

Educational Partnerships Policy



Aims

1. The responsibility for the approval, monitoring, review and renewal of all educational partnerships rests with University Education Committee (UEC), operating under delegated authority of Senate and reporting all approvals, renewals and conclusions of an educational partnership to Senate.
2. The aims of the Educational Partnerships Policy are to:
 - a. Ensure that all educational partnerships are consistent with, and support delivery of, the strategic aims and values set out in the University's Vision and Strategy (and its four supporting strategies).
 - b. Ensure that all educational partnerships are established and operate in ways that allows the University to exercise its ultimate responsibility for the academic quality and standards of all academic credit and awards made (in whole or in part) in its name.
 - c. Ensure that all organisations with which the University enters an educational partnership have demonstrated appropriate academic, financial and legal standing in respect of the proposed educational partnership.
 - d. Ensure that the University's management of educational partnerships is consistent with the requirement in the [UK Quality Code](#) that 'where a provider works in educational partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them'.

Scope

3. For the purposes of this policy the University defines an educational partnership as:
 - a. Provision that leads to either an award or academic credit by Newcastle University, in collaboration with an external partner (including but not limited to validation and accreditation arrangements).
 - b. Provision delivered by Newcastle University in a transnational context where this involves collaboration with an external partner (including but not limited to 'flying faculty' arrangements).
 - c. Articulation arrangements where successful completion of all or part of a programme of study at another educational provider gives all successful students a right to enter a Newcastle programme with advanced standing.
 - d. Newcastle University provision funded and partially delivered by an external organisation.
 - e. Provision by an external provider that contributes to a Newcastle University award.
 - f. Research degrees leading to a joint or dual award.
4. The University recognises that higher education is a sector where innovation is constantly taking place, so there may be types of provision that do not fall under the scope set out in paragraph 3 but which do fall under the requirements of the [UK Quality Code](#) quoted in paragraph 2d. Where this is the case the Educational Partnerships Policy will apply. In cases of dispute as to whether a particular arrangement constitutes an educational partnership, the chair of (UEC) shall make the final determination.

Support for the development of educational partnerships

5. The following support is available to proposers of educational partnerships:
 - a. The Learning and Teaching Development Service (LTDS) is available to provide advice and guidance on all aspects of the educational partnership approval and renewal processes, and publishes guidance notes on these processes in the online [Quality and Standards Handbook](#).

- b. Faculty Learning and Teaching Teams are available to provide advice and guidance on the approval of any new programmes to be delivered through an educational partnership.
- c. The Intellectual Property and Legal Services Team can provide advice and guidance on legal and contractual issues related to educational partnerships.
- d. The International Office can provide advice and guidance in relation to establishing educational partnerships with organisations outside the UK.

Educational partnership approval

6. Establishment of an educational partnership requires four key approvals. All four must be completed in accordance with this policy before an educational partnership can commence. Strategic Approval must be gained before Partner, Business Case or Academic Approval can be sought. Once Strategic Approval has been gained Partner and Business Case Approval should normally be gained before Academic Approval is sought.

Strategic Approval

7. The purpose of Strategic Approval is to set out the strategic rationale for developing the new educational partnership, in order to gain approval to allocate the time and resource needed to develop a fuller proposal.
8. Strategic Approval requires educational partnership proposers to prepare and submit a Strategic Approval Form. The Strategic Approval Form is intended to gather key information on the proposed educational partnership, to allow both the faculty in which the educational partnership will be based and the University to come to a decision on whether the potential strategic benefits of the proposed educational partnership are sufficient to justify the use of staff time to develop a fuller proposal. Given this focus on the strategic issues raised by the proposed new educational partnership, completed Strategic Approval Forms should normally be no longer than three sides in length, Calibri 12 pt with 2cm margins on all sides.
9. The process for the completion and submission of a Strategic Approval Form relating to an educational partnership is the same as the Strategic Approval Stage set out in paragraphs 22 to 29 of the [Policy on the Approval of New Programmes](#), except for the variations in paragraphs 10 to 15 below.
10. Strategic Approval Forms relating to educational partnerships, shall be considered for approval in respect of the following criteria, rather than those set out in the [Policy on the Approval of New Programmes](#):
- a. There is a clear and appropriate academic rationale for the proposed educational partnership.
 - b. The proposed educational partnership will support the achievement of the University's, faculty's and academic unit's strategic objectives.
 - c. There is no *prima facie* reason why the proposed partner would be not be appropriate (for example it would conflict with existing educational partnerships or other commitments).
11. The decisions that can be taken by the faculty on a Strategic Approval Form relating to an educational partnership are:
- a. Permission is granted to develop the proposed educational partnership.
 - b. The request for permission to develop the proposed educational partnership is rejected.
 - c. The request for permission to develop the proposed educational partnership is referred back to the proposer for revision.
12. Where permission has been granted, the faculty will also specify which professional services the proposer should consult in the development of the proposed educational partnership and/or any programmes to be delivered through the educational partnership.

