Service, are responsible for identifying and approaching potential External Examiners for modules, short courses and programmes leading to University awards. It is the responsibility of the Student Administration Service Manager (in consultation with their designated ASO(AQA)) to ensure that the search for replacements for External Examiners whose term of office is to expire is begun in good time. The period of office for an External Examiner is normally four (4) years but can be extended by up to one (1) year under exceptional circumstances.

C1.1.2 Where more than one External Examiner is appointed to a programme, Schools should consider phasing External Examiner appointments to enable and encourage the mentoring of new External Examiners.

C1.1.3 Proposals for the appointment of External Examiners must be submitted to AS not less than six (6) months prior to the required commencement of their duties. For most programmes and subjects AS will require nominations by 31 March for commencement on 1 October. This minimum period is necessary to allow sufficient time for proposals to be considered and for alternative appointees to be identified if first choices withdraw or are rejected by the University.

C1.1.4 The ADoS(AQA) or senior member of staff responsible for the programme, module(s) and/or short course(s) is responsible for nominations of Programme External Examiners, Module External Examiners and Short Course External Examiners, in consultation with the relevant Dean(s) of School.

C1.1.5 It is the responsibility of the ADoS(AQA) to ensure that the relevant nomination forms (AQ11, AQ12 or AQ13) are fully and properly completed, ensuring that the information provided by (or about) the proposed External Examiner is appropriate to the prescribed criteria.

C1.1.6 All proposals must be carefully scrutinised by or on behalf of the relevant SAC. This scrutiny should address both the merits of the proposed appointee and the strength and balance of the team of externals which they will be joining. Factors to be considered will include:

- i the capacity of existing External Examiners to make competent judgements relating to all agreed external reference points (including the requirements of PSRBs);
- ii the need for an appropriate match between the number of External Examiners and the quantity and complexity of the material being assessed;
- iii how External Examiners will be deployed where provision includes work-based learning or work placements;
- iv any additional requirements placed upon the University by PSRBs.

The Chair of the SAC will make the Committee's recommendation on the relevant nomination form.

- C1.1.7 Any proposed departure from normal requirements or procedures must be justified within an accompanying statement.
- C1.1.8 AS will screen all proposals before passing them to the DAQA (or nominee) for consideration and approval on behalf of the Academic Board.
- C1.1.9 AS will confirm the appointment, in writing, to the External Examiner. The External Examiner will receive:
- i the External Examiners' Handbook;
  - ii the current edition of the University Handbook 'Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes';
  - iii the letter of appointment, which will include an invitation to the External Examiner to attend an induction workshop (and explain the expectation of attendance).
- C1.1.10 The confirmation details of appointment of an External Examiner will be sent to the Student Administration Service Manager for further circulation within the relevant School and Partner Organisations.
- C1.1.11 It is the responsibility of the Student Administration Service Manager to ensure that programme documentation (including the Programme Specification(s)) and/or appropriate SCDs and DMDs and other documents are sent to the External Examiner on appointment.
- C1.2 Criteria for the Appointment of External Examiners
- C1.2.1 The following criteria are to be applied during consideration of proposed External Examiner nominations:
- i a Programme, Module or Short Course External Examiner's academic/professional qualifications should be appropriate to the programme/modules to be examined;
  - ii a Programme External Examiner should have, where appropriate, knowledge and experience of managing complex modular programmes;
  - iii an External Examiner should have appropriate standing, expertise and experience of UK Higher Education so that they are able to assess and confirm comparability of standards. Standing, expertise and breadth of experience may be indicated by:
    - a the present and previous post(s) and place of work;
    - b the range and scope of experience across UK Higher Education and/or the professions;
    - c current or recent active involvement in research/scholarly/professional activities in the field of study concerned;
    - d the level of the External Examiner's qualifications and breadth of experience which should generally match that which is to be assessed;

- iv an External Examiner should have competence and experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience;
- v an External Examiner should have enough recent internal and/or external examining or comparable related experience to indicate competence in assessing students; attendance at the University's External Examiners Training Workshop is mandatory for those with limited experience in this role;
- vi Examiners should not be over-extended by their External Examining duties and should not normally hold more than the equivalent of two (2) substantial undergraduate External Examiner appointments;
- vii there should be an appropriate balance of expertise in the team of External Examiners;
- viii External Examiners should be impartial in judgement and should not have previous close involvement with the University (or Partner Organisation) which might compromise their objectivity, for example, the nomination will not be accepted if in the last five (5) years the proposed External Examiner has:
  - a been a member of staff, a Governor, a student, a colleague or a relative of a member of staff who has involvement with the programme/module;
  - b completed a previous appointment as an External Examiner on a connected programme in the University or Partner Organisation. However, an External Examiner for a programme at the University may be appointed subsequently as the External Examiner for a franchise of that programme at a Partner Organisation;
- ix the proposed External Examiner should not:
  - a be personally associated with the sponsorship of students or the award of prizes;
  - b have a personal association with a student in their area of responsibility (for example, colleague, relation, partner etc);
  - c be in a position to influence significantly the future employment of students in their area of responsibility;
  - d be working in an organisation or company providing placements for students in their area of responsibility;
- x there should not be:
  - a more than one (1) External Examiner from the same institution in the team of External Examiners, except in a complex programme involving a large number of discrete subject areas;
  - b reciprocal External Examining between two (2) institutions;
  - c replacement of an External Examiner by one (1) from the same institution;



- d an External Examiner from an institution which has been the source of External Examiners in the recent past (normally four (4) years), for the same programme or subject area;
- xi an External Examiner will have fluency in English and, where programmes are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, fluency in the relevant language;
- xii where a PSRB requires, External Examiners must be registered on the relevant part of the professional register.

### C1.3 Termination of External Examiner Appointments

C1.3.1 An External Examiner's appointment and period of tenure is dependent upon them carrying out their role and responsibilities as specified in sections C and E, UPR AS14 'Structure and Assessment Regulations - Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes'.

C1.3.2 If an External Examiner consistently fails to carry out their duties as specified in the regulations then their period of appointment should be terminated.

C1.3.3 Guidance on the criteria for the termination of External Examiners' contracts is available on the Centre for Academic Quality website.

### C1.4 Receipt and Consideration of External Examiners' Reports

C1.4.1 The University considers External Examiners to be a significant part of its quality assurance processes and places great importance on their annual reports as an essential part of the monitoring and evaluation of programmes, modules and short courses.

C1.4.2 The letter of appointment sent to new External Examiners specifically requires them, as part of their contract, to report annually to the University on the programmes and/or modules and/or short courses for which they are responsible.

C1.4.3 The annual report is requested each year by AS. Guidance on External Examiners' reports and the report templates are available on the Centre for Academic Quality website.

C1.4.4 External Examiners are asked to submit their annual reports to AS where they will be logged as received in AS, before being sent to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) (or nominee) for consideration and then to the Student Administration Service Manager for circulation. External Examiners should be asked to address their reports to the Vice-Chancellor.

C1.4.5 In parallel with consideration in the School, the reports will be screened in AS to identify common issues and areas of good practice.

C1.4.6 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) (or nominee) will identify on the cover sheet (AQ15) reports which are considered to be inadequate, critical or especially commendatory and will identify the appropriate action to be taken. This may include some of the following:

- i asking the External Examiner for a more detailed report (in cases where successive reports are inadequate and the External Examiner does not respond to such requests, termination of appointment will be considered - see section C.1.3);
  - ii initiating a major review of a subject, module(s) or programme(s) and referring specific issues to the Dean of School or OVC;
  - iii referring specific issues to ASAC, ESEC or SAC, as appropriate (Where a SAC has established a working group to scrutinise Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports of which External Examiner Reports form part, it is implicit that this working group will report any issues of concern to the SAC at the earliest opportunity);
  - iv entering into further discussion with the External Examiner.
- C1.4.7 For programmes offered by collaborative partners only, all External Examiners' reports must be appended to the appropriate Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports (AMERs/SMERs/ASCMRs) and given full and detailed consideration when the reports are discussed by the Programme Committee and SAC or, where established, a working group of the SAC. AMERs should include the Programme Committee's reaction to comments made by the External Examiners and, where appropriate, details of the actions to be taken.
- C1.4.8 The receipt of all reports will be acknowledged by AS, indicating that the reports have been passed to the School for detailed consideration through the annual monitoring and evaluation process. It is the responsibility of a senior member of staff designated by the School (for example, Dean of School or ADoS (AQA)) to ensure that all External Examiners receive, in due course, a considered reply to their report indicating actions taken and planned in response to comments (guidance on responding to External Examiners' reports can be found on the Centre for Academic Quality website).
- C1.4.9 The University has the right to reject the view of an External Examiner but only following careful consideration of the issues raised. In the event of a significant issue being raised, a decision to reject the issue must be made in consultation with the DAQA (or nominee).
- C1.4.10 The University has adopted a policy that fees will not be paid to External Examiners until their annual reports have been received.
- C1.4.11 If, after several requests, an annual report is not received the External Examiner's appointment will be terminated (see section C.1.3).

## **C2 Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation**

- C2.1 This section defines the formal quality assurance regulations required for the annual monitoring and evaluation of all programmes leading to University awards and credit-rated short course provision. With the exception of credit-rated short course provision and agreed programmes offered in collaboration with other institutions, the Continuous Enhancement Planning process is followed. For agreed collaborative provision and credit-rated short course provision, the Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report process is followed.

## C2.2 The Continuous Enhancement Planning (CEP) Process

### C2.2.1 The Continuous Enhancement Planning process outputs are:

- i a 'live' action plan (the CEP action plan) owned by the Programme Team, and located within the University's CEP database;
- ii Programme Leader and Programme Team engagement with specified School or Department enhancement activities;
- iii for degree and higher apprenticeship programmes, a relevant section of the action plan will form the basis for the School level Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan that are required for Ofsted.

