

University Code of Practice

Academic Partnerships and Collaborative Provision

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Summary/ Description:	<p>To deliver an activity with a partner institution (such as admitting students or jointly delivering a programme) the requisite level of partnership approval must be obtained or be in place in addition to any approval required for the activity.</p> <p>This Code defines partnerships according to five levels, indicating the complexity and perceived risk, and sets out approval requirements for each level. The Code is underpinned by a process which emphasises proportionality. It focuses on due diligence and the assessment of the risks and benefits. Essential requirements include ensuring that the approval process culminates in a written agreement signed by the University and the partner and where relevant the recording of the partnership in the University's publicly available register.</p> <p>The Code also covers the monitoring, review and termination of Academic Partnerships.</p>

This university Code has been written in accordance with the approach approved by the University to enhance clarity involving the following terminology: **must** = mandatory **should** = advisable **may** = desirable.

Where these terms are used they are emphasised in bold.

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INTRODUCTION

- 1 This Code sets out the University's approach to, and requirements for, the approval, review and termination of Academic Partnerships and of the activities in which those partners will engage. It provides a guide for University staff involved in developing, seeking approval for, and being involved in the review of an Academic partnership; partners and potential partner institutions wishing to understand the University's requirements, and the way these are informed by the external expectations applicable to the University.
- 2 It is informed by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (versions published 2012, 2018 and the updated introduction published 2023) and embodies the established principles that the University, as the degree-awarding body, has ultimate responsibility which cannot be delegated for both the academic standards of its awards and for the quality of the learning opportunities leading to its awards.
- 3 All Academic Partnerships entered into should be part of a strategic approach by the University and should be mutually beneficial to both the University and the partner institution (or institutions), and each institution should be equally concerned to secure the academic standards of all awards and the reputation of each institution involved in the partnership.

Authority

- 4 Subject to the provisions of University of Gibraltar Act 2015, the Academic Board is the final arbiter of the application and interpretation of this Code of practice.

Scope of the Code

- 5 This Code applies to 'Academic Partnerships' and the activities carried out through those partnerships. An Academic Partnership is a formal written agreement between the University and another institution (whether based in Gibraltar, the UK or elsewhere) for the purpose of providing learning opportunities for students or the progression to such opportunities, where those opportunities lead to an award of the University of Gibraltar. Such learning opportunities may involve provision classified as 'taught' and that classified as 'research' in this Quality Handbook.
- 6 The term 'University' means the University of Gibraltar throughout this Code unless stated otherwise.
- 7 This Code does not apply to:
 - (a) activities concerned with the engagement with other institutions for the purposes of research, staff mobility, knowledge exchange or similar, and
 - (b) arrangements classified as 'placement learning' which are governed entirely by the Code on Placement Learning (QH:C5).

(c) arrangements classified as Memoranda of Understanding, Co-operation, or Agreement which reflect a commitment to work together for a general or a specific purpose versus an 'activity'. These are governed by the University Contracts & Agreements Committee.

Limitations

Serial arrangements

- 8 Serial arrangements are those where a partner institution contracts with another organisation which is not a partner institution of the University in relation to the University's provision/awards (hereafter 'third party organisation'), for example by entering into a progression agreement allowing students from the third party organisation entry to a University of Gibraltar programme.
- 9 The University will not approve programmes where any aspect of the delivery, assessment or support of the programme is to be carried out by a third-party organisation.
- 10 Under no circumstances is a partner institution authorised to commit the University to any serial arrangements or obligations involving a third-party organisation in relation to matters governed by this Code other than with the explicit written permission of the University.

Language of tuition

- 11 The language of tuition for provision leading to University of Gibraltar credits/qualifications must be English, unless the learning outcomes of the programme are explicitly related to competence in a language or languages other than English.

The University's Visual Identity (Brand Guidelines)

- 12 Partner institutions are required to adhere to the University's Brand Guidelines (including the use of the approved version of the Logo). Advice should be provided during the initial development of the partnership of the University's expectations.
- 13 Equally, advice should be sought from the (proposed) partner regarding its expectations about its own Visual Identity.

Informing Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies

- 14 Where a programme is subject to the accreditation or other oversight by a professional, statutory or regulatory body, or where approval of a professional body is required for successful students on a programme to practise the given profession, the relevant body **must** be informed of any partnership arrangement made under this Code which applies to the programme. The relevant body **should** be consulted during the development of the proposed partnership or partnership activity.

Certificates and Official Transcripts

- 15 Except as indicated in paragraphs 17 and 18, the University retains sole and full authority for the issuing of the Degree Certificate (including for an interim award) and for the issuing of the Transcript of Academic Record. Where the programme is delivered in its entirety by the

partner institution, the University may delegate production of the Official Transcript provided it is satisfied that the partner institution has in place robust arrangements for this, and the content and format of the Official Transcript comply with the University's requirements. Such delegation **must** be provided for explicitly in the legal agreement and be subject to periodic monitoring by University staff.

