

Collaborative Partnership Approval and Management Policy

Registry Services

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy establishes the framework under which collaborative provision operates at De Montfort University, and details the University's approach to the approval of new collaborative partners and programmes, the monitoring and review of partnerships, modifications made to existing provision, and the closure of partnerships.
- 1.2 The University is responsible for the quality and academic standards of all awards granted in its name, and the awards made under a collaborative arrangement must be comparable to similar programmes delivered by the University and aligned with relevant benchmarks in the UK.
- 1.3 This policy should be read in conjunction with the associated procedures and guidance for collaborative partnership approval and management activities.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to guide decision making within the University with respect to the approval, monitoring, review and closure of collaborative partnerships and of the programmes delivered therein.
- 2.2 This policy applies to all provision within the University's collaborative portfolio that leads to the award of academic credit or a qualification.
- 2.3 The DMU definition of collaborative provision is based on the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*:

Learning opportunities leading or contributing to the award of academic credit or a qualification that are delivered, assessed or supported through an arrangement with one or more organisations other than the degree-awarding body.
- 2.4 This policy does not apply to the University's apprenticeship sub-contracted provision. This is set out in the *Apprenticeship Sub-Contracting Policy*.
- 2.5 This policy and associated procedures are designed for use by:
 - Internal stakeholders involved in the approval, monitoring, review and closure of collaborative partnerships and programmes.
 - External stakeholders involved in the approval, monitoring, review and closure of collaborative partnerships and programmes.

- Members of the University's deliberative structures with respect to their consideration of proposals and outputs from the approval, monitoring, review and closure of collaborative partnerships and programmes.

3. Glossary

- 3.1 **Collaborative Provision** - Learning opportunities leading or contributing to the award of academic credit or a qualification that are delivered, assessed or supported through an arrangement with one or more organisations other than the degree-awarding body.
- 3.2 **Collaborative Partner** – Another institution with which the University enters into an agreement to deliver learning opportunities and grant awards.
- 3.3 **Partner Approval** – The processes for approving a new collaborative partner of the University.
- 3.4 **Programme Validation** – The processes for approving a new programme for inclusion in the University's taught academic portfolio.
- 3.5 **Programme Delivery Approval** – The processes for approving an existing DMU faculty-owned programme for delivery at a collaborative partner.
- 3.6 **Collaborative Review** – The processes for evaluating a collaborative partner to ensure the continued satisfactory operation of collaborative arrangements and identifying and addressing major issues that may have arisen over the reporting period.
- 3.7 **Programme Monitoring** – The processes for ensuring the quality of programmes delivered at collaborative partners is maintained and enhanced.
- 3.8 **Partnership Closure** - The processes for terminating and closing collaborative partnerships.

4. Responsibilities

Academic Board

- 4.1 The University's Academic Board is responsible for overseeing the scholarly activities of the University. This responsibility includes oversight of the approval, monitoring, review and closure of collaborative partners and associated programmes.

University Leadership Board (ULB)

- 4.2 The University Leadership Board is responsible for developing and implementing the University's strategy and plans, which includes considering proposals for new collaborative partnerships and granting 'approval in principle to collaborate'.

Academic Quality Committee (AQC)

- 4.3 The University's Academic Quality Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Collaborative Partnership Approval and Management Policy and for providing scrutiny and oversight of the operation of quality assurance and enhancement across the University's taught portfolio, including collaborative provision.

Collaborative Provision Sub Committee (CPSC)

- 4.4 The University's Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee oversees the development and implementation of collaborative partnerships, including the approval and development of each collaborative partnership's taught academic provision.

Faculty Collaborative Provision Committee (FCPC)

- 4.5 Each faculty has a Faculty Collaborative Provision Committee which is responsible for overseeing collaborative provision arrangements within its respective faculty.

Academic Quality Services (AQS)

- 4.6 Academic Quality Services is responsible for managing the academic quality of collaborative partnerships and the programmes delivered therein, ensuring they are operating in line with university and sector requirements and that students have the best possible experience.

Link Tutors

- 4.7 Link Tutors are members of academic staff appointed to act as the main academic link between the University and the collaborative partner institution where a DMU programme is being delivered. Link Tutors have an important role in maintaining and developing the relationship with the partner institution and their students, as well as assuring the quality of the provision via key monitoring activities.

DMU Account Managers

- 4.8 The DMU Account Manager is a member of UK Validation Services (UKVS) for UK partners, or Global Partnerships Unit (GPU) for Transnational Education partners. The Account Manager is assigned to partners to create and maintain the relationship and provide support with non-academic matters and development plans.

