

**Articulation Arrangements:**

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**A Definition and scope of articulation arrangements**

1 The University defines articulation arrangements as collaborative partnership arrangements which recognise and grant **guaranteed admission with ‘advanced standing’** to a University of Worcester (UW) award from a programme undertaken at an approved partner organisation.

2 ‘Advanced Standing’ applies generally to admission to a course, whereby an applicant can be admitted to a semester or year of the course other than the first semester or year, on the basis of learning they have completed elsewhere. This is sometimes referred to as credit transfer or accreditation of prior learning.

3 The University has four different arrangements covering entry with advanced standing:

- **accreditation of prior learning:** whereby individual applicants claim credit for prior learning on an individual basis
- **progression from Higher National or Foundation Degree programmes delivered by partner organisations to Honours degree top-up arrangements** agreed as part of the approval of the HN or FD course
- **recognition agreements:** an arrangement whereby an award delivered by another institution is formally recognised as appropriate for entry with or without advanced standing to a specified UW programme, thereby providing a basis for individual applications to the course. There is no guaranteed entry or progression through any recognition arrangement
- **articulation agreements:** an arrangement whereby an award delivered by another institution is formally recognised as appropriate for entry with advanced standing to a specified UW programme, with guaranteed progression for those students who meet all requirements.

4 Articulation agreements may develop from recognition arrangements, and sometimes programmes can be designed specifically with an articulation arrangement in mind. The critical difference between a recognition and an articulation arrangement is the expectation of the prospective student:

- if the applicant’s admission profile is considered on an individual basis and there is no guarantee of entry/progression to the UW programme or award, it constitutes a recognition agreement
- if entry/progression to a UW programme or award is guaranteed, it constitutes an articulation arrangement.

5 Whilst recognition agreements are not formally considered as collaborative provision by the University, articulation arrangements fall within the scope of the University Collaborative Academic Arrangements Policy and the QAA Quality Code on Managing higher education with others (2012).

## **B Process for the approval of articulation agreements**

1 The approval of an articulation arrangement normally involves the following stages:

- Stage 1: Identification of potential articulation arrangement
- Stage 2: Preliminary enquiries
- Stage 3: Executive approval to process and confirmation of terms and conditions for partnership approval
- Stage 4: Due Diligence
- Stage 5: Full curriculum mapping
- Stage 6: Site visit
- Stage 7: Articulation approval report compiled by Institute for ASQEC and Academic Board approval of the proposed articulation arrangement
- Stage 8: Articulation agreement.

2 These are not necessarily consecutive stages, on occasion it may be appropriate, for example, to carry out the detailed curriculum mapping at an early stage in order to ascertain viability of the proposed arrangements; equally, a site visit may take place at an early stage in order to progress discussion of the proposed partnership. Similarly the due diligence required for some organisations, for example some internationally recognised established degree awarding bodies, will take into account the risk involved.

3 The approval of articulation arrangements brings together **approval of the proposed partner and the specific proposed articulation arrangement**. In most circumstances there is no requirement for a formal approval visit as set out in the partnership approval process. This is replaced by a site visit conducted by the relevant UW Institute.

4 It should also be noted that proposals for articulation arrangements may come from/involve awarding bodies rather than organisations delivering a particular programme. In some cases proposals may be based on programmes accredited or awarded by recognised international accreditation agencies, or by existing partners of the University. These factors will be taken into account in determining the nature of the evidence required for due diligence, curriculum mapping and site visits.

5 If a proposal for an articulation arrangement comes from an existing partner of the University, stages 2, 3 and 4 are not required (since they have already been completed through the partner approval process). Similarly a site visit may not be necessary.

