

COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

DELIVERY PARTNERS

PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This handbook outlines the procedures operated by the University of Aberdeen (UoA) in respect of National and International **Delivery Partner** activities in which a partner organisation delivers the academic material provided by the UoA leading to the award of a taught UoA degree. The Delivery Partner, which may be any third party organisation which doesn't have degree awarding powers, provides infrastructure and staff to a specification agreed with the UoA¹. Through the procedures, the UoA seeks to ensure that programmes operated offer students comparable quality of learning opportunities and equivalent standards of awards to those received by students at the UoA.
- 1.2 In Chapter B10 of the Quality Code "Working with Others", the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) sets out the following expectation about managing the delivery of learning opportunities with others:
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.
- 1.3 The regulations and procedures herein take cognisance of the QAA Quality Code Section B10 *Managing Higher Education Provision with Others* www.qaa.ac.uk.

2. Fundamental Principles

- 2.1 The following principles underpin the UoA's approach to working with partner organisations:
- i. any arrangements made shall not contravene the laws, agreements, understandings or principles which are in force within the country or region of the collaboration or are local to the partner, but must remain compatible with UoA regulations;
 - ii. the UoA is responsible for the academic standards of awards. The standards achieved by students who are successful in completing programmes by Delivery Partners shall be equivalent to the standards achieved by students who are successful on equivalent programmes at the UoA;
 - iii. the UoA shall only enter into such arrangements in subject areas for which the UoA has expertise and where the language of delivery is English;
 - iv. the UoA shall only enter into collaborative partnership arrangements if confident of the Delivery Partner's abilities to support students, deliver a student experience that provides an equal opportunity to learn, and deliver the programme and its own abilities to manage the collaboration;
 - v. the UoA shall only enter into collaborative partnership arrangements if confident of the Delivery Partner's abilities to provide the quality of infrastructure to maintain the standards of our degree provision;
 - vi. the UoA shall only enter into collaborative partnership arrangements if confident of the Delivery

¹ Delivery Partners do NOT include those institutions whose academic provision we recognise, accredit or validate. For policies, procedures and regulations related to these types of partnership are available in section 10 of the Academic Quality Handbook. A taxonomy defining different types of partnership is available at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/types-of-partnership-3887.php>

Partner's abilities to support its staff, and provide the necessary environment to ensure the health and wellbeing of both staff and students;

- vii. the UoA shall only enter into collaborative partnership arrangements with Delivery Partners who have a shared understanding of equality, diversity and human rights principles as the UoA, and who are free to operate as such in-country;
- viii. the UoA shall only enter into collaborative partnership arrangements with Delivery Partners where the conditions of provision present no significant restrictions to the academic freedom of staff, such that they would compromise the academic probity of the degrees offered;
- ix. serial arrangements, whereby the partner offers approved UoA provision elsewhere or assigns to another partner powers delegated to it by the UoA, are **not permitted**.
- x. UoA will only enter into a collaborative partnership arrangement where it can be clearly shown that the resource implications will not negatively influence the quality of the student experience in Aberdeen.
- xi. that clear procedures are outlined in the Terms of Agreement (Contract) or ending the partnership if the contracted conditions are not kept by the delivery partner.

3. Status of Students

- 3.1 Students on programmes at UoA Delivery Partners are fully registered students of the UoA as well as being students of the Delivery Partner. As such, the associated School(s) shall treat these students in the same way as those studying at the Aberdeen campus in so far as it is possible to do.
- 3.2 It is important for purposes of statutory reporting, audit and award that students who are on a Delivery Partner programme can be distinguished easily from students who are on a parallel on-campus programme. For this reason, students must be assigned to the correct version of the programme on admission and on registration.

4. Certificates and Records of Study

- 4.1 Responsibility and authority for awarding certificates relating to the University of Aberdeen awards rests with the UoA. Where it is agreed that the Delivery Partner(s) can produce and issue transcripts relating to programmes leading to Aberdeen awards, the UoA must approve the format and content of the transcript.

5. Delivery Partner Approval Procedures

- 5.1 The following procedures are designed to ensure that there are adequate safeguards in place against issues that might compromise academic standards or the quality of learning opportunities. Consideration of strategic alignment, finances and the business case must be conducted separately from consideration of the academic proposal, approval of academic provision and scrutiny of processes for the management of quality and standards.
- 5.2 Before undertaking significant work on a potential partnership, the value of the potential Delivery

Partner should be assessed. In particular, consideration should be given to:

- whether the partnership will clearly contribute to the UoA's strategic goals,
- whether the UoA has the resources required to support the partnership, and
- the potential benefits and risks.