C2.2.3 The regulations seek to reflect a risk-based approach and to maintain a self-critical academic community supporting programme teams in their continual efforts to maintain academic standards, educational challenge and the currency of the curriculum, to improve the quality of learning opportunities and to enhance the student experience by an ongoing, evidence informed monitoring process, with effective oversight at School and University level.

C2.2.4 Each Programme Committee is required to agree a CEP action plan on an ongoing basis. The CEP action plan will be a standing item on the Programme Committee agenda. The ownership of the action plan is with the Programme Team and with the agreement of the Programme Committee, the Programme Leader may add actions as issues arise.

C2.2.5 The maintenance of the CEP action plan is the responsibility of the Programme Leader, on behalf of the Programme Committee. The Programme Leader (or nominee) must attend and engage in specified enhancement activities organised by the School and add any agreed actions to the programme's CEP action plan.

C2.2.6 The Programme Leader must consult the University-generated metric summary data after each specified data release point and where a particular data set is rated red for the programme against the relevant benchmark, an action must be initiated within six weeks of the data release point.

C2.2.7 The Programme Leader must develop an action point in the CEP action plan for all recommendations made by an External Examiner in their Annual Report (not just those in section 8 and 9 of the report).

C2.2.8 Associate Deans of School (Academic Quality Assurance) are responsible for:

- i ensuring that School enhancement activities take place that meet the requirements of the CEP process by giving consideration to how programme CEP action plans might adopt (i) good practice and (ii) reflect School- and Department-wide enhancement actions and the University's strategic direction. They will invite the appropriate Associate Director of Academic Quality Assurance and the LTIC Learning and Teaching Specialist and monitor the engagement of Programme Leaders and programme teams; and

- ii maintaining oversight of all the School's CEP action plans and signing off completed actions in the CEP database. Associate Deans (AQA) will (a) check that data sets rated red from Tableau, External Examiner Reports, SVQs and qualitative student feedback that requires an action have been included in the CEP action plan and that an action has been initiated within an appropriate timescale, (b) check actions agreed as part of enhancement activities have been included, (c) work with Associate Deans (L&T), Subject /Associate Heads and other academic managers as prescribed by the School, to advise programme teams on the appropriateness of the actions and the response times, and to evaluate the impact of actions; and
- iii ensuring that External Examiners receive a snapshot of the CEP action plan along with the response to the External Examiner report; and
- iv working with their Associate Director of Academic Quality Assurance and LTIC Learning and Teaching Specialist to develop and deliver workshops, training, and resources to support programme teams as required; and
- v submitting an annual report on Academic Standards and Quality to ASAC and ESEC, which includes a summary of the key issues arising from the School's CEP action plans (see further UPR AS 17 C4.3).

C2.2.9 The Associate Dean of School (AQA), the Associate Dean of School (L&T) and the Associate Director from CAQA will all have access to comment on the CEP action plan database, but the Associate Dean of School (AQA) will be responsible for signing off when the actions are satisfactorily completed.

C2.2.10 The appropriate Associate Director of Academic Quality Assurance will take a risk-based approach to sampling CEP action plans and review School-wide student performance data. They will report to the final School Academic Committee on (a) areas of good practice (b) areas for improvement of particular note or that are common across programmes and on (c) any support that is recommended for Programme Teams and on (d) how the delivery of the support has been shared between the Associate Director of Academic Quality Assurance, the LTIC Learning and Teaching Specialist, and the Associate Deans of School (AQA) and (L&T).

C2.2.11 The School Academic Committee may:

- i require a review of a programme or subject area; or
- ii report immediately to the DAQA if academic standards are considered to be at risk.

C2.2.12 Academic Registry is responsible for updating the programme and programme leader information in the CEP database and for arranging access for relevant staff.

C2.2.13 Schools will comply with any additional or alternative programme annual monitoring requirements of any PSRB, accreditation or funding body.

C2.2.14 Schools will have in place a risk-based process for module evaluation which addresses:

- (i) student performance data; and
- (ii) student feedback; and
- (iii) External Examiner feedback; and ensures that

- (iv) any agreed programme level actions are incorporated into the delivery of the module.
- C2.2.15 Each School has responsibility to set up at least one School- or Department-wide enhancement activity per academic year requiring Programme Leaders and programme teams to attend to:
- i share good practice, including actions that have led to improved data outcomes; and
  - ii develop further their CEP action plan to reflect (i) School- and Department-wide enhancement actions; and (ii) the University's strategic direction.
- C2.2.16 Schools will determine the timing and number of enhancement activities to be held in the School each year, whether such activities are held at School or Department level and effective ways to integrate the action plan enhancement activities into existing activities (e.g. Away Days, Learning and Teaching events).
- C2.3 The Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report (AMER) process
- C2.3.1 The regulations seek to maintain a self-critical academic community, in which individual members of staff are committed to maintaining educational challenge and the currency of the curriculum, the ongoing appraisal of their teaching, learning and assessment methods and the dissemination of good practice.
- C2.3.2 The following sections are applicable to credit-bearing short courses and to agreed programmes offered in collaboration with other institutions.
- C2.3.3 Each Programme Committee is required to agree and submit an Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report on the operation of the programme during the previous Academic Year.
- C2.3.4 For the purposes of annual monitoring of credit-rated short course activity, each School is required to prepare and submit an Annual Short Course Monitoring Report (ASCMR). If a School's short course activity is sufficiently large and complex then it may decide that more than one annual report is appropriate.
- C2.3.5 Guidance on the completion and templates for AMERs and ASCMRs is available on the Centre for Academic Quality website. AMERs and ASCMRs must comply with and use the University templates.
- C2.3.6 The preparation of the AMER is the responsibility of the Programme Leader (or equivalent), on behalf of the Programme Committee. The preparation of the ASCMR is the responsibility of the Dean of School (or nominee).
- C2.3.7 AMERs and ASCMRs should be completed by a date agreed by the ADoS(AQA). The ADoS(AQA) may also agree AMER completion dates for programmes that do not conform to the normal academic calendar.
- C2.3.8 The SAC or, where established, a working group of the SAC, will approve procedures for the consideration of AMERs and ASCMRs.

- C2.3.9 Following discussion and agreement by the Programme Committee, the AMER will be presented for consideration in accordance with the University's procedures, as soon as possible after the end of the academic session to which it relates. ASCMRs are discussed and agreed by the relevant academic School/Department, prior to consideration by the SAC or, where established, a working group of the SAC.
- C2.3.10 An action plan will be maintained for each programme AMER and ASCMR and will be reviewed and further developed during the School's and/or Programme Committee's monitoring of the full report.
- C2.3.11 All AMERs and ASCMRs will be considered by the SAC or, where established, by a working group of the SAC, which may:
- i approve the AMER or ASCMR;
  - ii refer the AMER back to the Programme Committee;
  - iii refer the AMER or ASCMR back to the ADoS(AQA) or Dean of School;
  - iv require a review of a programme or discipline;
  - v report immediately to the DAQA if academic standards are considered to be at risk.
- C2.3.12 The ADoS(AQA) is required to submit an annual report on Academic Standards and Quality to ASAC, which includes a summary of the key issues arising from the School's AMERs and ASCMRs. The Annual School Report to ASAC is described further in section C4.
- C2.3.13 The Student Administration Service Manager or Assistant Registrar (Collaborative Partnerships), where relevant is responsible for sending approved AMERs ASCMRs to Programme, Module and Short Course External Examiners (as appropriate).
- C2.4 Annual monitoring and evaluation of Collaborative Provision
- C2.4.1 The above procedures (see section C2.3) will apply unless otherwise specified in Memoranda of Agreement or it is agreed that the CEP process will be followed. The Collaborative Partnership Leader (CPL) will be present, and representatives of Partner Organisations are invited to be present during discussion of the AMERs and ASCMRs and appropriate feedback on the discussion will be provided to the Programme Committee in the Partner Organisation.
- C2.4.2 In cases where a programme is taught in the HHEC reference should be made to the Consortium Quality Handbook.
- C2.4.3 For the purposes of annual monitoring of credit-rated short course activity in externally-accredited partners, each partner is required to prepare and submit an Annual Short Course Monitoring Report. If a partner's short course activity is sufficiently large and complex, then the School may decide that more than one annual report is appropriate.

### **C3 Ongoing Developments of Regulations and Programmes**

#### **C3.1 Changes to programmes**

- C3.1.1 It is expected that all programmes will evolve on a continuing basis in line with developments in the subject and the capabilities required by graduates and employers. As a result, modification to aims and objectives, admission requirements, teaching and learning methods, programme structure, curricula and assessment arrangements will be required, and any changes made to PSs, as appropriate.
- C3.1.2 Such changes may be initiated as a result of academic or professional advances, evaluation and monitoring reports (including comments of External Examiners, professional advisors, student feedback, etc) or may result from requirements set by the University, the SAC, Consortium Quality Committee (CQC) or external bodies.
- C3.1.3 The ADoS(AQA), in consultation with the relevant ADAQA, will establish the scale of the revision proposed by the programme team. The ADoS(AQA) is responsible for identifying the appropriate approval process based upon whether major, substantial or minor revisions are proposed.
- C3.1.4 All such proposals for change must be discussed and approved in the Programme Committee before submission to the ADoS (AQA) of the modified PS for approval, prior to its submission to Academic Services. Guidance on revision to programmes can be found on the Centre for Academic Quality website.

#### **C3.2 Major changes to programmes**

Major changes to programmes include, but are not necessarily limited to major changes to programme learning outcomes and the addition of:

- i a distance learning delivery mode; or
- ii a full-time delivery mode; or
- iii an off-site delivery mode; or
- iv a new site for an existing programme delivered in an off-site delivery mode

and should be treated in the same way as the development of a new programme. These additional delivery modes may require the approval of the ADC (see section B1.1.3). Schools should refer to the guidance available on the Centre for Academic Quality website.

