

G5.1: Introduction to collaborative provision

1 WHAT IS 'COLLABORATIVE PROVISION'?

The University adopts the definition of collaborative provision (as given in the UK Quality Code advice and guidance on partnerships, 2018) as provision that leads to the award of academic credit and that is delivered, assessed or supported in partnership between the University and one or more other organisations, i.e. provision where the achievement of learning outcomes for a module or programme are dependent on the arrangements made between the organisations. The University recognises that it has ultimate responsibility for the academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities on all programmes of study leading to its awards, wherever or however they are delivered, and this principle underpins the procedures for the approval, monitoring and review of its collaborative provision.

The University's approach to collaborative provision is driven by its mission and corporate aims, to "...develop mutually beneficial partnerships to facilitate the application of the university's education, research, and knowledge transfer nationally and internationally..." More details of the University's key strategies can be found on our [new University strategy page](#).

Oxford Brookes is also committed to widening participation in higher education within the region, in particular through its [Associate College Partnership](#) (ACP) network; and has a number of other, non-ACP, partners in the UK, delivering a range of programmes in specialist discipline areas. The University's International Strategy provides a framework for the development of international partnerships.

This guidance note provides an introduction to the most common models of collaborative provision.

The following arrangements are not generally considered as collaborative provision:

- school experience, clinical practice, and other placements which form an integral part of Brookes 'home' programmes and are quality assured through the normal procedures governing that provision. However, Faculty AESC/QLICs are required annually to approve the Faculty framework for selecting placement providers, and to monitor placement quality through an annual report from the Partnerships & Placements Managers – using template T5.8;
- individual claims for the accreditation of prior learning;
- progression agreements - in which admission to a Brookes programme from a programme delivered by another institution is not automatic, but is conditional on some check on the applicant's prior learning or achievement.

The academic arrangements for collaborative research degrees are approved and monitored by the Research Degrees Committee – however, LPAG approval is required prior to entering into contractual arrangements in which a dual or joint award is made with another awarding body.

2 COMMON MODELS OF COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

Some of the common models for collaborative arrangements at Oxford Brookes are described in the following paragraphs. In practice, arrangements in place with individual partner organisations may consist of a combination of several of these different types of provision; and approval panels must ensure that they give appropriate consideration to the different aspects of collaborative proposals, according to the risks they pose to quality and standards.

2.1 Associate College Partnership (ACP) provision

The standard ACP delivery model involves the franchising of student numbers from the University to the ACP partner, for the delivery of programmes that have been developed in collaboration between the University and one or more ACP members. Students have enrolled status both at the partner College and at the University.

The current members of the ACP are:

- Abingdon & Witney College
- Activate Learning: City of Oxford College; Banbury & Bicester College; Reading College; Bracknell & Wokingham College
- Bridgwater & Taunton College
- Brooklands College
- Solihull College & University Centre
- Swindon College
- Wiltshire College

Visit the [partnership courses page](#) to view details of the ACP members and the Brookes programmes they offer.

The provision delivered by ACP partner colleges primarily consists of foundation degree programmes, and level 6 Honours degree top-up courses, jointly developed by the University and the partner colleges for delivery by any or all of the members of the ACP who can demonstrate that they have the capacity to offer the programme/s. In these cases, measures are taken to ensure the equivalence of academic standards and the quality of the learning experience across delivery sites (including, in the case of some programmes, at the University). The ACP portfolio has also included some level 7 provision, in a few cases where a partner college has been able to provide appropriate academic expertise; and there are instances in which Brookes programmes may be delivered by flying faculty on ACP partner college premises, or where ACP staff teach elements of a programme on Brookes premises.

2.2 Flying faculty

This type of provision involves the delivery of a programme - either new or existing - entirely by Brookes staff, to a separate cohort of students at a location other than the University campuses. Under this arrangement, the University retains full responsibility for, and directly manages, the quality and standards of the programme. The responsibilities of the partner are usually limited to the provision of teaching accommodation and, possibly, learning resources - they are also likely to have some responsibilities relating to marketing and recruitment.

2.3 Articulation agreements

This arrangement is a formal arrangement with another institution whereby the University recognises and grants credit to students who are successful on a named programme of study offered by the partner organisation for guaranteed entry onto a later stage of a programme of study - or one of several specified programmes - leading to a Brookes award. The credit achieved for the completion of the partner programme is transferred to contribute to the programme and award completed at the University. The two separate programmes are the responsibility of the respective institutions delivering them; however, since, together, they

contribute to a single award, the University has responsibility for ensuring that the curriculum and standards of achievement of the partner programme are, and continue to be, at an appropriate academic standard to be considered equivalent to the identified component of the Brookes award/s to which entry is granted.

An articulation agreement may be a standalone arrangement, but is more usually coupled with a wider collaborative arrangement in which it leads to entry onto a franchise of the later stages of a Brookes programme delivered by the same partner.

NOTE: where entry to the Brookes programme is conditional on some check on the applicant's prior learning or achievement, this is known as a progression arrangement, which is not considered to be collaborative provision. The granting of advanced standing (or credit entry) to individuals on a one-off basis is dealt with through the APL process. Please contact the Brookes Global team for advice on how to set up a progression agreement with an international institution.