5.3 The formal stages leading to the Delivery Partnership approval are:

5.3.1 **Assess value of potential partnership.** The proposal should be discussed with the Vice-Principal for Learning & Teaching and, where appropriate, the Vice-Principal for Internationalisation and the relevant Regional Dean.

5.3.2 Establish a **Project Board**. A project board will be chaired by either the Vice-Principal (L&T) or Vice-Principal (Internationalisation) to oversee the investigation and approval process, and activities leading to implementation.

5.3.3 **Instigate independent due diligence procedures** proportionate to the size/nature of the project. Undertake desk-top review of the potential partner and proposed arrangements, and if applicable contact other institutions partnered with same provider. During this investigation process the UoA must establish that it has the legal powers to carry out what it undertakes to do under the partnership agreement and, likewise, that the proposed partner has the legal powers to perform its duties. The UoA must also ascertain:

- (i) what the national legislation and national or regional qualifications frameworks of the intended country of operation are and whether these could have implications for the standards and standing of Aberdeen awards;
- (ii) that the proposed arrangements will allow UoA to exercise its responsibility for ensuring that its academic standards are maintained, irrespective of the requirements of the partner;
- (iii) that the proposed partner has appropriately qualified staff to teach to the level of the programme;
- (iv) that the proposed partner has adequate suitable facilities and learning resources to enable students to achieve the learning outcomes and required achievement levels on the proposed programme(s).

Annex A provides further details of the vetting documentation required and the areas to be considered under due diligence.

5.3.4 **Panel Visit to the proposed Delivery Partner institution.** A Panel approved by the VP (L&T) will be appointed, the remit and membership of which is detailed in **Annex B**, to visit the Partner as soon as is practicable. The partner shall be responsible for the production of the documentation required for the visit. Areas to be explored, staff and students to be met, and a proposed Agenda for the subsequent visit, shall be communicated to the Delivery Partner.

The visit will seek to determine whether the proposed Delivery Partner is able to deliver the programme such that academic standards will be achieved successfully and such that the quality of provision is at a comparable level to that at the Aberdeen campus. It will also seek to ensure that any changes proposed (e.g. to contextualise content) are acceptable in terms of content, breadth and academic level.

The programme for the event will normally include:

- a meeting of the Panel with senior members of the proposed partner to explore the location of the programme within the partner's portfolio, the familiarity of the prospective delivery organisation with the standards and ethos of UK higher education, issues relating to resourcing, and initiatives of provision which might affect

the programme (e.g. learning resource planning); (Note that if there are issues relating to a previous HE partner withdrawing from a relationship with the Delivery Partner which remain outstanding, such issues should be explored;

- a meeting of the Panel with the programme teaching team to explore the programme rationale, aims, structure, content, delivery, assessment, entry, staffing, facilities, and programme specific regulations as appropriate to the particular type of collaborative arrangement;
- a meeting with relevant heads of administrative services including those responsible for the allocation and management of learning resources, student and Registry services;
- meetings with students from other programmes in the partner institution;
- *wherever possible*, the Panel will also meet or correspond with any relevant local British Council or other appropriate local education officials;
- an inspection of relevant facilities;

Annex B also contains guidelines for members of panels appointed to scrutinize proposals for such collaborative ventures

5.3.5 **Recommendation:** Formulation of approval visit decision: (a) approved; (b) approved subject to conditions, or (c) not approved. In considering its recommendations and the conditions and recommendations of approval, as appropriate, the Panel shall take full cognisance of the Delivery Partner's perceived ability to deliver the programme to an agreed level of quality - as adjudged from the staffing expertise and capacity, the student experience, the learning resource levels and the student support available - and to sustain academic standards equivalent to those achieved by UoA students qualifying for equivalent awards. The recommendation report should be submitted to the Project Board and QAC for consideration.

