Royal Agricultural University

Code of Practice: Collaborative Provision

Contents

6.2 Responsibilities

1. Introduction

1.1   Purpose and Aims

The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) takes a strategic approach to the development of its educational collaborative partnership portfolio in order to ensure that all educational partnerships reflect institutional priorities, vision and goals.

1.1.2   This Code of Practice describes the University's approach to acquiring and approving new collaborative partnerships. It sets out the criteria that a new partner must meet for approval and anticipated timescales.

1.1.3   The purpose of the approval process is to ensure that the University enters into appropriate collaborations with educational partners that, once approved, will operate effectively to the satisfaction of both partners.

1.1.4   The RAU approves, reviews and monitors academic standards of its partners, and these processes follow established University processes as detailed in the Codes of Practice.

1.1.5   The aim of the approval process for collaborative partners is to ensure the University meets its obligations to and expectations of students, staff, governing council and regulators by:

- Engagement of internal and external expertise to approve collaborative partnerships to ensure these provide a high-quality academic experience to students (e.g. External Academic Advisors, Industry Advisory Boards, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), internal pedagogic and technological expertise).

- Engagement of current and past students – individually and collectively – to encourage discussion between expert peers, students and wider stakeholders on improving the educational experience within the University and its partners.

- Ensuring clarity of each phase in the process and its direct impact on the development and approval of programmes and module.

- Responding to the individual circumstance of each collaborative partners and the programmes to be delivered to ensure the quality requirements are proportionate the assessed risk, while ensuring a high-quality student experience similar to the experience offered by the RAU to its students on campus.

- The approval and review of partnership programmes follows the same principles as set out in Code of Practice F: Programme Design, Development and Approval and Code of Practice G: Review and Reapproval of Programmes and Modules, and Programme Closures.

1.2   Scope

1.2.1   This Code of Practice applies to the following awards from the Royal Agricultural University taught at its collaborative partners as well as its Joint Institute for Advanced Agritechnology at Qingdao Agricultural University (RAU at QAU) Joint Institute; franchised and validated provision taught at providers in the UK and international:

- Level 4 Certificates

- Level 5 Diplomas

- Level 6 Honours

- Level 7 Masters

1.2.2   In the event of a programme being developed at an academic partner institution, the subject area in which the partnership sits, will lead and work with the partner/s to ensure that the programme and modules adhere to this Code of Practice.

1.3   Regulations relevant to this Code of Practice

1.3.1   The following conditions of registration set by the Office for Students (OfS) are relevant:

B1	The provider must ensure that the students registered on each higher education course receive a high- quality academic experience which includes but is not limited to ensuring that each course: a) is up-to-date; b) provides educational challenge; c) is coherent; d) is effectively delivered; and e) as appropriate to the subject matter of the course, requires students to develop relevant skills.
B2	The provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure students receive resources and support to ensure a high-quality academic experience for those students, and those students succeed in and beyond higher education; and that effective engagement which each cohort of students takes place.
B4	The provider must ensure that qualifications awarded to students hold their value at the point of qualification and over time, in line with sector recognised standards. The provider must ensure that a) students are assessed effectively; b) each assessment is valid and reliable; c) academic regulations are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible; d) academic regulations are designed to ensure the effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a way which appropriately reflects the level and content of the course; e) relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously.

B5	The provider must ensure that, in respect of any relevant awards granted to students who complete a higher education course provided by, or on behalf of, the provider (whether or not the provider is the awarding body):
	a) and standards set appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards;
	b) awards are only granted to students whose knowledge and skills
	appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards.
C1	The provider must demonstrate that in developing and implementing its policies, procedures and terms and conditions, it has given due regard to relevant guidance about how to comply with consumer protection law.
E1	The provider's governing documents must uphold the public interest governance principles that are applicable to the provider.
E2	The provider must have in place adequate and effective management and governance arrangements to:
	a) operate in accordance with its governing documents.
	b) deliver, in practice, the public interest governance principles that are applicable to it.
	c) provide and fully deliver the higher education courses advertised.
	d) continue to comply with all conditions of its registration.

