Approval and Review of Teaching Partnerships

Introduction

This document provides arrangements for the approval and review of teaching partnerships and Memoranda of Agreement[[1]](#footnote-1), based closely on the previous practice of Transnational Education Committee in this area. A sequential three stage approach is proposed, comprising:

Stage 1 – Approval of Partner

Stage 2 – Approval of the Basis for the Partnership

Stage 3 – Formulation and Approval of Memorandum of Agreement

Stage 1 – Approval of Partner

Approval of all partners and partnerships is subject to support being received from the relevant Head of School(s) and, in the case of partnerships involving UNMC/UNNC, the relevant Vice-Provost(s) for Teaching & Learning. The approval of the partner then occurs automatically if the partner institution is one with which the University of Nottingham already has a current teaching collaboration. Approval will also be forthcoming if the partner:

* Has a position in the top 500 of the QS World Rankings, the Shanghai JT rankings, or other ranking methodologies of equivalent status that may emerge
* Appears in the ‘Times Higher Top 100 under 50’ rankings
* Appears in the ‘Times Higher Top 100 BRICS & Emerging Economies universities’
* Is a UK institution subject to regulation by the UK Quality Assurance Agency.

In all other cases, approval of the partner must be given by the relevant APVC in consultation with the relevant Regional Group of International Strategy Board. This approval will be granted on the basis of scrutiny of a Partnership Concept Paper (PCP) prepared by the International Office covering:

* A profile of the partner regarding its history, size, legal and financial status, and activities
* The status of the partner according to relevant authorising bodies in the country of operation
* Any other information the APVC deems appropriate.

The APVC will also take into account the fit of the partner with the aims and objectives of the University’s International Strategy Board. In approving a partner, the APVC is stating their belief that the partner has the capacity to fulfil its designated role in a teaching partnership with the University of Nottingham.

Stage 2 – Approval of the Basis for the Partnership

This stage applies to all partnerships; the intensity of the stage varies, however, according to whether or not it was necessary for a PCP to be considered. The stage also varies according to the type of partnership (see Appendix 1 for a typology of partnerships).

Approval of the basis for the partnership is undertaken by the relevant APVC on the basis of scrutinising the documentation stated below (as well as being satisfied that the partnership will attract sufficient students to be viable):

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Partnership | PCP not required[[2]](#footnote-2) | PCP required *(Documentation will be the same as for the column on the left plus the items below)* |
| Progression | Documentation from the school mapping study/qualifications of the partner with the standard entry requirements of the school | A report from the school of an analysis of a sample of assessed student work at the partner. The report to cover the level and quality of the work and the standards being applied by markers (this is only necessary when students are not undertaking a national qualification shown as equivalent to Nottingham entry requirements on the International Office database). |
| Articulation | Documentation from the school mapping the study/qualification of the partner with the learning outcomes of those stages of the Nottingham course not being undertaken at the University of Nottingham. | A report from the school of an analysis of a sample of assessed student work at the partner relevant to the stages of the Nottingham course not being undertaken at the University of Nottingham. The report to cover the level and quality of the work and the standards being applied by markers. |
| Off-Campus Delivery | Documentation from the partner stating the facilities/support that will be available to staff/students engaged in the partnership programme. | A report of a visit by school staff to the partner assessing the facilities/support that will be available to staff/students in the partnership programme. |
| Joint Delivery (Taught) | Documentation from the partner describing the study that will be undertaken at the partner institution. | A report of a visit by school staff to the partner assessing the quality of teaching staff, study facilities and quality assurance arrangements at the partner. The report also to include an analysis of a sample of assessed student work at the partner, covering the level and quality of the work and the standards being applied by markers. |
| Joint Supervision  (Research) | Documentation from the partner describing the supervision arrangements at the partner institution. | A report of a visit by school staff to the partner assessing the quality of supervisors, supervision arrangements, study and research facilities and quality assurance arrangements at the partner. |

The APVC may request any further documentation s/he deems necessary in order to be in a position to provide a guarantee to the University that the standards of qualifications and quality of the learning opportunities within the partnership meet normal University expectations. For partners within the UK, Stage 2 and Stage 3 approval are combined.

Schools are expected to retain all documentation collected for this stage.

Stage 3 – Formulation and Approval of the Memorandum of Agreement

Templates exist for standard regulatory, quality assurance, administrative, financial and legal arrangements for each of the types of partnerships. The application of these to particular partnerships, and any variation upon them, are discussed jointly by the relevant school(s), Academic Services, the International Office (in the case of international partnerships), and other professional services as necessary. On the basis of these discussions, a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) is drafted (again, using pre-existing templates).

For partnerships involving only an international campus, the role of Academic Services and other professional services will be undertaken by equivalent units on that campus under the auspices of the relevant Vice-Provost for Teaching & Learning.

The MoA is then sent to a member of QSC for consideration on behalf of the committee, with a view to recommending to the PVC Internationalisation that the MoA be signed (or other UEB member if the PVC Internationalisation is not available or in the case of agreements with UK partners). Accompanying the MoA is a commentary from Academic Services stating:

* Stages 1 and 2 have been completed (in the case of agreements with UK parners, the necessary documentation will be provided to the member of QSC for Stage 2 approval to be given).
* The MoA is based on standard arrangements and templates.
* Any variations from the norm that have implications for quality and standards.

If substantial quality and standards issues exist, the member of QSC may choose to refer the matter to the whole committee. Once a recommendation has been made by QSC, the International Office will arrange for the signing of international MoAs; with another relevant professional service (e.g. RGS or BEIS) undertaking this role in the case of UK MoAs.

Reviews of Partnerships

Partnership programmes are subject to annual monitoring and Teaching & Learning Review in the same manner as the University’s other courses. In addition, the partnership is subject to review whenever an MoA requires renewal (the maximum period for an MoA is five years – for MoAs lasting less than three years, a renewal review is not needed if the initial approval or a review has occurred within the last three years).

An MoA renewal review comprises:

* Consideration by the APVC of recruitment to the partnership programme. Normally, a partnership that has recruited below an average of five students per year in recent years will not be renewed (though there may be strategic reasons for renewal even in these circumstances).
* Scrutiny of documentation by the APVC in line with Stage 2 of the above approval procedure. The extent of documentation required will be the lesser amount indicated in Stage 2 if the partner has one of the three bullet-pointed characteristics listed in Stage 1.
* Revision of the MoA by the same units engaged in formulating the original MoA.
* Consideration by QSC on the same basis as with MoA approval, with the QSC member being provided also with statistics regarding the academic performance of students on the partnership programme relative to other Nottingham students on the same or similar course(s).

1. Memoranda of Understanding are subject to different approval arrangements and may be signed prior to any of the steps in this paper being conducted. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Where a PCP was not required because of a previous teaching partnership with the partner, then this column is only relevant if the previous partnership is of the same type, or a type lower down the above table, than the proposed new partnership. Otherwise, the column to the right applies. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)