6 Articulation arrangements fall under the scope of the QAA UK Quality Code chapter B10 on the [managing higher education provision with others](#), and are subject to formal approval and confirmation through University procedures. **In no circumstances should articulation arrangements be promoted to potential students in advance of formal approval.**

7 Clearly the **time period** required for approval of a proposed articulation arrangement will depend on a variety of factors, including whether the proposal relates to an existing University partner, the status and national context within which the partner is working, and the nature and quality assurance arrangements relating to the proposed link programme of the partner. Arrangements with new partners, particularly overseas partners, are likely to take at least six months, if not more, to establish and prepare since they are likely to involve the building of relationships and mutual understanding as well as some formal due diligence and preparation of paperwork. Advice should be sought from AQU at the earliest opportunity.

### **Stage 1: Identification of potential articulation arrangement**

1.1 Articulation agreements are developed by UW Institutes in liaison with potential partners and with guidance from the Academic Quality Unit (AQU) and other relevant

departments of the University as appropriate. It is anticipated that a single Institute will be involved in discussions with a given institution at any one point in time, but if this is not the case, it may be appropriate to agree a lead Institute who will conduct any wider institutional due diligence which may then be used by each Institute.

1.2 Proposals for new articulation arrangements will be considered by Institute Senior Management Teams in the first instance, in order to **determine whether the proposal fits with the Institute's strategic direction, priorities and resources**, and appears to be **viable in principle**. Advice should be sought from the AQU at an early stage to confirm the processes and requirements for approval.

1.3 Staff entering into **discussions with potential partners** for articulation arrangements must be aware of the principles for collaborative arrangements and the criteria for selection of partners, as set out in the University [Collaborative Academic Arrangements Policy](#). These should be made clear to partners as should the need for due diligence checks/verification for formal approval of the partnership arrangement. It is advisable that the articulation agreement template is shared and discussed with the proposed partner at an appropriate early point.

1.4 Institutes should consult with AQU at an early stage to ascertain the likely requirements for approval.

## **Stage 2: Preliminary enquiries**

2.1 The Head of Institute (or nominee) is responsible for making **preliminary enquiries** about the potential partner through **initial discussions, published material in the public domain and the organisation's website**, to assist in assessing the viability of the proposed partnership. It is advisable that staff engaged in preliminary discussions keep a written record of matters discussed and matters agreed in principle.

2.2 Initial considerations will cover matters such as:

- nature and reputation of proposed partner
- compatibility of mission and strategic objectives
- legal and financial status of the organisation
- suitability of resources/expertise to underpin proposed collaboration
- current experience of delivering higher education (HE) and current partnerships (if relevant)
- effective management of quality of provision
- UK Border Agency requirements and implications.

2.3 In addition some **preliminary mapping of curricula** to underpin the proposed articulation arrangement should be undertaken at this stage.

2.4 In the case of overseas organisations, checks should be made with the British Council and UK NARIC as to the recognition and standing of the proposed partner and its awards.

2.5 The first part of the form Articulation Arrangement Approval Report (annexe 1) should be completed by the Institute for consideration by the University Executive.

## **Stage 3: Executive approval to process and confirmation of terms and conditions for partnership approval**

3.1 The University Executive considers the proposed partnership in terms of institutional strategy for collaboration, and the **likely benefits, costs and risks** associated with the initiative, to determine whether the proposed collaboration should be pursued and the formal approval process commenced.

3.2 The Senior Quality Officer (Collaborative), in consultation with the Director of Quality and Educational Development, will establish the **nature of the due diligence required**. This will be informed by the **status and standing of the proposed partner** and the **availability of public information**. For many internationally recognised higher education institutions, the due diligence may be completed by the Institute on the basis of publicly available information (and associated checks as at 4.4 and 4.5); in other cases it may be necessary to seek information and evidence from the proposed partner via completion of the standard due diligence form. In the latter case, it may also be appropriate to request the proposed partner to indicate acceptance of the standard terms and conditions (see 3.5 below) at the outset.