Regulations relevant to this Code of Practice

1.3.2   The Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with the Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes, the QAA Advice and Guidance: Course Design and Development (Nov 2018) and the QAA Advice and Guidance: Assessment (November 2018).

1.3.3   In addition, as part of the 2024 Quality Code, the Quality Assurance Agency has published a set of sector agreed principles and key practices. Principle 8 – 'Operating partnerships with other organisations' states that "Providers and their partners agree proportionate arrangements for effective governance to secure the academic standards and enhance the quality of programmes and modules that are delivered in partnership with others. Organisations involved in partnership arrangements agree and communicate the mutual and specific responsibilities in relation to delivering, monitoring, evaluating, assuring and enhancing the learning experience". Further information about Principle 8, including full information on all of the key practices within the principle, is published on the QAA's website: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/2024

In addition to the above principle, working in partnership with collaborative partners is underpinned by the remaining principles of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024 that guide the *strategic approach* (Principle 1 – Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards, Principle 2 – Engaging students as partners, and Principle 3 – Resourcing delivery of a high-quality learning experience); *evaluate quality and standards* (Principle 4 – Using data to inform and evaluate quality, Principle 5 – Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision, and Principle 6 – Engaging in external review and accreditation); and implement the approach to quality enhancement and standards (Principle 7 – Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes, Principle 8 – Operating partnerships with other organisations, Principle 9 – Recruiting, selecting and admitting students, Principle 10 – Supporting

students to achieve their potential, Principle 11 – Teaching, learning and assessment, and Principle 12 – Operating concerns, complaints and appeals processes).

1.4   Responsibilities

1.4.1   Academic Board is responsible for confirming that the University's named awards and their curricula are appropriate, dynamic and challenging and that the quality and standards of provision by collaborative partners is appropriate to the level of award offered. It devolves responsibility for approval of partnerships to the Academic Strategy and Planning Committee (ASPC) and programme approval to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC).

1.4.2   ASPC is responsible for considering and approving the Business Case and Due Diligence for all proposed new UK and international educational partnerships before they can proceed to Institutional Approval; and approval of Collaborative Partner Self Evaluation Documentation before they can proceed to Institutional Review.

1.4.3   ASPC is responsible for considering programme proposals, or changes to existing programmes, delivered at collaborative partner institutions. This includes programmes that are offered by franchised or validated provision.

1.4.4   The Secretary for ASPC will ensure that all the required documentation evidence for due diligence is completed correctly and in time to allow for full consideration by committee members in advance of committee meetings taking. The Secretary will ensure formal notifications of approval / non-approval are made to all parties concerned.

1.4.5   AQSC is responsible for ensuring programmes to be delivered by collaborative partners meet high-quality design principles, qualification frameworks, and that all programmes meet the relevant OfS Conditions of Registration. AQSC has responsibility for the approval and re-approval of programmes and modules franchised to, or validated at collaborative partners, with subsequent recommendation to Academic Board for final sign off.

1.4.6   The institutional approval and programme validation processes, and reporting to Academic Board, provides the University's Governing Council with the information it needs to underpin the required assurances to the Office for Students (OfS) (Condition E).

1.4.7   Academic Quality is responsible for organising and managing the approval processes for collaborative institutions, programmes and modules, and will work closely with collaborative partner staff and RAU Link Tutors in the development phase and until such time that institutions, programmes and modules have received AQSC and Academic Board approval.

1.4.8   Link Tutors are responsible for ensuring that the partnership provision they are responsible for is conforming to University policies and procedures for assessment, programme and module design, examination board, annual monitoring and the ensuring of the student experience. Link Tutors are responsible for oversight of the

day-to-day operation of programmes at collaborative partners with support offered by Academic Quality and Registry.