13. If permission to develop the proposed educational partnership is granted, concurrence from the chair of UEC must be gained. The faculty is responsible for submitting the approved strategic approval form to LTDS (via uec@ncl.ac.uk), who will arrange for it to be considered by the chair of UEC and then communicate this decision to the faculty and the educational partnership proposer (copying in any professional services to be consulted by the proposer, as specified under paragraph 12).
14. The chair of UEC will also determine whether a site visit should be required to the proposed partner as part of the Partner Approval process. These will take place if a proposed educational partnership is deemed to be higher risk, for one or more of the following reasons:
 - a. The proposed partner has not previously delivered a programme at the proposed level.
 - b. The proposed partner is geographically located in a country or region where the University has no existing relationships.
 - c. The proposed educational partnership would involve the University entering into a new type of provision.
 - d. The proposed partner does not have its own degree awarding powers.

The judgment will be made on a holistic basis taking all these factors into account, and the decision of the chair of UEC is final.

15. If a site visit is deemed necessary, a team of at least two members of University (including a member of LTDS acting as visit secretary) will be appointed to undertake the review; gather information on the proposed partner; and report on the visit using Visit Report Template.

Business Case Approval

16. The purpose of Business Case Approval is to ensure that the proposed educational partnership is to demonstrate the viability of the proposed educational partnership, and ensure that appropriate resources are in place to deliver the educational partnership.
17. Business Case Approval for programmes delivered under an educational partnership will normally take place through the Business Case Approval process set out in the Policy on the Approval of New Programmes. This is subject to the University's standard thresholds for requiring FMBSG, Executive Board and Council approval for projects with estimated lifetime project costs.

Partner Approval

18. The purpose of Partner Approval is to ensure that the University is working with partners who are appropriate in terms of reputation and standing, and who have the capacity to deliver academically on the educational partnership. This includes conducting due diligence on the proposed partner, taking account of the following areas:
 - a. The legal and financial status of the partner.
 - b. The reputation and academic standing of the partner.
 - c. The ability and capacity of the partner to deliver on the proposed educational partnerships in terms of staffing, resources and access to learning opportunities.
 - d. For educational partnerships involving non-UK organisations, the legal, financial and cultural aspects of working in a particular country (including meeting any in-country legal and regulatory requirements).
19. Consequently the criteria that must be met in order for Partner Approval to be granted are:

For all proposed educational partnerships:

- a. The proposed educational partnership is consistent with, and supports delivery of, the strategic aims and values set out in the University's Vision and Strategy (and its four supporting strategies).
- b. The proposed partner is of an appropriate standing in the proposed subject area(s) for the University to collaborate with.

- c. The proposed partner has the appropriate legal standing to enter into a legally binding contract with the University.
- d. The proposed partner is financially sound.
- e. The proposed partner either has experience of delivering comparable programmes at a similar level, or can demonstrate the capability to do this.
- f. The proposed partner has an acceptable record of educational partnership with other institutions.
- g. The proposed partner has not been subject to any allegations or convictions for fraud, bribery or corruption, or to suggestions that in the conduct of their business they have adopted practices that may run contrary to the Bribery Act 2010.
- h. For proposed educational partnerships with organisations based outside the UK, there is a joint understanding of practices in higher education in each respective country; the capacity to address differences in cultures and expectations to ensure that the requirements of the arrangements can be met; and any in-country recognition or approval requirements will be met.