3.3 If the University Executive agrees the proposed arrangement may be taken forward, the **Senior Quality Officer (Collaborative) writes to the prospective partner** indicating the requirements for the formal approval process, including as appropriate, due diligence requirements, and the next steps, including a proposed outline schedule for approval, and notification of the standard terms and conditions.

3.4 At the same time the proposed partner will be provided with an **information pack** about the University comprising as appropriate:

- undergraduate and postgraduate prospectus
- UW Strategic Plan
- relevant quality assurance procedures relating to collaborative provision
- Collaborative Academic Provision Policy
- flowchart for approval of articulation arrangements
- template for articulation agreements
- any other relevant information.

3.5 The **standard terms and conditions** under which partnership approval is granted are:

- a) the University is satisfied as to the financial soundness of the partner organisation
- b) the partner organisation will agree to inform the University of any changes to ownership or governance, and the University reserves the right to re-negotiate the partnership agreement if there is a change in ownership or governance of the partner organisation
- c) the partner organisation confirms that it complies with all applicable laws and statutory regulations in force and has in place all necessary insurance arrangements, including professional indemnity, in respect of the partner organisation's responsibilities and liabilities towards students
- d) the partner organisation agrees not to sub-contract any programme, or component part of a programme, relating to the agreement with the University of Worcester, for delivery in part or in whole, by any other organisation, or at any other location, through an arrangement of its own, unless this has been agreed with the University in advance
- e) the partner organisation acknowledges that all intellectual property associated with the partnership and associated programmes is and shall remain the exclusive property of the University of Worcester unless otherwise specified
- f) the University shall approve all promotional/publicity material regarding the institutional partnership and associated articulation arrangement produced by the partner organisation, in accordance with current University policy, and prior to its dissemination in any form
- g) the partner organisation shall agree to comply with the University's policy on Equal Opportunities, with regard to the programme(s) associated with the University of Worcester articulation arrangement
- h) the partner organisation shall agree to engage fully with the relevant University quality assurance processes and co-operate fully with any audit or inspection visits that may be undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), Ofsted, professional or other similar bodies

- i) where appropriate, the partner organisation shall agree to ensure familiarity by senior staff and HE programme managers, with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

3.6 At this point the Senior Quality Officer (Collaborative) will also:

- ask the Institute to make arrangements for a **site visit** to the proposed partner (if not already undertaken)
- request the Institute carries out a **curriculum mapping** exercise
- provisionally agree with the Institute and the partner a mutually acceptable **timetable for approval** (although this may be discussed in principle earlier in the process)
- agree with the Institute any necessary **due diligence checks** as indicated below.

#### Stage 4: Due Diligence

4.1 The University has **established criteria for the approval of new prospective partners**. In setting the criteria the University takes as its guide the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and its own considerable experience in managing collaborative partnerships.

4.2 In order to acquire the evidence on which to make a decision, the University either requires the **Institute to confirm that the proposed partner meets the following criteria from information derived from publicly available sources** and visits or requires the **proposed partner to complete a due diligence form and provide documentary evidence** in relation to the criteria. This will depend upon the status and standing of the proposed partner and the public information available, and is determined by the Senior Quality Officer (Collaborative) in consultation with the Director of Quality and Educational Development.

4.3 The criteria and evidence requirements in the case of proposed partners for articulation arrangements are set out below:

1. compatibility of the **educational mission/objectives/ethos** of the prospective partner organisation with that of the University of Worcester

*Evidence includes the mission or vision statement, strategic or corporate plan, prospectus or equivalent documents of the proposed partner and/or any parent company*

2. clarity of **anticipated benefits** of the proposed partnership to all parties

*Evidence includes a short statement outlining the rationale and anticipated benefits of the proposed partnership*

3. clarity and appropriateness of the **ownership, leadership, governance and management arrangements** of the prospective partner organisation

*Evidence may include information about the above provided in organisational structure diagrams, terms of reference and membership of corporate and/or academic committees/Boards, role descriptions, etc. together with, where appropriate, formal assurances*

