

**The Annual Strategic Partnership and Quality Review Process**

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**Section 1: Introduction, aims and key principles**

**Introduction**

1. The University has operated various arrangements for partnership strategic planning meetings, most recently differentiated arrangements according to the partnership and the level of collaborative activity involved. The formal arrangements for strategic partnership meetings and the nature of, and responsibility for, the annual ‘academic health check’ of the partnership was reviewed in 2013-14. At the same time, the administrative arrangements and the business agenda for these meetings was clarified. Following consultation, this review resulted in the process of annual Strategic Partnership and Quality Review (SPQR) meetings described here. The SPQR meetings were introduced from January 2015 for the University’s strategic and regional partnerships with collaborative academic arrangements.
2. The process of meeting annually with academic partners for strategic partnership and quality review supports the strategic development, quality oversight and enhancement of the partnership. In this way, it contributes to meeting the Expectation of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B10 ‘ Managing Higher Education Provision with Others’ (QAA, 2013):

‘Degree-awarding bodies take ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the

quality of learning opportunities irrespective of where these are delivered or who

provides them. Arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations

other than the degree-awarding body are implemented securely and managed effectively.’

1. The SPQR meetings provide an opportunity to review with the Partner key quality indicators, including those arising from external review processes, and any quality issues which have been raised throughout the year. They also provide a forum for discussion of strategic developments and the strategic direction of the partnership. The outcome is an enhancement plan which is reviewed throughout the year. These will feed into the overall Partnership Review process.

1. The SPQR process aims to:

* maintain a strategic approach to the oversight of the academic health of the partnership and the effective management of the associated programmes and other collaborative activities;
* promote effective collaboration and communication between the University and its partners and to further enhance partnership working;
* maintain consistency in approach and recording of annual quality oversight and management of risk;
* review recruitment, retention, progression and achievement trends and outcomes of surveys for programmes within the partnership and identify actions for enhancement of the partnership and the quality of the student experience;
* review reports of any external quality audits and reviews and identify and monitor actions;
* act as a forum for sharing of institutional development priorities and identifying opportunities for further collaboration and strategic development of individual partnerships, and for consulting with partners on policy and procedural developments;
* contribute to a proportionate and risk based approach to institutional partnership review.

**Key Principles:**

1. The process is therefore based on the following key principles:

* Self-critical reflective consideration of evidence
* Accountability at strategic and managerial levels within the University and the partner organisation
* Strategic collaboration and evaluation for quality assurance and enhancement planning across the partnership

**Section 2: Key aspects of the SPQR process**

1. **One annual Strategic Partnership and Quality Review (SPQR) meeting** administered through AQU for all of the University’s more substantive partnerships which will normally take place between January and April following full completion of the Annual Evaluation Reporting (AER) cycle (see section 3).
2. An **evaluative ‘Annual Partnership Quality Review Report’ completed by partners** which reports on the quality of their arrangements for HE provision and the effectiveness of the partnership. It is intended that these reports will be concise and utilise existing trend data and reporting from within the partner organisation where possible (see section 3 and Annex 2 Report Template).
3. **The University** will report by exception (via AQU and the HoCP) on feedback received from Institute Quality Committees (IQCs), link tutors and other service departments, e.g. Information and Learning Services, Registry.
4. **Partnership review or combined partnership/periodic review will substitute for the SPQR meeting** for those subject to review in a given academic year. AQU will ensure that the partner draws on trend data for provision for each of these partnership reviews.
5. An increased emphasis on quality assurance and enhancement, with the key outcomes of discussion at the SPQR meeting forming a **‘Partnership Enhancement Plan’** which can feed into the six yearly partnership review process (see Section 3 and Annex 3).
6. To retain **flexibility for additional strategic partnership meetings** to be held at the request of either partner for further discussion of strategic developments, these to be administered either by the Director of Strategic Partnerships’ executive assistant or within University Institutes.
7. To reaffirm with University Institutes their **responsibility for arrangements for annual quality review and strategic discussion for ‘small partnerships and provision’**.
8. Those partner organisations that are designated **‘Associate Colleges’** will continue to have additional meetings coordinated by the Regional Engagement Manager focussing on wider aspects of partnership working (as appropriate).