- 16 Transcripts of Academic Record should refer to the involvement of the partner institution, the location and/or mode of study, and the language of study if this is not English.
- 17 Where the partnership involves a Dual Award the partner institution (being a degree awarding body in its own right) will be responsible for producing the Degree Certificate and Transcript of Academic Record in respect of its own degree. Both the Degree Certificate and Transcript of Academic Record produced by the partner institution and the ones produced by the University must refer to the other institution's documents.
- 18 Where the partnership involves a Joint Award the University and the partner institution will jointly agree the responsibilities for issuing the Degree Certificate and Transcript of Academic Record and agree the format and content of each document. Such arrangements **must** be agreed prior to the commencement of the partnership and be set out in the legal agreement. The Degree Certificate must refer to the existence of the Transcript of Academic Record and vice versa.

CHAPTER I: LEVELS OF ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

The need for Academic Partnerships approval

- 19 Before any Partnership Activity as defined by this Code can be undertaken the appropriate **Level** of approval of the **Partnership must** be obtained as defined below.
- 20 No individual member of staff has the authority to commit the University to a binding legal relationship without the approval specified in this Code.

Levels of Partnership approval

- 21 This Code sets out the following levels of partnership according to the nature of the activities to be undertaken through the partnership and defines where authority lies for approving the partnership.
- 22 Where it is proposed to undertake new activities within an existing approved partnership, further partnership approval – termed 'upgrading' – is only required if those activities are classified below as falling within a higher level of partnership.

Level 1

- (a) Matriculation Agreements
- (b) Progression Agreements
- (c) Incoming Study Abroad Partnerships (incoming students only)

Level 2

- (d) Exchange Partnerships
- (e) Outgoing Study Abroad Partnerships (involving outgoing students)

Level 3

- (f) Delivery of taught programmes/modules (leading to University of Gibraltar credits/qualifications)

Level 4

- (g) Dual awards

Level 5

- (h) Joint awards

Upgrading of partnership approval

- 23 Where approval has been granted at a level below level 5, an application can be made for an 'upgrade' of a partnership to enable a higher-level partnership activity to take place for which approval has not been granted. The proposal will be considered under the process set out in Chapter III, with appropriate modifications, and taking account of evidence of the effectiveness of the partnership to date.

Authority for approving new Academic Partnership

- 24 Approval of a partnership can only be granted as follows:
- (a) Levels 1-2: the Vice-Chancellor
 - (b) Levels 3-5: Academic Board.

CHAPTER II: DEFINITIONS OF ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

- 25 The following provide definitions of the types of Academic Partnership which fall within this Code.

Level 1 Partnerships**Matriculation Agreements**

- 26 For the purposes of this Code a Matriculation Agreement is defined as:

the recognition of either an existing award, or of individual modules, offered by an approved partner institution for the purpose of entry into year one of a University of Gibraltar programme.

Typically, a Matriculation Agreement is used where at least 10 or more students are expected to enter the University via the agreement, with smaller numbers of students being dealt with by an individual application.

Progression Agreements

27 For the purposes of this Code a Progression Agreement is defined as:

an agreement which allows students exemptions from specific modules or stages of a University of Gibraltar programme.

Typically, a Progression Agreement is used where at least 10 or more students are expected to enter the University via the agreement, with smaller numbers of students being dealt with by an individual application.

Incoming Study Abroad Agreements

28 For the purposes of this Code an Incoming Study Abroad Agreement is defined as:

an agreement which allows students of the partner institution to study at the University of Gibraltar and earn credit towards their programme at the partner institution.

Level 2 Partnerships

29 Level 2 partnerships differ from those at level 1 in that they involve University of Gibraltar students undertaking a proportion of their programme at the partner institution. The University remains entirely responsible for the programme and the award but needs to be satisfied that the arrangements for the provision at the partner institution are appropriate to lead to credit which can be counted towards the University's award, for example in being at the appropriate academic level and compatible with the learning outcomes for the programme.

Exchange Agreements

30 For the purposes of this Code an Exchange Agreement is defined as:

a reciprocal agreement between the University and a partner institution which allows University of Gibraltar students to study at the partner institution for an agreed period leading to the award of credit as part of each student's University of Gibraltar programme, and for students of the partner institution to study at the University and receive University of Gibraltar credit for that period of study.

Outgoing Study Abroad Agreement

31 For the purposes of this Code an Outgoing Study Abroad Agreement is defined as:

an agreement which allows students of the University to study at a partner institution and earn credit towards their programme at the University.

Level 3 Partnerships

- 32 For the purposes of this Code Level 3 partnerships are those which involve the delivery of part or the whole of a taught programme by a partner institution where the provision leads to a qualification of the University.
- 33 In the case of taught programmes this may involve existing University of Gibraltar programmes which are considered suitable for delivery by a partner institution, or programmes developed and approved specifically for the purposes of a given partnership.

Level 4 Partnerships

Dual Awards

- 34 For the purposes of this Code a Dual Award is defined as:

an agreement through which a single programme leads to two awards of the same level, one awarded by the University, the other by the partner institution, represented by separate Certificates and Official Transcripts, each referring to the other, and both awarded at the end of the full period of study concerned.

