

# **Educational Partnerships Policy: Framework for Taught Joint Awards**



## **Definition**

1. A jointly designed and delivered programme by two or more awarding institutions leading to a single award to all students on the programme.
2. As a Newcastle University award the institution has responsibility for the oversight of the overall quality and standards of the programme and for ensuring that the output standards are equivalent to similar Newcastle degree programmes.

## **Joint award partner(s)**

3. The University will normally only enter into a joint award arrangements with high quality comparator institutions who have academic experience in delivering programmes to the appropriate level and who meet the Educational Partnerships Policy criteria for approval.
4. Joint awards with a less experienced institution will only be considered if they are a Strategic Partner of the University. In such instances Newcastle University will act as the lead partner and have more overall responsibility for provision which counts towards the final award.

## **Partner approval**

5. All new partners will be considered for approval through the normal Educational Partnerships processes.
6. Existing partners will need to be considered for approval through the Educational Partnerships Sub-Committee if they are not already engaged in joint award programmes with Newcastle.

## **Confirmation of authority to enter joint award agreement.**

7. As part of the due diligence procedures it must be established whether partners have the legal authority to award joint degrees. Newcastle University is permitted to award joint degrees; this is stated in section 29(3) of the [University Statutes](#).
8. Additionally for programmes with international partners, it should be established whether there are any national/local requirements for the programme and whether there are any national approval processes which must be followed, for example Ministry of Education approvals. Where such requirements are in place these must be satisfied and documented as part of the programme approval process.

## **Level of award**

9. Newcastle University permits joint awards at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Doctoral level arrangements are permitted and are covered in a separate [guidance document](#).

## **Credit thresholds**

### *Undergraduate*

10. The normal expectation, in programmes with two partners, is that Newcastle University will contribute at least half of the credits for the award (i.e. 180 Newcastle credits (90 ECTS) for 3 year programme or 240 Newcastle credits (120 ECTS) for 4 year programme).
11. As part of programme design agreement should be reached on the most appropriate place for Newcastle contribution. However, in collaborations with a less experienced partner, Newcastle University will provide the majority of its contribution in the stages which contribute to the degree classification, including delivery of at least half of the final stage.
12. As a general principle the proportions should reflect the stage weightings for degree classification.

### *Postgraduate Taught*

13. The normal expectation, in programmes with two partners, is that Newcastle will contribute at least half of the taught modules. The dissertation/project may be jointly supervised if appropriate.

### *Collaborations involving more than two partners*

14. For UG and PGT programmes involving more than two partners these proportions will change accordingly. Guidance from Learning and Teaching Development Service should be sought at an early stage to discuss the proposed model.

## **Duration of award**

15. The normal expectation is that the duration of award will be same as the equivalent Newcastle award. If required by the partner and agreed by the University in the negotiation of the partnership the programme may take place over a longer period (and by extension may have an overall higher credit value which will require additional Newcastle input).

### **Lead institution**

16. Depending on the nature of the partnership, for example in a large consortium arrangement, it may be desirable to identify a lead institution to co-ordinate the programme.
17. Normally Newcastle University will act as the lead institution in collaboration with less experienced partners.

### **Ownership of credit**

18. Modules may be jointly delivered but one institution must take overall responsibility for each module in the programme.

### **Language of teaching and assessment**

19. The normal expectation is that the teaching and assessment of a Newcastle University joint award will be in English.

### **Location of delivery**

20. While the normal expectation is that students will undertake the Newcastle University elements of the programme at one of the University's campuses, delivery may also take place at the partner location by Newcastle staff or be delivered on an e-learning or blended learning basis.

### **Agreement**

21. A fully signed legal agreement outlining each partner's roles and responsibilities must be in place prior to any students being registered on the programme.

### **Termination**

22. Termination clauses must be built into the legal agreement to allow for either partner(s) to withdraw from the arrangement. These clauses should provide information on how the obligations to the currently registered students will be met.
23. Appropriate contingency plans should be established at the outset to enable all students to complete their programme of study, should the partner be unable to meet its responsibilities. In such cases the award will revert to a single award from Newcastle University.

### **Joint award quality management principles**

#### *Programme design*

24. The programme should be designed collaboratively by all partners to provide a coherent educational programme for students.
25. Subject to requirements noted in Section 5 the programme should be designed to allow each partner's subject expertise to be provided at the appropriate point in the curriculum.
26. Programmes should be designed taking into account both partners' regulatory requirements. The programme as a whole must be consistent with the qualification descriptor in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England Wales and Northern Ireland, and should be benchmarked against the relevant subject benchmarks and where appropriate Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies requirements.

#### *Programme approval*

27. The Programme Approval Committee (PAC) will consider the whole programme for approval, including the partner's contributions. Where possible, representatives from the partner should be in attendance at the PAC.
28. In addition to the documentation set out in the Educational Partnerships Policy proposers should complete the [Framework for Joint Taught Awards Programme Approval Checklist for the PAC](#).

#### *Changes to programmes*

29. Mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that any proposed changes to a partner's provision are considered and agreed by all partners prior to submission to the relevant Faculty for consideration for approval. Changes will be considered by the University's programme approval or major change policies (as relevant).

### **Governance and Programme Management**

#### *Board of Studies*

30. All Newcastle University programmes are the responsibility of a Board of Studies at Newcastle University.
31. Individual Academic Units should decide which Board of Studies is the most appropriate place for the joint award programme.
32. The agreed model will be documented in the legal agreement.
33. The Board of Studies should include both partner and student representation.