1.4.9 For validated provision, Link Tutors and academic staff are expected to liaise with collaborative partner academic staff to ensure programmes are designed by engaging with relevant stakeholders (external academic advisors, industry bodies, PSRB, etc) and meet the Office for Students (OfS) requirements of the Conditions of Registration.

1.4.10 Where a programme has been developed, written and approved by the RAU, and is franchised to a collaborative partner for delivery on behalf of the RAU, it is the responsibility of the RAU programme leader in collaboration with the Link Tutor to ensure delivery meets the expectations of the RAU.

1.5 Further Guidance

1.5.1 For further guidance on this section please contact the Academic Quality team by emailing quality@rau.ac.uk or your allocated Academic Quality Officer for your subject area.

1.5.2 For proposals involving UK and international partnerships, please contact both the Academic Quality team and the Academic Quality Officer (Partnerships) by emailing collaborative.provision@rau.ac.uk

2. Overview and Requirements

2.1 Stages of the Process

2.1.1 There are three phases of the design, development and approval process for all new programmes and modules for awards offered by the University:

a) **Stage 1: Business Case Development and Approval**
Completion of a Business Case and Due Diligence for the approval of a new collaborative partner institution for approval by the Academic Strategy and Planning Committee (ASPC)

b) **Stage 2: Institutional Approval**
Formal approval of the collaborative partner institution by considering the business case, due diligence, strategic objectives and general suitability of a partner institution. Senior representatives from the collaborative partner attend the meeting.

c) **Stage 3: Programme Approval**
Undertaken by Academic Quality and panel members with feedback for improvement and enhancement communicated to the Programme Team (collaborative partner), Link Tutor and RAU Programme Leader. The Partner Programme Team engages with the feedback provided from the scrutiny process and updates documentation as appropriate, prior submission of the final

documentation to Academic Quality for the programme validation meeting.

2.2 Criteria for gaining an educational partner

2.2.1 By considering for approval the proposal for a new collaborative partner, and its due diligence, ASPC should be assured that following institutional and programme approval, the collaborative partner matches the principles of the RAU for entering into a partnership, and that the programmes delivered on its behalf are comparable to the programmes offered by University. ASPC should be assured that:

a) the academic standards of the award will be equivalent to those of comparable awards delivered at the University and must be appropriately aligned to UK regulations and reference points, e.g. OfS, QAA, AdvanceHE;

b) the quality of teaching and student learning experiences offered at the collaborative partner and associated programme, enable students to achieve appropriate academic standards for the specific learning outcomes commensurate with the approved programme;

c) the collaborative partner has systems, resources and appropriately qualified staff in place to support the management and administration of programmes that are validated or franchised, including quality assurance processes, academic liaison systems and student support structures.

d) the collaborative partner will provide the resources and appropriately qualified staff team necessary for delivery of a high-quality academic experience and skills relevant to the subject matter and level of the programme and that it will prepare students for success in and beyond the course including for employment.

2.3 Definition of Partnership Models and Contractual Relationships

2.3.1 The following partnership models describe differing contractual relationships between the University, its collaborative partners and the students registered on RAU degree awards and form the basis of partnership agreements between the RAU and partner institutions.

2.3.2 Partnership models

a) **Sub-contracted provision (franchised)**
by which an institution with taught degree awarding powers (the lead provider) allows another institution (the delivery provider) to deliver all, or part of, a programme which has been designed, approved and owned by the degree awarding institution. The lead provider retains control over the content, delivery aspects, assessment and quality assurance arrangements of the programme concerned. This is also described as franchised provision in the OfS Regulatory Framework (page 220 definitions).

Under this definition, the following applies:

- The student's primary contractual relationship is with the RAU

- The fee and/or fee loan is paid to the RAU

- The student is registered as a student of the RAU and is included in its data returns.

