

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP PROCEDURES



February 2025

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Document title
Collaborative Partnerships Procedures
Document author and department
Academic Registry
Approving body
Academic Registrar
Date of approval
January 2025
Review date
2028/2029
Edition no.
13 (previous versions known as Academic Partner Policy/Collaborative Partnerships /Provision Doc)
ID Code
21
Date of effect
2025
For public access online (internet)
External queries relating to the document are to be referred in the first instance to the Corporate Governance team: email corporate-governance@port.ac.uk If you need this document in an alternative format, please email corporate.communications@port.ac.uk

The latest version of this document is always to be found at:

<https://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/document-021.pdf>.

Summary

What is this document about?

This document sets out the University's standard operating procedures for, and expectations of, academic collaborative partnerships that lead to an award and/or an award of credit by the University. It details the characteristics of different types of academic collaborative partnerships; the roles and responsibilities of those involved in managing and delivering partnerships; and provides an overview of the different stages of the partnership lifecycle.

Further information, guidance and supporting documentation can be found at the following University web pages:

- [Collaborative Programmes](#)
- [Course Approval](#)
- [Review Cycle](#)

Who is this for?

This document is primarily for University and partner staff who are or will be engaged in collaborative partnerships. It will also be of interest to the Office for Students and the wider public.

How does the University check this is followed?

The document is checked through the process it sets out, and operationally through Academic Registry.

Who to contact if you have any queries about this document?

If you are external to the University and you have any questions about this document please contact Academic Registry at the following email address: academicregistry@port.ac.uk

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the agreed framework through which the University manages collaborative provision, across all academic levels, of the credit and awards it delivers in partnership with other organisations. Its purpose is to ensure that robust arrangements are in place to underpin the initiation, development, operation and review of collaborative partnership activities, and to affirm that students studying for University of Portsmouth credit and awards, delivered in partnership with others, are of high quality and benefit from an excellent student experience.
- 1.2 This document concerns Collaborative Partnerships: those that extend the range of learning opportunities available to prospective and current University of Portsmouth students, both inside and outside the UK. It covers a range of partnership arrangements, which benefit the University, its students and its partners alike, and relates to provision with others where any of the following features:
- An organisation other than the University is involved in providing some or all of the learning, teaching and/or research environment, delivery, assessment, research supervision and/or student support;
 - Academic credit;
 - Academic award.
- 1.3 The Collaborative Partnerships arrangements approved by the University reflect the [University Strategies](#). The importance of fruitful and mutually beneficial partnerships is recognised, particularly in facilitating access to higher education, supporting research, curriculum development and enhancement, and reciprocal staff development. All partnerships will be considered for approval in light of their alignment with the University's strategies.
- 1.4 Collaborative Partnerships should make a substantial, valued, and long-term contribution to the sustainability of the University. Depending on the type of arrangement, a successful partnership, will contribute to the achievement of one or more of the following aims:
- to enhance reputational benefits through association for both the University and its partners;
 - to support both the University's and the partner's contribution to research and innovation;

- to support both the University's and the partner's contribution to civic and global society by contributing to economic growth;
- to provide a strategic response to local, national and international employer or workforce needs;
- raise the educational aspirations of our communities by facilitating and embracing different modes of delivery, through widening access and increasing progression opportunities, and by promoting lifelong learning;
- offer greater opportunities to students in terms of enhanced and varied courses, developing language competence and cultural awareness, and improved employability skills and opportunities;
- develop a global mindset in staff and students through mobility, collaborative projects and other activities that enable learning with and from other cultures;
- enable collaborative contribution to the development of educational and research capacity and capability in emerging economies.

1.5 This document provides information to University staff involved in the development, operation and review of Collaborative Partnership arrangements, and outlines the requirements for the managerial, contractual and academic oversight elements. By adhering to this document, staff involved in the delivery of partnerships must take shared responsibility for ensuring that the University continues to operate in line with sector-wide expectations and practices, as outlined in the Office for Students' ongoing Conditions of Registration [Office for Students](#)

1.6 The document includes guidance for partner staff concerning the University's expectations of its partners and the provisions that are required to:

- Ensure academic standards and outcomes are maintained in alignment with both the University's and sector's expectations, ensuring the delivery of high-quality education that meets the regulatory and accreditation requirements;
- benefit from the support that the University offers concerning partner staff development, fostering an equitable, supportive and engaging learning environment aimed at enhancing teaching and administrative practices;

- ensure that the University continues to be able to discharge its responsibilities to relevant external bodies, maintaining compliance with accreditation bodies and the Office for Students B3 thresholds;
- protect the reputation of both the University and its partner in the delivery of Collaborative Partnerships, ensuring consistent delivery of high-quality academic courses that reflect the values and standards of the University.

2. University's Expectations of Partners

2.1 The University is responsible for ensuring that the standards of its awards are credible and secure and that the student experience is of high quality, irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them. The University has set out expectations for partner institutions to support this:

2.2 Support our mission and strategy by:

- being of good repute and academic or professional standing amongst their peers;
- having a strategic plan and direction complementary to the University's;
- working ambitiously, responsibly and openly, in line with our values.