**Section 3: Arrangements for Strategic Partnership and Quality Review Meetings**

1. All FE colleges and collaborative provision partners **delivering two or more programmes, and/or with significant volume of students and/or complex delivery arrangements (e.g. flexible and distributed, overseas)** will be subject to one SPQR meeting annually between senior members of the University and senior members of the partner organisation.
2. Strategic Partnership and Quality Review (SPQR) meetings will be convened and administered by AQU and normally **chaired by the Director for Strategic Partnerships or another senior member of the University responsible for partnerships and collaborative provision**. Attendance for these meetings will be determined by each partnership. **Attendees** will normally include the Head of Collaborative Programmes, Deputy Head of Academic Quality (Collaborative) and senior representation from the partner organisation and relevant Institute(s). Heads of Institutes and Partners will advise on the attendees for these meetings to ensure **appropriate senior representation at the level of the partnership** whilst minimising burden.
3. This meeting will normally take place between January and April (to allow for completion of IQC processes for annual evaluation) and will have **a standard agenda** which can be supplemented by either partner (see Annex 1) and will be held at either the University or partner organisation.
4. The **Annual Partnership Quality Review Report** will be prepared by the Vice Principal/HE Manager/HE Coordinator (or nominee) of the partner organisation and submitted electronically to the AQU Officer (Collaborative) at least two weeks prior to the annual Strategic Partnership and Quality Review meeting (see Annex 2 – Report Template).
5. **The Report** should be concise and evaluative, informed by existing evidence and provide a self-critical account of the effectiveness of the operation of the collaborative arrangements. It should identify good practice, any generic matters to be addressed at institutional or partnership level (as opposed to individual course level except where significant issues have been identified) together with areas for improvement and plans for quality enhancement of the partner HE at institutional level, e.g. the student HE environment, resources, CPD and support for HE staff.
6. **Evidence** could include existing institutional trend data (three years if available), extracts from partner organisation’s existing HE self-assessment reports (SARs) and quality enhancement plans where relevant, student evaluations and other internal student survey/data collected, feedback from course team(s) and external reviews (as appropriate).
7. The Report should include the following (see Annex 2 - Report Template):

* Progress on actions/outcomes identified in the previous year’s report (Partnership Enhancement Plan) (if applicable)
* Evaluation of the operation of UW approved collaborative programme(s)
* Reflections on effectiveness of partnership liaison
* Commentary on the partners’ plans for quality enhancement of its HE (at institutional level, e.g. the student HE environment, resources, support and development for HE staff).

1. Partners may submit existing HE SARs or similar reports in place of elements of the ‘Annual Partnership Quality Review Report’, using the proposed report template as guidance. If partners use their existing documentation they may need to provide supplementary information to meet the expectations of this process and this should be discussed in advance of submission.
2. Where partners are subject to **external review**, e.g. QAA HE Review, the outcomes of the reports and action plans should also be reviewed and included as agenda items at SPQR meetings.
3. A **‘Partnership Enhancement Plan’ with targets and responsibilities appropriate to the actions identified** will be developed as an outcome of the meeting (Annex 3 – Template for Partnership Enhancement Plan). Key areas for action will be identified at the meeting. These will be informed by discussion of the partners’ evaluation report, feedback from Institutes and other agenda items, including outcomes of external reviews where relevant. These plans will feed into the six yearly partnership review process.
4. A **summary report** summarising key points for the attention of the University which emerge from the SPQR meetings and partnership enhancement plans will be prepared by the HoCP and normally submitted to the summer meeting of EPPSC.

**Section 4: Arrangements for Annual Review and Strategic Partnership Meetings at Institute Level for Smaller Partnerships and Provision**