- The content, design, delivery, assessment and quality assurance arrangements are controlled and owned by the RAU.

b) **Validated provision**

by which a validated programme and its modules are approved by a taught degree awarding institution leading to one of its awards. The validated programme is delivered by the collaborative partner institution that designed and developed the programme, and students enrolled on the programme have a direct relationship with the collaborative partner. The validating institution (degree award provider) remains responsible for the academic standards of the award granted in its name.

Under this definition, the following applies:

- The programme has been designed and is owned by the collaborative partner

- The student's primary contractual relationship is with the collaborative partner

- The fee and/or fee loan is paid to the collaborative partner

- The student is registered as a student of the collaborative partner and is included their data returns

- The student is also registered with the degree award provider for the purpose of exam board and degree award administration

Other collaborative partnership arrangements:

c) **Articulation Agreements**

which are formal agreements whereby the RAU recognises the credit rating of a named qualification of another partner institution. This allows students that have completed the named qualification to transfer credit to the RAU and enable student entry from the named institution with advanced standing to a programme leading to a RAU award. Students are not required to apply individually for entry as admission is automatically granted, subject to UKVI requirements. Articulation Agreements are reviewed regularly taking into account programme developments over time at each institution so as to ensure transferred credit meets programme requirements.

d) **Progression Agreements**

sets out the progression from a specific institution that is recognised appropriate for entry with advanced standing to a RAU degree programme. Each student's application is considered on an individual basis for direct entry, though there is no agreed progression route. In entering into a general progression agreement, the University does not underwrite the quality of the external award, but has verified that the curriculum and standards will prepare

students for entry with advanced standing. Students may gain credit as part of APL.

e) **Dual / Double Awards**
The granting of separate awards (transcripts and certificates) for the same programme by two degree awarding bodies who have both contributed to the development and the delivery of the programme of study leading to the awards. Students receive a degree from the partner (host) institution and the RAU.

f) **Joint Awards**
Under this arrangement, two or more degree awarding bodies together provide a programme leading to a single award which as been developed and approved jointly by both, or more, participants. A single degree certificate is signed by all partners confirms the successful completion of this jointly delivered programme, thereby replacing separate institutional qualifications.

2.4 Periods of Approval and Re-Approval Process

2.4.1 The University operates a rolling approval process for collaborative partners and their programmes. Partners are only able to recruit and enrol students if their institutions as well as their programmes are fully approved and validated in line with the programme approval process set out in the Codes of Practice F and G for programme approval and review. Partnerships will automatically be terminated and programmes will enter teach out arrangements unless success reapproval has been gained, or an extension period to the contract has been approved.

2.4.2 Approval periods for institutions are set by the Institutional Approval Panel and are usually between 3 to 5 years, with 3 years being the typical approval period for a new partnership. In agreeing the approval period, the University will take into consideration:

a) whether the partner and programme(s) are in a rapidly developing field of study which may have an impact on programme currency, e.g. technological developments such as AI, PSRB changes;

b) the partner is located in a geopolitical volatile region;

c) specific quality concerns or identified risks to the student experience require close monitoring of the programme over a shorter period of time;

d) the programme is validated or franchised to a partner new to the University.

Where possible, the University will avoid validating programmes that sit outside the subject expertise of its own programmes on offer as it would not be able to ensure subject and quality oversight to the satisfaction of the University's quality assurance processes.

2.5 Timings

2.5.1 The aim is to allow for maximal exposure of programmes in University publicity materials as this will be important for recruitment activities.

2.5.2 Unless alternative arrangements have been agreed in the Portfolio Planning stage with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning & Resources) Business Cases with the Provision of Information for Prospective Students and Financial Planning document should be submitted to the Secretary to ASPC no later than:

a) End of November for undergraduate courses commencing in the next recruitment cycle (e.g. by 31 October 2024 for courses beginning in September 2026). This would allow ASPC to approve/reject in November to inform the January opening of the programme marketing and recruitment activities cycle.

b) End of November for postgraduate courses commencing in the next recruitment cycle (e.g. by 31 October 2024 for courses beginning in September 2025). This would allow ASPC to approve/reject in November to inform January opening of the course marketing and recruitment activities cycle.