Level 5 Partnerships

Joint Awards

- 35 For the purposes of this Code a Joint Award is defined as:

an agreement through which a single programme leads to a single award of the University together with the partner institution represented through a single Certificate and Official Transcript. The programme is governed by a single regulatory and quality framework established and approved by both degree-awarding bodies.

CHAPTER III: THE PROCESS FOR THE APPROVAL OF NEW ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

The process of obtaining partnership approval

Informal consultation

- 36 All proposals for Academic Partnership approval **must** begin with a discussion with one of the Executive members of the University Contracts & Agreements Committee (Executive membership of which includes the VC, the CFOO, the Registrar, and the Director of Academic Programmes & Research) regarding the purpose of the proposed partnership, the nature of

the activities intended, and the perceived benefits for both the University and the proposed partner.

- 37 Proposals involving a level 1 or a level 2 partnership, if the Executive member of the Contracts & Agreements Committee agrees that the proposal merits further development, the proposer will be asked to develop the proposal, working with the proposed partner, to obtain and submit the required information for approval.
- 38 For proposals involving a level 3 (Delivery of taught programmes/modules), a level 4 (Dual award), or a level 5 (Joint award) partnership the Executive member of the Contracts & Agreements Committee **may** determine, in consultation with the Vice-Chancellor, that an outline proposal should be submitted to Academic Board, to enable Academic Board to determine whether there is sufficient merit for the development of such a proposal taking account of benefits and risks, and the extent to which the proposal reflects the University's strategic priorities.
- 39 To enable a level 3, level 4 or level 5 partnership to be considered fully, and for the criteria set out in this Code to be satisfied, the Executive member of the Contracts & Agreements Committee may require a business case (including due diligence and financial viability) to be developed as the first step before seeking more detailed information. They may also determine that it is appropriate to engage independent external expertise and or the Board of Governors to scrutinise the proposal and advise on the effectiveness of the proposed arrangements (including the effectiveness of the due diligence assessment).
- 40 The Contracts & Agreements Committee will advise whether it is more appropriate to consider the proposal for the partnership and the activity or activities to be undertaken in the partnership as one proposal, or as a 2-stage process where development of the activities is only undertaken once partnership approval has been granted.
- 41 Where the Executive member of the Contracts & Agreements Committee has authorised the development of a level three, a level four or a level five partnership proposal, the proposal **should** be submitted by a date agreed for consideration by the Academic Board and containing the information which enables the relevant committee to determine that the criteria for approval have been satisfied.
- 42 The proposal must identify the member (or members) of staff who will be named contacts at the University who will be in regular contact with the partner institution, and the members of the partner institution who will provide the reciprocal role.

Determining the proposal

- 43 For proposals at level 1 and level 2, provided that the Vice-Chancellor is satisfied that the proposal demonstrates that the applicable criteria set out in this Code have been demonstrated for the type of partnership and activity proposed, they are empowered to approve the proposal, direct that further specified information be obtained, or reject the proposal indicating the reasons for the rejection.

- 44 For proposals at level 3, level 4 and level 5, provided that the Contracts & Agreements Committee is satisfied that the proposal demonstrates that the applicable criteria set out in this Code have been demonstrated for the type of partnership and activity proposed, they are empowered to recommend to Academic Board that the proposal be approved, be approved subject to specific conditions, that further specified information be obtained, or recommend that the proposal be rejected indicating the reasons for the recommendation. Academic Board may approve the proposal, direct that further specified information be obtained, or reject the proposal indicating the reasons for the rejection.

The Legal Agreement

- 45 All Academic Partnerships approved under this Code must be effected through a formal written legal agreement, signed by the Vice-Chancellor and by a person designated by the partner institution, who has the authority to act on behalf of the partner institution. One of the signed copies will be held in the University's 'Deed Store', as designated by the University Contracts & Agreements Committee.
- 46 The legal agreement must:
- (a) specify the activities for which approval has been granted as part of the partnership. The agreement may be supplemented by further agreements in the event that subsequent approval under this code is granted for additional activities
 - (b) make explicit key roles and responsibilities of each partner
 - (c) include a notice period for either party to give notice to end the agreement. This period must take account of the implications for students studying as part of the partnership arrangement (see safeguarding students interests paragraph 105 below)
 - (d) identify the duration of the partnership if time limited or a date for its review if not time limited, and separate dates for specific activities if different to the date for the partnership.
- 47 The legal agreement may be supplemented by subsequent agreements in the event that further activities are approved for the partnership and/or in the event of an upgrade of the partnership level being approved in accordance with paragraph 23.

Commencement of partnership activities

- 48 No offer can be made to an applicant of a learning opportunity to be provided through a partnership to which this Code applies unless, and until, the partnership arrangement has been approved under this Code and the legal agreement set out above has been signed by both partner institutions, or such later date as may have been specified in the legal agreement.
- 49 Any advertising of a learning opportunity through a partnership which takes place prior to the signing of the legal agreement, must make explicit that the partnership is still subject to approval and there is therefore no guarantee that it will be approved.

