University of Aberdeen
CHECKLIST FOR THOSE CONSIDERING COLLABORATIONS LEADING TO AN AWARD (SINGLE, DUAL OR JOINT) OR CREDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY (see Section 10.3.5)

This checklist has been designed to help Schools and Colleges consider the range of issues that should be addressed when proceeding with a proposal to develop a collaboration leading to an award (single, dual or joint) or credit of the University. The questions will also assist in initial discussions with prospective partners and, if the proposal receives initial approval by the relevant University Committees, the preparation of any agreement.

The aim is to ensure that the necessary information is available with the proposal so that the University can be assured that appropriate due diligence has taken place and so that the proposal can be considered without unexpected delays.

Note that this checklist is for the guidance of University of Aberdeen staff only and should not be sent to the other organisation or body.

Strategic fit

1. What is the reason for the partnership? How does the collaboration align with the University’s strategic plan? What will be the target key performance indicators?
2. Are there any existing links with the proposed partner? If so, how well are they functioning? Does the prospective partner have links with any other UK or overseas higher education institutions or other bodies? If so, how well are they functioning? Is the proposal that these links are transferred to Aberdeen? If so, why is the existing link ceasing?
3. Has a risk assessment been carried out?

Financial arrangements

4. What evidence do you have that the proposed partner is financially stable?
5. Will the full costs of the partnership be covered by consequent income? If not, how is it anticipated that costs relating to the collaboration be covered and by whom?
6. Is there funding for the programme? Is funding being applied for that is contingent on this partnership?
7. Is it proposed to offer fee waivers or fee reductions? If so, how will the loss of income be covered and by whom?
8. Note that overseas collaborations cannot make use of S/HEFCE resources as ‘cross-funding’.

Staffing arrangements

9. Do the School and College have adequate staff and time to ensure that the prospective programme is appropriately monitored, taught and administered and that issues are dealt with timeously? If so, how many staff will be involved?
10 What will be the impact of this (academic and administrative) on day-to-day operations and how will that impact be mitigated? Will there be a requirement for the recruitment of additional staff?

11 If part or all of a programme is to be delivered by staff who are not academic members of staff at Aberdeen, their CVs must be approved formally by the University. Do you have evidence of their ability to deliver programmes at the equivalent level?

12 Will it be necessary for staff of a proposed partner institution to undergo Disclosure Scotland procedures?

13 What staff development arrangements does the prospective partner have in place?

14 Do the School staff have appropriate experience to cover teaching of the programme if the agreement or collaborating institution should collapse? If not, what arrangements might be in place to ensure that the University’s duty to what would be our students can be met?

Quality assurance and enhancement

15 What is the overall academic standing of the proposed partner? What was the outcome of its most recent external audit or scrutiny? What arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement does the proposed partner have?

16 What is the proposed partner’s experience of delivering comparable programmes at the same level? If it does not have this experience, what evidence is there that the proposed partner is capable of delivering programmes to that level?

17 If the proposed partner is outside the UK, what evidence is there that the partner has an understanding of current practices in UK higher education (e.g. external examining, assessment frameworks, and quality assurance arrangements)?

18 For joint and dual degrees, do you have evidence that the proposed partner is legally authorised to make such awards?

Academic standards and regulations

19 What are the proposed awards and areas of study?

20 Who will be the awarding institution and what type of award will be made (single, dual or joint degree; credit)?

21 All collaborative arrangements are subject to Aberdeen’s general undergraduate and postgraduate regulations but may also be subject to separate supplementary regulations if approved by the Senate. Will this programme be subject to supplementary regulations?

22 Is any part or all of the proposed programme subject to the approval, recognition or accreditation of a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSB)? Has the proposal been discussed with the PSB?

23 If the proposed partner is outside the UK, will the partner or programme be subject to the requirements of national or local governmental and/or of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies? If so, what are the implications for the proposed collaborative arrangement?

