Procedures for the Approval and Monitoring of Collaborative Courses

The original guidelines used by the University were successively revised to reflect guidance available in the form of the Code of Practice on University Validation of Courses of Study, revised by the Council for Validating Universities and approved by the CVCP, in 1993; the HEQC Audit of Collaborative Provision which took place in 1996, the publication of the QAA Code of Practice on Collaborative Provision in 1999, updated in 2004 and again in 2011, and the publication of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education in 2011.

This version published in 2017-18 takes into account revisions to the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education (part A, B and C) as well as the QAA online glossary up to 1 August 2017. This document also includes revisions to the Collaborative Strategy and Policy as approved by the Senate of the University on 8 March 2016.

1. Introduction

These procedures apply to all programmes of the University involving a partner in their conception or delivery (teaching, assessment or support). The procedures which the University has established for the monitoring of these partnerships and for the consideration of new partnerships are set out in this document.

At local level, the principal responsibility for quality assurance of any course subject to these procedures rests with a Validation or Franchise Group or Course Management Group, chaired by a Collaborative Academic Contact, and with the University's central Partnerships Committee. In addition, the courses are subject to at least the same scrutiny as other Warwick courses in both the approval and review process. The Terms of Reference for this and other committees are published on the Governance website here: https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/gov/committees/

A programme can be deemed within the remit of the Partnerships Committee where the University is dependent on a partner's distinctive contribution to a programme of study in order to meet the learning outcomes of an award by the University Warwick.

2. Definitions

(a) Validated courses
A validated course of study is one offered by another teaching institution which the University judges and approves to be appropriate to lead to the award of a qualification of the University. The course will normally be designed, delivered and assessed by the external organisation and the role of the University will be to provide quality assurance, and when requested, advice on the development of the course. The University will usually charge a validation fee which will cover, amongst other items, the External Examiner’s fees and central administrative costs. Students will not normally be permitted access to the University’s physical or electronic Library resources and partner organisations are expected to be able to provide appropriate physical and electronic Library and IT facilities for students on the validated course.

(b) Franchised courses

Franchising normally takes place when a course of study initially developed by the University is approved to be delivered by the staff of an external teaching institution on the external institution’s premises. The overall responsibility for the quality of the course and the assessment of the students resides with the University. Students are fully registered at the University and have the right to use the University Library and relevant electronic resources as negotiated and outlined in the collaborative agreement. The financial arrangements for franchised courses will be agreed on an individual basis depending on the nature of the course and the delivery partner.

(c) Distance Delivery Courses

Where Warwick staff teach at the premises of a partner institution while the partner provides some teaching and/or local administrative/learning support. This “Flying Faculty” arrangement is typically used as a low risk method of delivering a Warwick programme, leading to a Warwick award abroad.

(d) Joint/ Multiple or Double Award Courses

Courses where the final award bears the name of Warwick and one or more other Higher Education institutions, or where more than one award, from multiple institutions, is made for the completion of two mutually contingent programme(s) of study. Where multiple certificates are issued, these are cross-referencing where legally permissible.

(e) Dual award courses

Where two separate, independent awards are made in recognition of a jointly delivered programme of study, or separately delivered complimentary programmes where mutually recognised content creates efficiencies in learning.

(f) Other types of partnership
In some cases partnerships may be proposed which do not conform exactly to the models defined above. For example, University staff may teach on a course or module as well as staff from the partner institution or significant numbers of external staff may be involved in the delivery of a Warwick-based qualification. Since a range of types of partnership can be envisaged it is not straightforward to define which courses will require consideration using the procedures set out in this document.

The Guidance flowchart may be a useful reference point to understand the relative risk of the programme but the advice of the Chair and Secretary of the Partnerships Committee should be sought in advance to clarify the appropriate route for approval.

3. Approval of new collaborative courses

(a) Process

The approval process for new collaborative courses is similar to that for new courses offered directly by University departments except that outline permission should be sought first (to manage risk) and specific scrutiny is required at institutional level by one or more panellist(s) with the appropriate and relevant knowledge of collaborative programmes, usually drawn from the membership of the Partnerships Committee.

