

ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS POLICY

October 2022

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| Lucy Horder & Mark Shaw, Department of Student and Academic Administration |
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The latest version of this document is always to be found at:

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

Summary

What is this document about?

This document sets out the University's policy for, and expectations of, academic partnerships that lead to an award and/or an award of credit by the University. It details the characteristics of different types of academic partnership; 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:

- [Course Approval](#);
- [Collaborative Partnerships Documentation](#);
- [Reviewcycle](#).

Who is this for?

This document is primarily for University and partner staff who are or will be engaged in academic partnerships with other organisations. It will also be of interest to the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), the Office for Students (OfS) and its Designated Quality Body, 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 Quality Assurance, Academic Standards and Partnerships (QASP), Department of Student and Academic Administration (DSAA).

Who can you 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 Quality Assurance, Academic Standards and Partnerships (QASP), within the University's Department of Student and Academic Administration (DSAA), at the following email address: gasp@port.ac.uk

If you are internal to the University please contact your Faculty Associate Dean (Academic) or QASP.

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 This policy sets out the agreed framework through which the University manages academic provision, across all academic levels, of the 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 partnership activities, and to affirm that students studying for University of Portsmouth awards, delivered in partnership with others, benefit from an excellent student experience, regardless of their academic level, geographical location or mode of study.
- 1.2 This policy concerns collaborative academic 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 feature:
- 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 academic partnership 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 Academic partnerships make a substantial, valued, and long-term contribution to the sustainability of the University. The range of University partnership activities is diverse with resulting benefits. Dependent of the type of arrangement, a successful partnership, will contribute to 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 policy provides information to University staff involved in the development, operation and review of academic partnership arrangements, and outlines the requirements for the managerial, contractual and academic oversight of the higher education the University provides in partnership with others. By adhering to this policy, staff involved in the delivery of learning opportunities in partnership with others, must take shared responsibility for ensuring that the University continues to operate in line with sector-wide expectations and practices, as outlined in the [UK Quality Code](#).

1.6 The policy includes guidance for partner staff in respect of the University's expectations of its partners, and the provisions that are required in order to:

- secure a student experience of comparable quality to that enjoyed by University students at its campus;
- benefit from the support that the University offers in relation to partner staff development;
- ensure that the University continues to be able to discharge its responsibilities to relevant external bodies;
- protect the reputation of the University and its partner in the delivery of academic partnerships.

2. University's Expectations of Partners

- 2.1 The University of Portsmouth is responsible for ensuring that the standards of its awards are credible and secure, and 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 ours;
 - 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;
 - having in place effective staff development processes;
 - recognising the value of, and actively supporting, student engagement in quality assurance;
 - providing the appropriate environment to ensure that the safety and welfare of students and staff is paramount;
 - supporting the University's commitment to academic integrity.

3. Partnership arrangement types

- 3.1 More detailed information about partnership arrangements is provided on the Quality Assurance, Academic Standards and Partnerships (QASP) website in a series of separate taxonomies. Whilst the list of different partnership types set out in this policy and QASP 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.
- 3.2 This section is concerned primarily with the academic partnership model, not the classification of its funding type. The latter is covered in more detail on the QASP website.
- 3.3 There are five main types of Partnership arrangements that the University requires an agreement to be put in place for:
- A University course 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;
 - Arrangements to explore the discussion of topics with a partner.
- 3.4 Courses and awards delivered with a partner include:
- 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;
 - 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);
 - Joint School (delivery of a suite of courses jointly between the University and 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 Policy as no partner would be involved;
 - Postgraduate Research (PGR) arrangements such as Full Collaborative Partnership PGR, or Split-Campus PGR;

- Support provider (partner provides learner support or facilities to students on a University award, module or course).

3.5 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 own 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](#).

3.6 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).

3.7 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.

3.8 Arrangement to explore discussion of topics with a partner with a view to implementing formal written agreements in future:

- Cooperation agreement.

3.9 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 QASP.

- 3.10 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 QASP (support provider or service agreement) will be needed with the partner. An exception to the foregoing is if the provision is a generic room for an activity to take place, then QASP 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.
- 3.11 New courses, or proposals to offer arrangements via an alternative modes 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.
- 3.12 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 the partner. The University may also work as a subcontractor to another Lead Provider's DA. In addition to the University's academic partnership 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 specifies the amount and nature of the subcontracting.