24 If the proposed partner is outside the UK, will there be any local conditions that might affect the partner’s ability to comply with the principles of UK higher education? Any programme leading to an Aberdeen award (single, dual or joint) or credit must be the same as or equivalent to that received by students studying on the Aberdeen campuses and must comply with the requirements of the QAA Quality Code.
Admission, registration and reporting

25 How many students are expected to be involved?
26 Who will select and recruit the students? If the proposed partner is to do so, Aberdeen must retain the right to make the final choice of entrant.
27 The admissions criteria and English Language requirements to any Aberdeen programme or part-programme must reflect the admissions and language skill requirements in force at the time a student is admitted to the University.
28 Do any of the areas of study fall within the JACS codes requiring an ATAS (Academic Technology Approval Scheme) Certificate?
29 Are there any aspects of the proposed collaborative arrangement that might cause difficulties for non-EU students with regard to immigration?
30 Will it be necessary for students on the collaborative programme (whether at Aberdeen or at a proposed partner institution) to undergo Disclosure Scotland procedures?
31 How will non-standard applications be handled?
32 Will the students spend time at the University of Aberdeen. If so, how much time will they spend here, at what stage of the degree, and as what type of student (eg full-time, associate, visiting)?
33 Note that all students spending a period of study at the University and/or on a programme leading to an Aberdeen award (single, dual or joint) or credit of the University must be registered with the University.
34 Note that for dual degrees it is a requirement that students are registered for a minimum of 12 consecutive months as full-time, full fee paying students at Aberdeen, and that they are resident in and studying at Aberdeen for a minimum of 6 consecutive months during that 12-month period. Whilst these students are at the partner institution, they must remain registered at Aberdeen as associate collaborative students and pay the relevant fees.
35 What will be the arrangements for student records management? Note that all students spending a period of study at the University and/or on a programme leading to an Aberdeen award (single, dual or joint) or credit of the University must have a record on the Aberdeen student record system.
36 What will be the arrangements for returns to the SFC, HESA, etc?
37 What will be the arrangements for student funding?
38 What will be the arrangements for the collection of tuition fees?

Programme management

39 What mechanisms will be in place to ensure the effective management of the collaboration, including providing a named contact and communication regarding procedures and timelines?
40 Who will be the programme leader? Will there be a programme management committee?
41 What will be the membership and terms of reference?
42 How will design, approval, monitoring, amendment and review of the programme be carried out? Any programme leading to an award (single, dual or joint) or credit of Aberdeen must comply with Aberdeen policy and procedures.
43 All teaching materials, exam papers and exam scripts must be in English unless the programme in question is specifically approved by the Quality Assurance Committee for delivery in whole or in part in another language.
44 If the proposed collaboration involves a partner from outside the UK and instruction and assessment is to be in a language other than English, how will translation facilities to an appropriate standard be provided and how will the costs of this be covered?
Will the cohorts of students covered by the collaborative arrangements need a student handbook tailored to their particular needs? If so, who will produce it? Aberdeen must retain final responsibility for student handbooks for programmes leading to an award (single, dual or joint) or credit of the University.

How will the partnership ensure that overall staffing and infrastructure facilitate students to be able to meet the requirements of the awards?

What will be the arrangements to give students advice and feedback?

What will be the arrangements for student representation and student feedback?

What provisions would be made to ensure that students could complete their programme if the University were to suspend or withdraw from the agreement should the partner fail to fulfil its obligations?

Monitoring and progression, assessment, external examining and the provision of certificates and transcripts

Will transfer of credits be involved?

Will there be progression onto other Aberdeen programmes? How will progression within the programme and on to other programmes offered by Aberdeen or other institutions be handled?

What are the arrangements for student monitoring, progression, assessment and examination? All programmes leading to Aberdeen awards (single, dual or joint) or credit, undergraduate and postgraduate, taught and research, must be assessed in line with Aberdeen policies and procedures.