2.3 Offer security and scope for sustainable development of our relationship by:

- demonstrating sound financial management and financial security;
- having the legal capacity to enter into, and deliver against, a contractual arrangement with the University;
- having the resources (learning environment, support structure, facilities) in place to be able to support the partnership arrangement and the learning opportunities being delivered;
- demonstrating their commitment to the partnership and understanding their responsibilities;
- supporting our commitment to an ethical, anti-corruption and equal opportunity culture.

2.4 Actively support our vision to enhance the student experience by:

- Having in place appropriate qualified academic and/or professional staff who have the expertise, experience, capability and capacity to deliver to the appropriate standards;
- Establishing and maintaining effective staff development processes that promote continuous improvement, inclusive teaching practices, and adherence to the latest pedagogical advancements;
- recognising the value of, and actively supporting, student engagement in quality assurance processes, ensuring that students' voices are heard, valued and integral to the continuous improvement of the academic courses;
- Provide the appropriate environment that prioritises the safety, welfare, and well-being of students and staff, with policies and support mechanisms that promote mental health, physical safety, and overall well-being
- Promoting an inclusive and equitable learning environment where diversity is celebrated, ensuring that all students, regardless of background, are supported to achieve their full potential and are treated with respect and fairness, acknowledging national legal frameworks and cultural considerations.
- Embedding inclusive practices in curriculum design, teaching methods, and support services, ensuring that barriers to learning are identified and addressed proactively, recognising that tailored guidance and capacity-building may be required;
- Actively contributing to the University's broader goals of fostering global citizenship, social responsibility, and sustainability, ensuring students are prepared to engage with diverse perspectives in an interconnected world.

3. Collaborative Arrangement Types

3.1 Collaborative partners can be based either in the UK or internationally. International partnerships are often referred to as Transnational Education (TNE) partnerships.

3.2 Whilst the list of different collaborative types set out in this document and on the Academic Registry website is comprehensive, it is not exhaustive, as it is recognised that individual

partnerships can offer different types of provision tailored to meet the specific needs or circumstances of the arrangement.

3.3 This section is concerned primarily with the Collaborative Partnerships model, not the classification of its funding type.

3.4 The University requires an Agreement to be put in place for the following types of arrangements:

- University credit or award that is delivered with or by a partner organisation in whole or part;
- Contractual agreements to recognise qualifications at a partner for admission or advanced standing to a University course;
- University student mobility to study at a partner or receive students from a partner institution to study at the University;
- Arrangements that confer Associate College, or Associate Academic Department status;
- An arrangement where the University is the sub-contracted partner to another provider.
- A split-site delivery arrangement, typically for research degrees
- Arrangements to explore the discussion of topics with a partner.
- Branch Campus (delivery of a suite of University courses at another campus, only where this involves a partner either for part or all of delivery or support of delivery). A Branch Campus that was 100% owned and delivered by the University would not fall under the ambit of this document as no partner would be involved;
- Support provider (partner provides learner support or facilities to students on a University award, module or course).
- Collaborative Specific Credit (delivery of part of a University of Portsmouth course by a partner, but not a whole course/award)
- Collaborative Credit-bearing Short Course (credits delivered with, or by, a partner)

3.5 Courses and awards delivered with a partner include sub-contracted and validated provisions, which include the following academic types:

- Franchise academic type – this includes partner delivery of a course/award, at an external location, which is the same as the delivery of the course/award at the University;
- Validated academic type – this includes partner delivery of a course/award, at an external location, which is not delivered or not the same as the course/award at the University;

3.7 Awards involving a partner may include one of the following:

- an award solely by the University of Portsmouth (single award);
- a dual/double award which may lead to both the University and the partner organisation separately conferring their awards;
- a joint award whereby the University and the partner organisation jointly confer a single award.

For further guidance on arrangements for dual and joint awards, refer to the QAA Characteristics Statement for [Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body](#).

3.8 The Office for Students (OfS) categorises collaborative partnership arrangements into two core groups: **sub-contractual** and **validation**. In sub-contractual arrangements, the University retains overall responsibility for the course, while delegating certain aspects of teaching, assessment, or support services to the partner. In contrast, validation arrangements involve the University approving a partner's course as meeting its academic standards, with the partner responsible for the delivery, while the University maintains oversight to ensure quality and compliance with sector standards. Whilst this is subject to OfS regulations, here are some typical operational differences between the two groups, they can be grouped under accountability, funding flow, and regulation and reporting:

Sub-contractual Arrangements

- Included in the University's Access and Participation Plan (APP)
- Funding is typically routed through the University, with a proportion allocated to the partner. The University remains the primary recipient of student tuition fees
- Students can access a student loan vis the University, subject to their eligibility/course eligibility
- Applicants apply directly to the University or through UCAS using the University's institutional code
- Students are fully enrolled with the University

- The University bears full responsibility for quality assurance, regulatory compliance, and reporting to the OfS via its external returns

Validation Arrangements

- The partner usually receives tuition fees directly from the student.
- The University has a separate financial agreement with the partner under a business plan model
- Applicants apply directly to the partner or if applicable, the partner's UCAS institution code
- The partner assumes greater responsibility for operational management, and the University maintains oversight of academic quality and standards through approval, monitoring and review

3.8 Contractual agreements with a partner to recognise qualifications at a partner for admission or advanced standing to a University course include:

- Advanced Standing (non-guaranteed entry to a University course with credit transfer from a partner);
- Articulation (guaranteed entry to a University course with credit transfer from a partner).