Proposals to establish new collaborative courses should normally be submitted to the University with the aim of being approved at least a year in advance of the date of their proposed introduction in order to allow sufficient time for amendment should this be required and to plan effective marketing and recruitment activity, especially in light of the requirements for prospective and current student information as outlined in Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance for Higher Education. More time may also be required for:

- development and approval of collaborations involving a jointly awarded programme
- a new partner to the University or an existing partner with no collaborative programmes approved for the same level of study;
- a programme that will require international (Tier 4 sponsored) students to be present in the UK for any period of time for face to face teaching (or placement etc.),

The approval process has four main stages:

i) An outline proposal is submitted by the academic department

ii) If approved in outline, the department drafts full course proposal paperwork (as agreed with the Secretariat of the Partnerships Committee) in conjunction with the partner;

iii) The proposal is submitted for consideration by a course proposal panel, or Committee(s) where specified at outline approval stage;

iv) Final approval is confirmed by the Secretariat of the Partnerships Committee and the relevant collaborative agreement can be signed.
Consideration of initial proposals

Proposals for a new collaborative course will normally be made by the external institution in conjunction with a University department which has staff with expertise in the relevant area or, in the case of a franchise, by the department which originally developed the course.

Should an external organisation approach the University centrally without a supporting academic department, the Academic Registrar shall consult the Chair and Secretary of the Partnerships Committee to determine whether the University wishes to consider the proposal further. If it does, an appropriate academic department(s) will be contacted and asked to consider whether it would like to support the proposal. The department will be under no obligation to take the proposal forward. At least two members of University academic staff should express interest in supporting the course for discussions to be taken further. These two key members of staff will be designated as the University Collaborative Academic Contact and Deputy for the proposed course. They should initially give consideration to the suitability of the following:

(i) The content and proposed level of qualification to be awarded for the course of study in respect of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.
(ii) The methods of assessment.
(iii) The resources available, including the suitability of the proposed staffing and an assessment of the educational environment of the potential teaching institution.
(iv) The administrative resource required to support the collaboration and whether this would require additional administrative staffing at both the developmental and delivery stages of the new programme(s);

For large or complex collaborations, it may be necessary to appoint a team to consider the proposals and this will be chaired by the proposed Collaborative Academic Contact or Head of Department (or their nominee) as appropriate.

Where the department is supportive, the proposal should progress to outline approval stage as set out in the procedure for outline and full approval of collaborative programmes.

Format of proposals

Information on course proposal paperwork (as applies to all programmes, including collaborative) can be found on the Teaching Quality website.

At the point of outline approval of a programme, any additional collaborative documentation or specific approval required will be agreed and communicated to the proposing department, this may include (amongst other things):
(i) A collaborative risk assessment form and corresponding due diligence;

(ii) A draft collaborative contract, produced in consultation with the Finance Office and the Head of Contracts or their nominee;

(iii) Full CVs and coversheet for relevant staff employed by the partner who will be teaching, assessing or assuming significant academic responsibility for all or some aspects of the programme;

(iii) A schedule or criteria for preparedness prior to the recruitment of students and/or the commencement of study (where significant development is required in order to deliver the proposed programme);

The full proposal should be signed (or authorised) on behalf of the partner institution by its Principal/Director and by the Course Leader and on behalf of the University by the Collaborative Academic Contact and Head of the appropriate Lead Department.

The lead department should keep the partner organisation informed of the progress of the proposal through the University approval system and the Course Leader and/or Collaborative Academic Contact may be asked to attend meetings of relevant Committees considering the proposal where relevant. Revisions may be requested during the approval process and due to pressures in the annual University administrative cycle, partner organisations should be prepared to make agreed revisions to their proposals at short notice.

Once a proposal has been approved, this will be confirmed with the Lead Department who should then communicate this to the partner organisation. The contractual agreement with the University can then be finalised and signed by both parties.

(d) Points to consider when developing collaborative proposals:

(i) Course titles

Course titles should be chosen to reflect accurately the content of the course. Where the University validates a number of distinct courses in a single discipline the titles should make clear the different characteristics of the awards concerned. Where the University does not offer an award in the relevant area, titles employed should be those which enjoy national or, if appropriate, international recognition.

(ii) PSRB requirements

Where the collaboration involves a programme which is in any way recognised or accredited by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body in the UK or abroad, clarity and reassurances should be sought as to how any proposed arrangement might impact this in relation to the programme or individual student(s).
(iii) **Admissions requirements**

The proposal forms for new courses request information concerning the proposed admissions requirements. Partner organisations are responsible for recruiting and selecting students for admission to validated or franchised course to the criteria specified by the University. However, the Collaborative Academic Contact must give approval to the admission of applicants who do not meet the normal entry requirements. For postgraduate courses, the admission of students without first degrees will normally only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Academic Director (Graduate Studies) (or their nominee) or as otherwise permitted by the University’s Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.