2.5.3 As the Business Case template requires Programme Teams to obtain information from across the University, e.g. market research, employer engagement, staffing implications, resource requirements, financial planning etc, work on the Business Case phase needs to begin well in advance of these deadlines.

2.5.4 There may be instances when the process of approving a new programme can be completed quicker than the timescales indicate but this must be on the agreement of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning & Resource) and Chair of ASPC. For instance, where a programme has identified a ready-made market to recruit from, or where inclusion in the University Prospectus and/or UCAS listings may not be critical to successful recruitment.

2.5.5 Not withstanding programme approval timelines, programmes can only be approved once the Institutional Approval Process has been completed. Ideally, Institutional Approval Events will take place one week prior to programme approval events in order to ensure no issues arise that may impede on the approval and delivery of programmes of study at the collaborative partner.

3. Business Case Development and Approval

3.1   Overview

3.1.1 Business Case Approval ensures:

a) the University's and partner strategies provide a strategic fit and business developments will benefit both institutions and their programme portfolio;

b) relevant information on PSRB, or other external requirements are known prior to the commencement of the programme design and development, and PSRB approval can be planned for;

c) the information that is needed to market and admit students to the programme (subject to programme approval); and

d) compliance with financial and tax regulations, regulatory and legislative requirements can be clarified in advance (e.g. in-country higher education

registration requirements, immigration and visa regulations, and consumer protection).

3.2   Business Case Approval Steps

3.2.1   Business Case approval consists of three steps:

a) Step 1: Initial discussions with the UK or international partner following completion of the Initial Enquiries Form; discussions include financial and reputational areas, and the alignment of missions and strategic goals;

b) Step 2: Completion of the proposal (Business case including market research, costings, resource statement, venue check form, due diligence documentation);

b) Step 3: Approval by the Academic Strategy and Planning Committee (ASPC)

3.2.2   <u>Step 1: Initial discussion</u>

The Office of Business Development will hold initial discussions with the potential partner to consider whether there is suitable alignment between the University's and the partner's vision and strategic goals, and the type of partnership agreement most suitable for the arrangement.

Following discussion, the Preliminary Enquiries Form should be completed and submitted to collaborative.provision@rau.ac.uk. This document will support the business case development.

3.3   Completion of the Proposal

3.3.1   As part of the Business Case development, Directors and Heads of Professional Services departments, i.e. Registry, Library, Learning Technology, IT Services, are consulted on the resource implications the development of the new programme has on their service provision. They will be asked to discuss and endorse the new proposal and by doing so, they agree that:

a) The proposal is consistent with professional service business plans.

b) The proposal states all necessary impacts on professional service areas.

c) There are the resources within their services to deliver a high-quality experience for students on the proposed new programme(s).

d) In their professional service area there are no unstated risks to the recruitment to or delivery of a high-quality experience (for example, an area of study which is known to attract students with high demand for well-being services, or that the title of the programme is less attractive than alternatives in the market.)

e) There are no clashes with plans for new programme proposals in other areas of the University.

3.3.2   By completing the proposal, the Business Development Office, with the assistance of Academic Quality, both offices confirm that the proposal:

a) identifies the type of partnership agreement to be entered into;

b) can be supported by professional service areas;

c) identifies the partner's market area;

d) specifies the programme(s) the partner is seeking approval for;

e) the partner can support the programme(s) of study with the appropriate physical and human resources to deliver a high quality student experience;

f) the partner is legally allowed to operate in the UK or internationally;

g) the reputation of the partner is sound and there are no reputational risks to the RAU in entering a partnership agreement;

h) confirms the partner is financially of good standing.

3.3.3   The Business Development Office will confirm that there will be no clashes with other partnership and/or programme proposals in the target market identified.