4. Roles, responsibilities and obligations

4.1 Governance

- 4.1.1 Academic partnerships are a formal, contractual relationship between the University and the partner organisation. Whilst individual members of staff can initiate and liaise with colleagues in QASP 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, and financial processes. Only individuals with the authority to sign contracts (see section 5.4.7) on the University's behalf may do so, and a contract must be signed on the basis of an independent approval process. Formal oversight, approval, and review of partnerships is enacted through the University's corporate and academic governance structures.
- 4.1.3 The University is responsible for the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities and the student experience, where these are delivered on its behalf under an academic partnership arrangement that leads to a University award. Responsibility for the oversight, approval, and review of academic partnerships, and for the maintenance of academic standards, quality, and awards granted through an academic partnership lies with the University's Academic Council.
- 4.1.4 Academic Council enacts its responsibilities by delegation through the University's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), University Education and Student Experience Committee (UESEC), University Research Degrees Committee (URDC), University Global Engagement Committee (UGEC) and Faculty Executive Committees (FEC).

4.2 University Staff

- 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 initiate through strategic opportunities identified at University Executive level, or through local school and faculty activities.
- 4.2.2 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement and Student Life) and the Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education Partnerships) have specific responsibility for the strategic development of our academic 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 School, 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 operational management of our partnerships is typically fulfilled by Associate Deans and/or Heads of School (with their designated Academic Contacts). Complex arrangements will necessitate operational groups (see section 4.6) to coordinate the various activities.
- 4.2.6 The University's partnerships are supported operationally by colleagues across the University, including those in the Department of Student and Academic Administration which the Quality Assurance, Academic Standards and Partnerships (QASP) teams, Student Life teams, Student Systems teams, Faculties Administration teams are part of. Additional central Professional Services include the Degree Apprenticeships Office, Central Finance, UoP Global, the Department for Curriculum and Quality Enhancement, the Graduate School, the Library, and the Students' Union.
- 4.2.7 QASP offer a central point of contact for advice and guidance regarding all aspects of the approval, administrative oversight, annual monitoring and review of academic partnerships that lead to, or involve, the award of credit and/or qualifications.
- 4.2.8 QASP support the University's academic committees in ensuring that due process has been followed for all aspects of the partnership agreements that lead to an award of the University. This supports colleagues in delivering against their responsibilities for the assurance of academic standards and quality, and provides oversight at an institutional level.
- 4.2.9 Associate Deans (Academic) are responsible for quality assuring the arrangement; ensuring it is delivered in line with University policies. They work closely with QASP and other DSAA colleagues regarding approval, review and reporting requirements with the Associate Deans (Global Engagement) and other Global Engagement Leads and University Academic Contacts (see 5.2 below), and Partner Academic Contacts and Partner Administrative Contacts (see 4.8 below) to ensure effective implementation of University policies and procedures and the operation of annual monitoring and periodic review.

4.3 QASP's responsibilities include:

- Overseeing quality assurance arrangements, including maintenance of the Academic Partnerships Policy;
- Assisting in the coordination of communication with all relevant University stakeholders who need to be consulted with regard to each academic partnership;

- Supporting and advising on due diligence activities;
- Management of, and drafting of, contracts with appropriate advice sought from the University Solicitor, Executive Director Corporate Governance, and / or Deputy Vice-Chancellor Global Engagement and Student Life, Executive Deans and other faculty stakeholders, and securing relevant sign off;
- Providing expertise and guidance in evaluating, developing, and reviewing academic partnerships;
- Advising the University's academic committees;
- Acting as a point of contact for verification of University awards undertaken at partner institutions;
- Sharing good practice, particularly in relation to common challenges that arise;
- Advising on the national regulatory frameworks and codes of practice, and University policies, procedures, and practices that must be communicated to the partner by the faculty/school academic contact.

4.4 Faculty responsibilities include:

- Managing and implementing quality assurance arrangements, in line with the Academic Partnerships Policy and other applicable University policies;
- Carrying out due diligence activities;
- Undertake course approval and modification activities, to include input into, and approval of, the business planning process for the partnership;
- To review, and comment upon contracts, as requested by QASP;
- Evaluating, developing and reviewing academic partnerships in accordance with applicable University policies;
- Ensuring management of partnership arrangements, and oversight of the student experience for partner students, is included in the terms of reference for relevant faculty and school level academic committees to ensure consideration of regular updates, and to enable the local response to any matters pertaining to standards and quality to be formally recorded;
- Reporting and contributing to the appropriate University level academic committees;
- Ensuring a high quality student experience for all students studying through collaborative arrangements;
- Ensuring they can commit the necessary staff and other resources to the development and management of arrangements;
- Delivering training for the partner, to ensure they are familiar with University policies, procedures and practices;

- Sharing good practice, particularly in relation to common challenges that arise.

