**Liverpool Hope University**



**Academic Quality Handbook 8 (QH8):**

Partnerships Guide

# Introduction

Partnership refers to “*a provision that leads to the award of academic credit and that is delivered, assessed or supported in partnership between two or more organisations*” (UK Quality Code, Partnerships Advice and Guidance, November 2018).

The University’s Partnerships Handbook is a defined set of guidelines and required steps that must be taken for all partnerships at the University.

The Handbook provides an overview of the procedures, processes and requirements for the:

* **development and approval** of a new collaborative partnerships, courses or activities;
* **continuous quality management and monitoring** of collaborative partnerships, courses or activities;
* **periodic renewal** of all collaborative partnerships, courses or activities.

Liverpool Hope University’s policies and procedures for the development, management, and renewal of partnerships arrangements are aligned with the QAA’s UK Quality Code and in particular the core practices within the [Partnerships Advice and Guidance](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/partnerships).

# Liverpool Hope’s Approach to Partnerships

Partnerships, through national and international relationships is an important element of the University’s portfolio. It offers opportunities for the University to support a wide range of learners in a variety of contexts through partnership working. In particular, it supports the University’s objectives in extending and strengthening external partnerships, international engagement, and the development of employer engagement. It also provides a means to cultivate an international profile through the establishment of links with individual institutions overseas, provides opportunities for staff and student exchange, and fosters the development and sharing of good practice in curriculum development, learning and teaching, student support and research.

Our key strategic aim in respect of partnerships is to develop strong, effective, high quality, long-term, financially viable partnerships with a number of key partners in the UK and overseas. Another arm to the strategic aim of the University’s partnership model is to seek to strengthen the [University’s Mission](https://www.hope.ac.uk/aboutus/thehopestory/ourmissionandvalues/) and charitable objectives through the operation of partnerships.

# Definition of Partnerships

Partnerships may fall into one of several categories and, depending on the type of collaboration, different levels of quality assurance, legal and administrative support will be required in a proportionate manner. Examples of the types of Partnerships that the University may enter into are listed below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Type of arrangement** | **Definition** |
| **Articulation** | Articulation is a form of Entry with Advanced Standing. It is a process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria from a specific course (studied at another organisation) are entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advanced standing to a subsequent stage of a course at the University.A standard Articulation Arrangement permits credit achieved for the study undertaken at the other organisation to be transferred (subject to a satisfactory mapping exercise) and contribute to the course and award completed at the University. |
| **Dual Award** | A dual award describes collaborative arrangements under which two or more awarding institutions together provide courses leading to separate awards being granted by both, or all of them. |
| **Exchange Partner** | Partnership arrangement to enable Liverpool Hope students to study at European, and international institutions for part of their course and for those partners to send students to Hope with the aim of balancing incoming and outgoing numbers.  |
| **Joint Award** | Joint awards involve the granting of a single award for successful completion of a course 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. |
| **Joint Delivery** | A whole, part of (for example a level) or individual module(s) of a course is delivered and assessed jointly by the University and the partner. |
| **Off-site delivery (including Flying Faculty)** | Liverpool Hope credit-bearing modules or courses delivered by University staff outside University premises in conjunction with a partner who provides premises and equipment, learning resources and student or administrative support that is integral to the student learning experience. |
| **Study Abroad** | Partnership arrangement to facilitate a partner student studying full-time at Hope for one or two semesters as part of their course at home. They would receive academic credits for courses that were successfully completed here. The fee includes tuition. |
| **Subcontractual** | A subcontractual arrangement is defined by the University as an arrangement whereby the University allows the whole or part of one or more of its own internally developed courses to be delivered and assessed at a partner institution by academic staff not employed by the university, leading to an award of the University. The University retains overall control of the course’s content, regulations, delivery, assessment and quality assurance arrangements. |
| **Validation** | Validated Course – a course of study designed, delivered and assessed by a Partner on its premises, leading to an award of the University. The course is validated (approved) by the University (but not delivered by the University) and is subject to the quality assurance procedures of the University. |

# D. Key Roles and Responsibilities in Relation to Partnerships

**University Senior Executive Team (USET)**grants Strategic Approval for all partnerships proposals upon receipt of the Request for New Collaborative Partner Form (Appendix 1).

