

Formation of a new Academic Partnership

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Formation of a new Academic Partnership

This section of the Framework covers the formation of academic partnerships with prospective partner institutions in the UK and overseas.

Principles

- The process outlined below supports the University in forming partnerships that support the vision laid out in Strategy 2020 and add value to the University
- It ensures partners are able to offer awards at the appropriate standard and a high quality student experience

Step 1: Initial screening of prospective partnerships

Opportunities for partnership working can arise through a number of different avenues. Once a faculty have decided that a proposal is worth developing and they wish to proceed with a potential partner, a **New Partnership Proposal Form** must be completed by the lead proposer from UWE and signed off by the relevant Faculty Executive Dean. This form is used to provide information to the Academic Partnerships Development Group in order to make an informed decision on whether a potential partnership should proceed to the next stages. Should the Academic Partnership Development Group grant approval for further development of the proposal, steps 2 and 3 will take place concurrently.

Step 2: Due Diligence

Due diligence involves a detailed appraisal of the proposed partner's capacity and capability to deliver part or all of a University programme. This appraisal includes consideration of the proposed partner's existing;

- processes and procedures for quality assurance and enhancement
- monitoring and evaluation
- student voice and feedback mechanisms
- computing, library and learning resources facilities
- staffing
- vision and mission
- finances

The prospective partner is required to complete a **Due Diligence Questionnaire**. The form is designed to provide UWE with sufficient information to make a judgement about the benefits and sustainability of the prospective partnership. The Lead Developer in the faculty will play a key role in working with the prospective partner to collate the material and to ensure that UWE's requirements are understood.

Once the Due Diligence Questionnaire and supporting evidence has been completed and returned to the Academic Partnership Development Team, it is circulated to various individuals from across the University, to provide feedback on the strengths and any potential issues relating to the prospective partnership. This feedback is then reported to the Academic Partnerships Development Group and the Collaborative Provision Committee. The former will deal with strategic, legal and financial considerations; the latter will deal with academic and operational issues identified as part of the due diligence process. If both the Academic Partnership Development Group and the Collaborative Provision Committee are content with the information received, they will recommend that the proposal proceeds to the final stages of the due diligence process, the Institutional Meeting and Special UVP.

Step 3: Development of the proposed partnership

Financial Model

Prior to the Institutional Meeting and Special UVP, the financial arrangements which will support the proposed partnership, including student numbers and any agreed minimum annual charge, must be agreed in consultation with the Faculty, Professional Services and the prospective partner.

Programme design

Proposals that involve a new programmes or programme title changes will require approval from the University Curriculum Panel (UCP). Roll-out of existing UWE programmes with no change to programme title will be noted at UCP.

Prior to the Institutional Meeting and Special UVP, the faculty will work with the proposed partner on the following;

- Developing the programme/s with the partner and preparing the *module and programme specifications* and completing the *Programme Design and Development Report*
- Ensuring the programme is appropriately staffed and resourced for delivery at the proposed partner. The partner must provide a *staffing plan* and *staff CVs*
- Assisting with the creation of an *operational calendar* (in conjunction with the Operations Manager from Student and Academic Services) which will highlight any additional academic or administrative support needed
- Providing information for the *Operations Manual* which will include the communications strategy for the partnership
- Developing a *risk register* for the partnership using the UWE template

Step 4: Institutional Meeting and Special UVP

The approval process culminates in a visit by a Panel of Assessors to the proposed partner institution. The UWE Panel of Assessors will differ in composition for each proposal in line with the nature of the proposal but will normally involve a Chair of at least Associate Dean level, an academic with previous experience of UWE collaborative provision and a member of the Academic Partnership Development Team (who shall also act as Officer). Panel members should not be drawn from the Faculty linked to the proposal under consideration and shall be approved by the Collaborative Provision Committee.

The visit will normally involve an Institutional Meeting and a Special UVP. These are separate processes, but in most cases will be conducted as part of the same visit. Prior to the visit, the Academic Partnership Development Team will provide the prospective partner with guidance notes that set out the purpose of both processes and the indicative lines of enquiry that the Panel of Assessors may wish to explore further over the course of the visit.

Institutional Meeting

The Panel of Assessors will be responsible for conducting an Institutional Meeting and making a recommendation to the University on whether the prospective partner can be designated an Affiliated Institution of UWE. The proposing Faculty will normally be represented by the appointed Link Tutor and, if appropriate, a senior Faculty presence nominated by the Executive Dean.

The outcome of this meeting is a recommendation to Academic Board (following endorsement of the recommendation by the Academic Partnerships Development Group and Collaborative Provision Committee) that:

- the prospective partner be designated an affiliated institution; or
- the proposed partner should not be designated an affiliated institution

Special UVP

The Panel of Assessors will be responsible for conducting a Special UVP and making a decision about the prospective partner's capacity and capability to deliver the UWE programmes under consideration. A Special UVP will be held between the Panel of Assessors, the proposing Faculty representatives and the prospective partner and will consider the latter's capacity and capability to deliver the programmes under consideration. The precise format of the meeting will be adapted to fit the proposal under consideration. As part of this, meetings will normally be held (virtually or at the prospective partner) with academic and administrative staff who will be involved in delivering and administering the proposed programmes, students studying at the proposed partner and can involve a tour of the physical resources in place at the prospective partner if the meeting is conducted at the institution.

The outcome of this meeting will be to approve, approve with conditions or to not approve.

In the case of both the Institutional Meeting and Special UVP, should further documentation and/or discussions be required before a decision can be made, the Academic Partnership

Development Team member and Link Tutor will be responsible for working closely with the prospective partner until the issues outstanding have been resolved to the satisfaction of the Chair of the Panel.

Step 5: Post approval

Following agreement by Academic Board to grant affiliated institution status the Academic Partnership Development Team will draft a formal agreement between the University and the partner, known as the Academic Agreement, which confirms affiliated institution status, sets out the principles underpinning the partnership and the division of responsibilities.

Should the award or awards to be delivered under the terms of the agreement be accredited by any Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) in the UK and/or agencies in the partner's country, Student and Academic Services will assist in the coordination the accreditation of the partnership or the awards.

The Academic Agreement forms a binding contract and is signed by both institutions. It is supported by a Responsibilities Schedule, a Finance Schedule and an Academic Schedule for each programme to be delivered by the partner. The Academic Agreement is normally made for a period of five years and includes provision for review of the agreement and mechanisms for its termination, subject to satisfactory provision being made for completion of programmes by existing students.

The Academic Partnership Development Team will ensure that that the partnership approval outcome is communicated to stakeholders involved in the management and administration of the partnership as well as the wider University.