

## FRAMEWORK FOR OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF PARTNERSHIP PROVISION

1. This framework outlines the key mechanisms the University of Suffolk adopts for the operational management of academic provision that is delivered in partnership with others.
2. Definitions of different types of partnership activity are outlined in the University's [procedures for the approval, monitoring and review of partnership activity](#) (the Partnerships Handbook). The roles and responsibilities for operational management of partnership provision may vary across different partnership arrangements, with the definitive arrangements for managing each partnership outlined in the relevant partnership legal agreement and in the accompanying Partnership Operational Document (POD).
3. For most partnership arrangements, the following is normally applicable:
  - a. students are registered on the University student records system and are subject to University academic regulations, policies and procedures, unless bespoke regulations, policies and procedures for the partnership have been approved by the University;
  - b. the partner institution is responsible for meeting relevant statutory obligations, and local health and safety and safeguarding policies will take precedence over University policies;
  - c. the partner institution is responsible for course delivery under the oversight of the University, except in cases where joint delivery with the University has been agreed;
  - d. partner students are assessed through the auspices of the relevant University of Suffolk Assessment Board;
  - e. the partner institution is responsible for the provision of learning and teaching facilities, learning resources and student support (although students may also access the University's e-resources if this is agreed as part of initial contractual negotiations);
  - f. the University remains ultimately responsible for the quality of the student learning experience and for the academic standards of the award(s).

### **Approval and periodic review of partnership arrangements**

4. Procedures for the approval of new partnership arrangements are outlined in the University's [procedures for the approval, monitoring and review of partnership activity](#) (the Partnerships Handbook). In accordance with the Partnerships Handbook, all partnership arrangements are subject to institutional level review on a maximum of a five year cycle.
5. Partnership legal agreements are also normally subject to review and renewal on a maximum of a five year cycle. Due diligence activities will be revisited as part of this process to ensure that the partner institution continues to have the capacity to fulfil their designated

responsibilities. Due diligence may also be undertaken at more frequent intervals, as informed by relevant risk assessments.

### **Approval, monitoring and review of partner courses**

6. Approval of new courses is conducted in accordance with the University's [procedure for the validation of new courses at partner institutions](#).

7. For franchised courses, the validation event will focus on arrangements for course delivery, staffing, resources, student support, student representation and feedback, and course management at the partner institution, to ensure the partner has the capacity to effectively deliver the University course as part of a franchise arrangement. It is assumed that curriculum content has already been approved for internal delivery at the University of Suffolk as part of standard University procedures for the validation of courses, but where this is not the case (for example due to the need for local contextualisation) this may be incorporated into the validation process.

8. Where University courses are accredited by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and are approved for delivery at a partner institution under a franchise arrangement, there should be clarity for students on whether accreditation is confined to the University or whether it extends to franchised provision at the partner.

9. Any proposed modifications to courses within partner institutions are subject to approval in accordance with the University's [procedure for the approval of changes to existing courses](#). Any changes to courses within the University that are also franchised to partner institutions should be discussed and agreed with staff from the partner institution prior to seeking approval from the relevant School Academic Committee. There should also be the same level of consultation with partner students as with Ipswich students regarding any proposed changes to franchised courses.

10. All courses delivered by partners are subject to the University's standard review and re-approval cycle, as outlined in the University's [procedure for the re-approval of existing courses](#). Wherever possible for franchised provision, the re-approval cycle should be aligned with the re-approval of the relevant University of Suffolk course to ensure a streamlined approach.

### **Partnership governance**

11. Strategic management of the partnership is normally facilitated through a Partnership Management Group (PMG) or equivalent, including representation from the University and the partner institution. The PMG should report at least annually to the University's Portfolio Oversight Committee. Sub-groups of the PMG may be established to deal with operational management of the partnership, including student representation where appropriate.

12. The partner should have in place appropriate internal academic governance structures to effectively manage partnership provision, with University representation where appropriate to facilitate ongoing oversight, collaboration and support. This should include appropriate academic student representation in accordance with paragraph 59 below.

13. The University's Quality Committee is responsible for overseeing arrangements for the approval, monitoring and review of partnership arrangements, reporting regularly to the University Senate.

### **Academic link tutors**

14. Link Tutor(s) are normally appointed from within the relevant University academic school to oversee and support partnership arrangements from an academic perspective. Link Tutors work closely with relevant University academic and professional services teams to ensure that the partnership is effectively managed in accordance with internal and external requirements, and that any associated risks are mitigated. They play a key role in ensuring that the partner upholds the University's expectations in terms of quality and academic standards.

15. Further information on the roles and responsibilities of Link Tutors is available within the [Partner Link Tutor Guide](#).