**Senate** is the University’s most senior academic decision-making body. It provides the strategic steer and direction for developments in the area of collaboration and partnership and is responsible for approving all new courses delivered by the University. Senate is also ultimately responsible for the maintenance of threshold academic standards across the University and the effective operation of quality assurance and enhancement procedures.

**Academic Committee** has University wide responsibility for all matters relating to quality assurance and this includes oversight of Partnership and Collaborative arrangements. As part of its role in overseeing the implementation of the University’s academic quality assurance framework, Academic Committee monitors the effectiveness of the University’s procedures in relation to partnerships. Academic Committee also takes University-wide responsibility for oversight of all matters relating to enhancement of Learning and Teaching and the wider student experience. Academic Committee will receive and consider Annual Review and Enhancement (ARE) reports on provision delivered in partnership together with key matters raised by the Quality Learning and Teaching Committees, and wider reports as appropriate.

**Partnerships and Accreditations Committee (PAC)** (a sub-committee of Academic Committee)isresponsible to Academic Committee for the oversight of the management of partnerships (including study abroad and exchange partners). PAC is not responsible for the strategic approval of partnerships, which shall remain the responsibility of USET and Senate. Furthermore, PAC will not scrutinise the academic content of a collaborative course, which shall remain the preserve of the Course Design and Approval Procedure.

**Research Degrees Sub-Committee (RDSC)** takes responsibility (as a sub-committee of the University’s Research Committee) for the quality of research degrees offered by the University. The provision of any collaboration relating to research degrees will be routinely reported to RDSC as well as PAC.

**School Academic Committee**, or their dedicated sub-committees, take responsibility for the quality and academic standards of their partnerships.

**Network of Hope Experience and Academic Quality Committee** is responsible for monitoring its provision in the network colleges specifically.

**The Legal Services Office** is responsible for the due diligence process and all legal matters.

# E. Approving a Partnership

Strategic Approval should normally be sought at least twelve months before the partnership is expected to start. This is to enable the University adequate time to ensure that all necessary due diligence, student experience and academic standards/quality matters have been addressed. Note that should any concerns arise subsequent to USET approval as a result of due diligence checks or other quality / governance related matters during the development phase, strategic approval may be revoked.

The approval of a new partnership normally follows a seven-stage process:

























**Stage 1: Identification of Potential Collaboration**

Partnerships may be initiated via a number of routes: it may be part of an existing relationship with a partner, the University may be approached with a potential opportunity, or the University may seek to build a new relationship with a new partner.

**Stage 2: Proposal for Proof of Concept Approval**

Proposals for new partnerships will normally be submitted by the Schools/Departments using form QF8a: Request for New Collaborative Partner (see Appendix 1), with new Study Abroad partners proposed by the Associate Dean (International). In developing a proposal for collaboration, the Head of School/Department (HOS/D)/Associate Dean (International), will need to explain to the University Senior Executive Team (USET) the rationale for the choice of partner organisation and how such developments support the University’s strategic aims and objectives. It is advisable to consult with the Associate Dean (International) and the Legal Services Team prior to submitting a proposal to USET. The HOS/D will need to demonstrate either:

1. how the partnership will raise the academic profile of the University, or
2. how the partnership will make a financial contribution to the University. (Appendix 1 can be used to help focus the HOS/D’s proposal).

For an international partnership, the HOS/D should consult with the Associate Dean (International) before the proposal is submitted to USET for consideration.

**Stage 3: USET Approval to Proceed**

USET must approve all partnership proposals before Due Diligence can be undertaken. If USET rejects the proposal, the HOS/D is responsible for notifying the proposed partner.