5.3.6 **Discussion and Approval by Senate:** Senate will be asked to approve any new delivery partnerships, and any new physical campus(s), including a new campus(s) for established delivery partners. Senate will be provided with a paper for discussion and/or a presentation by the Vice Principal (Internationalisation), which would normally be expected to include:

- Nature and source of Due Diligence carried out
- Nature of delivery model including the expectations on home school staff
- Proposed programme areas for delivery
- An understanding of the positive benefit to the country or region of the proposed activity
- Implementation timeline

5.3.7 **Agreement.** An Agreement will be prepared, including clauses related to academic standards and quality assurance, applications and admissions, awards, fees, finance and HR, and the responsibilities of each party, and approved by the Project Board². Where appropriate the Project Board may seek legal advice.

5.3.8 **Admitting Students:** All UK institutions are required to have a legally binding Agreement signed by the authorized signatories of both (all) parties in place **before** any students are admitted or exchanged.

6 Marketing, Recruitment & Admissions

² A full list of content to be contained in such agreements is available the QAA Quality Code Section B10 *Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*, www.qaa.ac.uk.

- 6.1 The University of Aberdeen and its partners need to promote a clear and consistent message regarding its programmes offered on a collaborative basis to ensure that intended audiences receive accurate and appropriate information about higher education programmes. Such information should be fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy (QAA Quality Code: Section C).
- 6.2 Marketing and recruitment materials are the joint responsibility of the UoA External Affairs Marketing Team and the Delivery Partner’s Marketing Team. All branded materials should be prepared in line with the UoAs guidance and protocol, and approved by the UoA before they are distributed or published on paper or online.
- 6.3 Delivery Partners’ procedures for admissions will be agreed with UoA and will comply with the UoA Admissions Policy³, which itself complies with the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B2: Admissions.
- 6.4 The UoA and the Delivery Partner will jointly agree the Admission Entry Requirements necessary for all programmes delivered at the partner institution, subject to any accreditation requirements. No student will be admitted to any programme unless the admissions requirements for that programme are satisfied.
- 6.5 Applications will be processed by the Delivery Partner in accordance with UoA admissions criteria. Borderline applications will be sent to the respective UoA Director of Admissions for decision. An admissions ‘audit’ takes place at least annually, and a weekly admissions report is sent to UoA.

7	Governance, Oversight and Management of Partnerships
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- 7.1 Delivery Partnerships are managed, monitored and reviewed at institutional level, primarily by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), although they are operated on a day-to-day basis chiefly at School level, with the link-tutor playing a pivotal role.
- 7.2 **School(s):**
- Identify a link tutor(s) for the programme(s), who ensures that programme quality and academic standards achieved by students are maintained at an appropriate and acceptable level and that quality enhancement takes place. The link tutor acts as a source of advice and linkage for the Delivery Partner, a source of regular status reporting to the UoA Committee structure, and seeks to ensure comparability of the programme with similar programmes at the UoA
 - Monitor that link tutor visits take place as prescribed, and Delivery Partners are contacted regularly and/or visited as necessary for advisory or other purposes
 - Preparation of link tutor reports for submission to the QAC and (relevant) Regional Deans
 - Scrutinise external examiner reports and report on them to QAC
 - The role of the link tutor is detailed further in **Annex C**
- 7.3 **Partnership Management Group (PMG):** The Partnership Management Group, which comprises senior staff from the UoA and from the Delivery Partner, should monitor and review the partnership(s). In so doing it should consider:
- quality and standards issues;
 - planning and strategy for the short to medium term;
 - reports from the Link Tutor;
 - arrangements for examination and assessment of the programme(s);

³ <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/admissions-policy.php>

- regulations and requirements of the University of Aberdeen;
- any changes in local and national legislation in the country of operation of the Delivery Partner
- marketing and recruitment including progress against targets;
- IT, Library and infrastructure issues;
- preparation and submission of Quality Assurance documentation and Annual Report

Annex D provides details of the suggested composition of Programme Management Groups

7.4 In all other aspects, programmes at delivery partners shall follow the same regulatory, reporting, procedural and responsibility requirements as for Aberdeen-based programmes.