Register of Academic Partnerships

- 50 The University will maintain a register of all Academic Partnerships approved in accordance within this Code, and for level 3, level 4 and level 5 partnerships, will make the list publicly available through the University's website.
- 51 For each partnership the Register will identify the:
- (a) partner institution (including its registered address and location of delivery if different)
 - (b) the nature of the Academic Partnership (including the level of approval granted under this Code) and all activities permitted within the partnership (for example programmes being offered within it)
 - (c) the date on which the Academic Partnership was approved/commenced
 - (d) the date on which the Academic Partnership is scheduled to be reviewed or will expire if time limited.

CHAPTER IV: THE CRITERIA AND PROCESS FOR THE APPROVAL OF NEW ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

- 52 The following chapter sets out the criteria for the approval of Academic Partnerships:
- (a) criteria applicable to all partnerships
 - (b) criteria specific to individual levels of partnership

The criteria for partnership approval: all partnerships

- 53 The consideration of proposals for partnership approval is based on balancing a number of factors reflecting the University's approach to partnerships, primarily:
- (a) alignment of the proposal with the University's current strategic plan
 - (b) the potential benefits to the University and to the proposed partner
 - (c) the potential risks to the University, both financial and reputational
 - (d) the potential risks to any student engaged in activities offered through the partnership, especially in terms of being guaranteed the opportunity to complete the activity in accordance with the applicable regulations
 - (e) the sustainability of the partnership
 - (f) any potential risk to the University's ability to demonstrate compliance with applicable Gibraltar legislation, European laws or the expectations applicable to the University set out in the UK Quality Code and Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.
- 54 Consideration of proposed partnerships is informed by sector good practice reflected in Chapter B10 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2012) and the Guiding Principles issued as part of the 2018 revision to the Code, especially the need for due diligence regarding

the standing of the proposed partner and its capacity to meet the obligations of the partnership.

- 55 The following criteria will be applied proportionately according to the established nature and reputation of the proposed partner, the nature of the national (or regional) quality assurance framework within which it operates, and the type of activities proposed to be undertaken through the partnership.
- 56 The following criteria apply to all levels of partnership approval

Due diligence

- 57 The Contracts & Agreements Committee will oversee a due diligence exercise designed to provide assurance that the proposed partnership and activities are appropriate for the University and will not adversely affect the good governance of the University and the integrity of the University's academic standards. This exercise may require the involvement of other professional services, and may also require direct engagement with staff at the partner institution, especially those responsible for governance and/or academic quality. It may be carried out by an external on behalf of the University, provided that person has significant experience of, and understanding of, academic standards, quality assurance and international partnerships.
- 58 The extent and nature of the exercise will depend upon, and be proportionate to, the nature of the proposed partner and the proposed activities under consideration. Due account will be taken of any external review which has been conducted of the partner institution.
- 59 At the same time the Contracts & Agreements Committee (or person designated by them) will work with the proposed partner institution to enable that institution to carry out its own due diligence of the University and to ensure it is familiar with the University's requirements as set out in its Quality Handbook including how this is informed by the UK Quality Code and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The University will draw attention to any external review undertaken of the University.
- 60 As part of the due diligence exercise by the University, the following **should** be addressed and recorded using the University's Partnership Due Diligence Report template:
- (a) the proposed partner's quality assurance framework including any regulations or equivalent governing the admission, progression and completion of students
 - (b) details of existing or recent partnerships
 - (c) the proposed partner's governance arrangements including (where applicable) opportunities for student participation in the provider's governance, and arrangements for ensuring that academic planning and approval decisions are not made on purely financial grounds
 - (d) for institutions in the UK, the partner's arrangements for ensuring compliance with consumer protection legislation and the CMA guidance issued to the UK higher education sector

- (e) for institutions in England (and who are required to be registered with the Office for Students (OfS), information about:
 - (i) any special registration conditions imposed by the OfS and whether they are being complied with
 - (ii) any communication by the OfS indicating that the OfS has concerns about the proposed partner's compliance with the conditions of registration or has taken any enforcement action in respect of any conditions.
 - (f) for providers outside the European Higher Education Area, details of the applicable national regulatory/quality assurance framework and any applicable regional framework
 - (g) whether there are any regulatory or legal requirements of the proposed partner's country with which the programme or students will have to comply and whether the programme will be recognised in that country.
- 61 The proposal **must** include a document signed by a person authorised by the proposed partner, confirming the institution's wish to become a partner and should confirm that the partner has completed its own approval process.
- 62 When considering an application for a partnership upgrade (as set out in para. 23), the Contracts & Agreements Committee **must** be provided with evidence (which it notes in the minutes of the relevant meeting) of the effectiveness of the partnership to date judged against the original objectives of the arrangement (including any review that has been undertaken of the partnership (under Chapter V) or of any modules or programmes under the relevant Code.

Delegation of responsibilities

- 63 Where the University agrees to delegate responsibility, or to share responsibility, for specific functions or processes, this must be documented clearly as part of the formal proposal to be approved by the Vice-Chancellor or Academic Board under this Code.