#### **C3.3 Substantial changes to programmes**

Substantial changes to programmes include minor changes to programme learning outcomes, a change to an award title only or the addition of a part-time delivery mode. Schools should refer to the guidance available on the Centre for Academic Quality website for the approval process for such changes.

#### C3.4 Minor changes to programmes

Minor changes to programmes include minor changes to PSs, syllabus updating on DMDs and minor re-ordering of the curriculum. Schools should refer to the guidance available on the Centre for Academic Quality website for the approval process for such changes.

#### C3.5 Changes in assessment regulations

C3.5.1 The Academic Board has approved generic programme regulations (UPR AS11 'Schedule of Awards' and UPR AS14 'Structure and Assessment Regulations - Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes') that apply to all award-bearing programmes.

C3.5.2 Changes to these regulations may only be made by the Academic Board and it is the responsibility of the Secretary and Registrar to ensure that any such changes are notified to staff and students of the University and to External Examiners and that appropriate amendments are made, as required, to Programme Specifications. Such regulatory changes may be initiated as a result of internal or external evaluation and monitoring reports (including comments of External Examiners) or may result from requirements set by the University, the SAC, CQC or external bodies.

C3.5.3 Variations to UPR AS14 'Structure and Assessment Regulations - Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes' in content or application are not normally permissible.

### **C4 Annual School Reports**

C4.1 Each School is required to submit a School Annual Report on Academic Standards and Student Experience to ESEC and ASAC.

C4.2 Deans of School, with the support of the ADoS(L&T) and ADoS(AQA), are responsible for ensuring that the Annual School report is submitted to ESEC and ASAC, respectively, by a date to be specified each year by the committees. This timescale is set so that the reports can contribute to the University's annual strategic planning process. Reports should be written against the current standard templates available from the Centre for Academic Quality website.

C4.3 Part 1 of the School Annual Report on Academic Standards and Student Experience will typically cover the following matters:

- i The School Academic Standards and Student Experience Action Plan;
- ii Student View of School Student Representation;
- iii Adoption and Dissemination of Good Practice;
- iv Matters for ESEC and ASAC.

C4.4 Part 2 of the School Annual Report on Academic Standards and Student Experience is extracted from the Academic School Planning Report. It will typically cover the following matters:



- i Learning, teaching and assessment;
- ii Qualitative and quantitative student outcomes;
- iii The School's collaborative activity;
- iv Progress against the School action plan.

C4.5 The Report should be circulated to all School staff and discussed at a School meeting, and then submitted to the Chairs of ESEC and ASAC, respectively. The committees will consider and respond to the relevant part of each report and refer significant and recurring matters to Academic Board.

## **D Academic Quality Policies and Procedures in relation to collaborative provision**

### **D1 Collaborative Provision overview**

D1.1 This section relates to programmes that lead to University of Hertfordshire awards, offered in partnership with another organisation. There are a number of other kinds of collaboration or partnerships in which the University engages including, for example:

- i partnership with Schools in teacher education;
- ii partnership with health and social care organisations;
- iii research collaboration with industry or with other organisations.

This section (D) does not cover these kinds of collaboration but is exclusively concerned with the quality assurance arrangements for the kinds of collaborative arrangements outlined in Section D.2.

D1.2 For guidance on a range of the processes to be followed in relation to the policies present in section D, refer to the Centre for Academic Quality website.

D1.3 The fundamental principles informing the quality assurance of collaborative provision are that the University of Hertfordshire:

- i is responsible for, and retains proper control of the academic standards of all awards granted in its name; and
- ii the processes for approval, monitoring and review of collaborative partners to deliver, assess and/or support University of Hertfordshire provision is at least as rigorous and secure as those processes for programmes provided by the University.

## **D2 Types of Collaboration and Summary of Relevant Procedures for Approval In Principle**

### **D2.1 Types of collaboration<sup>1</sup>**

**D2.1.1** The University engages in four (4) main types of collaboration with regard to taught provision that lead to its qualifications or credit:

#### **i Franchising**

The University defines a 'Franchise' as follows:

The process by which the University agrees to authorise the provision of the whole or part of one or more of its own approved programmes by a Partner Organisation. In doing so, the University retains overall responsibility for the standard of the award, including the programme's content, delivery, assessment and quality assurance arrangements. The University registers the students and retains full contractual responsibility for them. The Office for Students define these arrangements as sub-contractual arrangements.

A 'franchised' programme will be the same as a programme offered at the University, in terms of the modules of which it is composed, module structure and pattern of assessment. Some limited variation may be permitted to take account of differences in relevant cultural, legal and/or business and industry practices.

#### **ii University Validation**

The University defines 'University Validation' as follows:

The process by which the University judges whether the quality and standard of a programme delivered by another organisation (but developed by the University of Hertfordshire and/or the other institution) is comparable to that of an award of the University of Hertfordshire. In doing so, the University retains overall responsibility for the standard of the award, including the programme's content, delivery, assessment and quality assurance arrangements. The University registers the students and retains full contractual responsibility for them. The Office for Students define these arrangements as sub-contractual arrangements.

#### **iii External Validation**

The University defines 'External Validation' as follows:

The process by which the University judges whether the quality and standard of a programme delivered by another organisation (but developed by the University of Hertfordshire and/or the other institution) is comparable to that of an award of the University of Hertfordshire. Students on the course register with and have a direct contractual relationship with that provider and not the University. The Office for Students define these arrangements as validation arrangements.

---

<sup>1</sup> The written agreements through which the University establishes academic collaborative relationships with other organisations are legal agreements of the Corporation and must be approved and signed in accordance with the requirements of UPR FR06 'Corporate Governance and Financial Regulation' – refer to 'Academic Agreements'.

The University will not, typically, externally validate a programme that is in a subject area outside its broad area of expertise.

iv **Accreditation of Externally-Provided Short Courses**

The University defines the accreditation of externally-provided short courses as follows:

The process by which the University judges whether the quality and standard of a short course developed and delivered by another organisation is satisfactory, to enable University of Hertfordshire credit at the appropriate level to be awarded.

D2.1.2 Students studying under the terms of the types of collaboration referred to in section D2.1.1 are registered and enrolled as students of both the University and the Partner Organisation.

These students, and the programmes on which they are enrolled, are subject to the University's academic regulations and their learning resources are provided by the Partner Organisation under the terms of the agreement between the University and the Partner. However, the regulations of the Partner Organisation apply in relation to non-academic matters.

D2.1.3 Articulation Agreements

Articulation Agreements cover the articulation of programmes of study offered at organisations other than the University, with a University programme. The programmes of study will, typically, have been designed by the organisation itself, with or without the help of the University. Entry to a University programme may be to the first year or to a later stage with specific credit (advanced standing) given for earlier parts of the programme. Admission will be guaranteed provided students meet agreed levels of performance on the organisation's programme. Articulation Agreements are normally appropriate when significant numbers of students (**10** or more) are expected to annually transfer to the University. The maximum number of students to be admitted per intake must be specified. These regulations are not applicable to nationally or internationally recognised qualifications, where normal application and/or APL processes apply. The APL procedure also applies in the case of an individual student who has a local qualification from an institution where there is no articulation or recognition agreement.

Before an articulation agreement can be signed, the School must undertake a formal articulation visit to the organisation. The School must inform AS of the intention to set up an articulation arrangement prior to holding the Articulation Visit, and involve Legal and Compliance Services in the drafting and negotiation of the relevant articulation agreement. The purpose of the visit is for the University to be assured that the standard of the award of the organisation is appropriate for the intended articulation, that the curriculum and learning outcomes of the award of the organisation provide specific credit consistent with the intended articulation and that there is confidence in the organisation's ability to maintain the standard of its award. A report of the visit recommending approval or non-approval of any articulation must be produced and a copy retained by the School. Guidelines on articulation visits are available on the Centre for Academic Quality website.

The approval of the articulation will be for a period not exceeding six (6) years, after which time a formal review will be required. The School must monitor the progress of students admitted on this basis. The format of the agreement is available from the University's Legal and Compliance Services. The original copy of the Articulation Agreement will be lodged with AS. Any changes required to the Articulation Agreement will be in consultation with Legal and Compliance Services. The School will inform the University's Legal and Compliance if it proposes to terminate an Articulation Agreement. The agreement or termination of articulation arrangements will be reported to Academic Development Committee.

#### D2.1.4 Progression Agreements

An arrangement whereby the University recognises, at its absolute discretion, students of another organisation, on achievement of specified qualifications, may be able to progress onto a specified University programme, and the University welcomes applications from such students. A Progression Agreement carries with it no guarantee of entry to the University and applicants would be considered on their individual merits in accordance with the provisions of University regulations and at the University's discretion. Progression agreements are prepared by the University's Legal and Compliance Services. The original copy of the Progression Agreement will be lodged with the International Office. The International Office will inform Legal and Compliance Services of any changes in the Progression Agreement or if it is to be terminated.

#### D2.1.5 Academic Support Agreements

An agreement with another organisation with which the University may or may not have another formal partnership, whereby the organisation is permitted to offer academic support for students enrolled on University of Hertfordshire programmes delivered by distance learning. Such agreements specifically exclude the organisation from assessing students or in any way awarding credit towards the University awards for which the students concerned are enrolled. The original copy of the Academic Support Agreement will be lodged with AS. Any changes required to the Academic Support Agreement will be administered via AS and in consultation with Legal Services. The School will inform ADC if it proposes to terminate an Academic Support Agreement (see section D11).

### D2.2 Summary of approval in principle

D2.2.1 When sufficient information is known by a School and the University about the prospective partner and/or the type of collaborative programme proposed, formal University approval, in principle, to proceed towards validation must be obtained. The process for this is for a formal proposal to be made by the relevant Dean of School to ADC. For guidance on submission to ADC, please refer to the Centre for Academic Quality website.