8 Quality Assurance and Monitoring of Delivery Partnerships

- 8.1 All provision at Delivery Partners is subject to the **same** quality assurance oversight as programmes delivered on the Aberdeen campus.
- 8.2 All provision at Delivery Partners is subject to the **same** General and Supplementary Regulations and Policies and Procedures as set out in the Academic Quality Handbook, except where in-country regulations supersede these.
- 8.3 Where consideration is to be given to a programme accredited by a professional, statutory or regulatory body, then full consultation with that body/association will take place through the associated School which will keep the QAC informed.
- 8.4 Oversight will be provided by the Quality Assurance Committee through the main monitoring systems as follows:
- 8.5 **Link Tutor:** The associated School via its Link Tutor is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that programme quality and the academic standards achieved by students are maintained at an appropriate and acceptable level and for ensuring that quality enhancement takes place. The Link Tutor will ensure
- any programme modifications are undertaken according to the UoA Course and Programme Approval Process (SENAS)
 - the quality and rigour of ongoing reporting, such as Link Tutors' reports and Annual course and programme reviews (ACR/APR), and ensure that any issues raised through these and from External Examiner reports are actioned accordingly;
- 8.6 **Collection and use of Student Feedback (including SCEF and SSLCs);**
- 8.7 **Annual Monitoring** (Annual course and programme review, External Examiner Reports, Annual Visit, Annual Report from Delivery Partner);
- 8.8 **Regulation of assessment** including External Examiners (all of whom are appointed by UoA) and Examiners Meetings. Where feasible the same external examiner should be used for programmes delivered via delivery partners as for programmes delivered at the Aberdeen campus;

Items 8.6 – 8.8 above will be undertaken in line with the guidance and procedures detailed in the UoA Academic Quality Handbook (section 3.5). Link Tutor(s) shall participate in all final Examiner Meetings and shall have an equal say with that of Internal Examiners on outcomes, and may additionally advise on UoA procedures where appropriate;

8.9 **Internal Teaching Review, ITR:** All UoA programmes undergo Internal Teaching Review (ITR), every five-six years and information pertaining to such reviews is given in the Academic Quality Handbook section 3.5). Delivery Partner ITRs will be reviewed as part of an ITR of the 'parent' School at the UoA. It is the responsibility of the associated School and the Link Tutor to ensure that the partner has been fully apprised and prepared for the event and that due timescales are observed. The parent School and the Link Tutor, working with the Partner, also have the responsibility to ensure that any conditions of the ITR review are met according to the required timescale.

8.10 **Partnership Management Group:** The Partnership Management Group (PMG) is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the partner programme(s), and meets to discuss and take action on programme related matters. This ensures that programme reporting takes place both internally to the Delivery Partner and externally to the UoA.

8.11 **Partnership Review:** Partnerships will normally be reviewed every 5 years. The main aim of partnership review is to provide assurance that the partnership is operating, on the part of both partners, in accordance with the terms of the agreements in place and that it is an arrangement to be recommended for continuation.

The objectives of partnership review are to:

- Provide an opportunity to reflect at institutional level on the experience of academic collaboration;
- Consider both strategic and operational arrangements for the effective management of the partnership;
- Review ways of working, identifying potential improvements to the management and operation of the partnership and enhancing the quality of the student experience;
- Check the effectiveness of arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement on the part of the partner and the UoA;
- Evaluate and confirm the overall academic standards and quality of the programmes delivered under the partnership arrangement;
- Review the support provided to partners by the UoA, and make recommendations regarding the term of office of the Link Tutor;
- Periodic due-diligence checks: In line with Section B10 of the QAA Quality Code, the UoA will carry out periodic due diligence reviews of its Delivery Partners;
- Consider renewing the partnership or otherwise.

A formal report of the partnership review and the action plan will be submitted to the QAC for approval, and will be reported to UCTL, and such other committees as may be appropriate.

Annex E provides further details of the Partnership Review process, including the due-diligence information to be collected for each Delivery Partnership review.

9 Assessment

9.1 The UoA stipulates assessment regulations and procedures with each partner and ensures that they are comparable with those that apply at Aberdeen. Any differences have to be justified by the partner and agreed by the UoA.

9.2 **Assessment Approval:** All examination papers that contribute to the final award of a programme should be approved by the External Examiner prior to being given to students. This also applies to re-sit examinations. Where practical given different time zones, all examinations will be the same for students at the UoA and Delivery Partner and would be expected to take place at the same time across campuses; any differences have to be justified by the partner and agreed by the UoA's Quality

Assurance Committee.