**Stage 4: Due Diligence**

Appropriate and proportionate Due Diligence is undertaken. Depending on the nature of the partnership, a panel may be convened to review any documentation in order to provide an analysis of the information for the HOS/D and USET (Appendix 2)

In some cases, a panel is not required and the due diligence is approved by the HOS/D.

**Stage 5: Appointment of an Academic Operational Lead**

The HOS/D is responsible for appointing the Operational Lead to:

* notify the legal services team that a new partnership is being considered;
* lead on the proposal and strategic direction of the collaboration;
* coordinate and oversee all aspects of the day to day management of the collaboration;
* provide support, advice and guidance to the course team both at the University and at the partner organisation where applicable;
* lead on the development of any new course/module to be delivered collaboratively (which must follow the University’s standard approval processes, as set out in the Academic Quality Handbook QH1: Principles of Course Design and Approval).

**Stage 6: Scope**

A scoping meeting will be arranged by the Academic School/Department taking advice from the Legal Services Office.

The agenda for the scoping meeting usually includes the following areas:-

* Financial arrangements;
* Academic provision;
* Quality Assurance procedures;
* Resources;
* Staffing;
* Risk Assessment and Mitigation.

This process will vary according to the nature of the collaboration proposed, the standing of the proposed partner and consideration of the risks involved.

**Stage 7: Legal Agreement**

All collaborative arrangements must have an approved and signed agreement. For some partners there will be an agreement per course, per partner. The agreement governs the formal relationship between the University and the partner organisation and provides a framework within which an approved collaborative course of study will be delivered. For a number of partners there will be an agreement governing the collaborative partnership with course-specific annexes.

The Legal Services Team working with the Academic Lead will be responsible for producing an initial draft of the Agreement. It will then be sent for initial internal review at Liverpool Hope prior to sending to the proposed collaborative partner for consideration. As this is a legally binding document, it is imperative that all those asked to review the Agreement do so to ensure that it correctly reflects the proposed division of responsibilities. Most of the operational matters dealing with a collaboration will be dealt with via the Definitive Document or Course Specification and some collaborations will require an operational manual. The Definitive Document/Course Specification and the Quality Assurance Guidelines are drafted by the primary Academic School/Department entering into the collaboration.

Only when the Chair of Senate has approved the Collaboration Agreement and it is signed by both institutions may course delivery commence and students can be registered.

# F. Annual Monitoring

The annual monitoring process for collaborative courses/partnerships operates at two levels: the University’s standard Quality Assurance processes and course monitoring via Annual Review and Enhancement (ARE).

1. **Annual Course Monitoring**

Annual Course monitoring will be conducted in line with the University’s ARE and Quality Processes. Partnerships will be summarised as part of the ARE process and submitted to the first PAC meeting at the start of the Academic Year. In addition, partnerships are monitored by School Academic Committee’s which submit quarterly reports to PAC.

The information in the reports above will assist the Chair of PAC in completing the Annual Overview of Partnerships for Senate.

PAC may also require additional reports and information to be provided on a case by case / thematic basis during the academic year in order to be confident in the on-going management of provision across the University.

# G. Periodic Partnership Review

# The periodic partnership review will consider whether threshold academic standards are being maintained, and whether the course provides a positive student experience and remains fit for purpose as well as reviewing the operation of the partnership. All partnerships will be reviewed every 3-5 years.

The Periodic Partnership Review will be carried out by the Operational Lead/Subject Team at least 12 months prior to the agreement expiry date (a report will be completed as per Appendix 3). The report can either recommend continuing approval of the partner to deliver the course or reject the proposal. The report will be presented to USET by the relevant HOS/D and USET will make the final decision on whether or not to renew the partnership. In recommending approval, USET may set conditions and / or recommendations.

If the partnership is approved, then proportionate due diligence should be undertaken by the Collaborations Officer and a new agreement drafted.