D2.2.2 It is important to recognise at the stage of submitting a proposal to ADC that there are potentially three (3) distinctive approval activities required in order to complete the process of approval of a new collaborative partnership:

- i approval of the Partner Organisation as a collaborative partner of the University (see section D3);
- ii approval in principle by the University, as appropriate, of the programmes intended to be delivered in the collaboration (see sections B1.1.3 and D2.2.1);

- iii approval (i.e. validation) of the ability of the Partner Organisation, in co-operation with the University, to deliver the proposed collaborative programmes at an appropriate standard and quality (see section D4 and D5).

D2.2.3 Once a Partner Organisation has been approved (see section D2.2.2, i), subsequent submissions to ADC will be for section D2.2.2, ii, only.

### **D3 Approval of a New Partner Organisation as a Collaborative Partner of the University**

D3.1 Formal approval of a Partner Organisation is required wherever it is proposed that the partner is to deliver a University programme or credit or that an Articulation Agreement or Academic Support Agreement be signed. There is a clear distinction between the approval of the partnership at organisational level and the approval of the partner to deliver specific programmes. The two processes are, therefore, described independently in sections D3, D4 and D5.

D3.2 Preliminaries to approval

D3.2.1 Where a new partner is to be considered for collaboration, the School will seek information about the organisation and its current provision and draw up and submit a proposal using form ADC2a.

D3.2.2 Statement of Principles

- i Any collaboration between the University of Hertfordshire and a Partner Organisation that leads to an award of the University is a matter for the agreement of both parties, made by the 'central authorities' of each party. Consequently, the University will only enter a Legal Agreement with the Partner Organisation itself. Neither Schools, nor areas within them, such as Departments or Centres may, in their own right, enter a Legal Agreement with another party such as a Partner Organisation.
- ii Approval processes and the drafting, administration, archiving and maintenance of Memoranda of Agreement and other similar Legal Agreements are matters for management and co-ordination by Legal Services, AS and the Secretary and Registrar's Office.
- iii Making a recommendation to Academic Board for University approval of new Partner Organisations will be the responsibility of the ADC.

D3.2.3 The 'central authorities' of a potential Partner Organisation which is part of the public sector of education in the UK is likely to be its Academic Board or Board of Governors. For organisations which are not part of the public sector of education in the UK or those outside the UK, there is a much greater variety in what constitutes the 'central authority' (for example, the Board of Directors of a company or a subsidiary body with similar responsibility for the training arm of a company or health authority). A small private college might have a more informal structure with, perhaps, only one or two people constituting the senior academic and business management.

- D3.2.4 Academic Board's approval of the new partnership will be formally established through the signing, by the Vice-Chancellor (or Deputy) and the equivalent post-holder in the Partner Organisation, of a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), an External Accreditation Agreement (EAA), an Academic Support Agreement (ASA) or an Articulation Agreement (AA), as appropriate.
- D3.2.5 Advice regarding preliminary explorations and guidance to the Partner Organisation can be obtained from AS.
- D3.3 The approval process for a new Partner Organisation
- D3.3.1 The institutional approval process is as follows:
- i The Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) will be invited to approve the partnership, in principle, through submission of a form ADC2a (for guidance on submission please refer to the Academic Quality website). Approval by the Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) authorises the initiation of the relevant processes agreed by ADC for final partner approval.  
  
(For the purposes of D3.3.1, i, the nominee of the Vice-Chancellor will be the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor unless they are conflicted, in which case, approval will be given by the Vice-Chancellor.)
  - ii On the basis of the risk assessment which constitutes part of the form ADC2a, ADC determines the due diligence process that will apply. Depending on the nature of the proposed relationship and the level of associated risk, this may include:
    - a an Institutional Audit, conducted by AS for which a written report is produced;
    - b a Financial Audit initiated by AS, through which the most recent audited accounts of the prospective Partner Organisation are scrutinised by a senior University Finance officer who provides a written professional opinion;
    - c an Enhanced Partner Approval Visit Report, for prospective Partner Organisations offering dual or joint awards where enhanced partner status is proposed.
  - iii The form ADC2a (including the risk assessment) and, as required, the Institutional Audit report and/or financial opinion will be considered initially by (i) the International Advisory Board (IAB) for non-UK partnerships or (ii) the UK Collaborative Provision Advisory Group (UKCPAG) for UK partnerships, and then ADC which may then approve the partnership. In approving a partnership, ADC may impose conditions and, in these circumstances, the validation of any programme to be offered under the terms of the partnership will be conditional on the requirements identified by ADC being met.
  - iv The completion and signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (or other Agreement, as described in section D3.2.4, above) by both parties.
- D3.3.2 The criteria for approval of a Partner Organisation as suitable for the delivery of programmes leading to awards of the University of Hertfordshire are that the proposed Partner Organisation must:

- i have a compatible and/or complementary mission to that of the University;
- ii be strategically committed to the provision of Higher Education;
- iii be financially stable and legally competent to enter into the necessary agreements and to this end, the University reserves the right to seek such information on these matters as it considers appropriate to satisfy itself;
- iv be able to support sufficient student numbers which will provide financial viability;
- v have an effective management system suited to assuring the quality of Higher Education programmes;
- vi offer an ethos and environment for teaching and learning appropriate to UK Higher Education;
- vii have available appropriate resources to support Higher Education programmes;
- viii have processes of accountability for academic quality that are defined and implemented according to agreed quality assurance and quality control systems;
- ix have appropriate academic and administrative policies and practices;
- x have an appropriate regulatory framework (dual and joint award partners only);
- xi be committed to ensuring that each cohort of registered students will be able to complete programmes;
- xii be able to comply with the appropriate University Regulations including the Academic Regulations.

D3.4 The approval process for a new Study Abroad Partner Organisation

D3.4.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Business and International Development) will be invited to approve the partnership, in principle, through submission of a form ADC2a(SA) and associated risk assessment.

D3.4.2 Approval of a new study abroad partnership will be formally established through the signing of the relevant Legal Agreement by the Secretary and Registrar of the University and the equivalent post-holder in the Partner Organisation.

### D3.5 Re-approval of a Partnership

D3.5.1 Approval of a Partner Organisation will typically be for a maximum period of six (6) years, and in parallel with renewal of the legal agreement. Towards the end of this period, AS (in consultation with the School, the International Advisory Board Operational Group (IAB Ops) or UK Collaborative Provision Advisory Group (UKCPAG), as appropriate, with Legal Services and the Director of Academic Quality Assurance) will initiate a formal review, including appropriate due diligence (see section D3.5.2, ii). The aim will be to re-confirm that the Partner Organisation continues to meet the criteria for partnership. The review and re-approval of a Partner Organisation may take place alongside validation or revalidation of one or more programmes. The refreshing of due diligence checks may also take place midway through a contract with a Partner Organisation which exceeds six (6) years. The Collaborative Partner Assurance Group may also consider and advise ADC in relation to any issues identified as a result of due diligence exercises.

D3.5.2 The process of re-approval is as follows.

- i The International Advisory Board Operational Group (IAB Ops) or UK Collaborative Provision Advisory Group (UKCPAG), as appropriate, will be invited to confirm, in principle that the partnership should continue, through submission of form ADC2d.
- ii The extent of associated due diligence could include:
  - a an Institutional Audit, undertaken by AS with the re-validation;
  - b Financial due diligence (initiated by AS) through the scrutiny by a senior University finance officer of the most recent set of audited accounts of the Partner Organisation who provides a written professional opinion;
  - c Legal due diligence, through the scrutiny by a senior University Solicitor of the Partner Organisation's legal, governance and regulatory documentation, who (if requested) provides a written professional opinion;
  - d a review of the legal agreement, with a new document to be signed by both parties in the event of re-approval;
  - e for partners with large and cross-School provision, the most recent Quality Liaison Manager's Annual Report.
- iii The identified information will then be considered by ADC which shall decide whether re-approval will be formally granted or not, and subject to any conditions that must be met. Any associated re-validation of the programme will be conditional upon the conditions for partner re-approval being met.

D3.5.3 The validation status of programmes offered in collaboration with an approved partner is dependent upon continuing approval of the partnership and not vice versa, see section D10.



## **D4 Planning Meetings and the Approval of Programmes**

### **D4.1 Planning Meetings**

D4.1.1 At an early stage but usually following approval, in principle of the programme, by ADC, a Planning Meeting is convened to agree the development and validation process. It will be convened and chaired by the ADoS (AQA) and formally minuted by AS. A copy of the confirmed minutes will be circulated by AS. For guidance on Planning Meetings, please refer to the Centre for Academic Quality website.

D4.1.2 The purpose of the Planning Meeting is to agree on how to carry out, as appropriate, the different components of the formal process, as stated in sections D2, D3 and D5, required for approval of the collaboration and, most importantly, to agree a timescale for validation. Reference should be made to Flowchart 1.

D4.1.3 A Planning Meeting is required to agree the process for all aspects of collaborative provision, for example:

- i approval of a Partner Organisation;
- ii approval of new University programme(s) for franchise or University validation;
- iii approval of a Partner Organisation's programme(s) for external validation;
- iv approval of the Partner Organisation's ability to deliver an approved programme.

D4.1.4 Membership must include the relevant ADAQA and the AR(SA-CP) (or nominee). The DAQA (or Deputy) is also an ex officio member of such meetings. It is good practice to invite a member from the Partner Organisation to the Planning Meeting but it is recognised that this may not be feasible in the case of more distant collaborations.

