

**Partnership Review: Principles and Process**

**Section 1: Key principles, aims and objectives of partnership review**

1. Following approval, all partnerships are reviewed normally on a six year cycle, against the terms of the Partnership Agreement in which the reciprocal expectations of both partners are expressed.

2. The aim of partnership review is to provide assurance that the partnership is

operating in accordance with the terms of the Partnership Agreement and that the responsibilities of all parties are being met.

3. Its objectives are to:

* Assure the University that the partner organisation continues to provide:
* Effective management of University approved programmes and learning opportunities for students
* Effective processes for quality enhancement
* Appropriate learning resources
* Appropriate staffing to meet the requirements of University programmes
* Evaluate and confirm the continued viability of the partnership
* Review and update due diligence
* Provide assurance of the continued alignment of the aims and direction of the partnership over time.
* Provide assurance that information relating to the partnership is current and accurate
* Review ways of working and identify potential improvements to the management of the partnership
* Review other partnership activities (example: Associate College, widening participation).

4. The University is committed to making partnership review a consultative, self- critical and genuinely collaborative process of engagement with partners. Conducted in this manner, the process is intended to serve as a means of enhancing transparency, communication and a shared understanding with collaborative partners.

5. The University also recognises that the process of review is not limited to the event itself and that decisions pertaining to the development of the partnership should be included in the lead-up and aftermath of review. In particular, the process is designed to encourage reflection and innovation, to utilise external networks, and to take the opportunity to discuss means of enhancing the partnership.

6. Partnership review is designed to allow for proportionate due diligence investigation of the partner which is risk based and builds on the information provide through the annual Due Diligence Return.

7. The process has been designed to inform, and in turn be informed by, existing processes of review and engagement at the University and in the wider sector:

 Partners with significant provision have an annual Strategic Partnership and Quality Review (SPQR) meeting with the University. Outcomes from these meetings including enhancement plan responses will provide evidence for the partnership review. This provides a similar alignment of processes as between annual evaluation and periodic review.

 Collaborative courses normally continue to be reviewed under the Periodic Review process conducted at subject level (although see paragraph 10 for combined Partnership and Periodic review). Collaborative courses are always included in annual evaluation for the academic Institute with which they are affiliated. These processes will provide evidence for the review as appropriate.

 QAA reports in relation to the partner will form a further source of evidence for the review, where available. Where possible, Partnership review will be scheduled in order to allow the outcomes of Higher Education Review to be included within the partnership review.

8. On establishing that the partnership is operating effectively and that the partner and University are meeting their respective responsibilities the key outcome of the review is to re-affirm the collaborative arrangement normally for a further period of six years, subject to engagement with the terms of any action plan, as appropriate.

9. A formal report of the review and the action plan will be received by EPPSC and reported to Academic Board through ASQEC. Progress with actions will be reviewed through the annual SPQR and reported to EPPSC.

10. In order to ensure a good fit between processes, and to eliminate unnecessary burden, where partner institutions offer limited provision (typically one or two awards) partnership and periodic review will be combined. For further information please consult the [Combined Partnership and Periodic](http://www.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/CombinedPartnershipandPeriodicReviewProcess.pdf) [Review Process](http://www.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/CombinedPartnershipandPeriodicReviewProcess.pdf) document.

**Section 2: Review Documentation**

The documentation will comprise:

11. From the Partner:

11.1 A partner evaluation and development document (EDD) drawing on SPQR reports and relevant evidence

 The evaluation and development document will cover:

* + - Developments since the last partnership review/commencement of the partnership, including any significant changes in management, organisation, size, strategy, HE student numbers and programmes and how the organization has addressed recommendations and good practice from the last review, partnership approval event etc.
		- Partnership performance (including a comparison of performance data across partnership provision, the viability of current provision)
		- The effectiveness of the management of quality and standards (including evaluation of management and reporting structures, review of enhancement plans and effectiveness in addressing actions).
* Assuring the quality of information regarding the partnership and provision
* Evaluation of the strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities

11.2 A completed due diligence enquiry form and supporting evidence, including copies of relevant policies and procedures.

12. Guidance on the production of the partner evaluation document is available separately [here](http://www.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/Guidance_on_writing_partner_EDD.docx).

13. From the University:

* A University partnership evaluation and development document (compiled by AQU) which collates main themes discussed through SPQR meetings.

Further information may be included from the following sources:

* + - Feedback from key Institutes, Departments and individuals who liaise with the Partner
		- Public information regarding the partnership

A report on due diligence enquiries forms an annex to the EDD

* An evaluation of learning resources available to partnership students produced by Information and Learning Services.

14. In both instances, the partners should identify areas of good practice, as well as areas for development. It is recommended that the two partners share a good draft of their documents four weeks in advance of submission.

15. Additionally the review documentation will comprise:

 Partner HE Strategy if applicable or statement on approach to HE

 Current Partnership Agreement

 Partnership approval/review report

 Minutes of SPQR meetings and enhancement plans for previous three years.

* Quality inspection reports (from partner and University where applicable), action plans and progress reports.