4.5 DSAA partnership administrative responsibilities (distinct from the QASP-specific ones):

- Ensuring students are registered on the University's student records system, and maintenance of the students' record and their achievement 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 with regard to 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 with regard to Boards of Examiners and Boards of Studies, as appropriate to the partner arrangements;
- Producing award transcripts and parchments for University awards and providing verification of these;
- In cases where the University undertakes the applicant admissions process in conjunction with a partner, ensuring student admissions are conducted efficiently and in accordance with the University's Admissions Policy.

4.6 Additional Mechanisms for Management of Cross-Faculty or Complex Partnerships

4.6.1 For University courses or awards that are delivered with a partner organisation, the following additional mechanisms should normally be in place to manage the partnership effectively:

4.6.2 Partnership Development Group

For cross-faculty arrangements or arrangements that are particularly complex or large, an appropriately constituted Partnership Development Group should be formed to coordinate the development of the partnership across different subject areas, and/or faculties as the case may be, to ensure consistency and equity across the partnership. The group should typically be chaired by a lead sponsor, identified by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor if cross faculty, or by the Executive Dean if single faculty, and approved by the relevant chair's line manager.

4.6.3 Partnership Operations Group

Once a partnership is approved, for cross-faculty arrangements or arrangements that are particularly complex or large, an appropriately constituted Partnership Operations Group should 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.

The Partnership Operations Group should typically be chaired by a single University Academic Lead identified by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and approved by the relevant line manager. For cross-departmental partnerships, a single University Academic Lead should be nominated by the Dean of the relevant faculty. The University Academic Lead would coordinate and channel communications with the partner during the operation of the partnership. This is to mitigate risk, steer enhancement of the partnership from an institutional level, and ensure that communications are consistent, clear and have one voice.

The responsibility for the effective operation of partnership arrangements lies with the University staff who manage them and it is their responsibility to ensure there are robust communication systems and support in place for partner staff and that expectations on both sides are clearly understood.

4.7 University Academic Contacts

- 4.7.1 At a course level, and for partnerships developed at a school rather than 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 management, enhancement, and health of the partnership arrangement for academic issues, and offers support for the student experience.
- 4.7.2 The Head of School needs to ensure that the University Academic Contact has sufficient time allocated on the staff workload to undertake this role. Details of the specific duties of the University Academic Contact and the counterpart at the partner are outlined in the Collaborative Operational Handbook, which details the day to day operation and management of the partnership arrangement.
- 4.7.3 The University Academic Contact is supported in their role by other University colleagues including the University Administrative Contacts, academic staff, faculty global leads, Associate Deans, Heads of School, Executive Deans, and where appropriate to the provision, Faculty Research Degree Coordinators.

4.8 University Administrative Contacts

4.8.1 The University Administrative Contact, a DSAA 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 students' journey. Specific activities may vary from partner to partner and are detailed in the Collaborative Operational Handbook for the partnership.

4.9 Partner staff

4.9.1 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.

4.9.2 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.

4.9.3 The University ensures that all partner staff teaching or providing academic support to students on a course delivered at the partner are adequately qualified and experienced to do so. This is achieved through the [Partner Associate Lecturer \(PAL\) Scheme](#), or Partner Associate Supervisor Scheme (PASS) for research programmes, which formally recognises and approves staff employed by the partner to teach or provide academic support on partnership courses.

4.9.4 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.

4.9.5 The PASS scheme allows partner Research Degree Supervisors to participate in Graduate School Supervisor Workshops in addition to the benefits provided by the University for PALs outlined above.

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

4.10 Management and Support of Student Exchange and Outbound Study Abroad

- 4.10.1 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.
- 4.10.2 The University and the partner, each as ‘home’ and ‘host’ to students as the case may be, has 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, to include 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.
- 4.10.3 The University is required to monitor the attendance of University students throughout their course, including periods of mobility at a partner institution, in compliance with the University’s [Student Engagement and Attendance Monitoring Policy](#).