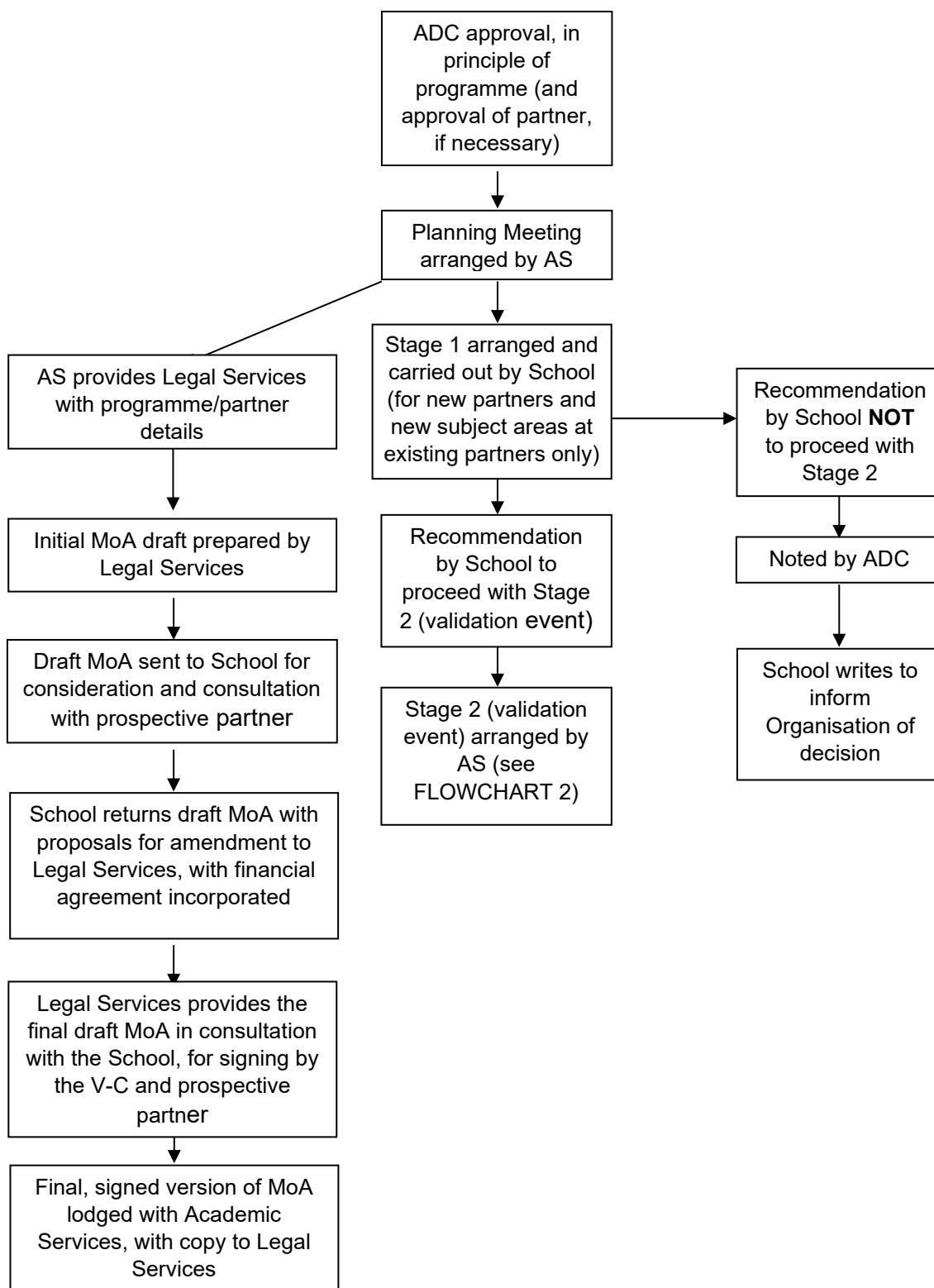
D4.1.5 There is a standard agenda checklist for collaborative Planning Meetings. Please refer to the Centre for Academic Quality website.

### **D4.2 Approval of Programmes**

D4.2.1 It is University policy to approve a unique Programme Specification for each collaborative programme. The School must prepare provisionally approved version(s) of the Programme Specification for the proposed programmes, for final approval at the Stage 2 visit to the Partner Organisation.

D4.2.2 Approval of a programme in relation to an external validation proposal requires that the collaborative partner, in consultation with the School, produces a Programme Specification that demonstrates that the student experience and the standard of the programme would be equivalent to that of a University of Hertfordshire award of the same type. Templates for the Programme Specification will be provided to Partner Organisations by the School, as agreed at the Planning Meeting.

## FLOWCHART 1 - Summary of the approval of the ability of a Partner Organisation to deliver Programmes of Study



## **D5 Approval of the Standard of Collaborative Awards and the Ability of the Partner Organisation to Deliver Collaborative Programmes**

### D5.1 Introduction

D5.1.1 All programmes that lead to a University of Hertfordshire award that are to be delivered by an approved Partner Organisation will be subject to University level validation activity organised by AS. This has two (2) stages described below:

- i ADC approval has been confirmed;
- ii the School has completed and reported on their Stage 1 approval process, where appropriate, with a clear recommendation to proceed to Stage 2.

D5.1.2 Stage 1 will not be undertaken until ADC approval of the programme has been confirmed. Stage 1 is only required for new Partner Organisations and for programmes in new subject areas at existing partners. In these cases Stage 2 will not be undertaken until the School has completed and reported on Stage 1 of the validation process, with a clear recommendation to proceed to Stage 2.

D5.1.3 For proposed franchised provision, the purpose of the validation process is to approve the Partner Organisation's ability to deliver a programme which is also delivered at the University. However, for University-validated and externally validated, there is an additional requirement to approve the standard and coherency of the proposed award. Where a proposed University-validated or externally validated programme is also a dual award, it is possible to approve this additional requirement in advance of a validation event.

### D5.2 Approval visits to Partner Organisations: Stage 1 and Stage 2

D5.2.1 The following steps apply to Stage 1 approval visits, undertaken by the School:

- i the Partner Organisation is given initial advice concerning approval visits and preparation for them by the School (a number of visits by School staff may be required to assist in this);
- ii the School arranges, in consultation with AS, for Stage 1 of the approval process (a formal process, carried out by the School, comprising one or more visits by appropriate members of the School), to take place;
- iii the School will, as appropriate, consult the Chief Information Officer (or nominee) concerning library and IT support and the Director of Academic Services concerning an Institutional Audit.

D5.2.2 A report from the Stage 1 process is used in a formal Stage 2 event arranged by AS. For guidance on the Stage 1 process please refer to the Centre for Academic Quality website.

### D5.2.3 Documents required for Stage 2

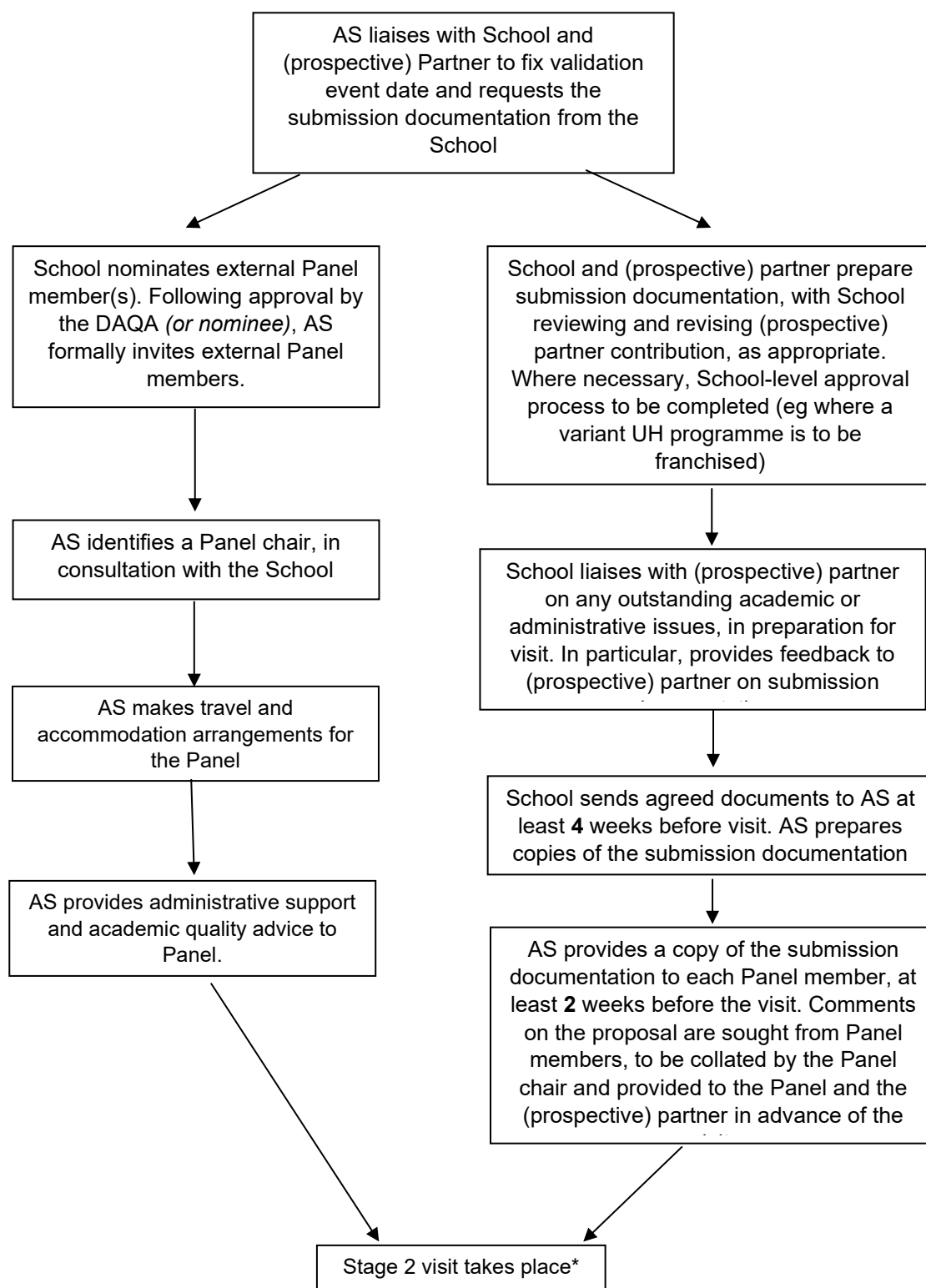
- i AS will request the following documents from the Partner Organisation or the School, as appropriate:

- a a submission document, for the programmes being considered for validation (see section B1);
  - b a draft Programme Specification for the programmes under consideration. In the case of a franchise or University validation this must satisfy UPR AS11 'Schedule of Awards' and UPR AS14 'Structure and Assessment Regulations - Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes', unless specific exemption is given by the University. In the case of an External Validation this must be consistent with UPR AS11 'Schedule of Awards' and UPR AS14 'Structure and Assessment Regulations - Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes';
  - c draft DMDs (for franchised and University-validated provision) or equivalent documents (for externally validated provision);
  - d details of academic staff resources (list of lecturers involved with the collaboration, with full CVs);
  - e details of resources to support learning and teaching (classrooms, library and laboratory details, technical and administrative support, canteen/refreshment facilities, medical and counselling availability, recreational and other facilities such as careers advice and guidance);
  - f a report on Stage 1 of the approval process, carried out by the School.
  - g for externally-validated provision only, confirmation from the relevant School that, in its opinion, the proposed programme aims and learning outcomes for each award title meet UK Higher Education expectations and the curriculum meets the expectations of the relevant sector and its employers.
- ii Additional documentary requirements will be specified at the planning meeting and are specified in the Centre for Academic Quality website.