- 9.3 **Assessment Approval Calendar:** An Assessment Approval Calendar which specifies the dates that assessments are to be taken with estimated dates for the submission of draft assessments should be agreed with the link tutor at the start of the academic year.
- 9.4 **Moderation:** Partners will adhere to the UoA Moderation Policy detailed in the UoA Academic Quality Handbook section section 7, appendix 7.17, with appropriate UoA staff acting as moderators. UoA staff will provide quality assurance guidance on behalf of the UoA and play a developmental role with Delivery Partners, including acting as second markers in the initial years of a programme.

10 Student Appeals and Complaints

- 10.1 The Delivery Partner will follow the UoA procedures unless superseded by in country regulations such as country-specific Ombudsman equivalents.
- 10.2 In the first instance student complaints will be dealt with by the Delivery Partner, with the Delivery Partner taking on the role of Head of School or Section for informal, frontline resolution.
- 10.3 Following resolution, details of the appeal or complaint will be communicated to Aberdeen via the Partnership Management Group.
- 10.4 If the complaint cannot be dealt with locally, the complaint will then be dealt with following the UoA Complaints Handling Procedure⁴.
- 10.5 Student Appeals will be handled by the UoA in accordance with the UoA's Policies and Procedures for Student Appeals⁵.

11 Changes to Programmes

- 11.1 Changes may be made to programmes following initial approval through the UoA SENAS procedures. Such changes must be the subject of consultation between the UoA parent School, the Link Tutor (who is responsible for submitting the SENAS form(s)) and the partner Institution and approved by QAC
- 11.2 It is acknowledged that programmes may have to be adapted to adhere to in-country requirements, particularly in relation to subject areas where there are differences in legal requirements and industrial practices. Such differences should be highlighted in the SENAS submission.

12 Termination of Partnerships

- 12.1 If any of the fundamental principles outlined in section 2 of this handbook are not upheld, the UoA will seek to terminate the partnership.
- 12.2 The Partnership Agreement used by the UoA will include clauses setting out the consequences of termination for the partners. It will specify the respective obligations to ensure that students

⁴ <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/aqh/appendix5x19.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/aqh/appendix5x18a.pdf>

enrolled on programmes delivered under the Delivery Partnership arrangement are able to complete their studies if they wish to do so in the event that any party to the agreement withdraws from an arrangement or that the degree-awarding body decides to terminate an arrangement. If such a circumstance arises, then upon termination of the agreement no new students should be admitted to any programme covered by the agreement.

- 12.3 Upon withdrawal of approval, the Delivery Partner shall be informed in writing by the Principal or nominee that it may not advertise the programme using the name of the UoA or in any other way implicate the UoA, save for those necessary and approved instances associated with the cohorts of students completing their studies at the collaborating institution.
- 12.4 The students will be informed of the termination by the UoA and provided with full details of progression options available to them. They will be provided with details of who they may contact to discuss the options.
- 12.5 Section B10, Quality Assurance Agency Quality Code states: *'Degree-awarding bodies retain responsibility for ensuring that students admitted to a programme who wish to complete it under their awarding authority can do so in the event that a delivery organisation or support provider or partner withdraws from an arrangement or that the degree-awarding body decides to terminate an arrangement'*. The UoA shall ensure by suitable means that the interests of students on the programme are protected as far as is possible by one or more of the following measures:
- arranging for existing students to undertake the remainder of their studies at the UoA or elsewhere;
 - allowing existing students to complete the programme at the delivery partner whilst permitting no new cohorts to enrol on the programme;
- 12.6 In any of the above cases, full consultation with students, Link Tutors, External Examiners and the Delivery Partner must take place for determination of the best programme(s) of action.

INITIAL VETTING INFORMATION AND DUE DILIGENCE REQUIREMENTS

The following information will be required:

1 Description of the Delivery Partner / General Information

This should provide an overview of the organisation, and give an indication of the following:

- Financial and legal standing.
- The ownership, governance and management structure of the organization.
- The rationale for the institution seeking to enter into a collaborative arrangement with the University of Aberdeen.
- Any existing collaborative ventures with the University of Aberdeen or other HEIs, whether formal or informal.