4.11 Students and the Student Experience

- 4.11.1 Students studying for a University of Portsmouth award through a partner organisation are registered students of the University, and are expected therefore to behave in a way that is consistent with relevant University policies. As registered students of the University, they automatically have associate member status of the [University of Portsmouth Students’ Union](#).
- 4.11.2 Whilst individual partner contractual agreement terms may apply, students on University-awarded courses or research programmes delivered by a partner are given a University email account, and access to our online resources, where available.
- 4.11.3 The University is committed to a vision for the Portsmouth Student Experience which seeks to provide an excellent, inspiring, and challenging educational experience underpinned by research, scholarship and professional and ethical practice, through which University of Portsmouth students will be able to achieve personal, academic, and career success.

- 4.11.4 The University's curricula embed and facilitate the development of the Hallmarks of a Portsmouth Graduate, outlined in our Education Strategy: Portsmouth graduates will be knowledgeable, informed, intellectually curious, responsible, self-aware and self-motivated, independent learners set for success in their future careers. The University will support students to acquire these Hallmarks of a Portsmouth Graduate through their engagement in courses that adhere to the University's strategic principles, and in the wider student experience. For University courses delivered by a partner that are identical to those delivered by the University (franchise academic type) or designed by the University but only delivered at the partner, the partner must ensure that the Hallmarks of a Portsmouth Graduate are embedded. For courses that are designed by a partner and not delivered at the University, the University encourages the partner to adopt the Hallmarks of a Portsmouth Graduate.
- 4.11.5 Exchange partners receiving University students for outward mobility exchanges will be expected to support them in developing the Hallmarks of a Portsmouth Graduate.
- 4.11.6 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 Policy for Listening to and Responding to the Student Voice apply to all provision delivered through a partnership arrangement.
- 4.11.7 The University's annual monitoring processes, in which all partners are expected to participate, outlines the central role that students have to play in working in partnership with staff to collectively identify and prioritise actions to be taken to address any problems that are identified, and to drive continuous improvement.
- 4.11.8 As part of the process of establishing partnership agreements, the University will agree with its partner's appropriate arrangements for sharing student data, and for ensuring that students understand how their data will be used, processed, and secured. Where third party processing facilities are used, the University will need to be assured that these operate in line with the information and data governance requirements outlined below in line with the UK Quality Code.
- 4.11.9 When partnership arrangements come to an end, the University will endeavour to work with the partner to teach or run the programme out where this is reasonably possible. The University will endeavour, where reasonably practicable, to ensure that registered students are able to complete their intended outcomes.
- 4.11.10 Students who have completed their course or award are alumni of the University and may apply to become members of the University of Portsmouth Alumni Association.

4.12 Partner staff development for staff teaching on a University course or award

- 4.12.1 For University courses or awards that are delivered with a partner organisation, where practicable, will offer partnership staff the opportunity to develop their professional knowledge and personal skills.
- 4.12.2 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.
- 4.12.3 The University will consider all staff curricula vitae, staff development plans, partner staff development policies, and details of partner staff engagement at teaching at Higher Education (HE) level through course approval. Periodic Review also considers all staff development activities undertaken by partner staff since approval/since the preceding review, including those offered by the University.
- 4.12.4 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.
- 4.12.5 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.
- 4.12.6 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.
- 4.12.7 The University, through its Department for Curriculum and Quality Enhancement (DCQE), 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.

4.13 Assuring and Enhancing Standards and Quality

- 4.13.1 The University's partners have a central role to play in ensuring that students undertaking courses delivered on the University's behalf under a partnership agreement, or students undertaking research with partner support, or University students on an exchange with a partner, benefit from an excellent student experience. Responsibility for assuring and improving the quality of these learning opportunities is a shared endeavour, and through the collaborative delivery of learning opportunities or research supervision, the University and its partners subscribe to the following key quality principles:
- 4.13.2 All staff and students own quality assurance and responsibility for ensuring quality therefore rests with everyone. Students' views are at the heart of the University's policies and procedures for managing quality - they are engaged individually and collectively in the development, assurance, and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience. The outcomes of our work to assure standards and quality drive improvement and enhancement.
- 4.13.3 The University's decisions about quality are made on the basis of shared information that is transparent and accessible across the academic community. University policies, processes and practices treat everyone with equal dignity and worth, and accord with our [Equality and Diversity Policy](#).
- 4.13.4 The University has a longstanding commitment to ensuring that the higher education it delivers, including through its partners, reflects the academic standards and requirements set out in the UK national qualifications framework, and is of high quality; i.e:
- is well-designed;
 - provides an enriching academic experience for all students;
 - incorporates reliable assessment of students' achievements,
 - provides students with the support they need to access, succeed in and benefit from higher education.
- 4.13.5 The University's effective management of quality and standards, and the ways in which these underpin the delivery of positive outcomes for all students, including those on courses delivered through partnership arrangements, are externally evaluated by the Designated Quality Body of the [Office for Students \(OfS\)](#).
- 4.13.6 For non-UK based partnerships, the University works in conjunction with the partner to comply with the regulatory processes for the approval of overseas qualifications in the partner institution's country.