3.9 Agreements to facilitate mobility of University students to study at a partner institution or receive students from a partner institution to study at the University include:

- Student Exchange;
- Study Abroad.

3.10 Arrangement to explore discussion of topics with a partner to implement formal written agreements in future:

- Cooperation agreement.

3.11 The titles of 'Associate College' or 'Associate Academic Department' are conferred by the University on a partner educational, research or practitioner organisation. These arrangements follow the Associate College and Associate Academic Department approval and renewal process and are captured in a contract drafted by the Academic Registry.

3.12 Although not a partnership type in itself, flying faculty arrangements, whereby University staff travel to deliver at another site, may or may not involve a partner organisation. If the

activity depends on the partner's supply of a service, resource or equipment, without which it is impossible or difficult for the student to complete the intended learning outcomes, then typically, a contractual agreement drafted by the University's Partnerships team in Corporate Governance (support provider or service agreement) will be needed with the partner. An exception to the foregoing is if the provision only requires a generic room for an activity to take place, then the Partnerships team will not normally need to draft a contract, and a simple invoice-based booking can be made between the University and the supplier of the room.

- 3.13 New courses, or proposals to offer arrangements via an alternative mode of study (e.g. the addition of a full-time route to an existing part-time delivery) or alternative methods of delivery (e.g. change of campus-based to block delivery or distance learning), will need to be considered via the relevant course approval or modification process.
- 3.14 Degree Apprenticeships (DA) may involve the University working as a Lead Provider with a partner to subcontract parts of the taught provision or subcontract functional skills (L2 English & Maths), to a partner. The University may also work as a subcontractor to another Lead Provider's DA. In addition to the University's Collaborative Partnerships and course approval processes, all DAs must be conducted according to the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) rules as set out in its grant to the University (or the ESFA grant to the partner if the University is a subcontractor). The ESFA has to approve the arrangements and the partners in advance of delivery of the DA and must specify the amount and nature of the subcontracting.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Governance

- 4.1.1 Collaborative Partnerships are a formal, contractual relationship between the University and the partner organisation. Whilst individual members of staff can initiate and liaise with colleagues regarding negotiating a contractual agreement, they alone cannot approve the arrangement.
- 4.1.2 Approval is a collective decision taken in line with the University's strategic plans, quality assurance, contractual and financial processes. Only individuals with the authority to sign contracts (also referred to as an Agreement) on the University's behalf may do so, and a contract must be signed based on an independent approval process. Formal oversight,

approval, and review of partnerships are enacted through the University's corporate and academic governance structures.

4.2 Professional Services Support

- 4.2.1 The University has a well-embedded organisational structure in place for the management and support of partnerships, which includes formal committees (governance), academic faculties and schools, and professional services. Proposals for new partnerships may be initiated through strategic opportunities identified at the University Executive level, or through school and faculty activities.
- 4.2.2 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement and Student Life), Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement), and Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education Partnerships) have specific responsibility for the strategic development of our Collaborative Partnerships, internationally and in the UK, respectively.
- 4.2.3 Business development activities and opportunity leads are also typically supported by Associate Deans, other global leads appointed in faculties, Heads of Schools, UoP Global, and the Degree Apprenticeships Office.
- 4.2.4 UoP Global office also supports transnational education partnership development and operation, particularly in terms of partner liaison.
- 4.2.5 The ongoing quality and operational management of our partnerships is typically fulfilled by Associate Deans and/or Heads of School (with their designated Academic Contacts). Some larger, more complex partner arrangements will necessitate operational groups (see section 4.6) to coordinate the various activities.

4.3 Academic Registry

- 4.3.1 Academic Registry offers a central point of contact for advice and guidance regarding all aspects of the national regulatory frameworks governing collaborative partnerships, and the quality of the collaborative student experience and outcome, this includes: course and partnership approval, and all aspects of annual monitoring and review of collaborative partnerships.

4.4 Corporate Governance

- 4.4.1 The Partnerships Team in Corporate Governance are responsible for the management of, and drafting of, contracts with appropriate advice sought from the University Solicitor,

Executive Director of Corporate Governance, and/or Deputy Vice-Chancellor Global Engagement and Student Life, Executive Deans and other faculty stakeholders, and securing relevant sign-off.

4.5 Planning Department

4.5.1 The Planning Department is responsible for issuing annual funding letters to UK collaborative partners running franchised or validated courses under a sub-contracted model. This involves agreeing on student targets with each College and leading faculty. Planning also liaises with collaborative partners regarding setting tuition fees under guidance set by the University's Tuition Fees and Scholarships Group.

4.6 Academic Services

4.6.1 The Cross-Faculty Support Office (CFSO) provides a comprehensive service supporting student and academic administration for most* courses delivered under academic partnership agreements. The team handles various activities, including curriculum management, student records management, assessment coordination, examination boards, progression, and awards. In addition, the CFSO responds to student and academic queries and signposts partners to key university services.