If a decision is taken to withdraw from the partnership, this must be carefully managed so as to ensure that academic standards and the quality of experience are maintained for remaining students. The arrangements relating to withdrawal may be specific to each agreement and must be clearly detailed within the legal agreement between the partners. The HOS/D from the relevant department shall work with the Head of Legal Services, Governance and Risk (or designated officer) to develop an exit and communication strategy.

**H. The Register of Partnerships**

Once the written agreement has been concluded and signed by both parties, the Collaborations Officer will add the new partnership onto the University's [official Partnerships Register](https://www.hope.ac.uk/media/gateway/staffgateway/documents/t4_256025_Media.pdf). Any changes to the details held on the Register must be reported at the earliest possible opportunity to the Legal Services Team, in particular where partners indicate an intention to withdraw from the arrangement and/or where it is proposed to contract with a new partner.

**I. Ending a Partnership**

A partnership is normally ended when the formal legal agreement runs out and is not reviewed. Either partner can submit a written intent to withdraw request, however, intention to withdraw from the partnership is defined in each legal agreement and can vary; some partnerships require up to 12 months notice to withdraw, and in some cases, withdrawal can be forced if local licences are lost.

All withdrawal requests are initially reported to PAC and then sent to Academic Committee for information. As noted in item 7 above, arrangements relating to each withdrawal can be specific to each agreement and it is the responsibility of the HOS/D and the Legal Services Team to develop a sufficient exit strategy.

**J. Office for Students – Reportable Event**

The Office for Students’ (OfS) Regulatory Framework[[1]](#footnote-1) (para 494) states that it must be informed in writing of any ‘reportable event’ such as a new partnership agreement or a partnership withdrawal. The process for notifying the OfS is managed by the Legal Services team and reported to the Partnerships and Accreditations Committee.

**APPENDIX 1:**

**QF8a: Request for New Collaborative Partner**

Strategic Planning Approval in Principle

*This form is to be completed by the proposer of a new partnership arrangement in consultation with the Partner Institution, Legal Services Team and the HOS. The completed form will be presented to USET for consideration.*

Overview

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of Proposer and School/Dept |  |
| Name of Proposed Partner  |  |
| Name and contact details of the link person at the proposed Partner Institution |  |
| Nature / type of proposed collaboration |  |
| Title of the courses concerned |  |
| Proposed start date |  |
| Approximate numbers |  |

Detailed information about the proposed partnership

|  |
| --- |
| Academic Information*Please provide details about the proposed collaboration including but not limited to* *Does this involve existing or new provision?* *How will the provision be delivered?**What is the extent of the partner’s involvement?* *If an overseas partner, does the course/partnership require in-country approval?* |
| Is there an existing relationship with the Proposed Partner? |
| What is the institutional standing of the proposed partner? |
| What is the Strategic Motivation for Liverpool Hope in entering into the proposed partnership? |
| How will the collaboration maintain or improve the academic profile of the University?  |
| Are the collaborative partner’s values commensurate with the University's Mission and Values? |
| Management and Monitoring of the collaboration*Please indicate how the collaboration and management of the provision will be managed and monitored by the University (and, where applicable, partner institutions).* |

**Financial Considerations/Business Plan**

Please attach a provisional costing for the proposed arrangement and the fee to be charged to the partner/students. The costing needs to reflect the true cost to Liverpool Hope (not just to the School/Department) of embarking on and maintaining the arrangement.

A business plan should be developed by the School/Department - the relevant Finance Officer can advise on an appropriate format and requirements. As a minimum the business plan should:

* include a projected income and expenditure account;
* include market research to make accurate forecasts of the likely student demand;
* identify all costs to be included in the budget, including marketing and legal costs.
* indicate the costs of termination and contingency, including the costs of teaching out if the partnership terminates;
* include ongoing costs in relation to the oversight of the provision and the costs associated with ARE and periodic review of partnerships;
* take account of any statutory financial obligations including partner jurisdictions, tax regulations[[2]](#footnote-2), licensing and PSRBs.