### **Student number planning**

16. Minimum and maximum student numbers per intake point and/or academic year should be agreed with the University through the Executive, with discussions facilitated through the relevant Partnership Management Group. Target student numbers for each intake point, within any agreed student number cap, should be notified to the University in accordance with the timelines specified by the University.

### **Tuition fees and student finance**

17. Tuition fees for all partnership programmes should be agreed with the University, with discussions facilitated through the relevant Partnership Management Group.

18. For UK partnerships where students are accessing student finance via the University, tuition fees are paid in accordance with the University's [Tuition Fee Policy](#). The partner institution is responsible for providing guidance to applicants on fees and financial support and for conducting fee status assessment prior to recommending to the University that an offer to study on the relevant course is made. Students will be eligible to apply for relevant financial support funds in accordance with guidance provided by the University.

19. For all other partnerships (including international partnerships), students will normally pay tuition fees to the partner institution. The partner institution should ensure that all information on tuition fees is clear and accessible to applicants.

### **Marketing, recruitment and admissions**

20. The partner institution is required to adhere to the University's publicity protocol within the relevant partnership agreement. The protocol is designed to support and guide the partner institution in promoting the partnership arrangement with the University and associated courses, and has been informed by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Guidance for Higher Education Institutions.

21. Entry requirements for courses delivered within partners are agreed by the University as part of the initial course validation process. Any subsequent changes are subject to approval by the University.

22. Any applications for recognition of prior learning (RPL) should be considered through the University's [Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](#). The relevant Course Leader at the partner institution is normally responsible for initial assessment of applications for RPL, with the University's Link Tutor granting final approval for all straightforward cases not requiring consideration under the University's RPL Panel.

23. The partner institution is responsible for recruiting students to courses in accordance with approved entry criteria and the admissions process agreed with the University. The partner is normally responsible for screening applications (including the conduct of interviews where necessary) and making recommendations to the University regarding offers

of study. The University retains the right to make final decisions on admission to partner courses.

24. UK partner institutions wishing to recruit international students onto validated or franchised courses must have a relevant Student Sponsor license in accordance with UKVI requirements. The partner will normally be responsible for issuing the Confirmation of Acceptance (CAS) and adhering to relevant UKVI monitoring requirements.

25. Students on courses at partner institutions will normally be included on the University's student records system. Partner institutions are responsible for verifying students' identify and prior qualifications at or prior to enrolment, and for confirming attendance for students in the UK accessing student finance via the University.

26. The partner institution is responsible for coordinating and delivering student (re)induction processes under the oversight of the University, including inviting relevant University and Students' Union representatives to participate as necessary.

### **Course delivery arrangements**

27. The partner institution is responsible for the provision of appropriate teaching and learning accommodation, facilities and learning resources to support effective course delivery, under the oversight of the University. The University may allow partner staff and/or students to access the University's electronic learning resources, as determined as part of initial contractual negotiations and where permissible under relevant licensing agreements.

28. Where agreed as part of initial contractual negotiations, the University may provide the partner with access to the University's online learning environment (Brightspace). The University will provide partner staff with training and support on the effective use of Brightspace, but the partner is responsible for maintaining content on the system and ensuring an engaging learning environment for students.

### **Partner staffing arrangements**

29. The partner institution is responsible for ensuring that the academic staff involved in course delivery and assessment are appropriately qualified, skilled and experienced for the role. The appointment of any new partner staff to be involved in course delivery and/or assessment is subject to approval by the University (normally by the relevant Link Tutor), in accordance with the mechanisms outlined in the partnership legal agreement.

30. The University will maintain and regularly update a record of all partner staff involved in teaching and/or assessment of partner courses. The partner institution is responsible for promptly notifying the University's Centre for Academic and International Partnerships of any substantive change of staffing which may affect the delivery of the provision, including periods of extended staff absence.

31. The partner institution is responsible for employing sufficient professional services staff to effectively manage the partnership arrangement, support course delivery and provide appropriate levels of student support, as articulated in the operational responsibilities within the relevant partnership legal agreement.

32. The partner institution is responsible for the induction, appraisal and ongoing professional development of their academic and professional services staff. Partner staff may access professional development opportunities within the University in accordance with arrangements outlined in the relevant partnership agreement, including in-house training, continuing professional development sessions, seminars and other events.

33. The University is responsible for ensuring that partner staff have a sound understanding of relevant University systems, regulations, policies and procedures that are applicable to the partnership arrangement, through the provision of appropriate training and development activity. The partner institution is responsible for ensuring that staff engage with all relevant training and development activity appropriate to their role within the partnership.

### **Assessment arrangements**

34. All partner courses will normally be assessed in accordance with the University's Framework and Regulations for the relevant award, or a variant approved by Senate.