*For all educational partnerships **except** for articulation agreements:*

- i. The proposed partner has robust quality management procedures.
 - j. The proposed partner has appropriate access to resources (physical and staffing) to deliver its role in the proposed educational partnership.
 - k. The proposed partner can provide an appropriate and safe working environment for University students and staff.
 - l. The proposed educational partnerships does not raise reputational risks (for example the proposed partner's business and ethical interests).
20. Educational partnership proposers must demonstrate that their proposed educational partnership meets these criteria by completing and submitting to LTDS a [Partner Approval Template](#), completed by the proposer in conjunction with the proposed partner organisation.
21. For all proposed educational partnerships, LTDS will convene a Partnerships Approval and Renewal Committee (PARC) to consider the proposal. The membership of the PARC shall be:
- a. The Faculty Dean or her/his nominee from the faculty in which the proposed educational partnership will be based, who will chair the PARC.
 - b. At least one and up to two further members of academic staff, one of whom should be from a faculty other than the one in which the proposed educational partnership will be based.
 - c. A member of the Intellectual Property and Legal Services Team, appointed by the head of that team.
 - d. For educational partnerships with organisations based outside the UK, a member of the International Office appointed by the Director of the International Office.
 - e. For educational partnerships involving a research degree, the Senior Student Policy Manager, Student Progress Service.
- A member of LTDS will serve as secretary to the PARC, and the chair of the PARC has the authority to co-opt further members should they deem it necessary. Where the proposed partnership will involve a new taught programme(s), a member of the relevant Faculty Learning and Teaching Team will be invited to attend the PARC meeting to support effective communication between partner and programme approval events.
22. All PARCs will receive the following documentation for consideration:
- a. The approved Strategic Approval Form.
 - b. The completed Partner Approval Template.

- c. The site visit report, where one has been undertaken.
23. The PARC must reach a judgment as to whether the proposed educational partnership meets the criteria set out in paragraph 19, recording its discussion and its judgment in a report of the meeting. This report should include one of the following recommendations:
- a. The proposed educational partnership meets the criteria for approval.
 - b. The proposed educational partnership does not meet the criteria for approval, and further work should take place to revise the proposal for resubmission to the PARC.
 - c. The proposed educational partnership does not meet the criteria for approval and should be rejected, with no opportunity for re-submission.
24. The PARC report also contain conditions and recommendation relating to the proposed educational partnership:
- a. *Conditions* are requirements that must be met to receive final approval.
 - b. *Recommendations* are issues that should be considered or kept under review, but need not be met before final approval can be given.

The PARC can also identify issues that must be considered as part of the Academic Approval for programmes to be delivered through the proposed educational partnership.

25. The authority to approve educational partnerships rests with Senate, which has delegated this authority to UEC. The University operates a risk-based approach to Partner Approval, for final approval:
- a. For educational partnerships relating to articulation agreements, and joint or dual research degrees, the PARC has the authority to approve the proposed educational partnership and will report all such approvals to UEC.
 - b. For all other educational partnerships, the PARC's role is to recommend to UEC that a proposed educational partnership be approved. (If a PARC decides to make such a recommendation, the secretary to the PARC is responsible to submitting the proposal to UEC for consideration for approval).

Academic Approval

26. The purpose of Academic Approval is to ensure that programmes (taught or research) delivered through an educational partnership will meet the University's requirements for the academic quality and standards of its awards given the increased complexity of delivering educational provision through such educational partnerships.
27. Academic Approval of programmes to be delivered through an educational partnership falls into one of four categories:
- a. *New taught programmes*: where new taught programmes are to be delivered through an educational partnership.
 - b. *Existing taught programmes*: where an educational partnership will not lead to the creation of a new programme (for example the educational partnership will involve the delivery of an already approved programme with a new partner).
 - c. *Articulation arrangements*: where a new articulation agreement is to be established but students will progress to an already approved University programme.
 - d. *Research degree programmes*: where a joint or dual PhD is delivered through an educational partnership, so that there is no programme approval required as such.
28. Arrangements in respect of category a. are set out in the New Programme Approval Process, which includes specific documentary requirements and criteria for new programmes delivered through an educational partnerships.