*Some partner courses are administered by the Faculty Administrative Services Centres (FASCs).

4.7 Faculty and School Support

4.7.1 Faculty and school members play a critical role in managing collaborative partnerships, ensuring alignment with the Collaborative Partnerships document and relevant University policies. Responsibilities include implementing quality assurance measures, conducting due diligence, and overseeing course approval and modification processes, including input into business planning. They review and comment on contracts in consultation with the Corporate Governance team and participate in the evaluation and development of partnerships. Faculties must ensure partnership management is embedded in faculty and school-level academic committees so that they can monitor the student experience and outcomes. They are also responsible for allocating staff and resources, delivering training for partners on University policies, and sharing best practices to address common challenges, all to maintain a high-quality student experience.

4.8 Academic Services (either by Central Administration or CFSO):

- 4.8.1 Ensuring students are registered on the University's student records system, and maintenance of the student's record and their achievements as appropriate to the type of partnership;
- Ensuring student status (i.e. withdrawals, study break/interruption, transfer, amendments) are correctly recorded;
 - For partnerships where the partner pays a proportion of the fees it collects from the student to the University, invoicing;
 - Liaising with partner administrative staff, University and Partner academic contacts as required;
 - Undertaking administrative duties concerning the setting and marking/moderation of assessments, where required, and input of marks into the University's student record system;
 - External Examiner liaison, administrative duties concerning Boards of Examiners and Boards of Studies, as appropriate to the partner arrangements;
 - Producing award transcripts and parchments for University awards and verifying these.

4.9 Partnership Operations Group

- 4.9.1 Once a partnership is approved, for cross-faculty arrangements or arrangements that are particularly complex or large, an appropriately constituted Partnership Operations Group may be formed to coordinate the operation of the partnership across different subject areas, and/or faculties as the case may be, to ensure consistency and equity across the partnership on an ongoing basis.

4.10 University Academic Contacts

- 4.10.1 At a course level, and for partnerships developed at a school rather than a multi-faculty level, the University Academic Contact in the school is the first line of contact for the partner's academic contact and is responsible for the day-to-day oversight, enhancement, and health of the partnership arrangement for academic issues, and offers support for the

student experience. In some arrangements, the term Link Tutor can be used instead of Academic Contact.

- 4.10.2 The Head of School ensures that the University Academic Contact has sufficient time allocated to the staff workload to undertake this role.
- 4.10.3 The University Academic Contact is supported in their role by the Cross-Faculty Support Office Associate Deans, Heads of School, Executive Deans, and where appropriate to the provision, Faculty Research Degree Coordinators.

4.11 University Administrative Contacts

- 4.11.1 The University Administrative Contact, staff member, is a key administrative liaison point between the academic staff in the University and the partner, and the administrative staff at both institutions. This role supports the core partnership administrative functions relating to the student's journey. Specific activities may vary from partner to partner and are detailed in the Collaborative Operational Handbook for the partnership.

4.12 Partner staff

- 4.12.1 Partner staff who are involved in the delivery or support of the partnership provision should be in place before delivery commences, and CVs of all staff who will be involved in the delivery form part of the formal approval and review documentation.
- 4.12.2 The roles of Partner Academic Contact and Partner Administrative Contact should be those as mirrored at the University and it is the responsibility of the University Academic Contact and if cross-faculty or cross-department, the University Academic Lead and school to ensure the Partner Contacts are clear on their respective roles and responsibilities. Specific details of these activities are confirmed in the Collaborative Operational Handbook document for each partnership arrangement.
- 4.12.3 The University ensures that all partner staff teaching or providing academic support to students on a course delivered by the partner are adequately qualified and experienced to do so. This is achieved through the [Partner Associate Lecturer \(PAL\) Scheme](#) which formally recognises and approves staff employed by the partner to teach or provide academic support on partnership courses.
- 4.12.4 A PAL is typically in a lecturing role at the partner and contributes to the delivery and/or support of the partnership course. PALs are entitled to a variety of benefits provided by the University including staff development opportunities and access to various online library

resources (where licences permit). PAL status does not constitute any form of legally binding contract of employment between the named PAL and the University.

4.12.5 Fuller information on the roles and responsibilities for collaborative arrangements leading to a University award are set out in a collaborative operational handbook.

4.13 Partner Staff Development for Staff Teaching on a University Course or Award

4.13.1 The University's commitment to supporting staff to Teach Well and consistently Well also applies to collaborative partners.

4.13.2 For Subcontracted partners, where practicable, the University will offer partnership staff the opportunity to develop their professional knowledge and personal skills.

4.13.3 The University offers a varied range of academic seminars and workshops, consultancy services, professional development events and advice on a wide range of academic areas, specifically tailored for University partners. Partners are expected to support their staff in accessing development opportunities, where possible, to ensure the effective and efficient management and operation of the partnership. It is acknowledged that the distance of some overseas partners presents challenges for providing staff development, and thus opportunities for providing partner staff development during staff visits, or the use of technology, should be exploited. Staff development activities should be costed for those partnerships that require a business plan.

