

**Processes for Partner Approval**

The processes of partnership approval are overseen by the Collaborative Partnerships Office and consists of these activities:

* Initial consideration and investigation, including risk assessment
* The submission of an Institutional Profile Document and information to support due diligence
* The completion of due diligence
* A partner approval visit

This appendix should be read in conjunction with section 9.5 and 9.6 of the Academic Quality Handbook, which has further details related to these activities.

*Initial consideration, including investigation, risk assessment and due diligence*

At the point at which the Collaborative Partnership Office wishes to register a firm proposal for collaboration, it submits its proposal (using Appendix CP1) to the Academic Planning Team. If the Academic Planning Team approves the proposal for due diligence and detailed costing, the activities undertaken are in four parts:

* Legal due diligence
* Financial due diligence
* Academic due diligence
* Detailed costing of the proposal based on the mode of provision envisaged

The due diligence will be based, in part, on a contextual Institutional Profile Document prepared by the prospective partner institution.

The University recognises that the institution may wish to undertake similar due diligence investigations into the standing of the University and will respond accordingly and in full to equivalent information requests.

*Contents of Institutional Profile Document and accompanying information*

The prospective partner institution is asked to supply an Institutional Profile Document, covering the areas listed below.

1. Description of the prospective partner institution, to include:
* date established
* legal status
* private or public sector
* funding sources
* size
* organisation and management structure, including faculty/departmental/school structure
* governance structure, to include locus of academic and business decision-making
1. Summary of mission, values, academic strategy and development plans
2. Summary of experience in delivering higher education programmes, to include:
* a list of the other academic colleges or universities with which the institution currently has a partnership arrangement
* details of any UK universities or accrediting bodies with which the institution has had a partnership during the last 5 years
* the institution’s admissions policy, together with the institution’s procedures for maintaining student records
* records of the institution’s academic committees, including those involving the participation of students
1. List of academic programmes offered over the past 3 years, with details of language of provision, student numbers and any partner institutions or accrediting bodies and, for UK provision, corresponding external examiners’ reports
2. Details (with supporting documentation) of any reports and/or inspections relating to the institution by relevant government, statutory and accrediting bodies (or equivalent) in the past 3 years
3. Prospectuses and/or other examples of publicity and marketing, together with the institution’s procedures for ensuring that such information is complete and accurate
4. (UK institutions only) Current UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) status (with supporting documentation)
5. Description of resources, to include:
* the number of academic and support staff, including details of teaching/industrial/research/ scholarly/consultancy experience and for UK institutions only and processes for meeting the Skilled Worker Visa requirements if applicable
* library and learning support provision facilities
* physical facilities, including number and type of classrooms, laboratories, workshops etc and equipment available to support the proposed programme(s) of study
1. Rationale for the introduction of the proposed programme(s) to be delivered under the auspices of the University
2. Summary of the proposed programme(s) to include:
* The name of each proposed programme and award
* Proposed student numbers for each programme
* Nature of current/likely student population in the programme area(s), for example sources of students; entry qualifications; level and range of studies undertaken; subsequent destinations of students
* The proposed language of delivery and assessment
* The envisaged mode of provision for each programme, for example ‘validation’
* The preferred start date for offering the programmes under the auspices of the University
1. The learning and teaching strategies adopted by the institution
2. The institution’s staff development and appraisal arrangements
3. The institution’s safeguarding policies
4. The institution’s quality assurance mechanisms
5. The English/Welsh language proficiency of staff and students, if appropriate
6. Any further information or comments as appropriate e.g., political, economic, cultural, social and religious differences which could affect the nature of the programme(s)

**For proposals which include research degrees additional information, as outlined in Appendix CP3, also needs to be submitted.**

*Due Diligence*

The due diligence is based on the Institutional Profile Document and accompanying information, as well further documentation as listed below. The documents should be indexed to correspond with the numbering used below.

Where the information to be supplied may constitute “personal data” or “sensitive personal data” pursuant to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, the institution is asked to ensure that, unless appropriate consent has been obtained from the data subject, the data is anonymised prior to its supply.

The documents required for legal and financial due diligence are:

1. A copy of the constitutional documents for the institution (incorporating any amendments which have been made) (with English translation where appropriate) notarised where appropriate.
2. Evidence that the institution has power to enter into the proposed partnership and confirmation of whether there are any conditions or restrictions on this power.
3. Details of the legal framework for the jurisdiction applying to the institution in respect of the proposed partnership.
4. Confirmation of the solvency of the institution to include:
* details of all mortgages, charges or other security documentation affecting the institution and copies of any documentation which may affect the partnership;
* details of the financing arrangements of the institution including particulars of all overdrafts, loans and other indebtedness and facilities affecting the institution;
* audited accounts for the last three years.
1. Details of any state or public sector funding applicable to the institution.
2. Details of any contracts with third parties which may confer rights on those parties in relation to the proposed partnership.
3. Confirmation that the institution owns all its own real property or details of any lease arrangements relevant to the proposed partnership.
4. A list of the names and qualifications of the Directors and senior managers of the institution.
5. Details of the institution’s arrangements for intellectual property rights.
6. Details of any quotations or tenders which the institution has submitted which are relevant to the proposed partnership.
7. Copies of all permits, authorities, registrations, licences, approvals and consents (whether granted by public or private authorities or otherwise) held by the Institution and necessary to carry on both the work of the institution or the proposed partnership.
8. Details of any of the following which is current, or which is known to be pending threatened or possible in relation to the institution or the proposed partnership:
* any litigation or arbitration proceedings (whether as claimant or defendant);
* any prosecution; and
* any investigation or inquiry by a governmental or official body.
1. Details of all relevant grants, loans, payments or allowances taken out by or granted to the institution in relation to the proposed partnership.
2. Any other details pertaining to any liabilities which are relevant to the institution or the proposed partnership.
3. Details of any data protection requirements relevant to the institution or the proposed partnership.

All the information to support the due diligence process is received by the Collaborative Partnerships Office for analysis by the relevant UWTSD staff.

In addition, academic due diligence is based on, but not necessarily limited to, the following enquiries, which will be undertaken by the UWTSD:

1. In respect of institutions outside the UK, enquiries about the legal and regulatory frameworks, the political and cultural context (including potential security risks or risks to academic freedom), and the higher education structures of the country concerned. This will include ascertaining any requirements for the institution to be accredited or recognised by the relevant authorities.
2. In respect of institutions outside the UK, enquiries directed to the British Council (or other appropriate body) about the good standing of the institution. Advice will also be sought from the British Council of relevant in-country issues of which the University should be aware when entering into a partnership.
3. Enquiries directed to all other UK universities and colleges with current (and, where appropriate, previous) partnerships with the institution, requesting comment on their experience of working with the institution.
4. Scrutiny of the institution’s website and other publicly available information, to ascertain whether it appears generally accurate and of an appropriate quality.
5. Reports published by QAA and other relevant external bodies, either relating directly to the institution or to its relationship with other UK institutions.
6. In respect of UK institutions, confirmation of UK Visas and Immigration licence status.

The findings of the due diligence process are reported by the Collaborative Partnerships Office to the Due Diligence Standing Group. If the Standing Group concludes that the findings of the due diligence process are satisfactory, it recommends to Senate a formal approval visit to the prospective partner institution is arranged.

In considering the findings of the due diligence process, the Due Diligence Standing Group will give specific consideration to the mode of partnership provision envisaged. The Standing Group may conclude, in the light of the due diligence, that an alternative mode of provision is desirable. In such cases, the Standing Group’s conclusions will be reported to Senate for consideration. If Senate determines that an alternative mode of provision is more appropriate, the prospective partner will be advised in advance of the approval visit.

The Academic Planning Team has authority to review the findings of the due diligence process and to confirm that an approval visit should be organised if no meeting of Senate is scheduled during the month following the completion of the due diligence process.

*Formal visit to the prospective partnership institution*

If due diligence is satisfactorily concluded and Senate approves the recommendation for a formal visit to the prospective partner institution, the visit is arranged by the Collaborative Partnerships Office.

The visit will normally be to the headquarters of the prospective partner institution. If the proposal is for delivery at other (or multiple) sites, additional sites may be approved for delivery following successful partner approval, either via the programme validation process or a new centre approval visit. The purpose of the visit is to confirm the following:

* that there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the prospective partner institution is of appropriate academic standing;
* that the learning environment, including the human and physical resources, is or can be made appropriate to the standards of UK higher education;
* that the prospective partner institution understands the administrative and quality assurance requirements of UK higher education and will be able to fulfil those requirements;
* that staff are appropriately qualified, familiar with the requirements and ethos of higher education, understand UK assessment requirements, and will be able to deliver academic programmes successfully in collaboration with the University;
* that the prospective partner institution and its staff have experience appropriate to the mode of provision envisaged, and that the learning environment is appropriate to that mode of provision;
* that the University’s understanding of the local operational context, such as registration with regional and/or national governments and/or regulatory bodies, is accurate, so required actions can be confirmed;
* that where the proposed collaborative provision is to be delivered/assessed in language other than English or Welsh, the University is able to support the prospective partner institution via the agreed procedures outlined in the policy for delivery and assessment in languages other than English or Welsh.

As such, the visit is essentially concerned with auditing the information already gathered, including the Institutional Profile Document (which may be updated and extended for the purposes of the visit), and assessing the institutional capability to sustain and deliver the intended programmes. It is also concerned with strengthening the link between the University and the prospective partner institution, and providing an opportunity for identifying early staff development needs. It provides an opportunity to have discussions concerning the development of the curriculum; the development of specific resources to support the proposed collaboration; and identify the key staff involved at the institution and at the University.