Approval of programmes/modules

- 64 Where the proposed partnership arrangement involves the delivery of programmes or modules by the partner institution, including for Dual and Joint Awards, and the programme/modules have not already been approved in accordance with the Code on Programme Approval (QH:C2), arrangements should be made for such approval (with any appropriate modifications, such as the involvement of the partner institution) prior to offers being made to students to undertake the programme/modules.
- 65 Specific attention must be paid to:
- (a) the qualifications and other experience of the staff who will deliver the provision
 - (b) the suitability of the resources and the teaching facilities available at the partner institution and any documentation.

Identifying concerns

- 66 In approving a partnership the University will include appropriate arrangements for enabling staff or students to report a concern about an aspect of the partnership and for that to be investigated and if necessary acted upon.

Specific additional criteria for partnership approval: Level 2 partnerships

- 67 Level 2 partnerships (Exchange Agreements and Outgoing Study Abroad Agreements) require the completion of a Report, typically a Site Report, prepared by a member of staff nominated by the Contracts & Agreements Committee (such as a Programme Co-ordinator) which provides evidence that the partner institution, at the location where the University students will be based during their time at the partner institution, has learning resources (broadly defined) available that are suitable to support the learning opportunities of the students concerned.

Specific additional criteria for partnership approval: Level 3 partnerships

- 68 Level 3 partnerships (provision leading to a taught award or research degree) are viewed as being of medium risk for both potential partners and therefore require more extensive consideration of the proposed arrangements before partnership approval can be granted, and also require separate consideration of the programmes and modules involved.
- 69 Before approval can be granted the following must be resolved (where applicable to the proposed activities) to the satisfaction of the University and the proposed partner, typically in the form of a contractual agreement:
- (a) whether the University's regulations governing progression and award (including mitigating circumstances and academic misconduct) will apply or whether the partner's regulations or some version thereof will apply
 - (b) whether the partner will be granted devolved admissions powers either from the outset of the partnership or at some time thereafter
 - (c) the arrangements for the protection of students' studies in the event of discontinuation, specifically including whether the University's Student Protection Policy or the partner's equivalent policy will apply
 - (d) arrangements for the approval of the programme by the partner prior to submission to the University for approval
 - (e) the extent to which internal marking and moderation will be undertaken by partner institution or University staff
 - (f) the extent to which responsibility for the management of boards of examiners, academic misconduct panels and fitness to practise panels (including chairing) will be undertaken by the partner
 - (g) confirmation of the arrangements for student complaints and academic appeals, including whether students will have a right of access to the Gibraltar Public Services Ombudsman or an equivalent independent external review body applicable to the partner institution
 - (h) the extent to which the partner institution will be responsible for the production of information about the provision for current and prospective students, and where it is

- responsible, its arrangements for ensuring that such information is fit-for-purpose, accessible and trustworthy
- (i) arrangements for the monitoring and review of the programme.

Non-negotiable elements

- 70 The following are considered to be 'non-negotiable' when approving a partnership involving the delivery of programmes by a partner institution:
- (a) students on the programme will always have a final right of academic appeal to the University of Gibraltar in line with the University of Gibraltar academic regulations
 - (b) all teaching staff of the partner institution who will be involved in the delivery of teaching and/or assessment must apply for and be granted recognition by the University
 - (c) the appointment (and if necessary removal) of external examiners is the responsibility of the University; the opportunity to nominate (in accordance with the University's criteria for appointment) may be delegated to the partner
 - (d) there will be no differentiation in the titles of awards or other qualifications awarded in a partner institution compared with those awarded in the University
 - (e) responsibility for the production of degree and other certificates rests with the University; the production of Official Transcripts may be delegated where the University is satisfied that this would be appropriate and secure.

Independent Site Visits

- 71 All proposals for a level 3 Academic Partnership involving the delivery of programmes/modules by the partner institution must include the written evidence of a member of staff nominated by either the Contracts & Agreements Committee or the Academic Board which demonstrates that the arrangements and facilities for delivery of the programmes/modules are suitable to ensure the integrity of the academic standards of the University's awards and the quality of the students' learning experience.
- 72 The person nominated must be a person who is not a member of the partner team responsible for the delivery of the programmes/modules forming part of the partnership proposal and who has sufficient experience of the development of such partnerships. Such person may be an external advisor engaged on behalf of the University, provided that person is independent of the proposed partner institution and has sufficient knowledge of the requirements for the programme(s) in question and sufficient experience of partnership provision.

New qualifications

- 73 Where the proposed programme would lead to a qualification not currently approved by the University (per Academic Regulations QH:C1 and QH: D1), consideration of the proposed programme must be deferred pending an application for approval of the new qualification. Such application must be submitted to Academic Quality and Standards Committee (for taught qualifications) and Research and Research Degrees Committee (for research degrees) for recommendation to Academic Board.