35. For franchised provision, assessment tasks should, wherever possible, be the same across all sites of delivery. Some variation is permissible to allow local contextualisation (particularly in international partnerships) and/or to protect the integrity of assessment where assessment is undertaken at different times (for example in relation to examinations).

36. Ethical approval of partner student research projects involving human participants should normally be sought through the relevant School Research Ethics Committee within the University, in accordance with the University's [Research Ethics Governance Framework](#).

Where responsibility for this is delegated to the partner, the University should be represented on the relevant partner Ethics Committee.

37. Marking and moderation should be conducted by partner staff in accordance with the University's [Assessment Moderation Policy](#). Where deemed appropriate, particularly in the early stages of a partnership arrangement, the University's Link Tutor or nominee may also undertake moderation of marking or periodic auditing of marking to ensure consistency of marking standards. This is in addition to the role of the external examiner, appointed by the University to provide external assurance on assessment and marking practices.

38. Where the same course is offered at more than one location under a partnership arrangement, normally a single University Assessment Board will cover all sites of delivery. However, if differing course delivery schedules and the volume of students under consideration makes this challenging, Assessment Boards may need to be held separately for individual partners. In all instances the Boards will be conducted in accordance with the University's [Assessment Board Policy](#), and will be chaired by a member of University of Suffolk academic staff.

39. Consideration of extenuating circumstances affecting a student's ability to engage with assessment should be considered in accordance with the University's [Additional Time due to Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#) or approved local variant. The policy outlines mechanisms for students to claim extensions to assessment deadlines, deferral of assessment and intercalation from their studies. Under the University policy, extensions to assessment deadlines are subject to approval by the University's Extenuating Circumstances Officer or nominee, and deferral and intercalation requests are subject to approval by the University's Extenuating Circumstances Panel.

40. The partner institution is responsible for ensuring that students have a sound understanding of good academic practice, including appropriate referencing and awareness of the permitted boundaries between individual and group contributions. Where cases of potential academic misconduct are identified, these should be dealt with under the University's [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) or approved local variant. In accordance with the policy, if the assessed work or student conduct can be considered as poor academic practice (particularly at an early stage of a course), then the partner should initially deal with the case through academic support mechanisms. Repeated or more serious infringements should be referred to the University as a formal allegation, to be dealt with via Stage 2 of the Academic Misconduct Policy.

### **External examiner arrangements**

41. The University will appoint external examiners to all partner courses in accordance with the University's [External Examiners Policy](#). For franchised provision, where the volume of work permits, a single external examiner will be appointed across all sites of delivery to ensure consistency of approach.
42. The University will be responsible for briefing external examiners on their role, usually through the annual External Examiner Forum. The partner should also brief the external examiner on the partner institution and the associated course(s) that they are appointed to oversee.
43. The partner will be responsible for day-to-day liaison with the external examiner, for example in relation to verification of assignments and examination questions (where these are not set by the University) and moderation of marking.
44. The external examiner's annual report will be submitted to the University, and will be shared with the Link Tutor and partner institution for review and response through the University's online external examiner reporting system. Where the external examiner is responsible for multi-site provision, they should be encouraged to provide feedback on all sites of delivery in order to pick up any good practice and/or concerns at individual locations.
45. The partner institution is responsible for ensuring that external examiner reports are shared in full with students on the relevant course.

### **Student complaints, appeals and conduct**

46. Student complaints should normally be considered in accordance with the University's [Student Complaints Procedure](#), with the partner institution responsible for the informal early resolution stage and the University responsible for the formal and review stages. When all stages have been exhausted, the University will issue a completion of procedures letter. If the student remains dissatisfied, they may request a review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). The partner institution is expected to cooperate with the University in dealing with any complaint submitted to the OIA.
47. Academic appeals should be considered in accordance with the University's [Academic Appeals Procedure](#), with the partner responsible for the informal early resolution stage and the University responsible for the formal and review stages. When all stages have



been exhausted, the University will issue a completion of procedures letter. If the student remains dissatisfied, they may request a review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). The partner institution is expected to cooperate with the University in dealing with any complaint submitted to the OIA.

48. Effective attendance and engagement monitoring mechanisms are expected to be in place within the partner institution, to identify and support students at risk of withdrawal in a timely manner. Attendance monitoring should be conducted in accordance with the University's [Student Attendance and Engagement Monitoring Policy](#) or agreed local variant, with particular reference to the actions required in the case of unsatisfactory attendance and/or engagement.

49. Any concerns regarding fitness to study should be dealt with in accordance with the University's [Support to Study Procedure](#) or agreed local variant, with the partner responsible for the informal mentored engagement stage and the University responsible for the formal stages.