4. the **public and legal standing** of the prospective partner organisation in their own country (and the implications of this for collaborative programmes and/or recognition of the qualification to be awarded)

*Evidence includes certification of legal identity, information about the legal/regulatory requirements for academic programmes and, in particular, collaborative activity in the country concerned, public documents on quality of provision/academic standing*

5. the **standing of the prospective partner organisation in the UK** (as determined by the experience of other UK institutions)

*Evidence includes details of any current or past collaborative activity with UK HEIs or educational establishments, and publicly available reports from organisations such as QAA and Ofsted. In the absence of such evidence, consideration will be given to seeking testimonials from other sources*

6. the **financial stability** of the prospective partner organisation

*Evidence may not be specifically acquired, but may be deduced from other information, ie the history and legal status of the organisation*

7. the ability of the prospective partner organisation to provide the **human, physical and learning resources** to operate the arrangements successfully

*Evidence will be derived from the site visit and discussions with the proposed partner*

8. the ability of the prospective partner organisation to provide an **appropriate and safe working environment for students** on an intended programme

*Evidence will be derived from the site visit and discussions with the proposed partner*

9. the ability of the prospective partner to provide **high quality learning opportunities** for students

*Evidence includes organisational quality assurance and enhancement policies in relation to staff and taught programmes, and student experience*

10. in the case of overseas collaborative arrangements, the ability of the partner organisation to operate within the legislative and cultural requirements of that overseas country and, at the same time, address the points of reference of the **UK Quality Code**

*Evidence includes information regarding national requirements and assurances as appropriate, in particular that relating to the academic standards and quality of the articulated award.*

4.4 For institutions that have, or have had, **links with other degree awarding institutions**, the AQU may contact these to enquire about their satisfaction with the partner. Cases where other HEIs have withdrawn from a partnership will always be investigated.

4.5 In the case of overseas institutions the University will also seek the views of the **British Council** and other independent sources, including government offices of the country in which the organisation is based and/or from the **UK NARIC** (if this has not already been completed as part of the preliminary enquiries, or where further detail is considered necessary).

4.6 Where the full due diligence, including completion of the due diligence form and submission of supporting evidence, is required, documentation is reviewed by the Director of Strategic Partnerships, the Head of Institute (or nominee), the Senior Quality Officer

(Collaborative), the Director of Finance (or nominee) (regarding financial information) and, where appropriate, other members of the University with relevant expertise. Comments on the documentation provided are forwarded to the Senior Quality Officer (Collaborative).

4.7 On the basis of the information provided by the partner and/or the information from the due diligence checks, and/or publicly available information, the Senior Quality Officer (Collaborative) or delegated Institute nominee will draft a short **due diligence report**, against the criteria in 4.3 above.

4.8 As for all collaborative partnerships with the University, should there be changes to the ownership or status of the partner organisation, the University must be informed and will normally require a review and updating of the due diligence and approval process.

### **Stage 5: Full Curriculum mapping**

5.1 The Institute must undertake a curriculum mapping process to ensure that there is a match between the course at the partner institution and the UW programme at the point of entry in terms of **academic standards, credit value and course content (ie the level, volume and content of prior learning)**. Such mapping serves to determine equivalence and that students have achieved the appropriate standards with pre-requisite knowledge and skills to join the University programme.

5.2 The **output standards of the course** at the partner institution must be directly evidenced, through scrutiny of **curriculum specification/syllabi, assessments, marking and grading criteria, processes for quality assurance, samples of assessed work, external verification reports** etc. Appropriate academic staff should be engaged in this scrutiny process and the external examiner should also be consulted. In some cases there may be a need for a bridging arrangement to be put in place, and consideration should be given to liaison and transition arrangements. Evidence of the curriculum mapping and scrutiny should be retained by the Institute.