Specific additional criteria for partnership approval: Level 4 partnerships (Dual awards)

- 74 The essential characteristic of a Dual award is that it is two awards – one from each institution – which are derived from a single programme which is the responsibility of both institutions and which provides a distinctive learning experience that could not be gained through one of the institutions acting alone. As such both are responsible for, and must be fully involved in, its design, development and approval and for its ongoing delivery (including assessment), monitoring and review, and for ensuring the security of the academic standards initially and as the programme progresses.
- 75 To be eligible for the two awards, each student must satisfy the academic regulatory requirements of each institution and cannot receive one award in isolation from the other. Students are required to demonstrate that they have satisfied a single shared set of criteria (i.e. the single set of programme intended learning outcomes).
- 76 Given the above, a dual award cannot be established unless there has been extensive engagement between the two institutions at:
- (a) the institutional level in developing a mutual understanding of each other’s regulatory requirements and the extent to which these are comparable and will not compromise each other’s responsibility for the standards of their awards and quality of the learning experience provided.
 - (b) the subject/programme level drawing on the subject and pedagogic expertise of academic and professional services staff in designing a programme which will offer a unique learning opportunity which is capable of meeting the regulatory requirements of the two institutions.
- 77 In developing the proposals for the dual award consideration should be given to the potential for joint working at each stage of the development, approval and delivery of the programme. For example, whether approval could be considered by a panel comprising staff from both institutions making a single decision about approval.
- 78 Before approval can be granted the following must be resolved to the satisfaction of the University and the proposed partner (where applicable to the proposed activities):
- (a) confirmation that the proposed partner institution is a body which has the authority under its national laws to award dual awards
 - (b) confirmation that the University’s academic regulations will apply to the University’s award (subject to minimum requirements set out in paragraph 79 onwards), and of which academic regulations will apply to the partner institution’s award
 - (c) confirmation of the partner institution’s quality assurance framework (governing those matters addressed in the University’s Quality Handbook as appropriate)
 - (d) arrangements for the protection of students’ studies in the event of discontinuation, specifically including whether the University’s Code on Student Protection (QH:E3) or the partner’s equivalent policy will apply

- (e) arrangements for the approval of the programme by the partner either prior to or subsequent to the approval by the University
- (f) arrangements for the mutual recognition of teaching staff to be involved in the delivery of the programme at each institution
- (g) confirmation of the arrangements for the admission of students to the dual award programme including ensuring clarity over decision making, entry requirements and ensuring that the process meets external expectations
- (h) the partner institution's arrangements for student complaints and academic appeals, and confirmation of whether students studying on the partner institution award will have access to an external independent review body once internal complaints and appeals mechanisms have been exhausted
- (i) the partner institution's arrangements for ensuring that such information about the dual award for current and prospective students is fit-for-purpose, accessible and trustworthy
- (j) arrangements for the partner institution to provide a Degree Certificate and Official Transcript (or equivalent) for its degree
- (k) arrangements for the award and conferment of degrees, and for the making of interim awards in the event of non-completion (including whether this is an interim dual award or a single award of the University or the partner institution).

Non-negotiable elements

79 The following are considered to be 'non-negotiable' when approving a partnership leading to a Dual Award:

- (a) the University will only approve a programme for a Dual award in a subject in which both the University and the partner institution has established subject expertise
- (b) the programme must include a minimum of 33% more credits than the equivalent single award programme.
- (c) the University will not approve a dual award which is designed to involve fewer than the number of credits designated for each University award under the Academic Regulations: Taught Programmes (QH:C1) even where the partner institution normally offers such an award for fewer credits, principally
 - (i) Ordinary degrees at Bachelors level: 300 credits, Honours degrees (at Bachelor's level): 360 credits or 480 credits in the case of a four-year Integrated Master's degrees
 - (ii) Master's degrees: 180 credits.

Duplication of awards

80 A dual award approved in accordance with this Code constitutes an explicit exception to the University's requirement that the same credits cannot be counted towards two separate qualifications unless one qualification is a stage in the normal progression to the other qualification.

Independent Site Visits

81 All proposals for a Dual award require an Independent Site Visit as defined in paragraphs 71-72.

Specific additional criteria for partnership approval: Level 5 partnerships (Joint awards)

- 82 Joint awards are the highest level of Academic Partnership under this Code because they involve the greatest level of complexity in establishing them. Specifically, their key characteristic is that of being a single award made jointly by the two (occasionally more) degree-awarding bodies and as such require a bespoke single regulatory and quality assurance framework addressing all matters of student admission, progression and award (and therefore the majority of matters covered in the University's Quality Handbook).
- 83 In deciding whether to support the development of a proposal for a Joint award the University will need to be satisfied that:
- (a) there is a broad institutional collaboration in place (of which a Joint Award would be part) or the demonstrable prospect of a sustainable and deepening partnership and clear mutual advantage at institutional level
 - (b) there is proportionality between the volume of activity and the institution-level governance and quality assurance arrangements needed to oversee the award
 - (c) there is a compelling business case which takes account of all associated costs
 - (d) governance and quality assurance arrangements can and will be agreed before any offers are made to students.