1. For all partnerships outside of the criteria for a centrally managed Strategic Partnership and Quality Review meeting (e.g. single course/modular provision and/or small numbers), the responsibility for the annual review and strategic partnership planning arrangements for each partner **rests with the relevant host University Institute**.
2. This will consist of an **annual review and strategic partnership meeting held between a senior representative(s) of the host Institute and of the partner**. This will normally be led by the Institute senior partnership representative or another member of the Institute’s senior management team (i.e. not the link tutor) and the HE Manager or equivalent at the partner organisation to enable strategic discussion, accountability and decision making.
3. **The meeting** will be based on discussion of the AER enhancement plan and the strategic priorities for the partnership, including continuing viability, good practice and areas for enhancement for the operation and management of the partnership. The standard agenda (Annex 1) and the prompts within the partnership quality review report template (Annex 2) should be used to inform the areas for discussion.
4. **A record of meetings taking place and a file note of the key points and actions arising from discussion will be kept both centrally and at Institute level and significant issues for the quality assurance and enhancement of the partnership reported to IQC** as part of the collaborative agenda item.
5. **The file note and any matters of significance will be forwarded and discussed with the Director of Strategic Partnerships, Head of Collaborative Programmes and Deputy Head of Academic Quality (Collaborative).**
6. Notes of Institute led meetings and minutes from IQCs will be utilised as part of the evidence base in the institutional combined partnership and periodic review.

**Section 5: Planning and Key Contacts**

1. Academic Quality Officers for collaborative work will be the main contact for making the arrangements for central SPQR meetings. To assist this process, partner organisations will be asked to identify who will be the main contact for correspondence about the meetings, who will author the Annual Partnership Quality Review Report and who will attend from the partner. It is the intention to keep this at the level of senior representation of the partnership, such that individual curriculum areas or course representation is not normally required. The Partner is invited to identify additional agenda items.
2. Similarly, the University Heads of Institutes will identify appropriate representation. As a minimum this should be someone who can represent senior level responsibility for the partnership within the Institute/s concerned. ‘Subject’ centre leads and Link Tutors are not normally required. The Institute is also invited to identify additional agenda items as appropriate.
3. For clarity, AQU should agree with the Director of Strategic Partnerships/Head of Collaborative Programmes a definitive list of partners and their respective arrangements for SPQRs (centrally managed or at Institute level), to be published annually in advance of the academic year.

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| --- | --- |
| **Author** | Head of Collaborative Programmes |
| **Date Approved** | Agreed at EPPSC 6 May 2015; approved by ASQEC 25 June 2015 |
| **Approval Authority** | ASQEC |
| **Date of Commencement** | 2014-2015 |
| **Date for Next Review** | September 2018 |
| **Related Policies, Procedures, Guidance, Forms or Templates** | Annex 1 - Indicative Agenda Items for SPQR Meetings  Annex 2 - Template for Annual Partnership Quality Review Report  Annex 3 - Template for Partnership Enhancement Plan |

**Annex 1 – Indicative Agenda Items for SPQR Meetings**

1. Annual Partnership Quality Overview report (provided by the partner)
   1. External Quality Review reports and action plans, e.g. QAA HE Review, Ofsted, FDAP (as appropriate, provided by the partner)
2. Key Issues from Institutes/IQC (as necessary; provided by the HoCP/AQU)
3. Current Enrolments (2014/15) and Application data (2015/16) for collaborative courses
4. Review of progression data (as appropriate to the partner):
   1. Partner internal progression from level 3 to UW approved collaborative HE provision (to be provided by partner organisation where relevant)
   2. Progression from partner UW collaborative programmes to further study at UW, e.g. to Level 5/Level 6 and ‘Top-Up’ degrees (to be provided by UW where relevant)
   3. Recruitment from partner organisation level 3 to other UW HE provision (to be provided by UW where relevant)
5. Update on Partnership Review action plans (as appropriate)
6. Quality enhancement initiatives planned for the partnership by the University and partner organisation
7. Strategic planning:
8. University and partner organisation strategic plans and developments
9. Course developments and reviews
10. Other joint/collaborative strategic developments
11. Fees 2015-16
12. Policy and Process Update and consultation (as appropriate)
13. Identification of key actions for the Partnership Enhancement Plan for 2014/15
14. Any other business

**Annex 2 – Template for Annual Partnership Quality Review Report**

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**University of Worcester – Strategic Partnership and Quality Review Meetings**

**Annual Partnership Quality Review Report Template**

This report should be completed by the Vice Principal/HE Manager/Coordinator or nominee of the partner organisation and submitted electronically to the AQU Officer (Collaborative) at least two weeks prior to the annual Strategic Partnership and Quality Review meeting.