16. The Academic Quality Unit (AQU) will hold a briefing meeting with the Partner at least 16 weeks before the review in order to clarify the process and to discuss the format and production of the documentation. Any variations will be agreed with the Director of Quality and Educational Development (see para 21). AQU also co-ordinate the collation of documentation and send this to the review panel two weeks before the review.

17 One week in advance of the meeting the review panel members will provide feedback and potential lines of enquiry to AQU. AQU will collate feedback to produce potential agenda items for the Chair to review.

**Section 3: Outline of Process**

18. The AQU co-ordinates the preparations for a partnership review in liaison with the key contact identified at the Partner. Reviews will normally take place over a long half-day at the Partner institution.

19 The **Review Panel** will comprise:

 Senior member of the University (Chair)

 Member from another higher education institution with experience of collaborative provision

 Member of UW staff experienced in partnership working but not involved with the host institute(s) concerned

 Deputy Head of Academic Quality (Collaborative).

20 **Meetings**

20.1 Meeting with students

This meeting will seek to involve representation of all collaborative provision offered through the partnership.

The purpose of this meeting is to review the experience of studying through the partnership arrangement including:

 Engagement with the University and awareness of its involvement in the course

 Overall student experience

* Access to partner resources and the quality of learning opportunities

 Experience of accessing UW systems and resources

 Opportunities for representation

 Visibility of progression opportunities

20.2 Meeting with senior managers from the partner

This meeting will include appropriate representation from the partner staff including:

* Member(s) of the senior executive with responsibility for academic and partnership matters
* HE Manager
* Manager(s) with line management responsibility for UW provision
* ILS Manager
* Student Support Manager

The purpose of this meeting is to review the strategic effectiveness of the partnership against the terms of the Partnership Agreement and to respond to institutional issues raised through the review documentation and student feedback including:

* Management of devolved and shared responsibilities including engagement with quality systems and processes, resourcing, marketing
* Engagement with outcomes of SPQR and enhancement planning
* Effectiveness of staffing policies which support delivery of UW provision
* Effectiveness of strategies for developing staff (teaching and learning specific to HE, opportunities for scholarly activity, policies to facilitate engagement in HE CPD)
* Effectiveness of communications at senior management level and of mechanisms for dissemination of information to course teams.

20.3 Meeting with course leaders and relevant staff involved in the operation of the partnership provision

This meeting should involve a representative sample of course leaders and key teaching staff and Link Tutors. Administrators, library, and student support staff may also be included.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the operational, rather than course specific, experience of delivering and administrating collaborative courses and working in partnership including:

 Engagement with UW systems (e.g. regulations, admissions)

 Liaison with the University (centrally and via link tutors)

 Team management of, and engagement with quality assurance and enhancement processes

 Opportunities to develop skills and knowledge for higher education (teaching and learning specific to HE, opportunities for scholarly activity, HE CPD)

 The management of public information and marketing activities

21. Whilst paragraphs 18 to 20 detail the normal process of partnership review, it is recognised that in order to ensure that the process is fit for purpose, reasonable adjustments may be negotiated. Any adjustments will be explored in principle at the briefing meeting and confirmed by the Director of Quality and Educational Development.

**Section 4: Outcomes of the process**

22. The review panel will reach a recommendation on the basis of a review of the evidence and the discussions held during the review meetings. Normally, this will be a recommendation to issue a Partnership Agreement for a further six years, although a shorter time-span may be agreed if substantial areas for development are identified. Re-approval is based upon the Panel’s confidence that the partnership is operating in accordance with the terms of the partnership agreement.

23. In recommending the extension of the partnership, the review panel will identify areas for development. These may be on the part of either partner and will be take the form of actions to be completed within an agreed timescale. These areas will be incorporated into an action plan and be reported in a year-on update to EPPSC.

24. The review panel will also identify areas of good practice in partnership working, which will be disseminated to HE Managers and Heads of Institute.

25. EPPSC will receive a full report of the review and the action plan response. Good practice and any issues will be identified to ASQEC through the minutes of the meeting along with, as appropriate, a recommendation to continue the partnership. The recommendation will be communicated to Academic Board through the committee structure for agreement. EPPSC will receive and recommend for approval to ASQEC a year on response to the action plan.

26. Following approval a revised partnership agreement will be issued and the signed agreement in place in advance of the start of the next academic year.

**Section 5: Evaluation of Partnership Review Practices**

27. The Partnership Review process is evaluated through the use of questionnaires supplied to the Panel and Team following the event. These cover the management of the process, the level of transparency and clarity of outcomes and the extent to which the process has encouraged reflective evaluation by participants, and a clear plan for the future has been determined. The outcomes are considered by the Deputy Head of Academic Quality (Collaborative) alongside other informal feedback. As appropriate, a paper summarising the effectiveness and success of the process is produced for EPPSC.

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| **Author** | Deputy Head of Academic Quality (Collaborative) |
| **Date Approved** | Agreed at EPPSC 6 May 2015; approved by ASQEC 25 June 2015 |
| **Approval Authority** | ASQEC |
| **Date of Commencement** | 2015-16 |
| **Date for Next Review** | September 2019 |
| **Related Policies, Procedures, Guidance, Forms or Templates** | Guidance for Partners on Writing your Partner Evaluation and Development Document for Partnership Review. |