2.4 Credit-rating arrangements

Credit rating is where the University recognises and awards credit for successful completion of modules/short courses offered by another organisation. This type of arrangement is related to articulation - the key difference lies in how the credit may be used: a credit rating involves creating an award in its own right, while the Brookes credit associated with a partner programme through an articulation agreement has no currency outside that agreement.

2.5 Franchised provision leading to an Oxford Brookes award or credit

This is where the University authorises the delivery of all or part of one of its own approved programmes by a partner organisation. The University, as awarding body, retains overall responsibility for the programme content, the teaching and assessment strategy, the assessment regime and quality assurance. Students may either be enrolled or registered with the University – advice on the status of students studying through this type of arrangement should be sought from the Academic Registrar (Director of ASA).

2.6 Validation arrangements

A validation arrangement is where the University recognises a programme of study which has been designed and is offered by another organisation, as being of an appropriate standard and quality to lead to a Brookes award or credit. Students are enrolled with the partner organisation, and registered with the University for the purposes of making the award on successful completion of the programme.

2.7 Jointly-provided programmes

This is where the University collaborates with one or more other providers to jointly design a programme of study, and deliver it via an arrangement where students study in one or more of them. When such programmes are designed and delivered with other degree-awarding bodies, they may also lead to either dual/multiple awards or a joint award. The term 'jointly-provided' refers to the educational experience provided rather than, necessarily, to the nature of the award, and examples of jointly-provided programmes leading to a single (Oxford Brookes) award include those developed in partnership with ACP members

The University has the legal powers to allow it to collaborate with other degree-awarding bodies - in the UK or abroad - to jointly provide programmes of study which lead to joint, dual or multiple awards. However, it should be noted that UK degree-awarding bodies are not permitted to make arrangements for students to receive a UK degree alongside that of a non-UK degree-awarding body where the UK degree-awarding body has had negligible input to the design of the programme and little control over its delivery. UK degree-awarding bodies are also expected to maintain awareness of how their programmes and academic credit are used,

in order to avoid the situation where a non-UK degree-awarding body makes an award without the knowledge of the UK degree-awarding body, to a student who has completed a programme of study designed to lead to a UK qualification offered through a franchise or validation arrangement.

As a general guide (for reputational reasons), jointly delivered programmes of study leading to dual/multiple or joint awards should not be offered in partnership with institutions that would not meet the threshold criteria for taught degree-awarding powers in the UK. Certificates and transcripts should refer to the other partner/s and make it clear that they refer to the completion of a single, jointly-conceived programme of study.

Any programmes of study leading to dual/multiple or joint awards must meet both the expectations of the Framework for HE Qualifications (in EWNI) and of any other relevant national qualifications frameworks. Partnerships with existing partners currently delivering through a franchise arrangement, who subsequently gain and wish to exercise their own degree awarding powers alongside those of the University, may need to be renegotiated and redefined as more of a 'mutual recognition' arrangement.

2.8 Dual/multiple awards

A programme of study leading to a dual or multiple award involves each partner granting a separate award (at the same level) based on the same programme of study and assessed work. Responsibility for the quality and standards of each award rests with the relevant awarding body and cannot be shared between the partners – each partner applies its own regulations for making awards and for quality assurance, hence the requirement for comparability of academic standards, as described above. The University should be alert to the potential for doubling the credit value (for the purposes of credit accumulation and transfer) of individual modules completed, and should ensure that the award certificate and/or transcript provides sufficient information to clarify that a single programme of study delivered in collaboration with one or more partners has led to multiple awards.

2.9 Joint awards

Joint awards involve the granting of a single award for successful completion of a programme of study which has been designed and delivered by two or more institutions, who have combined their degree awarding powers for the purposes of making the award. In this case, the University must ensure that the legal basis on which the award is made is sound (i.e. the partner has the legal and regulatory capacity to make awards in collaboration with other institutions), especially where it involves pooling degree awarding powers granted within different legal jurisdictions. The responsibility for the quality and academic standards of the award is shared between the awarding bodies, and requires careful work to align that regulations and quality assurance processes for the programme (providing a framework for admissions, assessment, progression and making awards) to ensure standards are secured. Joint award arrangements tend to pose a greater level of institutional risk than those for dual/multiple awards; however, they offer the opportunity to work in association with high quality partner HE providers.

See the [Characteristics Statement on Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body \(QAA, Oct 2015\)](#): This document also includes a note on research degrees offered by one or more awarding bodies.

PDTs and panels should be aware that programmes of study leading to joint awards present particular challenges for quality assurance and securing academic standards, since responsibilities are shared with a partner. It is desirable to agree a joint framework for managing the quality and standards of the programme, including, potentially, a bespoke joint regulatory framework governing assessment and award requirements. The procedures and

how they will be implemented should be clearly articulated in the Operations Manual. Programme teams should be aware that the process of drafting and agreeing such a framework may be lengthy, especially where the programme needs to meet the requirements of different jurisdictions; therefore appropriate time should be built in to the programme design stage of the project.