4.13.4 The University will consider all staff curricula vitae, staff development plans, partner staff development policies, and details of partner staff engagement at teaching at the Higher Education (HE) level through course approval. Periodic Review also considers staff development activities undertaken by partner staff since approval/since the preceding review, including those offered by the University.

4.13.5 It is recognised that additional staff development, mentoring or supervision may be required for those partner staff who are less experienced in delivering HE-level courses, and who will be involved in formative or summative assessment.

4.13.6 The University's school and faculty should ensure that appropriate training, briefing and mentoring is provided to those partner staff, to ensure their competence to undertake the necessary roles and responsibilities, and that assessment is robust. The requirements should be tailored to the nature of the arrangement.

4.13.7 Partner staff contributing to research supervision are approved by the University during the admissions process for postgraduate research degrees. Appropriate training in University of Portsmouth supervision processes and responsibilities is provided via the Graduate School Supervisory Workshops.

4.13.8 The University, through the Centre for Academic Development and Innovation (CADI) also offers partner staff the opportunity to engage with online resources, training and study guides in essential skills, supporting the adoption of appropriate approaches to learning, teaching, and assessment. Online training modules include planning and enhancing student learning, assessment feedback and marking, and evaluation of practice.

4.14 Management and Support of Student Exchange and Outbound Study Abroad

4.14.1 Student mobility is coordinated by Departmental exchange coordinators, and where relevant, in liaison with the Global Mobility team in UoP Global. Work placement activities overseas are coordinated by Faculty placement offices.

4.14.2 The University and the partner, each as 'home' and 'host' to students as the case may be, have a duty of care to students undertaking a student exchange or other mobility between the respective institutions. The University must ensure that an adequate risk assessment is carried out before the activity takes place, including establishing appropriate insurance requirements, immigration and, and that students are aware of the risks of studying in the host country before they embark on their mobility. An appropriate written contract must be signed between the University and the partner before the exchange or outbound study abroad can take place.

4.15 Student Voice

4.15.1 As registered students of the University, students automatically have associate member status of the [University of Portsmouth Students' Union](#).

4.15.2 The University expects all partners to provide students with formal mechanisms to provide feedback on their learning experience and to promote and support a student representation system. Whilst there may be agreed partner variation in student feedback and representation processes, the principles set out in the University's Student Voice policy should be applied.

5. Partnership lifecycle

5.1 Establishing a new partnership - Consultation

- 5.1.1 Proposals may come from within a faculty or school, or from senior executives. Before undertaking any formal approval processes, the person wishing to initiate a Collaborative Partnerships (the proposer) or nominated individual(s) must discuss this with appropriate stakeholders within the faculty and University to establish appetite, feasibility, alignment and strategic fit for the proposal.
- 5.1.2 The proposal should be discussed with the contracts team in Corporate Governance and the quality team in the Academic Registry to ensure that the University is aware of proposals from the very beginning and to advise on approval processes and stakeholder consultation.

5.2 Due Diligence and Risk Management

- 5.2.1 An important consideration for any partnership proposal is to understand and evaluate the benefits and risks of the type of partnership and collaborating with the partner organisation. Consideration needs to be given as to whether the proposed arrangements align with our expectations of our partners.
- 5.2.2 The nature of the risks involved and whether these present opportunities or threats depends on the partner, nature, and scope of the activity. Due diligence may involve academic, financial taxation, and legal considerations. Through the Portfolio Approval process, the University assesses the risks involved and mitigates them appropriately.
- 5.2.3 The University has a structured risk-based approach to consider partnership proposals. Due diligence is undertaken that is appropriate and proportionate to the nature and type of partner and partnership to effectively identify, interrogate and understand the risks that may be involved. Such due diligence is conducted through formal approval and review procedures.
- 5.2.4 Specific due diligence and risk management processes are detailed in the approval and review processes relevant to the type of partnership.

5.3 Approval of Partnership Provision

5.3.1 Academic Registry manages the University's Portfolio Approval, Modification and Closure Policy by supporting Portfolio Approval, Modifications and Closures within the course lifecycle. These processes include all award-bearing provisions and collaborative courses.

Course and partnership approval are underpinned by a structured strategic portfolio approval cycle, informed by strategic market research and employer insight into the skills needed for graduate roles. The process is designed to be strategic, robust, supportive, inclusive and flexible. The overall structure of the process revolves around three distinct gateways, serving as pivotal points to guide and streamline the approval process. These are:

- Strategic Approval Gateway
- Resources Approval Gateway
- Curriculum Approval Gateway

5.3.2 Strategic Approval Gateway

The Strategic Approval Gateway comprises two key elements: strategic consideration and planning of the University-wide academic portfolio, and the approval of individual courses and collaborative partnerships. Both of these elements are conducted through the University Portfolio Approval Group (UPAG). UPAG is also responsible for evaluating individual course and partnership proposals and providing strategic approval for their implementation. By granting strategic approval, UPAG ensures that each course and partnership proposal contributes to the broader goals of the University. At this point, the new course/partnership proposal is ready to move to the Resources Approval Gateway.