3.3.4   The completed and endorsed business case together with the documentary evidence demonstrating due diligence is to be submitted to the Secretary of ASPC at least three weeks in advance of the next scheduled meeting.

3.3.5   Should submissions have incomplete fields or missing signatures, they should be returned by the Secretary of ASPC to the Business Development Office and / or relevant Dean of Subject for completion, prior to further processing.

3.4   Business Case approval at ASPC

3.4.1   The endorsed Business Case and due diligence evidence will be evaluated and discussed by ASPC. ASPC will consider and confirm:

a) the business case is consistent with strategic objectives and operational business requirements;

b) the proposed programme(s) are complementary to the University's offerings in its subject areas and do not compete with the University's own programmes;

c) there is strong sustainable demand for the programme(s) to be offered;

c) the fee level is appropriate;

d) the partner has appropriate physical and human resources to support the programme delivery and a high-quality student experience.

3.5   Actions following Business Case Approval

3.5.1   Following approval of the Business Case

a) the Secretary of ASPC will inform key stakeholders of the approval of the Business case including Admissions, Marketing, Registry, Learning Technology, IT Services and the Library, Academic Planning and Finance;

b) the Collaborative Partner and its programme(s) can be marketed on the University's and partner website, in its prospectus, and students can be offered places on the

programme(s). The programmes remain "subject to validation" and this message must be conveyed in all materials until approval is confirmed;

c) Institutional and programme(s) approval arrangements will be facilitated by Academic Quality in liaison with the partner institution, the RAU Link Tutor and Programme team; dates will be scheduled such that attendance can be assured from both parties;

d) the University appoints a Link Tutor who will work with partner institution and Academic Quality until such time all documentation is ready for approval; where necessary in consultation with PSRB bodies;

e) the partner institution commits the resources required for the development of programmes and institutional approval requirements; the RAU Programme team will assist as required;

f) The Academic Planning Manager can include the programme in planning processes as appropriate;

3.5.2   Any publicity materials should be approved by the University's Marketing department prior to advertisement and/or recruitment. Completion of Business Case approval at ASPC signifies that the University is committed to offering the programme at the partner institution.

4. Institutional Approval

4.1   Overview

4.1.1   The purpose of the process of Partnership approval is to confirm that academic quality and standards at the educational partner meet or are likely to meet the requirements of, and are comparable to, those at the RAU. The RAU is accountable for the standards of all provision offered in its name and also is ultimately responsible for the quality of the student learning experience provided under collaborative arrangements.

4.1.2   The outcome of the event will be based on the scrutiny of extensive documentation provided by the educational partner, consideration of the due diligence and discussions with representatives from the partner. The Institutional approval panel will provide a recommendation to the University's Academic Board as to whether institutional approval of the partnership and its agreement should be granted.

4.2   Institutional Approval Event and Membership

4.2.1   The institutional approval event will be organised and facilitated by Academic Quality at a date agreed with representatives from the University and the partner.

4.2.2   Normally, institutional approval of UK partner institutions takes place at the partner.

4.2.3 Institutional approval for international partners may take place virtually provided the Business Development Office / Academic Quality have undertaken an institutional venue visit, and completed the venue and resource forms.

4.2.4 The panel for institutional approval events will comprise of panel members from the RAU and the educational partner.

<u>RAU membership</u>

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resources) (or nominee) - Chair
Head of Academic Quality (or nominee)
Director of Finance (or nominee)
Director of Academic Services (or nominee)
Director of Digital Innovation (or nominee)
Senior Academic staff including Link Tutor and Programme Leader (or as appropriate to the partner)
Academic Quality Officer (Partnerships) (Clerk)

<u>Attendees from the partner institution</u>

Chief Executive / Principal (or equivalent senior management staff)
Head of Academic Quality (or equivalent)
Registrar (or equivalent)
Student Support Manager (or equivalent)

4.2.5 The Academic Quality Officer (Partnerships) will work with the RAU panel to establish a line of questioning based on the business case and documentation received. The agenda will be shared with the partner in advance of the event.