3 RISK MANAGEMENT

The level of risk involved in a collaborative arrangement depends on the nature and scope of the responsibilities for teaching, assessment, learning support and quality management that are devolved to the partner/s (overall responsibility for the academic standards of the awards cannot be delegated, which is why examination committees are always managed by Brookes). The key points to be taken into account when assessing the level of risk involved in a proposed collaborative arrangement include the partner's experience of collaborative provision and of delivering HE programmes in the discipline, the number of partners involved and the complexity of the collaboration, and the characteristics of the partner (including its previous 'quality' record). **See guidance note G5.3a/b for information on how to complete the risk register when preparing a CPPF or CPRF for submission to LPAG.**

There are some aspects of collaborative provision that may particularly challenge the University's ability to secure the quality of the student learning experience and assure the standards of the awards it will be making. It is therefore important that careful consideration is given to the arrangements that will need to be put in place to ensure the success of the partnership - robust initial and ongoing risk assessments are key to this. Some of the issues that may apply are described below, in relation to:

- Student status (access to University learning resources and services)
- Professional accreditation
- Teaching/assessment in a language other than English
- Serial arrangements
- Flying faculty delivery
- Jointly-provided programmes involving more than one awarding body (see guidance note G5.1)

It is important to be clear about the **status of students** on the proposed collaborative programme/s, and the entitlements that will be conferred on them – especially in respect of international partnerships. In most cases, the expectation is that the partner organisation is able to provide the appropriate resources and support for learning for successful delivery of the programme/s. However, a partnership may be dependent on students having access to relevant online learning resources through the Brookes library. Access to learning resources needs to be costed and agreed with publishers, and should therefore be discussed with the Associate Director of Learning Resources – Collections ([Paul Harwood](#)) It is also important to clarify whether any access to ASA services will be required in order to support the partnership, and these requirements should be discussed with the Director of Academic & Student Administration ([John Kirk](#)) *NOTE: there is a standard agreement in place to provide ACP students with equal access to Brookes services and resources as on-campus students.*

The transfer of student data between partners and the University – especially where it involves transfer between different jurisdictions – is also risky, so you should ensure you follow the Checklist for Partnership Data Protection Reviews (available on the APQO website under 'forms and guides' for Chapter 5 of the Quality & Standards Handbook) when completing Appendix C of the Operations Manual, once a new partnership has gained LPAG approval.

In some cases, collaborative programmes leading to Brookes awards are **accredited by a professional body**, and the University is therefore additionally responsible for ensuring that the

professional – as well as academic - standards continue to be met. The loss of professional accreditation is damaging to the University's reputation, and is likely to adversely affect student recruitment; and professional competencies are often delivered and assessed via placements provided by third parties. The failure of a programme to retain professional accreditation is therefore considered to be a key area of risk, which must be carefully monitored by the managing Faculty. Where the equivalent programme at Brookes is recognised by a PSRB, PDTs should establish what steps are necessary in order to achieve and retain recognition for students studying through the collaborative arrangement – these requirements should be clearly set out in the CPPF, and key controls and actions should be recorded in the risk register.

A small number of the University's programmes offered by international partners are taught and assessed in a **language other than English**. This enables Brookes to reach a broader market within those countries than it would normally have access to, but has implications for the University's ability to assure itself of the academic quality and standards of that provision. In particular, assessment in a foreign language introduces risks to the University's ability to maintain control of the academic standards of its awards and make judgements about the standards of student achievement, and appropriate measures must be put in place to manage this risk, taking into account any costs involved. LPAG may be reluctant to approve new proposals for collaborative programmes delivered and/or assessed in a language other than English, except in the case of an existing partner delivering in that language or where they are provided with evidence that the benefits of the partnership are likely to substantially outweigh the risks associated with delivery in a foreign language.

A **serial arrangement** is one in which the University enters into a collaborative arrangement with a partner organisation who, in turn, uses this as a basis for entering into collaborative arrangements of their own with a third party to offer the University's awards. A key risk is that serial arrangements can seriously jeopardise an institution's ability to know what is being delivered in its name. Faculty Executive Groups and LPAG should therefore not permit such proposals to proceed to approval panel stage, other than in exceptional circumstances in which the University has a direct involvement in the assessment of all students on the programmes leading to its awards.

The **flying faculty** model of collaborative provision is often considered to be low risk in respect of the awarding body's ability to directly assure academic quality and standards. However, it can be an expensive model to deliver because of the demands on staff time. For international arrangements, delivery teams also need to be alert to any changes to in-country permissions to operate, and to Government advice on political situations that could potentially put University staff at risk when they travel out to teach on the programme.

4 AWARDS

The certificates and/or transcripts for awards for collaborative programmes must record the name of the partner, location of study, and the language of study (if not English). Certificates/transcripts for dual awards should be clear about the nature of the programme of study which led to the award being made, to avoid the danger of mis-representation of the award.

Students may be eligible to attend graduation ceremonies at Brookes, where practical. However, awards ceremonies for students of international partners will normally be held at the partner's premises. Liaison Managers should liaise with the ASA Graduation Team to ensure the appropriate arrangements are made and invitations issued.