5.3.3 Resources Approval Gateway

The Resources Approval Gateway is designed to be flexible and led by the faculty and is focused on assessing the financial viability and availability of resources necessary to support the proposal. These discussions must include how existing resources can be redirected to support the new proposal. It considers the recruitment targets set at the earlier Strategic Approval Gateway and aligns with the intended teaching, learning and delivery strategy for the course and/or partnership. During the Resources Gateway, high-priority proposals, as confirmed by UPAG, may receive targeted support from key departments within the University, these include Marketing and Communications, UoP Global, and Careers and Employability.

5.3.4 Curriculum/Partner Approval Gateway

Preparations for the Curriculum/Partner Approval Gateway can commence at any stage, but it is recommended that the earliest point is after the Strategic Approval Gateway. The Curriculum/Partner Approval Gateway will typically consist of a panel review to allow for both partner and course scrutiny in line with the University's Quality Assurance processes.

Further detail and support for this process can be found within the Portfolio Approval Process Guidance document and on the Academic Registry webpage.

- 5.3.5 Where additional approval or accreditation is required from any external body, it is the responsibility of the relevant University school/faculty to ensure that formal approval is sought, and any conditions made by external bodies are met before the University's approval process is finalised. Subject to the requirements of external bodies, it may be appropriate for them to have input into the formal University approval and/or review process, which could include a presence on the panel or additional documentation for submission for approval and/or review. The school should therefore ensure that effective liaison is undertaken with the relevant body/bodies at an appropriate early stage to ensure that the University's approval and/or review processes may be completed promptly. Any reports and/or action plans produced by external bodies, or to meet their requirements, need to be provided to the Academic Registry for formal submission to the University Education and Student Experience Committee (UESEC).
- 5.3.6 The school/faculty should also keep apprised of any ongoing requirements set by the external body and the status of any formal recognition should be made clear to the partner and prospective students. Guidance on providing documentation and information for external bodies can be sought from the Academic Registry. The school/faculty is responsible for advising the Academic Registry regarding any prospective or agreed changes to external body requirements, particularly where these have the potential to impact academic standards or the quality of students' learning opportunities.

5.4 Contractual arrangements

- 5.4.1 The contractual agreements that lead to, or involve, an award or credit of the University are drafted and managed by the Partnerships team in Corporate Governance. Contracts for the supply of services around innovation, research, knowledge transfer, and development of learning materials by a partner that do not lead to, or involve, an award or credit of the

University are typically drafted and managed by the RI Legal team also in Corporate Governance.

- 5.4.2 All partnerships, within the scope of this document, between the University and a partner are subject to a formal fixed-term contractual agreement which sets out the responsibilities and obligations of each partner. The contract assures that the parties understand and agree to undertake their respective responsibilities. The form of agreement will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the partnership and will vary according to the scope, coverage and the intended outcomes of the partnership. The activities contemplated under the contract must be agreed in writing and signed by the authorised signatory of the parties involved before the activities can commence.
- 5.4.3 Contractual agreements are drafted in liaison with the relevant faculty and/or school, and other University stakeholders such as members of the University Executive Board (UEB), Planning, Central Finance, Academic Registry, University Solicitor, as applicable, and discussions and negotiations with the partner.
- 5.4.4 Contractual agreements between the University and the partner must include details of any financial arrangements that may apply to the activity. Where financial arrangements apply, appropriate and proportional considerations must be given to the following:
- Financial due diligence is undertaken periodically to establish the partner's financial probity, currency and taxation risk if overseas, and other financial and reputational risks to the University;
 - Appropriate business planning is undertaken before the activity commences to establish the expenditure and income;
 - The periodic review and re-evaluation of business planning is undertaken by the University / Faculty to ensure that the activities are, and continue to be, correctly costed.
- 5.4.5 In addition to the above, where the activity involves partner delivery of a University award and is conducted on a full economic cost basis:
- Credit checks are undertaken periodically by the University to monitor financial and credit risk;
 - Direct and indirect costs to the University are evaluated and understood;

- Business plans are formulated in consultation with internal stakeholders and Central Finance, agreed and signed off by the Head of School, Executive Dean of Faculty, or Directorate;
- Email confirmation of financial checklist from Central Finance to signify that the proposal has been considered by the management accountant;
- Invoicing arrangements are established with the partner.

Management accountants for the relevant Faculty can advise on the appropriate business planning methodology for other arrangements.

5.4.6 Once agreed, both partners sign and execute the formal agreement before the partnership commences, and where applicable to a University award, before any students are registered on a course and/or award. These agreements assure that each party:

- understands the other party's requirements, particularly the University's requirements where an award of the University is involved;
- agrees to fulfil its responsibilities and obligations to the other party;
- Understand the specific details of the educational or support activities and an overview of the management and administrative arrangements relating to the University and the partner.

5.4.7 The only persons permitted to accept (i.e. sign) a contractual agreement that bind the University are as follows:

- Vice-Chancellor;
- Provost;
- The Deputy Vice-Chancellor(s);
- Chief Financial Officer;
- Director of Finance;
- Deputy Directors of Finance, Financial Controller, or Companies Accountant.

This is set out in the University's Financial Regulations; please refer to this Regulation for the most up-to-date list.

5.4.8 Signed (executed) contractual agreements are held centrally on the Universities eRecords system - this is done by the Partnerships team in Corporate Governance. The parties

exchange electronic copies of the signed contractual agreement for each other's records.