Associate PVC International

- 4.9 The Associate PVC International is a senior member of staff with responsibility for overseeing academic matters and support relating to overseas partnership arrangements.

Heads of Global Partnership and Engagement (HGPE)

- 4.10 The Heads of Global Partnership and Engagement are academic members of staff assigned to TNE partners to coordinate and support academic matters relating to partnership arrangements.

5. General principles/Policy statements

5.1 Models of collaboration

The University works with a wide range of collaborative partners including organisations and educational institutions in the UK and overseas to provide students with opportunities to study for a DMU award.

The different types of collaborative activity managed by the University are set out in Appendix B: *DMU Definitions and Models of Activity*. These come under the broad headings:

1. Academic Partnerships
2. Recruitment Partnerships
3. Student Mobility

This policy covers provision that falls within the Academic Partnerships category.

This policy does not cover the management of provision that falls within the definition of Recruitment Partnerships or Student Mobility i.e., progression agreements, Study Abroad (fee paying), Erasmus, student exchanges or Higher/Degree Apprenticeships.

5.2 Collaborative Partnership Approval

The University is committed to developing collaborative partnerships that are clearly aligned to the University strategic plan and offer high-quality, relevant and market-attractive programmes that lead to a positive student experience and successful student outcomes.

All collaborative partnerships:

- Should align with the University's strategy
- Must be with partners who have the appropriate academic standards, facilities and resources to successfully deliver the proposed programmes
- Will offer a comparable experience for all students
- Will normally have English as the main language of delivery and assessment
- Must be with institutions that have passed financial, legal and reputational checks as prescribed by the University's due diligence processes.
- Must have a collaborative contract in place that is signed by both parties
- Must comply with the requirements of their in-country regulatory body.

Before collaborative partnerships can commence, both the partnership and any programmes to be delivered therein are subject to approval by a university panel at a dedicated approval event.

Partner and programme approval are two separate processes. This policy concerns the approval of collaborative partners. The policy for approving programmes is detailed in the *Programme Approval and Monitoring Policy* and sets out the processes to be followed.

In the context of a collaborative partnership approval event, the purposes are:

- To ensure that new collaborative partners are of good standing and compatible with the strategic aims of the University;
- To ensure that new collaborative partners have the capacity and resources to fulfil their proposed role in delivering DMU awards;
- To ensure that awards delivered by collaborative partners are aligned with external reference points, such as the Office for Students Conditions of Registration for Quality and Standards, the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements.

The University adopts a staged approach in its collaborative partnership approval procedures, comprising:

- Stage 1: Partnership Proposal and Initial Due Diligence

Initial consideration will be given to the partner's fit in relation to the University's strategic plans and a demonstration of the market for the proposed programmes and of the fit with the wider University taught academic portfolio. Initial reputational due diligence will be undertaken, alongside market analysis and site visits. This would normally result in the proposal being presented to CPSC.

- Stage 2: Full Due Diligence

Full due diligence will be undertaken to examine the fundamental basis for the collaboration. Prospective partners, faculties and GPU/UKVS, will be required to submit paperwork for scrutiny and endorsement at faculty level, prior to recommendation of approval at Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee and subsequent progression of proposals to University Leadership Board for 'approval in principle to collaborate'. UKVS/GPU will coordinate this activity, working closely with the faculty, Finance, and Legal Services and if appropriate, external due diligence provider as appointed by the Procurement Services.

The proposed partnership and programmes must not be advertised on either the partner's or DMU's website until UKVS/GPU has confirmed to the faculty and the partner that approval in principle has been granted by University Leadership Board.

- Stage 3: Contract

A partner institution collaborative agreement will need to be prepared once 'approval in principle to collaborate' is achieved, but this may have been drafted at an earlier stage. The collaborative agreement will be prepared by DMU Legal Services in consultation with GPU/UKVS. Sufficient time should be allocated for the prospective partner to review the contract ahead of an approval event so that the agreement can be signed as soon as possible following the event.

- Stage 4: Internal Scrutiny of Approval Documentation

The faculty and proposed partner organisation, supported by GPU/UKVS the Link Tutor and HGPE (for TNE provision), will be required to develop draft

approval paperwork for scrutiny and it will normally be approved at faculty level prior to progression of proposals to University Approval Panel.