The membership of the panel normally comprises:

* Chair, a senior member of staff
* one or two external members, at least one of whom has significant experience of collaborative provision, for example as a QAA Reviewer
* up to three internal members, with expertise that covers the discipline area(s) to be offered by the prospective partner institution, experience of collaborative provision and/or knowledge of learning resources
* up to two members of staff from the Collaborative Partnerships Office, one of whom shall also record the deliberations of the panel and draft its report.

The precise composition of the panel shall depend on the nature of the proposed partnership. For proposed collaborative partnerships which include the provision of research degrees, for example, at least one internal member and one external member of the panel will normally have direct experience of the management of research degrees. The eligibility of external panel members shall be considered by the Heads of Collaborative Partnerships, in liaison with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and/or their nominee.

The duration of the visit is determined by the University. Arrangements are made by the Collaborative Partnerships Office in liaison with the prospective partner institution. The visit includes, as a minimum:

* meetings with the senior management of the prospective partner institution
* meetings with a group of students of the institution, including elected student representatives
* meetings with the teaching staff of the institution and, where the proposed provision includes postgraduate research degrees, meetings with research supervisors
* meetings with the staff responsible for the provision of learning resources, student support and student administration
* scrutiny of the institution’s learning and teaching facilities, and other facilities for students

Where appropriate, some members may contribute to the meeting virtually. However, the expectation is that the Chair, external member and members of Collaborative Partnerships Office will physically visit the site. Where there are circumstances that do not permit a physical visit for a period of time the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and/or their nominee will decide if the majority of the panel’s visit can be conducted virtually, with the proviso that a physical visit can take place as soon as it is possible and before the commencement of the programme validation process.

In undertaking its activities, the panel will be mindful of the mode of provision envisaged at the commencement of the partnership and tailor its enquiries accordingly. Where a validation partnership is proposed, for example, the panel should expect to see evidence of a track record of successful programme development, as evidenced through student achievement and satisfaction and the reports of external examiners, and will wish to discuss the programme development process in detail with relevant staff. Where the proposed partnership includes the provision of research degrees, the panel will expect to explore in detail the institution’s history and experience of delivering research degrees and its structures for managing and supporting research degrees.

The panel will ensure that the proposed partner understands the requirements, both academic and administrative, in relation to programme validation and that additional charges may be applied if the University is required to support the partner in this respect.

The outcome of the visit is a report to Senate setting out the findings of the panel, with one of the following recommendations:

* that the institution is approved as a collaborative partner of the University. Approval may be subject to conditions, which must be addressed to the University’s satisfaction prior to the next stage in the process, and/or recommendations which must be formally considered by the institution. Where this recommendation is made, the panel also specifies the mode of provision to be offered in the first instance;
* that the partnership is not approved at the current time, but that the University is prepared to consider a partnership in the future, subject to certain conditions;
* that the partnership is not approved as a collaborative partner of the University and that no further consideration should be given to the prospective partnership in the foreseeable future.

In the event that Senate approves the institution as a collaborative partner of the University, the Chair of the approval panel is responsible to IACPC for ensuring that the institution is aware of any conditions of approval and for confirming to IACPC and Senate when such conditions have been met.

A summary of the approval routes for partnership provision is provided below:

| **Type of provision** | **Approval**  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Academic Planning Team** | **IACPC[[1]](#footnote-1)** | **Academic Standards Committee** | **Senate\*** |
| New partnership | YesVia CP1, approve to proceed to preliminary visit (where necessary) and due diligence | No | No | Yes, approve partnershipVia Chair’s report and/or IACPC minutes |
| New programme in new partnership | YesVia Form PV1, approve to proceed to validation | No | Yes, approve programme validation  | No |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| New programme in existing partnership | YesVia Form PV1, approve to proceed to validation | No | Yes, approve programme validation  | No |
| New centre with existing partner | YesForm CP1, approve proceeds to visit  | Yes via Form CP11,New centre approval pro-forma  | No | YesVia Chair’s report and/or IACPC minutes  |
| New mode of provision with existing partner | YesForm PV1A, approve to proceed to next stage as appropriate (due diligence and/or validation) | No | Yes for approval of programme validation | Yes for approval of new mode where due diligence has been undertakenVia Chair’s report and/or IACPC minutes |
| New articulation link | YesVia Form CP1A | Yes | No | YesVia IACPC minutes |
| Additional route in existing articulation link  | YesVia Form CP1A | Yes | No | YesVia IACPC minutes |

1. Where IACPC/Senate does not have a role to approve proposals it will be nevertheless be kept informed of developments via Chair’s report and/or receipt of partner approval and validation reports. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)