COLLABORATIVE PROVISION: DELIVERY PARTNERS: POLICY AND PROCEDURES
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1.1 Members of the Committee received the draft handbook in respect of National and International Delivery Partner activity, noting its prior consideration by the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committees and at a recent meeting of the Heads of School.

1.2 The Committee acknowledged the intention of the handbook in covering instances where the University is engaging with a non-degree awarding organisation for the delivery of University owned provision resulting in the award of a University of Aberdeen degree. The Committee were informed that in such instances the partner organisation will provide facilities and infrastructure and the University will provide the programmes and courses, and is therefore fully responsible for the Quality Assurance of the academic provision.

1.3 Members of the Committee noted concern regarding how their lectures might be taught elsewhere, specifically querying whether teaching materials such as PowerPoint slides would be sent to the partner organisation. Members of the Committee were assured that discussions between schools and the organisation(s) concerned would need to take place and that procedures may differ from across schools. The Committee noted the handbook was intended to specify how the University would determine a partner with whom to work; the annexes to the document providing some detail on how a partnership would work in practice. The Committee noted the intended ‘link-tutor’ acting as a liaison between University and organisation.

1.4 The Committee noted concern regarding how the knowledge and research-led teaching provided by an individual University of Aberdeen academic member of staff could be provided by a third party. The Committee were assured that research-led teaching would be promoted. While, initially, partnership relationships would focus on teaching, support for research would undoubtedly follow.

1.5 Members of the Committee requested the addition of a principle to address the issue of equality, diversity and human rights and to ensure the University was clear when entering into any partnership that the delivery partner shared these principles with the University.

1.6 Members of the Committee acknowledged the work that had gone in to the creation of the handbook, drawing on policy already in existence elsewhere in the UK. The Committee noted that the policy had been carefully contextualized to Aberdeen and including key Quality Assurance methods such as annual review.
The Committee agreed on the importance of appointing staff to provide teaching based on criteria provided by the University, to ensure an appropriate level of expertise.

Members of the Committee raised concerns regarding the ability of Undergraduate students studying at a partner organisation to receive the same experience as those at the University, particularly noting Curriculum Reform and the breadth of subject choice open to students studying with the University directly. The Committee were assured that while, unavoidably, lesser choice would be available, students undertaking their studies by way of a partner organisation would be provided with an element of choice and where courses were required for a degree programme, these would definitely be provided.

The Committee discussed the delivery of teaching to be provided by the University. Members were reassured of the expectation that teaching would be provided in the spirit of the University and with adherence to the fashion and behaviours expected of and demonstrated by the University. Members of the Committee noted the expectation that agreements with organisations would include a commitment to a percentage of revenue being spent on staff development. The Committee noted that the partnerships covered by the handbook could vary from organisations delivering a single degree programme to a campus based overseas, however, the appropriate Quality Assurance procedures (such as Annual Course Review, moderation and link tutors) would be present, as applicable throughout each.

The Committee noted that not every discipline may be suitable to the partnership delivery model and that careful consideration would need to be given by schools to such proposals. Members of the Committee noted that this stage of the process would follow only after an appropriate business case had been determined and approved. Should it not prove possible to establish an appropriate agreement on the basis of quality, however, teaching would not be delivered.

Members of the Committee queried the infrastructure provided by an organisation and were assured that the appropriate infrastructure, or agreed procurement of, would be a requirement of any agreement between the University and a delivery partner. The Committee noted that where programmes in Aberdeen benefit from industry expertise, such as oil and gas companies based in Aberdeen, this would be replicated as far as possible and may even bring the opportunity for new industry relationships for the University.

The Committee noted that issues such as student fees, exchange opportunities, accreditation and means of moderating assessments would all be issues for discussion between the appropriate school/discipline and the partner organisation and element would be addressed within the agreement.

Members of the Committee noted the role of the link-tutor as being work intensive. The Committee acknowledged the need to employ an appropriate individual and that the responsibility be accounted for in workload allocation. Members of the Committee noted concern at the proposed introduction of more work to colleagues already under pressure.

Overall, the Committee were content to approve the paper, subject to the revisions as suggested above.
2.1 Members of the Committee noted the report provided following a University visit to the Interactive Design Institute (IDI), Musselborough to discuss the proposed delivery of an online version of the University’s Masters of Business Administration (MBA). The Committee noted that the panel, comprised of members of the QAC spoke to staff and students of the IDI and viewed the facilities available.

2.2 The Committee queried why the University could not provide such online provision and required a third party to do so. Members of the Committee were informed that the resource to do so did not currently exist within the Institution and that IDI can provide facilities that the University does not currently have the ability to provide.

2.3 Members of the Committee were assured of the processes in place between the Business School and IDI in transferring knowledge and creating a suitable programme for study. The Committee were informed that the criteria for the appointment of staff in this regard had been set by the Business School and that they were very involved at all stages of the process.

2.4 There was feeling amongst some members of the Committee that the direction of travel, in working with third party organisations, was not appropriate for the University. The Committee were reminded that such issues were not for the QAC but that the assurance of the quality of programmes delivered was.

2.5 The Committee acknowledged that the students recruited to this programme were likely to be students who could not study at Aberdeen and without online provision would not be able to complete an MBA.

2.6 Members of the Committee were assured that staff based at IDI although perhaps not ‘research active’ were active in keeping abreast of research to inform their teaching at all times.

2.7 Overall, the Committee were happy with the quality of the provision as reported. The Committee agreed to approve the proposal, with one abstention. It was noted, however, that the abstention was not for reasons of the quality of provision.