5.3 A **curriculum mapping report**, to be appended to the articulation approval report, should be produced covering the following:

- review of programme specification/syllabus and match in terms of learning outcomes, content and level with UW programme
- review of marking/grading criteria and samples of student work
- external verification/accreditation or other reports for the programme
- quality assurance mechanisms that apply to the partner's programme
- advice/confirmation from UW external examiner for UW programme
- conclusions and recommendations.

5.4 The currency of curriculum mapping must be reviewed on an annual basis and updated as appropriate (see section C below). Planned curriculum changes by either the partner organisation or the University to the relevant courses should trigger a check on the currency of the curriculum mapping.

### **Stage 6: Site Visit**

6.1 Assessment and verification of the prospective partner's premises is an essential part of the approval process and a written report is required. There may be circumstances where the need for a site visit and report are waived, but this is at the discretion of the Director of Quality and Educational Development; likewise there may be circumstances where the arrangements for a site visit require additional personnel to be involved. Site visits are often combined with discussions with the partner about the operation of the articulation agreement.

6.2 A site visit should be conducted by a senior member of Institute staff, with the appropriate understanding of the requirements of the process and the expertise to make an assessment (eg where specialist facilities are required).

6.3 A short **site visit report form**, to be appended to the articulation approval report, should be produced covering the following:

- details of visit (dates, meetings, participants, etc)
- physical facilities and teaching accommodation
- learning resources
- IT and computing resources
- student records arrangements
- specialist resources relating to the proposed articulated course
- conclusions and recommendations.

### **Stage 7: Articulation approval report compiled by Institute for ASQEC and Academic Board approval**

7.1 The Institute proposing the articulation arrangement compiles the **articulation arrangement approval report** for Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC). This is composed of an overview approval report, together with the due diligence report from the Institute or Senior Quality Officer (Collaborative), the curriculum mapping report, and the site visit report as annexes.

7.2 The report must be **signed off by the Chair of Institute Quality Committee (IQC) and the Head of Institute**. It is presented to ASQEC for scrutiny. ASQEC is responsible for confirming that the due diligence and approval process has been carried out robustly and in line with University policy and procedures. If ASQEC is satisfied with the report, it will recommend approval of the proposed partnership and articulation arrangement to Academic Board. The Board will receive for information the overview approval report.

### **Stage 8: Articulation Agreement**

8.1 Once approved by ASQEC the Institute should provide to the Senior Quality Officer (Collaborative) a draft articulation agreement based on the standard template, or a copy of the agreement prepared by the intended partner organisation as appropriate.

8.2 The draft agreement must accurately reflect the intended arrangements with the partner and should therefore be shared with the partner at the draft stage. However, it is important that it is made clear that the draft agreement is subject to University level review and approval.

8.3 The **articulation agreement is time limited**, normally for a period of three years in the first instance.

8.4 Once the draft articulation agreement has been approved by the Senior Quality Officer (Collaborative) and relevant University officers, arrangements should be made for it to be signed and returned by the partner.

## **C Monitoring and review of articulation agreements**

1 The relevant Institute will be responsible for overseeing and monitoring the details of the articulation agreement on an ongoing basis, through the designation of a **named contact for the articulation arrangement**. Oversight of the arrangement will be the responsibility of the Institute named contact and their equivalent at the partner institution. It is expected that an appropriate level of **communication** will be maintained in order to implement the terms of the agreement with at least an **annual visit and discussion** to

consider progress in full and to ascertain whether there are any planned changes to the articulated programmes for the following year.

2 Normally such visits are undertaken in conjunction with providing information and advice to students on the arrangements for progression to the UW programme.

3 Articulation arrangements should be monitored by IQC as part of the annual evaluation process. A **short report appended to the AER for the relevant articulated University award** prepared by the named contact, and drawing on the annual discussions with the partner should consider specifically:

- whether the curriculum mapping remains current
- whether the arrangement has been satisfactory in other respects e.g. accuracy of public information and promotional materials
- the numbers of students progressing through the arrangement and their performance in relation to those accessing through different routes, based on information provided by the Data Management Unit and coding applied at admission.