#### *Joint Management Committee*

34. Where appropriate, a Joint Management Committee should be established at the outset of the collaboration with responsibility for the overall management of the collaboration and will report as necessary to the Board of Studies.
35. The JMC will include appropriate membership from all joint award partners. Membership should normally also include student representation.
36. The JMC will normally be organised and supported by the Lead Institution.

#### *Liaison mechanisms*

37. In cases where a Joint Management Committee is not appropriate, Academic Unit's should ensure appropriate liaison mechanisms are in place between the partners.
38. A named contact for the programme should be appointed by all partners and regular meetings, which can be held virtually, should be established throughout the academic year.

#### *Day to day management*

39. Day to day administration of the programme is likely to take place at the location of the student. In all cases the Lead institution will have oversight of activity.

#### **Monitoring and Review**

40. All joint awards will be subject to the same monitoring and review processes as all Newcastle provision. For example, Annual Monitoring and Review, Learning and Teaching Review, and student evaluation.
41. As an Educational Partnership joint awards will be additionally subject to:
  - a. One year review – all new Educational Partnerships are subject to a one year on review.
  - b. Review of Partnership and International Campus Provision (RPICP) – where the joint award is part of a larger strategic arrangement the programme will be reviewed through the six yearly RPICP process.

#### **External Examining**

42. An external examiner(s) must be appointed to the programme by Newcastle University. Nominations should be agreed jointly through the Joint Management Committee.
43. The external examiner will have oversight of the programme as a whole, including the modules contributed by the partner.
44. Where appropriate, external examiner(s) should be the same as those overseeing similar programmes delivered at Newcastle to ensure the comparability of standards.

45. Joint appointments may be possible, particularly in cases of awards involving other UK HEIs.

46. Where partners make separate external examiner appointments, all reports should be considered through the Joint Management Committee and Board of Studies.

### **Assessment**

47. Each partner will be responsible for assessing their respective modules.

48. At the outset of the collaboration a single marking scheme for the whole programme should be developed or a marking conversion agreed. The marking scheme(s) should be published and made available to students.

49. In addition a consistent strategy for re-sits should be established at the outset.

50. Mechanisms should be put in place to ensure consistency and appropriateness of marking. This may include Newcastle University staff undertaking a sample moderation of assessments in arrangements with partners who have not previously delivered at the proposed level or who are in the process of developing their internal quality assurance systems.

### **Board of Examiners**

51. A joint Board of Examiners will be established with membership from all contributing institutions.

52. The legal agreement should set out the membership and terms of reference for the Board.

53. The Chair will normally be from the Lead institution.

### **Joint award student lifecycle principles**

#### **Recruitment, Marketing and Publicity**

54. The recruitment strategy for the programme should be jointly agreed and all marketing and publicity materials approved by each partner at the outset. Marketing materials will be periodically reviewed to ensure accuracy of information.

55. Academic and English language requirements should be jointly agreed. The expectation is that at least the University's standard entry criteria for similar provision, including English language ability, will be required.

## **Admissions**

56. A clear admissions process should be agreed by all partners and set out in the legal agreement. To ensure clarity one institution should be responsible for the co-ordination of the applications process.
57. The selection process should be a joint process against clearly defined and agreed criteria.
58. Appropriate discussion should take place at an early stage with Admissions and Student Progress Service to ensure appropriate information is provided to students.

## **Enrolment**

59. Students will be fully registered as students of all partners.

## **Complaints, appeals and disciplinary procedures.**

60. Procedures should be agreed at the outset and included in the legal agreement.

The general principles will be:

- a. A student with an active registration with Newcastle University has a right to complain or appeal to the University, regardless of location of study. A student with an active registration with Newcastle University is also subject to ultimately the University's disciplinary and assessment irregularity procedures, regardless of location of study.
- b. Underpinning the above is the general principle that all parties will seek to resolve cases at the most local level first. This includes disciplinary issues, which should be considered at the location of study in the first instance.
- c. The University will seek to consult the partner as part of a case investigation, should the case relate to issues involving the partner. Newcastle University also expects to be consulted by partners in investigations, should a case relate to issues involving Newcastle University.
- d. Students should be actively advised that, should their studies be undertaken at another campus, institution or other non-Newcastle location of study, they may additionally or alternatively become subject to procedures or codes of conduct specific to that campus, institution or location, which may differ from Newcastle's.
- e. The sharing of information relating to all types of student case work should be limited to a level that permits appropriate investigation and resolution. In many instances, only the final decision will need to be shared between partners in order to maintain accurate student records whilst appropriately protecting confidentiality.

- f. The Agreements relating to individual Educational Partnerships may include more detail about how student cases are considered and the level of consultation expected between the partner and Newcastle University.

### **Certification and records of study**

61. A single parchment will be awarded to students. The design of the parchment should be agreed by all parties early in the partnership. This should include all relevant logos and signatories. Normally the Lead Institution will be responsible for producing and issuing the parchment.
62. The HEAR/transcript for the students should record the location of study of modules and clearly state the nature of the partnership.

### **Graduation**

63. Students will be permitted to attend the graduation of one of the partners, normally the lead institution.

### **Exit awards**

64. Depending on the credits undertaken, students who leave the programme before completion may be entitled to a Newcastle University exit award.
65. Exact details of requirements should be documented in the Degree Programme Regulations.

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