For all programmes leading to Aberdeen awards (single, dual or joint) or credit, undergraduate and postgraduate, taught and research, programme materials, examination papers, assessments, candidates’ scripts, and theses must be submitted in English unless the Quality Assurance Committee has given formal approval otherwise. Does the partner/prospective students understand this?

How will examiners’ meetings be handled? External examiners for any Aberdeen award may be nominated by a partner institution. However, Aberdeen must retain the right to appoint/not appoint such nominees. Does the partner understand this?

How will PhD vivas be handled? Where will the viva be held? For dual awards are the regulations of Aberdeen and the prospective partner regarding examination similar enough to allow just one viva? Note that for all Aberdeen awards (single, dual or joint), all aspects of the examination (eg length and format of thesis, number and type of examiners) must comply with Aberdeen regulations.

Professional and statutory bodies

Is the programme approved, recognised or accredited by a Professional or Statutory Body (PSB). How will this impact on the collaboration? How will the status of the programme with reference to PSB accreditation be made clear to prospective students? Has the PSB been consulted?

Learning and other resources

Does the prospective partner possess sufficient resources to discharge effectively its part of the proposed collaborative agreement?
What learning support resources are offered by the prospective partner?

What facilities for English Language support, if required, are offered by the prospective partner?

Are the prospective partner’s physical resources (eg teaching rooms, study areas) sufficient?

Are the prospective partner’s library facilities adequate?

Are the prospective partner’s IT facilities and technical support adequate?

What careers’ advice is available to students?

What support is offered by the prospective partner for disabled students?

Who will be responsible for health and safety?

What are the general welfare arrangements offered by the prospective partner?

What facilities does the prospective partner have for student counselling?

Will there be any constraints on students’ access to the partner’s resources and facilities?

What rights will students have to access Aberdeen resources and facilities?

Who will be responsible for discipline? While at Aberdeen or while registered on a programme leading to an Aberdeen award students should be subject to Aberdeen policies and procedures on academic discipline. While registered on a programme leading to an Aberdeen award offered at a validated/accredited institution, it may be appropriate that students should be subject to the non-academic disciplinary procedures of the partner.

Will the programme be subject to fitness to practise requirements?

How will student appeals and complaints (academic and non-academic) be handled?

Arrangements and agreement

How long is it planned to offer the partnership (eg number of initial cohorts; length of agreement/supervision). It should not be longer than five years in the first instance. In particular circumstances, schools may consider it helpful to have a shorter initial contractual period.

What will be the arrangements for the suspension and termination of the arrangement? All collaborative agreements must include provisions to safeguard students still on programmes if/when an agreement is suspended, terminated or not renewed.

Will any exclusivity arrangements be required?

Will there be any IPR or copyright issues?

Are you aware of the legal status of the proposed partner? Can it contract legally with the University?

Collaborations with non-UK partners

Under which legal jurisdiction will the collaboration operate and disputes be resolved?

Will in-country government approvals/licenses be required? If so, how will Aberdeen be assured that these have been secured?

Aberdeen cannot sign an agreement in a language other than English unless an English version, prepared by an independently qualified translator, appointed and paid by Aberdeen, is signed by the same parties at the same time.

Marketing, publicity and recruitment

Has market research been carried out to check demand for the proposed collaborative arrangement? If so, does it indicate that there is sufficient demand for this programme?
How will the programme be marketed and by whom? How will brands, logos, etc. be used? Note that Aberdeen must retain final authority on any marketing and publicity material and on the way in which its corporate image is used in all kinds of marketing and publicity.

What will be the recruitment targets?

What mechanisms will be in place to ensure the accuracy of all public and publicity information (print and electronic) and promotional activity relating to the partnership?

Discussions with colleagues

Has the prospective collaboration been discussed with:
- the Head of School;
- the Head of College;
- the College Director of Teaching & Learning/Director of the Graduate School;
- the College Accountant;
- the College Registrar.