#### D5.2.4 Composition of the Validation Panel

- i Stage 2 of validation is a formal University event, organised by AS. For guidance on the composition of Validation Panels, refer to the Academic Quality website. AS will invite both University (including an independent chair, a representative of the DAQA and a representative of the LTI) and independent external Panel members, usually seeking nomination from, or in consultation with, the ADoS(AQA) or other School colleagues.
- ii AS is responsible for liaison with the Partner Organisation and all arrangements with the proposed collaborative Partner in respect of the organisation of the Stage 2 visit. The School's nominated academic contact will be responsible for continuing liaison with the Partner Organisation on all academic matters. Schools and Partner Organisations are required to provide timely information and documentation to AS. Flowchart 2 summarises the Stage 2 process.

## FLOWCHART 2 - Preparation for Stage 2 validation visit\*



\* The Stage 2 validation event takes place usually at least 8 weeks after initial ADC approval of the programme and usually at least 4 weeks after final ADC approval of the partner (through its consideration of the financial audit, institutional audit and the Stage 1 approval report).

### D5.3 Follow-up to Stage 2

D5.3.1 Following the validation event, AS will produce a report. The report constitutes the Panel's formal recommendation to the Academic Board for:

- i the approval/non-approval of the collaboration;
- ii the period of approval (maximum six (**6**) years);
- iii any conditions that must be met before students may be admitted, see section B1.

D5.3.2 In many cases, recommendations for approval are 'subject to conditions'. Once a validation event has been held, the responsibility for chasing the progress of any conditions lies with AS. Partner Organisations will be asked to forward their written response to conditions to AS by a specified date. A formal letter from the Vice-Chancellor will be sent to the Partner Organisation to inform them of Academic Board approval for the collaboration. AS will not process validation documents for ratification by the Vice-Chancellor until:

- i all University requirements are met (in terms of relevant AQ forms, documents, reports) and are with AS;
- ii the Validation Panel has confirmed that conditions of approval have been met.

D5.3.3 Students **may not be registered** with the University until the Academic Board has ratified the validation.

D5.3.4 The Panel may also make recommendations concerning the collaboration. It is the responsibility of the SAC to ensure that any ongoing conditions are monitored and that both partners consider the Panel's observations or recommendations. Where established, such monitoring may be undertaken by the SAC working group with responsibility for scrutinising Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports. It is implicit that such working groups will report any issues of concern to the relevant SAC at the earliest opportunity. It is good practice to cross-refer in the AMER to issues raised in the validation report over the first two (**2**) or three (**3**) years of operation (see section C2).

### D5.4 Changes proposed subsequent to validation but before ratification

D5.4.1 If the School becomes aware of any significant changes between validation and ratification they must alert AS, for example:

- i knowledge that the partner does not intend to recruit to the programme or significant change in the anticipated student numbers (up or down);
- ii a proposed change in the title of the programme or the mode of delivery;
- iii significant changes in personnel at the Partner Organisation;
- iv a change in ownership, name, or management structure at the Partner Organisation.

D5.4.2 Any changes to the approved programme and its delivery and location which may occur during the period of validation must be approved. Such changes may require further validation and AS must be informed. Validation reports and the PS and DMDs will always specify which campuses are being considered and which are approved. Any proposal to change or add to the approved locations must follow the regulations for new campus approval (see section D8).

#### D5.5 Delayed Commencement of Collaborative Provision Programmes

D5.5.1 The following process has been developed in order to satisfy the University that Partner Organisations have retained the resources to launch a programme validated by the University in circumstances where there has been a delayed start date to delivery of that programme.

D5.5.2 Partner Organisations will be informed at programme validation and revalidation that:

“If the proposed commencement of the validated or revalidated programme exceeds six (6) months from the approved start date then they will need to confirm to the School that resources remain in place for effective programme delivery. If the proposed commencement of the validated or re-validated programme exceeds 12 months from the approved start date then the University reserves the power to call for a fresh validation event to be undertaken at the expense of the partner”.

D5.5.3 If the planned commencement of the validated or re-validated programme exceeds six (6) months from the approved start date then the relevant SAC should be provided with evidence that the physical and human resources remain satisfactory. This may require the relevant School to visit the Partner Organisation to review the resources in place. Following SAC consideration, the ADoS (AQA) will inform AS of the outcome. The Partner Organisation will not be able to commence the programme until SAC has been satisfied that resources continue to be in place for effective programme delivery.

D5.5.4 If the planned commencement of the validated or re-validated programme exceeds 12 months from the approved start date, then AS should be provided with information to enable the DAQA to advise the University on the continuing suitability of the resources available to the programme. This may require the relevant School to visit the Partner Organisation to confirm that the resources are in place. The views of:

- i the School on the currency of the curriculum and
- ii the International Advisory Board (for non-UK-based programmes) or
- iii the Academic Partnerships Office (for UK-based programmes) may also be sought.

D5.5.5 Following consideration, the DAQA will then make a recommendation to ESEC. The Committee, acting through the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience), reserves the power to call for a fresh validation event to be undertaken at the expense of the Partner Organisation. The Partner Organisation will not be able to commence the programme until ESEC has been satisfied that resources continue to be in place for effective programme delivery.

## D5.6 Marketing of programmes

A proposed collaborative programme cannot be marketed until it has been approved, in principle, to proceed to validation by ADC. Following approval, in principle, by ADC, any promotional material for the programme must include the caveat 'subject to validation'. Once validation of the programme has been ratified by the Academic Board, 'subject to validation' should be removed from any promotional material.

## D5.7 Collaborative programmes where there is little or no University discipline expertise

### D5.7.1 Development and approval of the programme

- i Where ADC has approved the proposed programme, in principle, to proceed to validation, the DAQA, in consultation with the School, will determine the number of external subject experts (normally one **(1)** or two **(2)**) that the proposing School is required to recruit to be members of the programme development team, in preparation for the validation event. Because of the need for impartiality, the external subject expert(s) is/are not allowed to become members of the subsequent Validation Panel.
- ii The validation event will not go ahead if the required external subject experts have not been recruited **at the programme development stage**, as the discipline context of the delivery of these programmes needs to be established (i.e. achievement of QAA Subject Benchmark statements, potential professional requirements, discipline trends, etc.). External subject experts should also indicate that they are prepared to act as external subject experts on an on-going basis, should the programme be approved (as a sustainable source of external subject experts for the programme needs to be established. Without these, the standards of the programme cannot be assured).
- iii External subject experts work closely with the programme team at the collaborative partner as well as with the University's Collaborative Partnership Leader (in fact, some of their duties overlap with those of the Collaborative Partnership Leader) and responsibilities include:
  - a at the Development Stage, giving subject advice and support:
    - 1 on the preparation of a programme that meets the expectations of FHEQ and the appropriate Subject Benchmark Statements;
    - 2 on the preparation and subject content of the DMDs;
    - 3 on the preparation and content of the Programme Specifications;
    - 4 on curriculum-related matters at development team meetings;
    - 5 at the Validation Panel meeting, as a member of the development team;
  - b at the post-validation stage, giving subject advice and support:
    - 1 on the satisfaction of any conditions of programme approval;
    - 2 on the preparation and content of programme documentation, such as module guides and programme handbooks;
    - 3 on the preparation of assessments;
    - 4 to the partner staff, in the form of staff development.



- iv External subject experts cannot also act as External Examiners for the programme.

#### D5.7.2 Ongoing monitoring processes

External subject experts are employed on an ongoing basis, to internally monitor and assess the standards of programmes in a discipline where there is little or no expertise within the University and to support the Partner in assuring and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience (along with the University Collaborative Partnership Leader) by:

- i undertaking the job of the University's internal moderators by:
  - a internally reviewing module assignments and examination papers, on behalf of the University;
  - b internally moderating samples of all marked student work;
  - c completing paperwork as a University internal moderator would;
- ii supporting the University Collaborative Partnership Leader in undertaking their duties in those aspects where discipline expertise is required, including visiting the partner at least once a year;
- iii providing staff development as and when necessary;
- iv on behalf of the School, reviewing and/or approving the subject-related content of any publicity materials;
- v preparing and submitting annually, a written report to the School on the delivery of the programme, to be appended to the AMER;
- vi giving subject advice and support on the preparation of the AMER and presenting it to SAC for approval on behalf of the partner;
- vii giving advice on any proposed revisions to individual modules or the programme;
- viii supporting the partner in preparing for periodic review and revalidation.