- 4.13.7 As the awarding institution, the University seeks to ensure the delivery of a comparable student learning experience, which reflects the demands appropriate to the level, credit and award, and which enable students to achieve the appropriate academic standards, and which supports all students in developing the Hallmarks of a Portsmouth Graduate, as they apply to the type of partnership. Standards of student achievement at collaborative partners must be equivalent and comparable to those for similar awards offered on University of Portsmouth courses and other UK higher education providers.
- 4.13.8 Confirmation of, and support to offering, delivery of a comparable student learning experience is achieved through formal policies and procedures such as the [Approval, Modification and Closure of Academic Provision](#), the [Curriculum Framework Specification](#), [External Examiners Regulations and Procedures](#), [Annual Monitoring and Academic Review Policy](#), [Student Voice Policy](#), [Examination and Assessment Regulations for Collaborative Courses](#), and where applicable the [UKVI Student Route Compliance Policy](#), [Regulations for Research Degrees](#), the [Framework for Flexible Postgraduate Research Provision](#), and the [Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees](#).
- 4.13.9 The examination and assessment requirements for partnership provision are aligned with those for University of Portsmouth delivered courses and are governed by the [Examination and Assessment Regulations for Collaborative Courses](#) for taught courses, and [Regulations for Research Degrees](#) for research degree programmes.
- 4.13.10 It may not be practicable for all partnership arrangements to follow these assessment regulations owing either to the nature of the provision, or the specific requirements of any local regulatory bodies, or the nature of the organisation of the partner institution. In these cases, the University will consider approving [Partner Specific Examination and Assessment Regulations](#) during the formal approval process, which are drafted by QASP and will be compatible with those of the University.
- 4.13.11 All partnership course provision is subject to the University's [External Examiners Regulations and Procedures](#) which set out the appointment process, rights, role, duties and responsibilities of External Examiners. External Examiners for research degree programmes are appointed in accordance with the [Regulations for Research Degrees](#).
- 4.14 The University is obliged to take account the expectations, policies and regulations of a range of external bodies. These obligations are set out in Annex 1 to this Policy. University staff involved in developing or working with the University's academic partners should ensure that partner colleagues are made aware of these obligations.

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. Prior to undertaking any formal approval processes, the person wishing to initiate an academic partnership (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 partnerships team of QASP to ensure that the University is aware of proposals from the very beginning and to advise on approval processes and stakeholder consultation. QASP provide regular status reports to key stakeholders on pipeline partnership activity.

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 and taxation, and legal considerations. The University must assess the risks involved, manage, and mitigate 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 in order 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 Initial strategic approval

Partnership proposals must undergo initial strategic approval, as set out by the Course and Partnerships Strategic Approval (CaPSA) process, through relevant channels as appropriate to the risk of the proposed endeavour, to consider their alignment with and contribution to the University's strategy and key benefits and opportunities of working in partnership.

- 5.3.2 Once initial strategic approval is granted, arrangements involving a course or award are approved in line with the University's [Approval, Modification and Closure of Academic Provision](#) policy. Initial strategic approval is required before further work is undertaken to establish a partnership. Should initial strategic approval not be granted, then the proposer may be asked to provide a stronger rationale for consideration, or withdraw the proposal.

5.3.3 Partnership approval

Once initial strategic approval is granted, the appropriate approval process for the type of arrangement is followed, as set out on the [QASP website](#). In the case of cross-faculty or cross-department proposals the University Academic Lead should be appointed and is the locus for coordinating the documentation and liaison with the internal University staff and with the partner. For single faculty proposals that do not require a University Academic Lead, a faculty-based proposer will be the coordinating point for the proposal. In case of any uncertainties as to which process is followed the proposer should contact QASP for advice.

Courses delivered in partnership with others are considered for approval in relation to the suitability of the partner regarding delivery, standards and quality, support and management. This includes ensuring that course design and delivery, or research degree programme design and implementation, will be consistent with the University's policies and regulations - including those in relation to external examining, programme monitoring and review, and listening and responding to the student voice.