Proposed Partnership Risk Assessment

Please indicate the level of risk (reputational, financial and/or strategic) associated with the proposed partnership by completing the table below:

Enter the score awarded for each identified risk in the ‘Score’ column

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Identified Risk** | **Low Risk: 1** | **Medium risk: 2** | **High Risk : 3** | **Score** **1, 2 or 3** |
| Geographical location of proposed partner | UK | European  | International |   |
| Proposed partner’s capacity to contract | Publicly funded HE / FE (UK) | Privately funded HE / FE (UK) | Other |   |
| Proposed partner’s educational context | UK based HE system | European / Commonwealth based HE system | Other |   |
| Student language at the proposed partner | UK or overseas – English first language | UK based – English second language | Overseas – English second language |   |
| Language of delivery for the proposed course | English | Combination of English and other | Other  |   |
| Proposed partner’s resource capacity to support the partnership | Large, well resourced | Small, well resourced | Limited resources |   |
| Role of proposed partner | Dual AwardJoint DeliveryJoint AwardFlying Faculty | Franchise arrangement Validation agreementArticulation AgreementStudy Abroad/Exchange  | Serial Arrangement |   |
| Proposed partner’s academic expertise | Courses at this level | Courses at a lower level | No experience in this field |   |
| Proposed partner’s previous experience with UK HEIs | At this level | At a lower level | None |   |
| Proposed partner’s quality assurance system or agency | UK QAA | European based QA system | International based QA System |   |
| Proposed partner’s capacity to provide appropriate datasets which align with the University’s data management system | Alignment with the University’s data management system | Partial alignment to the University’ data management system | Datasets not aligned |   |
| Total Risk Score: |  |
| 11-15 low risk16-20 medium risk21-33 high risk |  |

**Appendix 2**

**QF8b: Due Diligence Approval Panel/Review**

This form is to record the Legal, Financial and risk-based Due Diligence undertaken by the University on the proposed partner.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of Proposed Partner  |  |
| Type of Collaboration |  |

Comments from the Panel/ Due Diligence Review

|  |
| --- |
| Legal Services |
| Finance |
| Quality Assurance – University Executive Managers |
| Registrar |
| Other |

**Outcome of the panel Meeting/Due Diligence Review**

The Due Diligence Panel/review has considered the full suite of evidence provided by the partner and makes the following recommendation to the Chair of Senate:

Recommend the proposed collaboration / Recommend the proposed collaboration, subject to conditions / Reject the proposed collaboration\*

*\*Delete as appropriate*

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Position: Head of School**

**Date:**  \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 3:**

**Q8Fc Periodic Partner Review**

To be completed by the Strategic/Academic Lead at least 12 months before the agreement expires[[3]](#footnote-3).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of Partner  |  |
| Type of collaboration |  |
| Title of the course/s |  |
| Date Partnership commenced |  |

Review of the partnership

|  |
| --- |
| Cohort Data*Please provide student data for each year of the partnership – please include the number of Registrations, Withdrawals and Completions and identify any trends.* |
| Annual Review and Enhancement*Please provide copies of all ARE reports / ARE action plans relating to the partnership provision*  |
| Complaints and Appeals*Please provide details of student complaints / appeals during the period of the partnership.*  |
| Financial review*Please provide a full breakdown of the financial status of the partnership including a full breakdown of income and expenditure (this should include the actual costs which the University has incurred)* |
| Has there been any change in the institutional standing of the partner? |
| What is the strategic motivation for continuing with the partnership? |
| How has the partnership improved the academic profile of the University?  |
| Any other comments: |

1. The Framework can be found here at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1406/ofs2018\_01.pdf](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1406/ofs2018_01.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In the UK, education is exempt from VAT and corporation tax but this is not always the case in other countries [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. If the agreement is for one year only, the partnership will need to monitored and a decision made on renewal at least 4 months before the end of the agreement [↑](#footnote-ref-3)