29. Categories b., c. and d. do not involve new programmes. The University still needs to be assured that the academic quality and standards of the programmes delivered through an educational partnership will be appropriate, and it needs to do this in a proportionate way. Consequently where a proposed educational partnership involves programmes in one of categories b., c. or d. the PARC's remit will be extended beyond Partner Approval, to include Academic Approval.
30. In these circumstances PARCs will consider proposals against an additional approval criterion to those laid out in paragraph 19:
- m. The proposed programmes (taught and/or research degree) to be delivered through the educational partnership will meet the University's requirements to the setting and maintaining of academic quality and standards.

To support PARCs in assessing proposals against this criterion, educational partnership proposers will be required to submit the following additional documentation for consideration by the PARC:

| b. Existing taught programmes | c. Articulation arrangements | d. Research degree programmes |
|--|---|--|
| A completed Student Lifecycle Template | A completed Articulation Arrangement Template | A completed Joint or Dual PhD Student Lifecycle Template |

31. The decision taken by the PARC on the recommendation it makes to UEC in relation to proposed educational partnerships involving programmes in categories b., c. and d. will encompass both Partner Approval and Academic Approval. UEC's final decision on approval or rejection will also cover both issues.

Legal agreements

32. A signed legal agreement must be in place for all educational partnerships, before any students can be registered on a module or programme delivered through that educational partnership. The normal duration of a legal agreement is six years, but this may vary depending on the nature of the educational partnership.
33. Once a proposed educational partnership has received both Partner Approval and Academic Approval LTDS will notify the Intellectual Property and Legal Services Team of the need for a legal agreement to be prepared, and send this Team the details of the partnership to allow the legal agreement to be developed. The lead in the development of the legal agreement will be taken by the Intellectual Property and Legal Services Team, and LTDS will play a co-ordinating role in this process and in obtaining the signature of the partner organisation to the final agreement.
34. The final signed version of all agreements will be held by the Intellectual Property and Legal Services Team.

Extensions to existing educational partnerships

35. Where there is a desire to extend the provision offered through an existing educational partnership, there is no requirement for an additional Partner Approval process. In all such cases the Strategic Approval process set out in paragraphs 7 to 15 must be followed, and Academic Approval as set out in paragraphs 26 to 31 must be completed. For Academic Approval, additional programmes (taught or research degree) in categories b., c. or d. may be considered by the PARC through a virtual rather than physical meeting.

Monitoring and review of educational partnerships

36. Monitoring and review of approved educational partnerships takes place through the University's established quality management processes:
- a. *External examining*: all taught programmes delivered through an educational partnership will be subject to the University's [Policy and Procedures for External Examiners of Taught Programmes](#), and research degree programmes delivered through an educational partnership will include external examiner involvement in line with the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes](#).

- b. [Annual Monitoring and Review](#): this includes involving partners either in writing the report, or having the opportunity to comment on the report prior to its submission to faculty. For new educational partnerships this will incorporate a One Year On Review to ensure that new partnerships are effectively initiated.
- c. [Learning and Teaching Review](#): normally this will take place at part of the LTR of the subject area responsible for the programme, but where a subject area's partnership provision is large or complex it may be deemed necessary to consider these programmes separately from the subject's 'home' provision. Where an LTR includes consideration of programmes delivered through an educational partnership the LTR report will include a separate section on the operation of the educational partnership.
- d. [Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework](#): joint and dual PhDs will be considered in the annual reviews and audit visit of the academic unit involved in the educational partnership.