4 ASQEC will receive a short summary annual report on the status and operation of articulation agreements. This will be based on the Institute annual monitoring of these arrangements and be compiled by AQU from the reports submitted to IQC.

5 The **renewal of articulation arrangements** is subject to the approval of EPPSC by means of a short paper drawing on the evidence of the annual monitoring. Renewal will be subject to satisfactory continued course mapping, and a proven track record of student progression in terms of numbers and comparative achievement on the UW course. The options at this stage are:

- the issuing of a further articulation agreement for a period of up to three years where all aspects of the agreement have been observed satisfactorily, or
- cessation of the articulation agreement where progression has not been successful and/or where communication with the other institution has been poor in relation to updating mapping.

6 The Institute should continue to retain and update curriculum mapping documentation.

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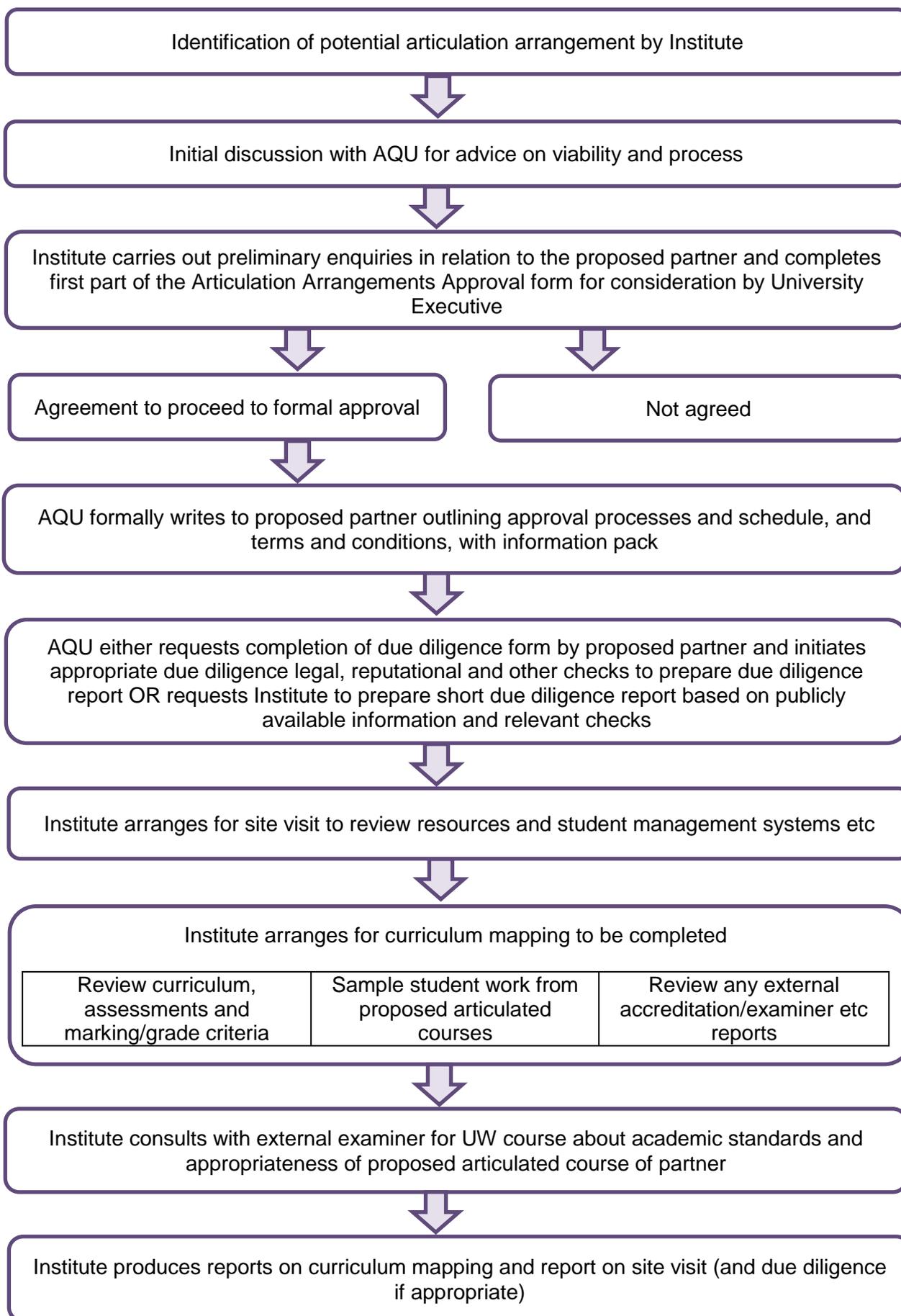
Document approved by: ASQEC 9<sup>th</sup> January 2013