#### D5.7.3 Main attributes of external subject experts

External subject experts need to satisfy the UK HE expectations of an External Examiner and will, therefore, have sufficient experience to enable the standard of the programme to be compared to equivalent UK degree programmes. This would, typically, mean that the person teaches and assesses on another UK degree in the discipline, or has done so very recently. They should, therefore, have an understanding of current practice and developments in teaching, learning and assessment in higher education.

D5.8 Programmes delivered in a language other than English

D5.8.1 Upfront approval processes

- i The following principles should normally apply to all collaborative programmes of the University of Hertfordshire:
  - a delivery and/or assessment of **100%** of a programme in a language other than English is not permitted;
  - b entry to a programme should be subject to the attainment of a minimum English language capability equivalent to IELTS **5.5**, although stricter requirements may be imposed, as necessary;
  - c all elements of assessment in the final stage of study (for example, Level **6** for undergraduate programmes, the final **60** credits of study for full-time Master’s programmes) should be conducted in English;
  - d delivery and/or assessment in a language other than English should be permitted in early stages of a programme, subject to the following guidelines:

Academic stage (Bachelor’s programmes)	Minimum number of module credits delivered/assessed in English
Level <b>4</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> Year)	<b>30</b> credits
Level <b>5</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> Year)	<b>60</b> credits
Level <b>6</b> (Final Year)	<b>120</b> credits

Academic stage (full-time Master’s programmes)	Minimum number of module credits delivered/assessed in English
Level <b>7</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> Semester)	<b>15</b> credits
Level <b>7</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester)	<b>30</b> credits
Level <b>7</b> (Final Semester)	<b>60</b> credits

- ii Any programme where it is proposed that elements be delivered and assessed in a language other than English needs approval to do so from ADC. If approved by ADC, the programme will then need to be validated, or revalidated if it is already validated to be delivered in English.
- iii Where ADC has approved the proposed programme in principle to proceed to validation, the DAQA, in consultation with the School, will determine the number of external, bilingual subject experts (normally one **(1)** or two **(2)**) that the proposing School is required to recruit to the Validation Panel in preparation for the (re-)validation event (i.e. the validation event will not go ahead without their recruitment). These external Panel members should also indicate that they are prepared to act as External Examiners should the programme be approved.

- iv The programme development team should advise the Validation Panel on the level of English language competence that students should be expected to have achieved on entry to the programme. The development team includes University subject experts and partner subject experts but, if there are no bilingual University subject experts, then the School would normally also employ an external bilingual subject adviser in order to achieve this objective.

#### D5.8.2 Ongoing monitoring processes

The following are required to be in place to assess the standards of programmes delivered in languages other than English:

- i bilingual External Examiners are employed,
  - ii either:
    - a bilingual members of University academic staff in the relevant discipline, who will:
      - 1 internally moderate module assignments and examination papers at all academic levels and
      - 2 internally review samples of all marked student work at all academic levels and
      - 3 review and/or approve any publicity materials, module guides and programme handbooks prepared in the language of delivery;
    - or
    - b external bilingual subject advisers (with relevant subject experience in UK HE on short-term contracts) who will undertake the job of University internal moderators. These bilingual subject advisers would:
      - 1 internally moderate module assignments and examination papers from a distance, on behalf of the University;
      - 2 internally review samples of all marked student work, through one **(1)** or two **(2)** visits;
      - 3 complete paperwork as a University internal moderator would;
      - 4 review and/or approve any publicity materials, module guides and programme handbooks prepared in the language of delivery.
- External subject advisers would **not** need to complete an annual External Examiner's report (they are not an External Examiner) or attend Boards of Examiners, although a short annual report to the School would be required.
- iii Programme Specifications must be prepared in both English and the language of delivery.
  - iv Programme Committee minutes and AMERs must be presented in English.
  - v Validation events, revalidation events and Examination Boards will be conducted in English.

### D5.8.3 Main attributes of external bilingual subject experts

As well as being bilingual, these subject experts need to satisfy the UK HE expectations of an External Examiner: sufficient experience to enable the standard of the programme to be compared to equivalent UK degree programmes. This would, typically, mean that the person teaches and assesses on another UK degree in the discipline or has done so very recently.

## D6 Written Agreements

- D6.1 The University has four (4) MoA templates for UK partners and for overseas partners covering franchised or validated programmes.
- D6.2 All agreements will be produced in draft by AS and forwarded to Legal Services, usually following the Planning Meeting, see section D4. The Dean of School (in consultation with the International Advisory Board for international partnerships) is responsible for negotiating and completing the financial arrangements (which are part of Schedule 1).
- D6.3 University policy is to have one (1) over-arching MoA for each kind of partnership with a Partner Organisation. Thus, if a Partner Organisation has a mixture of both franchised and validated provision, there will be two (2) Memoranda of Agreement. The validation report for each new collaborative programme becomes part of a schedule to the relevant MoA.
- D6.4 The signing of an MoA is a standard condition of validation for the first programme with this Partner. It is practice to sign the MoA once there is a degree of confidence that the collaboration will go ahead. A standard clause in the MoA states that it applies only to arrangements that have been validated. Proposed amendments to, and administration of, the final version of Memoranda will be dealt with by Legal Services or AS. The Vice-Chancellor (or Deputy) will not sign Memoranda unless they are processed through Legal Services or, exceptionally, OVC. Legal Services or AS or, exceptionally, OVC will send all Memoranda to Partner Organisations for final signature.
- D6.5 The University also has templates for Articulation Agreements, Recognition Agreements, Academic Support Agreements and External Accreditation Partnership Agreements. Further guidance on the agreements and templates can be found on the Centre for Academic Quality website.

## D7 Collaborative Partnership Leader (CPL)

- D7.1 General
- D7.1.1 Unless otherwise agreed between Schools and AS, a Collaborative Partnership Leader will be appointed to oversee each separate collaboration with a Partner Organisation. It is the responsibility of the Dean of School to appoint a Collaborative Partnership Leader.
- D7.1.2 At the commencement of each, the Dean of School (or nominee) will inform the Collaborative Partnerships Unit (CPU), CAQA and Academic Services ([as-systems@herts.ac.uk](mailto:as-systems@herts.ac.uk)) of Collaborative Partnership Leaders for each collaboration in which the School is engaged.

## D7.2 Core Activities of the Collaborative Partnership Leader

### D7.2.1 The core activities of the Collaborative Partnership Leader are as follows:

- i To monitor the health of a collaborative programme (for example, through visits or other communications) and to report to the Dean of School (or nominee) any actions that need to be taken to support the collaboration or on any other matters relevant to the partnership. The CPL should prepare reports on each visit and a summary report for the AMER/CEP.
- ii To be the main academic point of contact for communications between the School and the Collaborative Partner.
- iii To present the Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report to the SAC or appropriate Sub-Group (or, in the case of Academic Support Partnerships, to prepare an annual report for each partner to be appended to the AMER).
- iv To act as an ex officio member of the relevant Programme Committee at the Partner Organisation.
- v To co-ordinate the review and moderation of the assessment process. When this involves the review by the University of in-course assessments or examination papers, the role of CPL gives authority to make requests of Deans of relevant Schools to provide subject staff to carry out this task.
- vi To act with the Dean of School (or nominee) and the University's Marketing and Communications Department to ensure that all necessary administrative procedures, including the approval of promotional material, are carried out at the necessary time.
- vii To work with Academic Services on audits of public information to ensure that all published Collaborative partner information is accurate and updated regularly.

D7.2.2 The Collaborative Partnerships Leader is **not** permitted to act as Chair of Boards of Examiners for the collaborative partnership for which they are Collaborative Partnerships Leader.

D7.2.3 The core activities identified in D7.2.1 may be added to by the School, if this is deemed appropriate, and the activities of the Collaborative Partnership Leader will be agreed by the Dean of School (or nominee). For Partner Organisations where a Quality Liaison Manager (or equivalent) has been appointed, the Collaborative Partnership Leader will work closely with them. The core activities identified in D7.2.1 should be read in conjunction with the Collaborative Partnerships Handbook, where the activities associated with the role are explored.

## **D8 Approval for a New Campus of an Existing, Approved Partner Organisation to Deliver a Collaborative Programme**

### **D8.1 General**

D8.1.1 Wherever an approved partner of the University has proposed to either transfer the delivery of a University-validated programme to a new campus, or deliver at an additional new campus, then ADC approval of that campus is required. In addition to campus approval:

- i where there is a proposal from a partner to deliver an already-approved collaborative short course, module or programme at an additional campus and it is intended that the same staff should deliver at both the existing and proposed new locations, the process described in section B1.3 also applies;
- ii where there is a proposal from a partner to deliver an already-approved collaborative short course, module or programme at an additional campus and it is intended to be delivered by different staff to those delivering the programme at the existing location, ADC initial approval and a University-level validation event is also required;
- iii where there is a proposal from a partner to deliver an already-approved collaborative short course, module or programme at a new campus and it is intended that delivery is transferred from the existing to the new location, then only campus approval is required (using the process described in section D8.2).

### **D8.2 Campus approval process**

D8.2.1 The Partner initiates the process by providing the School with a proposal, identifying the location of the new campus. The University expects to receive adequate notice of a partner's proposal to deliver the programme at a new location, to facilitate a visit by the School and the approval of ADC before delivery commences.

D8.2.2 The School should then conduct a subject-level academic resource visit of the new campus and report on the outcome, clearly indicating whether or not the School is recommending to ADC the approval of the new campus.

D8.2.3 ADC approval of the proposal requires consideration of an ADC2a form plus the School's visit report.

D8.2.4 Upon final ADC approval, the School is required to revise the PS, as appropriate. Approval of the new or additional campus is acknowledged as a schedule in the MoA.

### **D8.3 External Examiners**

The School should ensure that External Examiners are notified and that any revised arrangements for Examination Boards are clear and appropriate.