50. Any concerns regarding fitness to practise should be dealt with in accordance with the University's [Fitness to Practise Procedure](#) or agreed local variant, with the partner responsible for the initial consideration stage and the University responsible for the formal stages.

51. Student disciplinary matters are normally dealt with by the partner institution under the relevant partner disciplinary procedure, as verified by the University as part of the partnership approval process.

52. Partner students involved in complaints, appeals and conduct cases should have access to independent advice and guidance, either through the University of Suffolk Students' Union Advice service or equivalent independent advice service at the partner institution (see paragraph 54 below).

### **Student support arrangements**

53. The partner institution is normally responsible for the delivery of student support services under the oversight of the University, unless otherwise agreed through initial contractual negotiations. This should include support for students with disabilities and/or additional learning needs (including provision of reasonable adjustments); academic advice

and guidance; careers advice and guidance; support for student health and wellbeing; access to counselling services; guidance on student finances; accommodation advice; and safeguarding and Prevent arrangements.

54. Partner students' eligibility for full or associate membership of the University of Suffolk [Students' Union](#) (SU) should be determined as part of initial contractual negotiations, drawing on the definitions of full and associate membership outlined in the [SU Bye-Laws](#). Normally, UK-based students enrolled with the University through sub-contractual partnership arrangements are eligible for full membership of the SU, and will therefore be offered access to as many SU services as is practically possible (location and resources permitting). Students at validated partner institutions (where the partner is the lead institution) are eligible for associate membership of the SU, which will normally afford them access to SU Advice services. The SU will communicate relevant membership benefits, student activities and opportunities to partner institutions as appropriate.

#### **Student records and external data returns**

55. The partner institution is expected to work with the University's Centre for Academic and International Partnerships to ensure that the University's student records system is kept up-to-date, including through timely notification of changes to personal details (including address or contact information) or student withdrawal.

56. Partner institutions are required to retain student and course records in accordance with the University's data retention schedules.

57. The University is normally responsible for student data returns to relevant regulatory bodies, including the Office for Students and its designated data body. To facilitate the returns, the partner institution is responsible for providing accurate student and course data to the University in a timely manner as required, in agreed formats and in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.

#### **Quality assurance and enhancement arrangements**

58. Partner institutions are expected to comply with the University's [quality monitoring and enhancement procedures](#), including arrangements for gathering and responding to student feedback, evaluating module and course delivery, and reviewing and responding to key performance indicators. Partners will normally be provided with access to the University's business intelligence system in order to view their own student performance data.

59. In accordance with the University's [Student Representation and Student Voice Policy](#), partners are expected to develop, implement and evaluate student representation and student voice mechanisms which suit the needs of students (taking into account student demographics, delivery models, student numbers and other relevant factors). The University Students' Union can offer advice to partners on appointing, training and supporting student representatives as necessary.

60. Eligible partner students will be invited to participate in the National Student Survey (NSS), with all other students normally invited to participate in the University's parallel internal student survey. The partner institution is responsible for promoting the surveys to eligible students and reviewing and proactively responding to the feedback received.

61. The partner should complete an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for all courses (or groups of cognate courses) delivered as part of the partnership arrangement. The AMR should be submitted to the University's Centre for Academic and International Partnerships by the agreed deadline, for onward submission to the Link Tutor for review and feedback. The AMRs should be considered by the relevant Partnership Management Group and the University's Quality Committee.

### **Access and Participation Plans**

62. Where partner students in the UK are accessing student finance via the University under a sub-contractual arrangement, the partner institution will be expected to work closely with the University on its Access and Participation Plan. The partner institution will be expected to collaborate with the University to improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education, contributing to the achievement of targets and milestones within the University's Access and Participation Plan. The partner institution will also be expected to submit information to the University as required to support the ongoing development of the Plan and associated monitoring activity (including information required by the University for OfS monitoring returns and for elements of the University's annual financial return relating to the Plan).

### **Graduation, certificates and transcripts**

63. The partnership legal agreement should outline whether partner students are eligible to attend University of Suffolk graduation ceremonies or alternatively whether partners are responsible for organising their own ceremonies. Where partners organise their own

ceremonies, a senior University of Suffolk representative should be invited to attend to confer awards. In addition to scheduled University graduation ceremonies (normally in October), there will be an additional mid-year conferral point (normally in April) to cater for partner institutions operating on non-standard delivery cycles.

64. The University is responsible for the production of all degree certificates for partner students, using a template agreed between the University and the partner.

65. The University is also normally responsible for issuing the final approved version of the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) to partner students on graduation. The HEAR will be available electronically as a formative document to partner students from the first year of study on an eligible course, via the Gradintelligence ([www.gradintel.com](http://www.gradintel.com)) website.

66. Graduates of partner courses will be eligible for full membership of the University of Suffolk [Alumni Community](#).