The signing process is typically organised by the Partnerships team.

- 5.4.9 Contractual agreements contain a standard clause relating to re-negotiation and/or extension. The contractual agreement renewal process is initiated and managed by the Partnerships team and in discussion with the relevant senior managers and other University colleagues, as appropriate.

5.5 Collaborative Operational Handbook and Partnership Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.5.1 The Collaborative Operational Handbook, which may be a physical or digital document, is a definitive document that sets out in detail the operational arrangements of both parties in support of the partnership. It is produced for partnerships that involve delivery or research supervision of a University award (in part or in full) by a partner organisation, and as such, should be discussed and agreed with the partner. It is initially produced as part of the documentation requirements for the collaborative course approval process. Operational arrangements for cross-faculty, extensive or complex partnerships should be captured consistently across the partnership. It is also advised that a more detailed roles and responsibilities checklist is produced.
- 5.5.2 Noting that partnerships evolve, it is important that key operational documents evolve accordingly. As a definitive document supporting the management of a partnership, the Collaborative Operational Handbook should be reviewed and updated periodically, as appropriate to the risk, complexity and nature of the changing arrangements, at a minimum to tie in with the partnership review cycle.

5.6 Annual Monitoring of Partnership Arrangements

- 5.6.1 The annual monitoring and review of our Collaborative Partnerships provision is embedded in the core quality policies and procedures of the University. This ensures the effective management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, and how these underpin the delivery of positive outcomes for all students, including those on courses delivered through partnership arrangements. Quality is most effectively evaluated and enhanced by those directly involved in the educational process, and the most important site of responsibility for maintaining academic quality rests with individual staff in their contribution to courses and as facilitators of students' learning. The University's approach to

assuring standards and driving up quality through annual monitoring and academic review is:

- Data-informed
- Transparent
- Risk-based
- Proportionate
- Timely
- Action-focused
- Inclusive

5.6.2 Quality Priority Plans (QPPs) are used as a mechanism to capture good practice and prioritise actions for improvement. Collaborative Partners will be supported to complete course-based QPPs for subcontracted courses as detailed in the [Annual Monitoring and Academic Review Policy and Operational Handbook](#). For validated partners, a partner-level QPP will be required to maintain quality assurance monitoring on an annual basis.

Where a subcontracted course is identified for Academic Review, the Academic Review policy and process is followed as outlined within the [Annual Monitoring and Academic Review Policy and Operational Handbook](#).

5.7 Partnership Review

5.7.1 The University is ambitious that all courses are as successful and sustainable as possible, especially those being delivered by our collaborative partners. To support our partnership agreements, a Collaborative Course and Partnership Review (CCPR) will take place. CCPRs apply to all sub-contractual and validated UK and transnational collaborative award-bearing taught courses and partnerships. Owing to the added considerations of operating collaborative arrangements, collaborative courses and partnerships are reviewed on a default rotating five-yearly basis. Cyclical reviews will take place every 5 years with all collaborative partners, in line and ahead of any partnership agreement renewal with the University. More information on this process is detailed within the [Collaborative Partnership Review](#) Guidance document.

5.7.2 Scheduling of reviews may be brought forward if there is evidence to suggest there is a concern with the partnership arrangements, the curriculum, and/or the student experience. Periodic reviews of partnerships and courses can also be rescheduled or combined if there are benefits to the partner and/or the University to schedule the review alongside other

processes, such as combining with PSRB events or combining reviews for partner and home equivalent courses.

- 5.7.3 Academic Registry maintains a register of periodic review activity and produces the review schedule for all courses, confirming the schedule for each Faculty with the Associate Dean (Academic) annually.
- 5.7.4 Partnerships subject to special review by the University may be suspended or terminated if the University considers that academic standards are at risk; where a decision to suspend or terminate is taken, the University commits to ensuring that appropriate arrangements are put in place to safeguard the quality of the experience of those students who have yet to complete the requirements for their award.

5.8 Reviewing Partnership Contractual Arrangements

- 5.8.1 For partnerships that involve the delivery of a course that leads to a University award, the effectiveness of the contractual arrangements is reviewed before contract renewal; this is in addition to the annual and periodic quality assurance review processes that apply to the partnership and courses or awards. Before the renewal, the Partnerships team produces a paper containing information about key performance areas which is provided to the Faculty Executive and copied to the relevant Deputy-Vice Chancellor to assist the renewal decision.
- 5.8.2 Other types of contractual agreements follow a renewal process (part of the approval paperwork) that is dependent on the nature and risk of the activity. The renewal process requires that the effectiveness of the arrangement is considered and documented on the paperwork and forms part of the Faculty or University's decision to renew.

5.9 Ending Partnership Arrangements

- 5.9.1 Regardless of the reason for terminating a partnership arrangement, both the University and the partner have a duty of care to students undertaking a University award, or part of their studies, delivered at or with a collaborative partner. The particular arrangements for ending a partnership will depend on the circumstances, the agreement reached with the partner, and for UK-based partners, the University's Student Protection Plan submitted to the OfS.