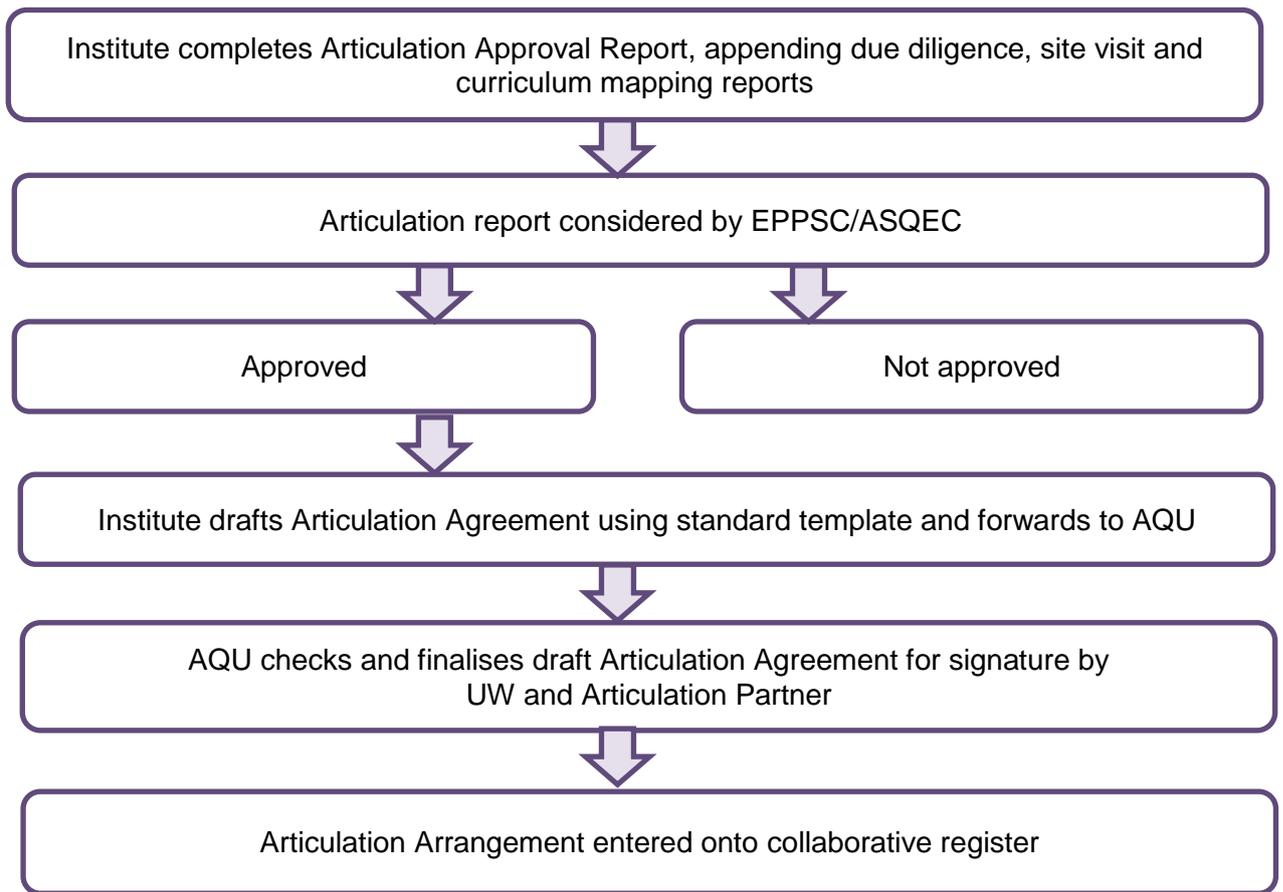
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## Articulation Arrangements: approval, monitoring and review