2 Details of the course(s) and programme(s) that have the potential to be delivered by the Delivery Partner

- Planned Programmes and Courses and associated Modes of Study
- Anticipated student numbers
- Likely qualifications of students on entry
- Source of student funding
- Professional Body requirements
- Details of input or resources required from the University of Aberdeen

3 Details of staff involved in organising and delivering the course(s) and programme(s)

4 An outline of the arrangements for student support

5 Details of how the University of Aberdeen Quality Assurance procedures will be implemented

6 Facilities and Resources

- Location of all campus(es):
- Details regarding ownership of the delivery premises
- Details of Staff Development, Equal Opportunities and Health and Safety Policies:
- Library holdings, both physical and electronic

7 INVESTIGATION OF IN-COUNTRY HIGHER EDUCATION LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS including any restrictions on staff and/or student recruitment and /or mobility that might impact on the business plan.

8 DUE DILIGENCE CHECKS TO BE PERFORMED BY UOA should include, but are not limited to:

- a) A summary of the institution's financial position⁶ and procedures for resource allocation [NB: The University of Aberdeen will request updated financial information and carry out credit checks as part of its periodic updating of due diligence (section 7)];
- b) A fully costed Business Plan;
- c) details of the education system in the country concerned;
- d) Details regarding the requirements for formal recognition/accreditation/approval by the relevant national authorities of collaborative providers and programmes in- country;
- e) Details of any current or previous partnerships with Universities, Colleges or other awarding bodies (in country or overseas). If a relationship has been terminated, please provide details of the reason for termination;
- f) Details of checks carried out by UoA staff with the authorities in-country;
- g) Legal/Political/Ethical/Cultural issues to be considered in the proposed collaboration;
- h) Levels and type of insurance held by the institution:
- i) Details of any legal judgements in the last three years against the Delivery Partner or any pending legal action

⁶ A copy of the partner institution's most recent audited annual accounts should be submitted. Details of the procedures for resource allocation should be provided, emphasising particularly any special provision which has been agreed with respect to the courses and programmes for example, capital and recurrent funding earmarked for the courses and programmes.

PARTNERSHIP APPROVAL PANEL: REMIT & MEMBERSHIP

Panel Membership

1. Panels for Delivery Partner approval visits will normally comprise as a minimum:
 - (i) A member of the Quality Assurance Committee,
 - (ii) *at least* one person from an associated School(s)
 - (iii) a member of Academic Services
 - (iv) a student representative

2. The Vice Principal (Learning & Teaching) may vary the composition given above as appropriate to the particular circumstances of the event. Depending on the scale and type of the proposed partnership it may be appropriate to include a member, normally from another UK higher education institution, who is external to the UoA and has expertise in collaborative provision.

Pre-Visit

3. Documentation submitted by a prospective partner institution should demonstrate that it could satisfactorily deliver, support, monitor and assess the courses and programmes in question, and could provide adequate support and guidance to students who would be registered on the programmes.

4. A Pre-visit meeting of the Panel in Aberdeen will be convened to:
 - (i) identify key areas to be investigated during the visit
 - (ii) to prepare an agenda and schedule for the visit
 - (iii) to identify any further documentation required

Visit

5. The primary aims of a Panel visit to the prospective partner institution are:
 - to confirm the veracity of statements in the documentation supplied by the partner in relation to its ability to deliver, support, monitor and assess the relevant courses and programmes;
 - to establish that the partner institution has a suitable teaching and learning environment, including adequate and appropriate teaching accommodation, equipment and information technology facilities (e.g. computing laboratories and library facilities) and an academic culture consonant with that required for the successful delivery of higher education courses and programmes at the level proposed;
 - to establish that an appropriate infrastructure exists for student support (academic, general welfare, personal and medical);
 - to confirm that the partner has satisfactory arrangements for quality control, and quality assurance and enhancement, which will complement those required by the UoA as part of a formal agreement.

6. To facilitate the above, the Panel should agree with the partner institution, prior to the visit, those individuals and/or groups whom the Panel would wish to meet and identify the issues that the Panel wishes to explore.

7. The Panel should meet those who would be responsible for teaching and administering the courses and programmes, and those who would provide academic and personal support to students registered for the programme(s). Wherever possible, the Panel should also meet with potential and current students of the programme(s). Alternatively, the Panel could meet with students in existing programmes of the Partner's provision.

8. The Panel, in determining a timetable for the visit, should include, where appropriate, a request for a demonstration of services or activities which the partner has identified as being integral to the successful delivery of the courses and programmes (e.g. video-conferencing facilities; computer conferencing or other specific IT facilities).