Where University awards are delivered by or with a partner, the University's contractual agreements contain run-out clauses to teach-out or run-out arrangements to enable students to complete their studies if either organisation wishes to end the arrangement. The

University will endeavour to work with the partner to ensure that students registered on a University award can complete their course, including any referral assessments.

- 5.9.2 The University will endeavour to agree on a supportive student communication strategy for students registered at a partner studying a University award. The communication strategy reassures students that the University and the collaborative partner are committed to teaching the course, supporting the students throughout and communicating the final date for completion of referrals/repeat modules.

Annex 1: The University's Obligations to External Bodies

1.1 The Office for Students

1.1.1 The [Office for Students \(OfS\)](#) is the statutory regulator for English higher education provision. It regulates the sector on behalf of all students, in line with its published [regulatory framework](#). As an English higher education provider, the University of Portsmouth is subject to the requirements set out in the OfS regulatory framework. The priorities of the OfS are as follows:

- Helping students get into and succeed in higher education;
- Helping students stay informed;
- Making sure that students get a high-quality education that prepares them for the future;
- Protecting students' interests.

1.1.2 The University of Portsmouth is required to maintain registration with the OfS to be able to:

- Where appropriate, access public grant funding (such as funding to support teaching), and/or student support funding (such as enabling our home students to access student finance);
- Operate under a Home Office licence, which enables recruitment of international students (those students that are not UK nationals or do not have leave to remain in the UK);
- Maintain degree-awarding powers and University title.

1.1.3 UK-based partner organisations wishing to provide international students with visa clearance to join courses at the UK National Qualification Framework level 3 or above will also need to be registered with the OfS if they wish to apply for or maintain a Home Office Tier 4 licence.

1.2 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

- 1.2.1 Until 31 March 2023, the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#) is the [Designated Quality Body](#) (DQB) in England, acting on behalf of the [Office for Students \(OfS\)](#) to assess the quality of, and standards applied to, higher education offered by registered providers.
- 1.2.2 The QAA publishes the [UK Quality Code](#), which sets out national expectations for standards and quality of UK higher education. The expectations and practices outlined in the UK Quality Code capture ways of working that support effective management of quality and standards, and which underpin the delivery of positive outcomes for students. The University of Portsmouth's systems and processes are designed to reflect and contribute to sector-wide good practice and underpin the delivery of a positive experience for all of our students, including those studying with us via a partnership arrangement.
- 1.2.3 The UK Quality Code identifies specific core practices to be evidenced by the University when working in partnership with other organisations. These include having in place effective arrangements that ensure that the standards of our awards are credible and secure and that the academic experience is high quality, irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.

1.3 UK Visas & Immigration

- 1.3.1 The University of Portsmouth holds a licence issued by the Home Office to enable the recruitment of international students. The licence allows the University to sponsor international students via issuance of a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) for them to obtain a study visa to join courses at the University at RQF Level 3 or above. The University must risk managing its licence to ensure compliance, and is responsible for international students from the point of CAS issuance, until course completion or if the student withdraws from the course. To retain its licence, the University has to fulfil certain criteria relating to the recruitment, arrival, monitoring and reporting of international students (including mobility periods). The University's obligations to the Home Office are specified in further detail in its [UKVI Student Route Compliance document](#).
- 1.3.2 Incoming exchange or study abroad international students must adhere to UK immigration regulations before commencing their mobility period at the University.

1.3.3 Partners or partnerships that do not support or sponsor international students to enter the UK to study for all or part of their course are not affected by UK Home Office requirements.

1.3.4 UK-based partners that recruit international students must adhere to OfS and Home Office regulations.

1.4 The Information Commissioner's Office

1.4.1 The [Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\)](#) is the UK's independent body set up to uphold information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals. In complying with its obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018), the University follows the principles set out by the ICO to ensure that personal data is collected and used fairly, processed properly, and stored securely. The University's commitment to adhering to the data protection principles of the GDPR and the DPA 2018 and the responsibilities of everyone who handles personal and special category data within the University are outlined in its [Data Protection document](#).

1.5 UK statutory external agencies

1.5.1 The University is responsible for submitting several statutory returns to key external agencies (such as the Higher Education Statistical Agency, HESA), comprising data relating to the students registered on its awards. This can include students undertaking their award via a partner institution.

1.6 UK Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)

1.6.1 The University is accountable to the CMA. Consumer protection legislation applies to UK universities' relationships with applicants and students, wherever they study. The CMA requires the University to:

- give applicants the information they need to make an informed decision before they enter into a contract with the University;
- operate clear and transparent terms and conditions, including rules and regulations;
- operate fair and transparent complaints processes.

1.7 Other external bodies

- 1.7.1 External bodies such as Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) or overseas Governmental or Ministerial bodies may have to accredit, approve, or validate the provision for delivery at the partner before delivery can commence. Their decision-making process may depend on the nature of the proposal, the course/award, the country, and the partnership agreement itself. The University will need to have formal written confirmation from the external body that this recognition for delivery has been granted before the University's formal approval process is complete and delivery can commence.

1.8 Expectations

- 1.8.1 The University expects that partners fully adhere to the requirements and expectations of the above external bodies as they apply to the partnership and as required by the University.