Approval is granted subject to satisfactory conclusion of agreement negotiations and the production of a signed contractual agreement, and conclusion of any applicable national governmental or regulatory body approval. Ongoing approval is contingent upon successful engagement with the University's Annual Monitoring and Academic Review processes.

- 5.3.4 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(ies) at an appropriately early stage to ensure that the University's approval and/or review processes may be completed in a timely manner. Any reports and/or action plans produced by external bodies, or for the purposes of meeting their requirements, need to be provided to QASP for formal submission to the University's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).
- 5.3.5 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 QASP. The school / faculty is responsible for advising QASP 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 QASP. Contracts for the supply of services around innovation, research, knowledge transfer, 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 Research and Innovation Services.
- 5.4.2 All partnerships, within the scope of this Policy, between the University and a partner are subject to a formal fixed-term contractual agreement which clearly sets out the responsibilities and obligations of each partner. The contract provides assurance 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, Corporate Governance / 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 and all 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 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;
- A financial checklist is completed in Central Finance to signify that the proposal has been considered by the management accountant;
- Invoicing arrangements are established with the partner.

For University courses delivered with a partner, or research degree programmes with a partner, the type of business planning methodology is given under the relevant collaborative course or research programme approval process. Management accountants for the relevant Faculty are able to advise 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 provide assurance 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;

- understands 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;
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor(s) / Chief Operating Officer role;
- Pro Vice-Chancellor(s);
- Executive Director of Finance;
- Deputy Director of Finance (under delegated authority from the Executive Director of Finance);
- Financial Controller (under delegated authority from the Executive Director of Finance)

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 Hard copies of signed (executed) contractual agreements are held centrally in QASP, and electronic records are held centrally. The partner also receives a copy of the signed contractual agreement for their records.

5.4.9 Contractual agreements contain a standard clause relating to the date for re-negotiation and/or extension. The contractual agreement renewal process is initiated and managed by QASP 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 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.

Noting that partnerships evolve over time, 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 academic partnership 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 the ways in which 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.
- 5.6.2 The University approves, monitors and reviews partnerships and arrangements through formal quality assurance processes detailed in the [Approval, Monitoring and Closure of Academic Provision](#) and the [Annual Monitoring and Academic Review Policy](#), and delivered in a way that is consistent with the quality principles outlined in Section 4 of this document. These quality assurance requirements are an explicit part of the contractual agreement for each partnership, and it is the responsibility of the University school and faculty to ensure the partner is aware of, and understands, both the University's quality assurance arrangements and the partner's specific roles and responsibilities regarding the arrangements, to ensure the effective management of the partnership.
- 5.6.3 In order to maintain the standards and quality of the student learning experience the same annual monitoring and periodic review process are applied to both University of Portsmouth home and partner provision. The University's monitoring processes used annually to maintain oversight of academic standards and quality are as set out in its [Annual Monitoring and Academic Review Policy](#).
- 5.6.4 Partners should also have their own internal quality assurance processes which are applied to their provision, and the University recognises that its partners may have arrangements with other HE partners with different quality assurance processes to adhere to. The partner's internal quality assurance arrangements, as well as their ability to understand and engage with the University's arrangements as appropriate, are considered during both approval and review. University schools are responsible for reporting on the health of the provision through the annual monitoring process, which considers the partner's effective operation of the University's quality management procedures.

5.7 Periodic Review of Partnership Arrangements

- 5.7.1 All partnerships are subject to formal periodic review through the processes defined in the [Annual Monitoring and Academic Review Policy](#).
- 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 Reviews also incorporate a partner visit, which involves meeting students and staff and viewing the learning environment, resources and facilities.
- 5.7.4 QASP 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.
- 5.7.5 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 Effectiveness of the contractual arrangements are 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. Prior to the renewal, QASP produce a paper containing information about key performance areas which is provided to Faculty Executive and the relevant Pro-Vice Chancellor(s) to assist their 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 the arrangements to enable students to complete their studies in the event that 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 are able to complete their course, including any referral assessments.

The University will endeavour to agree a supportive student communication strategy to 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 out the course, supporting the students throughout and communicates 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 in order 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 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 manage 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. In order 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 Policy](#).
- 1.3.2 Incoming exchange or study abroad international students must adhere to UK immigration regulations prior to 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 Policy](#).

1.5 UK statutory external agencies

1.5.1 The University is responsible for submitting a number of 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.