## **D9 Management of Academic Standards**

- D9.1 Following approval of a collaborative programme, Schools are required to make arrangements to sustain the quality of the collaboration, in accordance with University regulations for on-going quality assurance and requirements laid down in the MoA. Particular additional requirements for collaborations include the following:
- D9.1.1 Schools are required to confirm nomination of a Collaborative Partnership Leader to oversee the operation of the collaboration prior to the admission of students on to any programme. The terms of reference of Collaborative Partnership Leaders are set out in section D7;
  - D9.1.2 the Dean of School is required to inform CPU of Collaborative Partnership Leaders and Chairs of Boards of Examiners for each collaboration at the start of each Academic Year. A Collaborative Partnership Leader for a collaborative programme may not be appointed as a Chair of a Module or Programme Board of Examiners related to the programme;
  - D9.1.3 Schools are required to negotiate a Collaborative Operational Delivery Plan with each Partner Organisation for each programme offered in collaboration. This will constitute agreement of how the assessment processes are to be carried out and, in particular, the arrangements for moderation of assessment by the Partner, by the School and by the External Examiner(s), as required in Memoranda of Agreement. Notes for guidance on the Collaborative Operational Delivery Plan are available on the Centre for Academic Quality website;
  - D9.1.4 Schools are required to nominate External Examiners using the University's normal procedures (see section C1). Collaborative partners can nominate External Examiners for consideration by the School. In relation to overseas collaborations, it is a requirement that the programme and all necessary modules are allocated to External Examiners with direct knowledge and experience of comparable UK standards for the programme(s);
  - D9.1.5 the University offers all newly appointed External Examiners, including those based overseas, induction and briefing materials concerning the nature of the collaboration, their role, programme and benchmark specifications, the format and style of report required and the requirements of any professional, statutory or regulatory bodies;
  - D9.1.6 Schools are required to monitor the assessment process of the collaboration through the review and moderation of assessments, through the activities of the Collaborative Partnership Leader and others and by providing a Chair for relevant Boards of Examiners;
  - D9.1.7 Schools, along with the University's CPU, are required to set up procedures for registration of students, documentation and information provided to students, arrangements for approving promotional material, monitoring the effectiveness of the administrative arrangements, administering the assessment process, including moderation of papers and scripts and Boards of Examiners; provision of transcripts and other documentation required by students; timely alerting of the University's Exams Office of the need to issue certification of awards;

D9.1.8 Schools are required to advise staff in the Partner Organisation on the production of all documentation required by the University's quality assurance procedures. In particular, it is the Collaborative Partnership Leader's responsibility to assist the Partner Organisation in the production of the AMER.

## **D10 Review and Revalidation of Collaborative Arrangements**

D10.1 The aims and purpose of review and revalidation at programme level

D10.1.1 All collaborative programmes are subject to periodic review and revalidation. The maximum period of approval is six (6) years. The distinction between review and revalidation is described in sections D10.1.2 and D10.1.3.

### **D10.1.2 Review**

- i Review is a quality management process and procedure, the aim of which is to re-affirm assurance to the Partner Organisation, the University, students, their parents or other sponsors and other interested stakeholders (for example, accrediting or professional bodies; UK external quality agencies; non UK governmental approval agencies) that, as appropriate, the programme continues to:
  - a meet the requirements and standards for the relevant award(s), as established by the University and by the UK QAA;
  - b be supported by satisfactory human and physical resources and an appropriate learning environment;
  - c be supported by satisfactory quality of teaching and that appropriate mechanisms are in place to enhance quality;
  - d be appropriate to the needs of students, employers, and the wider aims of the Partner Organisation.
- ii The appropriateness and the extent to which these core areas are explored will, necessarily, be determined on an individual basis. For example, the nature of the focus on the programme itself may be different if the programme is a University programme (and, therefore, subject to routine University programme review, see section B1) delivered off campus than it will be for a non-University programme that is reviewed. For guidance on review and revalidation events, please refer to the Centre for Academic Quality website.
- iii In addition, Review will consider:
  - a the quality of the programme in operation, as demonstrated by the annual monitoring process and the reports of the External Examiners and Collaborative Partnership Leaders;
  - b evidence that staff delivering the programme have updated themselves by, for example, engaging in relevant research, consultancy and professional activity and the extent to which this activity has, as appropriate, informed curriculum development;
  - c the effectiveness of the Partner Organisation's own mechanisms for critical appraisal of the programme and its delivery;



- d the effectiveness of other internal quality assurance arrangements in the Partner Organisation and of those in operation between the School and the Partner;
- e the rationale for any changes in the programme, its management, delivery or the arrangements for quality assurance since initial validation and any plans for future changes;
- f the impact of any institutional changes (either at the Partner Organisation or at the University) on delivery of this programme;
- g the effectiveness of the administrative arrangements, such as those associated with registration, examinations, Boards of Examiners, maintenance of student records in relation to this programme.

### D10.1.3 Revalidation

- i Revalidation can be defined as the formal outcome of a successful Review. It is, therefore, usual for a University Revalidation event to be the formal culmination of a review process that may have taken place over a longer period of preceding time. For example, the routine annual monitoring process is undoubtedly part of the on-going review process that follows initial validation. Part of the function of the Revalidation event is, therefore, to offer the opportunity for critical reflection on the effectiveness of the annual monitoring process. The event will include in its programme and in its documentation, explicitly, the opportunity for both partners to reflect on the effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements.
- ii As part of on-going monitoring and review of collaborative programmes, Schools must be alert to any significant changes subsequent to initial validation that may affect the approval status of a collaborative programme. Examples of significant changes might include failure to recruit, substantial changes in anticipated student numbers (up or down), proposals to change titles or modes of delivery, proposals to change the location of teaching to a new site, changes in ownership, name or management structure of the Partner Organisation. In such cases, the ADoS(AQA) should consult with the relevant ADAQA and AS in considering appropriate action.
- iii AS will make all arrangements for review and revalidation, in accordance with guidance on the Centre for Academic Quality website.
- iv Formal Revalidation of a collaborative programme must be achieved at least three (3) months before the existing period of validation expires. Ideally, the revalidation event should take place at least six (6) months before expiry. AS will remind Schools of the need for revalidation during the year preceding expiry (i.e. towards the end of one (1) Academic Year where revalidation is due before the end of the next Academic Year). However, it remains the responsibility of Schools to initiate Planning Meetings and to ensure that revalidation is initiated in good time.
- v The need for the re-approval of a partnership (see section D3.3) should be considered whenever a collaborative programme is due to be revalidated.

## D10.2 Review or Revalidation outside the stated period of approval

D10.2.1 In addition to the above, it is important to note that the validation status of all programmes leading to University awards is subject to satisfactory annual monitoring and evaluation and to the continuing approval of the Partner Organisation, see sections C2 and D3. Where necessary and appropriate, SACs or ESEC may require a Review and/or remedial action to be taken before the formal period of validation has expired. Memoranda of Agreement make provision for circumstances where there are deemed to be major or significant quality issues, such that the standard of the University's award is at risk. Partner Organisations may also request Review or they may have cause to terminate a programme (or its operation at one or more campuses or centres, for example).

D10.2.2 Depending on the nature of the issues that suggest that an interim review or reconsideration of approval status would be prudent, the School should take one of two actions:

- i send out an Audit Team to investigate the problems and report back with recommendations to the ADoS (AQA) or ESEC. The Audit Team must normally be chaired by someone independent of the School and must not include the Collaborative Partnership Leader. AS and the relevant ADAQA must be fully consulted if this action is taken and may intervene in the process. The Audit Team must provide a written report to the ADoS(AQA), who will ensure that the SAC is briefed, and to the DAQA;
- ii in consultation with the DAQA, AS, OVC, the Partner Organisation, take steps to terminate the collaboration (see section D11).

## D11 Terminating a Collaborative Agreement

D11.1 A decision to propose termination might be the outcome of mutual agreement between the partners that might be based on, for example, awareness that the market for a programme has declined, changes in regulations within a country or changes in the ownership, management or strategy of a Partner Organisation or of the School/University. In addition, the University has, in the past, given notice of termination based on one or more of the following factors:

- i continuing evidence that a Partner Organisation is unaware of the limitations and requirements that collaboration places upon the programme and its delivery. This has included, for example, delivery in locations not approved by the University and delivery of modules not approved by the University as part of an approved programme;
- ii concern for quality and standards raised by School representatives (for example, Chairs of Boards of Examiners, Collaborative Partnership Leaders) and External Examiners.

D11.2 It might also include:

- i non-viable numbers leading to inadequate income to support the collaboration;
- ii students admitted in breach of admissions requirements;

- iii the numbers for which the collaboration was approved being exceeded without prior agreement;
  - iv evidence that the programme is being delivered in ways that are contrary to the approved PS or the DMDs.
- D11.3 These, or failure to comply with the requirements of the MoA by either party, could be grounds for termination.
- D11.4 Termination of either an individual programme or of the approval for the Partner Organisation can be proposed, mainly on the grounds outlined above. Where the University or a School reaches a decision to terminate a collaborative arrangement, usually following consultation with the Partner Organisation and with the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor (or nominee), a proposal for termination should be made to ADC (using form ADC2c). The paper should outline, in summary:
- i the reason(s) for proposing termination;
  - ii transitional arrangements for students already registered with the University;
  - iii the timescale by which the last students registered with the University will complete study for their awards.
- D11.5 If ADC agrees to termination, the matter will be progressed by the OVC in consultation with the Director of Legal Services and University Solicitor. Following the University's formal notification to the Partner of intent to terminate the collaboration, all communication related to termination with the Partner Organisation or with students must be channelled through the OVC. Where termination is of the Partner Organisation, any remaining programmes leading to University awards at the Partner Organisation will also have to be terminated.

Sharon Harrison-Barker  
Secretary and Registrar  
Signed: **1 August 2023**

#### **Alternative format**

If you need this document in an alternative format, please email us at [governanceservices@herts.ac.uk](mailto:governanceservices@herts.ac.uk) or telephone us on +44 (0)1707 28 6006.