Report

9. Following the visit, the Panel should prepare a detailed report relating to the visit and to the documentation submitted by the partner. Areas of good practice and of concern should be highlighted.
10. In particular, the report must highlight any issues which the Panel believes that the institution must address before approval of the proposed arrangement could be recommended by the Panel.
11. The report should conclude with the Panel's overall recommendation with respect to the proposed arrangement and should be submitted to the Project Board and Quality Assurance Committee.
13. The report should indicate the Panel's recommendation, which will be one of the following:
 - (a) that the UoA should approve the proposed collaborative arrangements for the relevant course(s)/programme(s)/institution;
 - (b) that the UoA should approve the proposed collaborative arrangements subject to any recommendations of the panel being accepted by the proposed partner; or
 - (c) that the proposed collaborative arrangements should not be approved.

In cases (b) and (c), details should be provided.

ROLE OF LINK TUTOR

For programmes delivered via our Delivery Partners a minimum of one Link Tutor per subject area⁷ will be appointed to each partnership and will be responsible for all subject-programmes within that partnership.

[a] **QUALITY & STANDARDS:** The purpose of the Link Tutor is to be the main point of contact within the School for a particular partnership. This includes:

- Quality assurance role: including advising on the UoA's regulations and procedures and advising partners on programme modifications)
- Quality enhancement role: identify staff development needs at the partner institution, participate in or facilitate training events and share good practice with partners
- Advise partners on draft Quality Assurance documentation prior to their submission to the UoA
- Seek feedback from students during visits to partner institution
- Attend programme management committee at partner institution or videoconference/skype (at least one p.a.)
- Take part in Exam Boards
- Assist with staff and student induction (where necessary)
- Report to the relevant School Committees and QAC on partnership issues
- Advise on and monitor student handbooks
- Peer observation of teaching (where necessary)
- Approve new staff members at partner institutions (and interview, if deemed necessary)
- Review resources at the partner institution on an on-going basis and advise on and monitor any necessary improvements
- Provide advice (in conjunction with colleagues in the relevant School) on draft assessments (coursework and examinations) prior to transmission to External Examiner(s)
- Provide assistance to partners (in conjunction with colleagues in the relevant School) on learning materials and MyAberdeen

[b] **VISITS TO DELIVERY PARTNER:** Link Tutors will visit the partner as necessary, and as a minimum once per academic year, to ensure that the programme progresses appropriately. In addition, the link tutor should make arrangements to interact regularly with staff and students of the Partner Institution via alternative means, for example, video conference meetings. Such Link Tutor visits should include participation in a Programme Committee meeting and in meetings of Examination Boards. It is also envisaged that Link Tutors will:

- meet and discuss the programme with students;
- contribute to discussions with respect to the facilities and infrastructure required to deliver the School's programmes
- review facilities in relation to programme developments and student numbers;
- review students' work;
- review Programme Committee records;
- review assignment schedules and where possible harmonise these with the 'home' programme;
- participate in course and programme review discussions-
- meet informally with the Programme Director and members of the programme team.

Link Tutors may make recommendations, and contribute to staff development activities during their visits, or assist in any other way such that they may fulfil the function of mentor and adviser to the programme

⁷ To be determined by the Programme Management Board in consultation with the Head of School at UoA

team.

[c] **ASSESSMENT:** The Link Tutor will ensure equivalence of assessment. Link Tutors shall receive and approve

- draft assessments and examination papers, and associated marking schemes (based on intended learning outcomes) and/or facilitate the development of common assessment wherever possible across the UoA and the collaborating institution;
- If not included in the review of students' work as above, an agreed sample of student assignment work and examination scripts before the visit;
- any other documentation requested by the Link Tutor for assurance that the quality of the programme and the standards achieved by students are appropriate.

[d] **REPORTS:** An annual report must be submitted by the Link Tutor for presentation to the Partnership Management Group and to the QAC in parallel. Link Tutor reports shall address the following:

- issues raised by students and any action taken or proposed to consider/address them;
- observations regarding the resources - including staffing, physical, library and other learning resources - with recommendations for enhancement where necessary;
- staff development undertaken by the programme team, perceived staff development needs, and how such activities will benefit the programme;
- observations on programme delivery and programme management;
- issues arising and any resulting discussion and action taken as a result of Link Tutor, External Examiner and student consultation issues;
- progress made in regard to issues arising from approval recommendations, periodic review conditions and recommendations;
- matters relating to the UoA regulations and procedures, including compliance observations;
- where applicable comments on the standard of assignments and examination papers set, marking schemes and the standard of marking, in comparison to equivalent programmes at the UoA;
- observations on assignment schedules and teaching plans;
- the overall standards attained by students;
- the conduct of assessments and examinations;
- the conduct of the Examination Board and any pre-meeting, and the appropriateness of preparation and organisation of papers for the Examination Board;
- any problems encountered, and any consequent proposals for staff development;
- any other general issues pertaining to the programme