(iv) **Financial arrangements**

These should be discussed with the departmental Finance Link Officer and specified in the collaborative agreement;

(v) **Learning Opportunities and supporting student learning**

As noted above, students following validated courses will not normally be permitted access to the University Library. Partner organisations are expected to provide all the necessary learning resources such as a library, e-resources, IT and the physical facilities or equipment required for successful delivery of their course. The site visit required as part of the approval process should ensure that resources are adequate for the successful delivery of the specific course. A site visit is therefore required where the relevant facilities or resources required for the specific programme differ from those already approved as part of an existing collaborative programme with the partner organisation.

Students following franchised or other collaborative courses resulting in an award of the University of Warwick are fully registered with the University and are therefore entitled to normal student access to University facilities as relevant for the specific mode and location of delivery. Where students are at some distance from the University within the UK or based overseas the availability of relevant electronic learning resources and an appropriate virtual learning environment will be a particularly important facet of providing the appropriate learning opportunities for the course.

(vi) **Student-staff liaison arrangements**

The University will normally require the partner organisation to monitor student views on its teaching by using questionnaires, discussion groups and informal contact and to establish a Student-Staff Liaison Committee (or equivalent) in accordance with the principles underpinning the SSLC system at Warwick.
The Partnerships Committee may wish to see copies of SSLC meeting minutes, annual reports or feedback as part of monitoring and review.

(vii) Assessment and external examiners

Awards of the University of Warwick are governed by the regulations and conventions for the relevant level and programme of study (where relevant). Jointly awarded programmes of study that

All examinations and assessments should normally be double marked or moderated by a second marker. All assessment should be anonymous except where this is impossible.

It is University policy to permit academic staff to disclose the marks for individual assessments and to discuss these marks with the students concerned in confidence. Mark schemes, marking criteria and examination conventions should also be clearly publicised to students.

The Validation Group, Franchise Group or Course Management Group with the addition of the External Examiner will usually act as the Board of Examiners with responsibility for recommending the award of the validated, franchised or collaborative qualification. The quorum for the Examination Boards is two-thirds of the membership providing that the University of Warwick members are in a majority. The External Examiner may be considered as a University representative for this purpose.

The University regards the role of the External Examiner as a crucial element of its quality assurance mechanisms. All External Examiners will be appointed by the University in line with University Policy and should have recent and relevant knowledge of the UK Higher Education quality assurance regulatory framework, even where a programme is delivered abroad. In cases where the University validates or franchises the same or a similar course of study to more than one partner institution the same External Examiner(s) should, where possible, be appointed for all the courses concerned.

The External Examiner’s role should be conducted according to University guidelines and requirements. The Collaborative Academic Contact will be responsible for providing advice on University assessment procedures and the role of the External Examiner.

(ix) Appeals procedures

Complaints in relation to a course validated by the University of Warwick should be considered in accordance with the University’s Student Feedback and Complaints Resolution Framework, where students are not satisfied by the outcome of the relevant local resolution process by the teaching institution. Academic Appeals should be dealt with under the University
Academic Appeals Regulation. The applicable procedure should be specified in the University’s agreement with the partner organisation.

Complaints from students registered on franchised or other collaborative programmes resulting in an award of the University of Warwick will be considered in accordance with the University’s Student Feedback and Complaints Resolution Framework. Academic Appeals from students registered on franchised or other collaborative programmes resulting in an award of the University of Warwick will be considered in accordance with the University Academic Appeals Regulation.

(x) **Student records and administration**

The University’s Academic Office will maintain a record for each student following a validated, franchised or other collaborative course. At the beginning of their period of study, all students should be provided with information setting out their rights and responsibilities as a student on a course validated by the University or delivered through a franchise or other collaborative arrangement. The Good Practice Guide on providing Information to Students is provided by the Teaching Quality section of the Academic Registrar’s Office as guidance as to the information to be included in student handbooks, the relevant University department and partner organisation may provide amended information in a form and context appropriate to the course, noting that a durable (usually PDF) version of this should be retained by the lead department for each relevant cohort of students.

It is essential that partner organisations keep the University fully informed of the progress and status of students registered on their validated, franchised or collaborative courses, including notification of changes of address and the progress of any students who are required to resubmit work after the usual final examination board for their cohort.