Reports should be evaluative, identifying strengths, good practice, specific issues and areas for improvement at the level of the partnership based on existing evidence. This is intended to be a **concise evaluation and identification of key themes for enhancement** of the partnership and not duplication of detailed course annual evaluation reports.

**Name of Partner Institution:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Completed by:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Details (Email):** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Year:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**List of courses/collaborative arrangements approved by University of Worcester:**

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**Please comment on the following in relation to your partnership with the University of Worcester.**

1. **Progress on actions/outcomes identified in the previous year’s report (if applicable):**

*Please attach last year’s updated Partnership Enhancement Plan (not applicable in 2014-15)*

1. **Evaluation of the operation of UW approved collaborative programme(s)**

*Include themes emerging from evaluation across provision and identify specific issues where arrangements are not working effectively and points of good practice worthy of dissemination. Evidence would include trend data, internal student survey/data collected, partner annual reviews of HE and quality enhancement/improvement plans.*

*To include:*

* *Evaluation of trend data (three years if available) for recruitment, retention and progression (in-course and to L5/L6 or ‘Top-Up’ degree if applicable) and achievement (including identification of courses recruiting less than 15 students) and reflections on how UW partnership students perform in comparison to other partner HE students (if applicable)*
* *Student engagement, NSS and/or internal student survey/evaluation results*
* *Any cross-institutional HE related matters, for example in relation to learning resources, physical environment or staffing*

1. **Reflections on effectiveness of partnership liaison**

*How successful is the working relationship with the University? This may include reflection on administration, admissions, assessment cycle, advice and guidance, communication of changes, staff development and link tutor arrangements*

1. **Any other information:**  *(e.g. outcomes from and responses to external quality reviews, e.g. QAA Higher Education Review, changes to status in relation to any national qualifications authority or body, employer/professional body liaison, staff development). Reference can be made through hyperlinks to report summaries and appended action plans or other pre-existing internal documentation*
2. **Issues for action and plans for quality enhancement of the partnership**

*Areas for improvement and issues for discussion at the annual Strategic Partnership and Quality Review meeting should be identified. These will be used to inform discussion and subsequent formulation of a draft partnership enhancement plan as an outcome of the meeting (see Template).*

Please tick the box to confirm that the college/HE prospectus and any relevant publicity material for UW approved courses have been submitted (or the relevant web links provided) for consideration by the University in accordance with the [‘Policy for Approving Marketing and Publicity Materials’](http://www.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/PolicyforApprovingMarketingandPublicityMaterials.pdf)prior to being made publicly available.

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**Signed :** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Annex 3 – Template for Partnership Enhancement Plan [NB Key actions will be identified at the meeting and the plan developed as an outcome of the meeting]**

***Please identify key priorities for action to be instigated over the forthcoming academic year. The Partnership Enhancement Plan should be regarded as a ‘live’ document, to be reviewed and updated through the year and presented to the annual Strategic Partnership and Quality Review meeting. Example included in row 3.***

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| **Action** | **Evidence Source** | **Reason for taking action** | **Key person(s) responsible for achievement** | **Anticipated date of completion (and milestones, as applicable)** | **Criteria for success** | **Progress** |
|  | *What evidence informed the decision to make this a priority for action?* | *Please include why this is deemed to be a priority, and what the intended action will potentially achieve* | *Person responsible for ensuring action is completed* |  | *How will you know if you’ve successfully completed the action?* | *Whether action has been completed or changed, how it has impacted and any further action necessary* |
| *Ensure appropriate staffing for HE course delivery and that staff new to delivery of UW approved courses meet UW criteria and are approved as Registered Lecturers* | *Link Tutor Reports*  *Student Feedback to Link Tutor and through Course Management Committee* | *Link Tutors made aware of changes in staffing at partner organisation and received feedback from student representatives that new sessional staff are involved in module delivery* | *Partner Course Leader/HE Manager* | *August 2014* | *UW confidence in appropriateness of staffing and completion of the registered lecturer approval at least 4 weeks prior to the commencement of staff involvement in course delivery to ensure access to UW resources, Blackboard, etc and UW staff development.*  *Positive feedback from students regarding the consistency of module staffing* |  |