**Key**

- AQU            Academic Quality Unit
- ASQEC        Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Unit
- EPPSC        Externally Provided Programmes Sub Committee
- UW             University of Worcester

**Annexe 1**



**Collaborative Partnerships  
Institutional Approval: Articulation Arrangement Approval Report**

**Institute:**

**Author of Form:**

**Name of prospective partner institution/organisation:**

**Contact details of prospective partner institution/organisation:**

**Type of organisation and nature of proposed relationship (give brief summary)**

1	Give brief details of the nature of the organisation/institution and its funding. [eg is it an HEI, FEC, private sector organisation, registered company or charity etc; is it for profit/not for profit etc; size, length of time established]	
2	Proposed partner web address.	
3	Give brief details of the rationale for the articulation arrangement proposed (subject area, level, number of potential students etc.) and how it relates to Institute strategy.	
4	UK Border Agency implications (discuss with Assistant Registrar (Admissions))	

**Programme arrangement**

5	Give details of the intended linked programme of the partner (award title, length, credits, accreditation etc).	
6	Give details of the intended UW award(s) to which the articulation arrangement will relate (award title, point of	

	entry etc. together with any additional requirements that student must meet, eg language requirements).	
7	Give brief details of the quality assurance arrangements for the intended linked programme of the partner (eg external examining, accreditation, partner quality assurance policies, especially as to how they relate to the assurance of academic standards).	
8	Give details of the University/ Institute involvement with the proposed partner (eg meetings, support, design, delivery, other collaborative arrangements in existence).	
9	Give details (name and responsibilities) of the person(s) who will take responsibility for managing the partnership on behalf of the Institute/University.	
10	Give details of the intended arrangements that will be in place to support student transition (before, during and after transfer to UW).	
11	Give brief details of the arrangements for marketing/promoting the link and ensuring publicly available materials conform with University policy.	
12	Give brief details of any financial arrangements associated with the intended arrangement (eg discounted fees, commission payments etc).	
13	Give details of any other special conditions or features of the proposal that are relevant.	

**Please attach and confirm the following:**

**1 AQU Due Diligence Report**

Are there any matters arising from the due diligence report that require risk management?	
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**2 Institute Site Visit report**

Are there any matters arising from the site visit that should be brought to the attention of the approving committee?	
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**3 Curriculum mapping report**

Is the Institute satisfied that students entering from the partner programme will have undertaken an equivalent level and volume of relevant learning?	
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**Institute Approval Sign Off**

The Institute has reviewed the proposed articulation arrangement and the associated partner and is satisfied that the proposal is consistent with the principles and criteria set out in the University [Collaborative Academic Provision Policy](#), that due process has been followed, and the partner's programme is comparable in standard to the UW award with which it will be articulated.

**Author of document**

Signature	Name	Date

**Course leader of articulated UW course(s)**

Signature	Name	Date

**Chair of Institute Quality Committee**

Signature	Name	Date

**Head of Institute**

Signature	Name	Date