SUGGESTED COMPOSITION OF PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT GROUP

The Partnership Management Group (PMG) meets four times per annum, or more frequently if required. Each PMG is chaired by the Vice Principal (L&T) or Vice Principal (Internationalisation) and membership includes senior academics and professional services staff from the UoA and from the Delivery Partner.

Others may be co-opted onto the group as required.

PMGs consider:

- (a) planning and strategy for the short to medium term;
- (b) reports from the Partnership Management Group and Link Tutors;
- (c) marketing and recruitment including progress against targets;
- (d) quality and standards issues;
- (e) IT, Library and infrastructure issues;
- (f) staff development activities and funding;
- (g) student number updates and financial analyses.

PARTNERSHIP REVIEW PROCESS

All Delivery Partnerships will be reviewed, normally every 5 years. The main aim of partnership review is to provide assurance that the partnership is operating, on the part of both partners, in accordance with the terms of the agreements in place and that it is an arrangement to be recommended for continuation.

[a] The **objectives** of partnership review are to:

- Provide an opportunity to reflect at institutional level on the experience of academic collaboration;
- Consider both strategic and operational arrangements for the effective management of the partnership;
- Review ways of working, identifying potential improvements to the management and operation of the partnership and enhancing the quality of the student experience;
- Check the effectiveness of arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement on the part of the partner and the UoA;
- Evaluate and confirm the overall academic standards and quality of the programmes delivered under the partnership arrangement;
- Review the support provided to partners by the UoA, and make recommendations regarding the term of office of the Link Tutor;
- Periodic Due-diligence Checks: In line with Section B10 of the QAA Quality Code, the UoA will carry out periodic due diligence reviews of its partners;
- Consider renewing the partnership or otherwise.

[b] **The Process**

The Partnership Management Group will co-ordinate the preparations for a partnership review. Reviews will normally take place over a day, normally (but not necessarily) at the Partner institution.

(i) **A Review Panel** will be established comprising a member of the Quality Assurance Committee, a senior member of staff from another academic school, and a member of Academic Services.

(ii) **Meetings with Staff:** The Review Panel will expect to meet with senior managers from the partner institution, course leaders and representatives from staff teaching on the programmes, and any other individuals who play a key role in the programmes (for instance administrators or technicians). During these meetings the Panel will discuss/consider:

- Developments within the aims of the partnership to date
- Successes and challenges encountered to date
- Experience of working with UoA systems and processes
- Relationship with the UoA and Schools
- To discuss plans for future development
- Experience of course development
- Teaching and learning issues

(iii) **Meetings with students** to discuss the experience of studying on a programme and experiences of being a student of both the partner and the UoA

(iv) **Meeting with Link Tutor** to discuss engagement with UoA colleagues and processes and Quality assurance and enhancement issues

(v) **Review of key documentation**

(vi) **Outcomes, Recommendations and Report:** A formal report of the partnership review and the action plan will be submitted to the QAC for approval, and will be reported to Senate and UMG.

The review panel will reach a recommendation on the basis of the discussions held during the review meetings. Normally, this will be a recommendation to continue with the partnership for a further 5 years, although a shorter time-span may be agreed if substantial areas for development, or to address, are identified. In exceptional circumstances, the recommendation may be that the partnership be discontinued.

In recommending the continuation of the partnership, the review panel may identify areas for development by the partner (or UoA), as conditions (to be met by a specific date) or recommendations (not mandatory but response to be reported through next APR report) based on their implications for the effective continuation of the partnership.

The review panel may also identify areas of good practice in partnership working, which will be disseminated to relevant staff in the UoA and at partner institutions.

If the outcome of the review is to recommend discontinuation of the partnership, both partners should work closely to ensure that any existing students already enrolled on programmes at the partner institution are given the opportunity to complete their studies (as stipulated in the Memorandum of Agreement).