Renewal of an educational partnership

- 37. The purpose of renewal of an educational partnership is to confirm, no later than the final year of the legal term of the educational partnership, whether the University wishes to extend the partnership and if it does so that the partner remains an appropriate partner and that the partnership has managed the academic quality and standards effectively.
- 38. Consequently the criteria for renewing an educational partnership are:
 - a. There remains a valid strategic rationale for the educational partnership.
 - b. The partner retains appropriate academic, financial and legal status.
 - c. The partnership has met and will continue to meet the University's expectations for academic quality and standards.
 - d. The partnership has operated in line with the legal agreement.
 - e. There is a valid business case for the continuation of the partnership.
- 39. The academic unit proposing extension of the educational partnership should complete and submit to LTDS a [Self-Evaluation Template](#), completed by the proposer in conjunction with the partner organisation.
- 40. The academic unit is responsible for liaising with the faculty to which it belongs to agree what format of business case needs to be submitted to support the request to extend the educational partnership. The responsibility for setting what is required rests with the faculty, and authority to consider and approve or reject the business case lies with relevant Faculty Steering Group (or member of the Group designated to take this decision).
- 41. A PARC will be convened by LTDS as set out in paragraph 21, and will receive the following documentation:

Provided by the academic unit:

 - a. A completed Self-Evaluation Template.
 - b. Written confirmation that the business case for extension has been approved by the faculty.

From LTDS:

 - c. The most recent LTR or QAEF visit report including consideration of the programme(s) offered through the educational partnership.
 - d. A summary of AMR or QAEF Annual Reports relating to the programme(s) delivered through the educational partnership, prepared by LTDS.
 - e. For taught programmes, a summary of the external examiner reports for the programme(s) delivered through the educational partnership (prepared by LTDS).

42. The PARC must reach a judgment as to whether the proposed educational partnership meets the criteria set out in paragraph 38, recording its discussion and its judgment in a report of the meeting. This report should include one of the following recommendations:
- The educational partnership meets the renewal criteria, and UEC should approve renewal.
 - The educational partnership does not meet the renewal criteria, and further work should take place to revise the proposal for resubmission to the PARC for consideration for recommendation to UEC.
 - The proposed educational partnership does not meet the criteria for renewal and should be rejected, with no opportunity for re-submission.
43. The PARC report also contain conditions and recommendation relating to the proposed educational partnership:
- Conditions* are requirements that must be met before an educational partnership receives final approval.
 - Recommendations* are issues that the academic unit involved in the educational partnership should consider or keep under review, but need not be met before final approval can be given.
44. The respective authorities of the PARC and UEC in respect of approving the renewal of an educational partnership, is the same as set out in paragraph 25 for initial approval.
45. If renewal is approved by UEC, LTDS will notify the Intellectual Property and Legal Services Team of the need for a new legal agreement. The lead in the development of the legal agreement will be taken by the Intellectual Property and Legal Services Team, and LTDS will play a co-ordinating role in this process and in obtaining the signature of the partner organisation to the final agreement.

Conclusion of an educational partnership

46. Where a decision is taken to suspend or end an educational partnership (either part-way or at the end of the agreed duration of the partnership), this must involve consultation with the partner organisation. Advice and guidance in such situations is available from LTDS.
47. In all such situations the academic unit involved in the educational partnership should complete [Conclusion of An Educational Partnership Template](#) (which includes a requirement for a teach-out plan should the request to conclude the educational partnership be approved). This should then be submitted to the relevant Faculty Learning and Teaching Team for consideration for endorsement by the Faculty Dean, following which it should be submitted to LTDS who will arrange for the chair of UEC to consider the request on behalf of UEC. Once a decision has been taken, LTDS is responsible for notifying the faculty and academic unit.

Register of educational partnerships

48. All approved educational partnerships shall be listed in a [University Register of Educational Partnerships](#), which will be made available publicly. LTDS is responsible for maintaining and publishing this Register.

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| Approved by University Education Committee: 17 Oct. 2018 Last updated by LTDS 20 February 2019 | |
| Intended for use by: | Faculty Deans Faculty Learning and Teaching Teams Proposers of new educational partnerships DPDs for existing educational partnerships School administrators Research and Enterprise Services International Office |
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