The partner institution should create and maintain (in accordance with the relevant laws) a full record of the courses of study taken by each of its candidates registered for an award of the University and to share these with the University’s Academic Office as agreed in the collaborative agreement to enable transcripts of the studies undertaken by students enrolled on validated, franchised or other collaborative courses to be provided as necessary. In the event that a partner institution should for any reason cease its relationship with the University, suitable arrangements must be agreed with the University to ensure that the facility to provide such transcripts is not lost.

Students registered on courses validated by the University will be subject to the regulations of their own institution at all times, and to the University of Warwick’s Charter, Statutes,
Ordinances and Regulations and other rules governing validation. They will not be reported to HESA by the University.

Students on a franchised or other collaborative course will be fully registered students of the University and subject to its rules and regulations. Such students will be reported to HESA as University of Warwick (franchised) students.

(xi) Award ceremonies and certificates

Students being awarded a University of Warwick degree (including foundation degree) on successful completion of a validated, franchised or other collaborative course will be eligible to attend the University’s degree congregation where previously negotiated in the collaborative agreement. Other students (diploma or certificate courses) will be issued a formal University certificate recording their qualification after the pass list has been approved by the relevant University authority. Some departments may also wish to arrange local, specific degree ceremonies for such students.

(xii) Student information and promotional material

All material used to advertise or inform prospective students about the validated, franchised or other collaborative course should make clear the role of the University in the course using the wording “validated by the University of Warwick”, “franchised by the University of Warwick”, “jointly awarded by the University of X and the University of Warwick” or other wording as applicable. The precise wording should be agreed in advance and noted in the collaborative agreement/contract. The University logo may be used to promote validated, franchised or other collaborative courses; again, if this is to happen, or if the logos of both the University and the partner are to be used, it should be noted in the collaborative agreement/contract. Collaborative Academic Contacts are asked to monitor the quality and accuracy of promotional material on at least an annual basis, and a sample may be considered as part of the programme’s programme of monitoring and review.

4. Monitoring and review after the validation, franchise or other collaboration has been approved

(a) Arrangements for monitoring
The Validation or Franchise Group or Collaborative Course Management Group led by the University Collaborative Academic Contact and Deputy, is the primary body responsible for the quality assurance of a validated, franchised or other collaborative course. The responsibilities of the Collaborative Academic Contacts and of the Group are set out in Appendices II and III. All validated courses will be subject to monitoring and review by their Validation Group which is required to submit an annual report to the Partnerships Committee. This is the main mechanism by which the Committee monitors the work of the Group. Further details of the procedures for monitoring and review are set out on the Teaching Quality website (go.warwick.ac.uk/quality).

The Partnerships Committee is the body with primary oversight of External Examiners' reports for validated, franchised and other medium to high risk collaborative courses in respect of the operation of the partnership. This is in addition to the monitoring and review process applied to all programmes of the University.

(b) Institutional Teaching and Learning Review

The University operates a cyclical review of all of its provision called the Institutional Teaching and Learning Review. Further information on this process is available on the University’s Teaching Quality website. All collaborative programmes are subject to at least the same scrutiny as those programmes wholly delivered and awarded by the University.

(c) Collaborative Review

The Partnerships Committee has primary responsibility for maintaining and undertaking a risk-based policy and schedule of (cyclical) collaborative review as outlined in the Procedures for Collaborative Review.

(c) Changes to the structure and staffing of approved courses

(i) Structure and component modules

All significant changes to the structure of a validated, franchised or other collaborative course should be submitted via the University's course and module approval system. The panel assigned to the revision should have a representative of the Partnerships Committee. Such changes might include the introduction of new component modules, changes in assessment methods, inclusion of additional teaching or new Student-Staff Liaison Committee arrangements. Minor changes to syllabus or teaching arrangements do not require approval by the University. Where there is any doubt whether a change needs to be reported, the Secretariat to the Partnerships Committee should be contacted for advice. Any new component courses should be submitted for approval via the university’s course approval process and should include the CVs and collaborative staff proposal coversheet of any new teaching staff who may be involved in the delivery.

(ii) Staffing
All changes to the staff teaching on a module for which the University will be awarding credit require approval and CVs of new staff (and coversheets) will normally be required for submission to the Secretariat of the Partnerships Committee for consideration by the Chair. The Collaborative Academic Contact is responsible in the first instance for ensuring that the University is kept informed of any staffing changes.