Criteria for approval

- 84 Before approval can be granted the following **must** be resolved to the satisfaction of the University and the proposed partner (where applicable to the proposed activities):
- (a) confirmation that the proposed partner institution is a body which has the authority under its national laws to make Joint awards
 - (b) the development of a single set of academic regulations governing the progression of students to the award (addressing at least those matters covered in the University of Gibraltar's academic regulations); this may take the form of both parties agreeing to apply either the University, or, the partner institution's academic regulations, or the development of a jointly agreed bespoke set of regulations
 - (c) the development of appropriate arrangements to secure the academic standards of the Joint award and to assure the quality of the student learning experience
 - (d) confirmation of the arrangements for the admission of students to the programme including ensuring clarity over decision making, entry requirements and ensuring that the process meets legal and external expectations
 - (e) the arrangements for the protection of students' studies in the event of discontinuation, specifically including whether the University's Code on Student Protection (QH:E3) or the partner's equivalent policy will apply
 - (f) arrangements for the approval of the programme by the partner either prior to or subsequent to the approval by the University
 - (g) arrangements for student complaints and academic appeals, including whether they will have access to an external independent review body once internal complaints and appeals mechanisms have been exhausted

- (h) arrangements for providing information to current and prospective students and for ensuring that such information is fit-for-purpose, accessible and trustworthy
- (i) arrangements for the production of a single Degree Certificate and single Official Transcript/European Diploma Supplement (or equivalent)
- (j) arrangements for the award and conferment of degrees, and for the making of interim awards in the event of non-completion (including whether this is an interim Joint award or a single award of the University or the partner institution).

Non-negotiable elements

- 85 The following are considered to be 'non-negotiable' when approving a partnership leading to a Joint Award:
- (a) the University will only approve a programme for a Joint award in a subject in which both the University and the partner institution has established subject expertise
 - (b) the University will not approve a Joint award which is designed to involve fewer than the number of credits designated for each University award under the Academic Regulations: Taught Programmes (QH:C1) even where the partner institution normally offers such an award for fewer credits.

Independent Site Visits

- 86 All proposals for a Joint award require an Independent Site Visit as defined in paragraphs 71-72.

CHAPTER V: REVIEW AND RENEWAL OF ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

Review of a partnership

- 87 All Academic Partnerships to which this code applies should be reviewed no later than the fifth anniversary of the approval of the partnership or previous review as applicable. Where the partnership was approved for a period of fewer than five years, the review should be conducted prior to the expiry of that shorter period.
- 88 As with partnership approval, the review will be proportionate to the partnership and activities undertaken in accordance with that partnership. In all cases the review will address the extent to which the partnership and activities are meeting the original expectations of the University and the partner institution, taking into account any changes in circumstances relevant to the partnership.
- 89 A partnership involving more than one activity will address each of the activities as well as the overall effectiveness of the partnership.

- 90 The process of review assumes that throughout the operation of the partnership there will have been effective communication between the University and the partner at all levels proportionate to the nature of the partnership.
- 91 The process also assumes that any review:
- (a) will be proportionate to the extent and nature of the partnership and activities undertaken within that partnership, and any issues or concerns which might have been highlighted since the partnership was established
 - (b) will facilitate equivalent scrutiny by the partner institution of the University's contribution to the partnership and therefore of the effectiveness of the partnership from the partner's perspective.

Reviews of Level 3, Level 4 and Level 5 partnerships

- 92 As these are the most extensive forms of partnership arrangement, the process of review is designed to reflect that extent and to build on existing forms of quality assurance in operation during the partnership.
- 93 The process of review therefore assumes that effective communication between the University and the partner will have been operating through academic staff involved in learning, teaching and assessment, as well as through professional services staff and senior managers. Such communication will have included any formal mechanisms put in place, such as a Joint Board at programme or institutional level, Boards of Examiners, and graduation ceremonies, as well as less formal means such as staff development events.
- 94 The process also assumes that all relevant documentation will have been provided to the University as set out in the University's quality assurance framework including annual monitoring reports, responses to external examiner reports, Official Candidate Lists. It also assumes that there has been the full disclosure of any issues arising in relation to the regulation or oversight of the provider by the provider's national authorities or other external review.

Reviews following material changes

- 95 The University may through Academic Board, determine that it is necessary to conduct a review earlier than scheduled in the event that there are significant or material changes relating to the partner institution (such as change of ownership) or the environment in which the partner institution operates. The need for such a review will be discussed with the partner institution and will be proportionate to the nature of the partnership and the changes in question.
- 96 As part of, or prior to such a review, the University will review its due diligence and risk assessment of the partnership.

Conduct of reviews

- 97 Partnership review should be conducted in four stages:

- (a) a desk-based scrutiny of relevant documentation by at least one member of the Academic Board or by an external person nominated for the purpose by Academic Board
 - (b) where the reviewers and/or the partner consider it would be desirable, a meeting with staff of the partner and specifically in cases where the reviewer(s) has identified potential issues of concern or ambiguity
 - (c) a meeting with a sample of students studying through the partnership arrangement
 - (d) a succinct report to Academic Board, summarising the findings of the review and including the extent to which the partnership is meeting its objectives, the extent to which the partner is complying with the terms of the agreement in respect of each aspect of quality assurance and academic governance, and any strengths, good practice (worthy of sharing across the University/with other partners) and recommendations for the partner and for the University to strengthen further the partnership or specific aspects of it.
- 98 Reviews will involve the scrutiny of a sample of at least the following documentation (as applicable):
- (a) external examiner reports and the partner's responses to them
 - (b) staff/student liaison committee meeting minutes or equivalent
 - (c) annual monitoring reports and subsequent action plans
 - (d) information produced for prospective and current students through whatever media.
- 99 On receiving and considering the report of a review conducted as above, Academic Board will determine whether to endorse any recommendations made by the review and also consider whether more significant changes should be made to the partnership, such as bringing to an end existing activities or introducing new activities (for which separate approval will be required in accordance with this Code).