- Stage 5: University Approval Panel

Collaborative partnership approval panels will undertake a review of documentation, followed by an approval event to consider both the partnership and validation or delivery approval of associated programmes. The collaborative partnership approval panel is coordinated by Academic Quality Services and the event normally takes place at the site of delivery so that the panel can be further assured of the ability of the partner to deliver the programmes.

At the conclusion of the event, the approval panel will establish the outcomes and recommend either approval or rejection of the proposal. Following a successful event, the panel will make a recommendation to the Vice-Chancellor as Chair of Academic Board and the University Leadership Board that the proposal is approved. The proposal will also be noted by AQC.

All conditions of the approval event must be met before the programmes can be approved and delivery commence. All required actions and commendations should be responded to within a specified timescale, normally within the first year of delivery.

As soon as possible following the approval event, the collaborative agreement is finalised and signed by both parties.

5.3 **Programme Approval**

All programmes to be delivered by a collaborative partner must first be approved by a University Validation Panel. This may take place at the same time as the initial partner approval event, but there may be instances where a collaborative partner may want to introduce additional programmes for delivery at a subsequent date. These programmes may be newly validated, in which case a University Validation Panel will be convened and an approval event organised. The processes for this panel are set out in the *Programme Validation Procedure*.

Alternatively, the partner may want to deliver a programme that has been previously approved at DMU Leicester and which will be delivered on a franchised basis. The partner and programme team will need to obtain 'programme delivery approval' to deliver the programmes, and a Programme Delivery Approval Panel will need to be

convened and an approval event organised. The processes for programme delivery approval are set out in the *Programme Delivery Approval Procedure*.

5.4 Collaborative Partnership Monitoring and Review

5.4.1. Ongoing Monitoring and Annual Review

The University is committed to the monitoring and review of its collaborative partnerships to ensure they continue to align with the collaborative contract and that the quality of provision and parity of standards across locations of delivery is maintained.

The day-to-day academic management of collaborative programmes is devolved to faculties with oversight of the partnership maintained by the Account Manager. These duties are contained in the Service Level Agreement that forms part of the collaborative contract.

All collaborative provision is subject to monitoring and review by the University. The monitoring of collaborative provision is maintained centrally by AQS due to the higher risks involved.

Monitoring is undertaken at both partnership and programme levels. The different types of monitoring activity undertaken are:

- Link Tutor Annual Reports
- Link Tutor Visits
- Enhanced Monitoring Visits (UK provision only)
- Annual Partnership Reviews, including review of due diligence, programme compositions and Service Level Agreements
- Student Feedback
- External Examiner Reports
- Annual Programme Monitoring Processes

These quality monitoring requirements are detailed in the *Collaborative Partnerships Monitoring Procedure* document.

The University recognises that collaborative partners may have their own internal quality assurance processes to adhere to, and where possible, the University will aim to be flexible with its academic quality requirements. Any non-standard arrangements must be approved by AQS prior to implementation in order to ensure that adherence to DMU academic quality policies, academic regulations and the Office for Students Conditions of Registration are not compromised. Such

arrangements will be monitored through the longer-term process of collaborative review.

5.4.2. **Collaborative Review**

All collaborative partnerships are subject to regular review and renewal.

Collaborative review is the process of renewing a collaborative partnership, and the frequency with which this is undertaken is determined by the terms of the contract. Collaborative reviews are conducted to revisit the strategic reasons for working in partnership, renew the due diligence process, ensure the continued satisfactory operation of collaborative arrangements and to identify and address major issues that may have arisen since the initial approval event or previous collaborative review. Reviews will include the operation and delivery of all programmes within the collaborative partnership. The emphasis of the review is on self-critical evaluation leading to the overall enhancement of the quality of provision, and on dialogue between all those involved.

The collaborative review has two distinct stages:

- Stage 1 – Due diligence

Financial and legal due diligence will be undertaken in order to assess the continued strategic fit, reputation and standing of collaborative partners and to inform the creation of a new collaborative contract. Due diligence activities are initiated by AQS and coordinated by GPU/UKVS who will liaise with partners, Finance, Legal Services to ensure that the process is completed and that a summary statement is produced. No financial or commercially sensitive information will be shared with the collaborative review panel.

A new collaborative agreement will be prepared by DMU Legal Services in consultation with GPU/UKVS. Sufficient time should be allocated for the partner to review the contract ahead of the collaborative review exercise so that the agreement can be signed as soon as possible following the event.