Renewal of a partnership

- 100 Where a partnership was granted approval on a time limited basis an application to renew the partnership for a further period of time should be made and be considered in the form of a review of the partnership as set out in the above paragraphs.

CHAPTER VI: TERMINATION OF PARTNERSHIPS

Termination by the University

- 101 Where the University determines that it wishes to bring to an end a partnership for strategic or other reasons, a member of the Contracts & Agreements Committee (other than the VC), will oversee the development of a proposal to be considered by Academic Board for partnerships at level 3, level 4 and level 5 or the Vice-Chancellor for partnerships at level 1 and level 2.
- 102 The proposal must identify all partnership activities which will be affected by the termination of the partnership and must adhere to the notice period(s) set out in the legal agreement.

- 103 The Vice-Chancellor or Academic Board may determine that an Exit Strategy Group be established to oversee the exit arrangements. The Group should be chaired by a member of Academic Board and involve such academic and professional services staff as appropriate given the nature of the partnership and activities in question.

Termination by the Partner Institution

- 104 A partner institution wishing to bring an end to a partnership, in accordance with the notice period set out in the legal agreement, should consult with an Executive member of the Contracts & Agreements Committee before formally serving notice of its intention to terminate the partnership.

Safeguarding students' interests

- 105 The University is required to safeguard, and is committed to safeguarding, the interests of its students undertaking a programme including those at or involving a partner institution (whether based in Gibraltar, the UK or internationally). Approval for the termination of a partnership or of activities within that partnership cannot be granted unless appropriate measures have been or will be taken to protect the interests of the students affected. Students in this case means those currently studying, including those who have been granted a suspension of studies or who have been referred and applicants for an applicable programme to which an offer of a place has been accepted or deferred.
- 106 The University is committed to ensuring that all students and applicants (as defined above) are able to complete the opportunity offered to them through the partnership (whether progression, period of study abroad, module or programme) on the terms and conditions set out in the original offer.
- 107 Where such completion is not possible, the University will activate its Code on Student Protection (QH:E3) – or the equivalent Policy agreed as part of the partnership approval – including ensuring that students are fully consulted on the implications of the partnership termination, and comparable opportunities for completion, and/or refund and compensation are provided.

TYPOLGY OF PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

- 108 The following table provides a simple typology for reference purposes of the types of Academic Partnership to which this Code applies, and provides an outline assessment of the risk associated with each partnership and the main mitigating or control factors appropriate to such risk levels.

Type of agreement	Definition	Risk level	Mitigation
Matriculation	An agreement which specifies the recognition of either an existing award, or individual	Low	Proportionate due diligence

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	modules, offered by an approved partner for the purpose of entry into year one of a University programme.		Clear authority for approval Monitoring and review
Progression	An agreement which allows students exemptions from specific modules or stages of a programme.	Low	Proportionate due diligence Clear authority for approval Monitoring and review
Incoming Study Abroad	an agreement which allows students of the partner institution to study at the University of Gibraltar and earn credit towards their programme at the partner institution.	Low	Proportionate due diligence Clear authority for approval Monitoring and review
Exchange	A reciprocal agreement between the University and a partner institution which allows University of Gibraltar students to study at the partner institution for an agreed period leading to the award of credit as part of each student's University of Gibraltar programme, and for students of the partner institution to study at the University and receive University of Gibraltar credit for that period of study.	Medium	Proportionate due diligence Clear authority for approval Monitoring and review
Outgoing Study Abroad	An agreement which allows students of the University to study at a partner institution and earn credit towards their programme at the University.	Medium	Proportionate due diligence Clear authority for approval Monitoring and review
Programmes/Modules	An agreement to allow a partner institution to deliver a part or the whole of a programme leading to a University of Gibraltar award.	Medium /High	Proportionate due diligence Clear authority for approval Clear responsibilities set out in legal agreement Protection of students Monitoring and review
Dual Award	An agreement through which a single programme leads to two awards of the same level, one awarded by the University, the other by the partner institution,	High	Proportionate due diligence Clear authority for approval

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	represented by separate Certificates and Official Transcripts, each referring to the other, and both awarded at the end of the full period of study concerned.		Clear responsibilities set out in legal agreement Protection of students Monitoring and review
Joint Award	An agreement through which a single programme leads to a single award of the University together with the partner institution represented through a single Certificate and Official Transcript. The programme is governed by a single regulatory and quality framework established and approved by both degree-awarding bodies.	High	Proportionate due diligence Clear authority for approval Clear responsibilities set out in legal agreement Protection of students Monitoring and review

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