- Stage 2 – Collaborative review exercise

The collaborative review exercise is conducted by a DMU-appointed panel who will review documentation submitted by the partner, faculties and professional services colleagues. This is normally followed by a visit to the collaborative partner to undertake discussions with partner staff, students and key DMU stakeholders and undertake a tour of resources.

At the conclusion of the review visit, the review panel will establish the outcomes and recommend either reapproval of the partnership or rejection of

the proposal. Following a successful event, the panel will make a recommendation to the Vice Chancellor as Chair of Academic Board and the University Leadership Board that the partnership and associated programmes are reapproved. The outcome will also be noted by AQC.

The collaborative review exercise is intended to be a two-way process, offering both the University and the collaborative partner an opportunity to discuss the operation of their collaborative provision and to provide feedback on areas that may require further attention. In the context of quality enhancement, it is important that examples of good practice are identified and, where appropriate, disseminated to colleagues.

After a successful collaborative review exercise, a new collaborative agreement will be finalised and signed by both parties.

The timing of collaborative reviews normally follows a standardised approach. After approval of a new collaborative partnership, a review will normally take place after three years of operation. After the first reapproval, further reviews will generally take place at five-yearly intervals unless otherwise stated, reconfirming approval of the partnership and programmes.

A shorter interval between collaborative reviews may be recommended if the outcome of the first review or any subsequent reviews indicates cause for concern, if there are significant changes to the collaborative partner management if there are any issues that need addressing at operational level, or there is a request from the collaborative partner.

5.5 Collaborative Partnership Modification

There may be occasions when collaborative partnerships and the programmes delivered at them need to be modified. In the context of partnership modifications, the following mechanisms are in place to ensure the University can be assured of the quality of provision:

5.5.1. Approval of a new site/campus

A collaborative partner may want to change the site of delivery for an approved programme, or add an additional site of delivery. The University will need to be assured that the proposed new site is fit for purpose by undertaking a visit to the site and by receiving a rationale for change and supporting documentation from the partner. This process is to be coordinated by GPU/UKVS and the Link Tutor and is detailed in the *Collaborative Partnership Modification Procedure*.

5.5.2. Approval to increase student numbers and/or introduce new cohorts

All programmes approved for delivery at a collaborative partner will have an agreed number of cohorts and minimum and maximum validated numbers of students. These arrangements will have been agreed at the relevant programme validation or delivery approval event, and they set out the number of students by which the programme can successfully run, taking account of resource capacity, the quality of the student experience and recruitment forecasts. If a collaborative partner believes they have the resources and the market demand to recruit above the validated maximum or introduce new cohorts, they must apply to DMU for approval so that the University can be assured of the proposal. The process is detailed in the *Collaborative Partnership Modification Procedure*.

5.5.3. Change of Partnership Name and/or Legal Ownership

There may be occasions when changes made by a partner institution impact on its collaborative arrangements with the University. These include changes to the name of the partner and/or a change of legal owner. The University should be notified of such changes immediately.

All changes made to a partnership name and/or legal ownership must be reflected in the Partner Institution Collaborative Agreement. This is to be coordinated by GPU/UKVS in conjunction with Legal Services.

The *Collaborative Partnership Modification Procedure* details the process to be followed.

5.5.4. Programme Modification

There are occasions when programmes approved for delivery at collaborative partners may need to be modified, and they are usually undertaken for one of the following reasons:

- To ensure the continued alignment of the intended outcomes of the programme with the design and delivery of teaching and learning, including changes made at DMU Leicester.
- To ensure the continued currency and relevance of the programme's curriculum.
- To ensure that the curriculum continues to meet relevant external reference points, such as the Office for Students Conditions of Registration, the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements, or in-country quality assurance requirements.

- To respond to and embed strategic initiatives and objectives.

The *Programme Approval and Management Policy* and its associated *Programme Modification Procedure* sets out the expectations and processes for making changes to programmes and outlines the categories of programme modification. It also documents where the changes are substantive enough that the programme would need to undergo formal revalidation or delivery reapproval.

Any changes to existing programmes must be cognisant of, and compliant with, consumer protection regulations and the University's contract with students, both in the context of student consultation on proposed changes and the timing of their implementation.

All changes made to programmes delivered at collaborative partners must be reflected in the programme compositions which form part of the Partner Institution Collaborative Agreement. Programme compositions are confirmed as part of the Annual Quality Monitoring process.

5.6 Collaborative Partnership Termination and Closure

The decision to formally close a collaborative partnership may be undertaken by either the University or the collaborative partner and will be informed by the terms of the collaborative contract.

Decision taken by DMU to formally close a partnership

If the University decides to close the partnership, it will normally be for one or more of the following reasons:

- A change of University strategy
- Ongoing low recruitment to programmes delivered by collaborative partners
- Significant ongoing academic quality issues
- A change in status or ownership of the partner organisation

GPU/UKVS will coordinate the termination process, liaising with the relevant faculties, directorates and the collaborative partner. A recommendation to terminate and close a partnership will be submitted to ULB by GPU/UKVS in liaison with the faculty. If ULB approval is granted, a formal notification will be sent to the partner institution confirming the decision to terminate the partnership.

Once the decision has been made to close a partnership, an exit strategy plan will be developed to ensure that the closure is undertaken in line with both partners'

expectations and requirements. The exit strategy plan is produced by GPU/UKVS and noted at FCPCs and AQC.

The Collaborative Register will be updated at this point to reflect that status of the partnership. The register will be maintained by AQS.

During the teach out phase, the University's normal academic quality monitoring and enhancement processes will continue to apply. These processes will be monitored by AQS, GPU/UKVS and FCPCs/ CPSC to ensure the quality of provision is maintained until the partnership is closed and to ensure that existing students on validated programmes continue to receive the same level of delivery and support.

Once the partnership end date has been reached it will be noted at CPSC and the partner institution will be removed from the Collaborative Register.

The partnership closure processes are contained in the *Collaborative Partnership Termination and Closure Procedure*.

Decision taken by a collaborative partner to formally close the partnership with DMU

Partner institutions will have their own internal procedures for closing a partnership. In such cases, partner institutions must comply with the terms set out in the Partner Institution Collaborative Agreement, which includes ensuring any remaining students are able to complete their studies up to the maximum registration date. Partners are advised to liaise with GPU/UKVS and ensure the rationale for the closure is fully communicated to DMU in a timely manner and continue to work with DMU openly and transparently until all students have completed.

6. Monitoring and review

- 6.1 This policy and its application will be monitored by the University's Academic Quality Committee and Academic Quality Services team. A full review of the policy will take place every three years with policy revisions considered and approved by the University's Academic Board.

7. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 7.1 Equality, diversity and inclusion considerations are central to the curation of the University's collaborative partnership portfolio, the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of the student experience by collaborative partners, and the University's compliance with its regulatory obligations. In this context,

collaborative partnership approval and management mechanisms will embed explicit requirements for equality, diversity and inclusion considerations to guide decision making. For instance, policies, procedures, and guidance for collaborative partnership approval and management will support the development of high-quality collaborative partnerships and programmes that support all students.

8. Sustainability

- 8.1 Sustainability considerations are central to the curation of the University's collaborative partnership portfolio and the University's financial, social, and environmental sustainability. In particular, policies, procedures, and guidance for collaborative partnership approval and management support the financial strength of the University through the development and maintenance of market-attractive academic offers and enable the University to embed learning on Education for Sustainable Development within its curriculum.

9. Related policies and standards/documentation

- 9.1 [Office for Students \(OfS\) Regulatory Framework](#)
- 9.2 [Quality Assurance Agency \(QAA\) UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#)
- 9.3 Internal procedures relevant to the implementation of this policy (see Appendix A)
- 9.4 [Programme Approval and Management Policy](#)
- 9.5 Other internal policies relevant to the quality assurance of the University's taught academic provision can be accessed here on the University's website: [Academic Quality Services](#)

10. Appendix A: List of Associated Procedures

- 10.1 This policy is implemented via the following associated procedures:
- Collaborative Partnership Approval Procedure
 - Collaborative Partnership Monitoring Procedure
 - Collaborative Partnership Modification Procedure
 - Collaborative Partnership Review Procedure

- Collaborative Partnership Termination and Closure Procedure
- Programme Delivery Approval Procedure

11. Appendix B: DMU Definitions and Models of Activity

[Definition and Models of Activity](#)

12. Document and version control information:

Version control information heading	Details
Policy number	TBC
Owner	Deputy Director and Head of Academic Quality
Author	Academic Quality Services
Approved by	Academic Board
Date of approval of this version	06/05/2026
Next review date	Not to exceed 3 years after approval date
Version number	001
Applicable statutory, legal, or national best practice requirements	Not applicable
Equality impact assessment completion date	08/06/2026
Data protection impact assessment completion date	Not required
Coverage	DMU Leicester, DMU London, DMU Dubai, and collaborative partners (including Transnational Education)