4.3 Institutional Approval Outcomes

4.3.1 Following a private panel meeting at the end of the event, feedback will be provided to the partner institution confirming the outcome of the event. This may include conditions and recommendations. A written report will be provided within one week of the event.

4.3.2 The Institutional Approval panel may reach the following decisions with a recommendation to AQSC and hence the Vice Chancellor and Academic Board that an institutional partnership with a partner:

a) should be approved for a defined period of time (normally three years for new partners and five years for partner reapprovals);

b) should be approved subject to the completion of conditions raised by a set deadline;

c) should not be approved.

4.3.3 If a partner institution receives approval, the date for the institutional reapproval will be stated in the event report.

4.3.4 The Clerk to the panel will confirm the outcome of the event in writing to the partner

and distribute the Chair approved institutional approval event report.

4.3.5   In the event of approval subject to conditions, the partner is asked to meet the conditions by the deadline. Academic Quality will liaise with the partner to ensure their response is received by the deadline, and once all documentation has been checked, will confirm to the Chair of the panel the completion of conditions with a recommendation to sign off the institutional approval.

4.3.6   Once the Chair of the panel has signed off the recommendation to AQSC, the documentation is then presented at the next upcoming AQSC meeting with a view to recommend to Academic Board the partnership.

4.3.7   Once the conditions of approval have been met, the University and the partner can proceed with the signing of the partnership agreement which is drawn up and negotiated by the Business Development Office. The fees for the agreement are noted Annually during the senior partnership meeting.

4.3.8   Following institutional approval, Academic Quality will confirm with the partner the arrangements for the programme approval event. This process follows the same stages as set out in Code of Practice F: Programme Design, Development and Approval.

4.3.9   The approval period for programmes to be delivered at the partner institution will follow the approval period for the institution so as to ensure that both periods align.

4.3.10 As part of the contractual arrangements, an operational schedule will be drawn up and agreed by both institutions which sets out operational details that govern the partnership.

5. Institutional Review

5.1   Overview

5.1.1   Collaborative partners approved by the University will be subject institutional review after the first initial three-year period, and thereafter every five years, unless concerns are raised thorough annual monitoring and/or feedback from staff and students which may result in earlier reviews.

5.1.2   For the re-approval, partners are required to complete a Self-Evaluation Document and update due diligence and resource statements.

5.2   Self-Evaluation Document

5.2.1   The Self-Evaluation Document (SED) prepared by the collaborative partner institution and should review the effectiveness of the partnership against the terms of the partnership agreement, and draw on the operation of the programme(s) under review.

It should include a short critical evaluation of each programme, identifying strengths, weaknesses, innovations and planned developments for quality enhancement.

5.2.2 The SED should not a descriptive account of what the collaborative partner does, nor is it intended to be an updated version of their most recent annual evaluation report. The Partnership Agreement and Programme Specifications together with associated documentation will provide a substantial description of the partnership and each programme, and panel members will be provided with annual monitoring/evaluation and external examiner reports, together with other existing documentation.

5.2.3 The expectation is that the SED should be evaluative, reflective and self-critical. It is the collaborative partners opportunity to reflect on the overall partnership to-date, whether operationally it works well, and what could be improved in future. Problems or weaknesses should be stated, and steps that are to be taken to address these.

5.2.4 The University expects that the partner should consult with students enrolled on the programme(s) awarded by the RAU, and ask them what they consider to be the positive aspects of the partnership with the University, what the subject does well and what might be improved, and where appropriate consult with graduates and/or employers. As part of the review event, the University will invite a student panel to participate.

5.2.5 The Institutional Review event will be organized similarly to the initial approval event with the membership as outlined under 4.2.4, with the addition of a student panel.

5.2.6 The Academic Quality Officer (Partnerships) will work with the RAU panel to establish a line of questioning based on the business case and documentation received. The agenda will be shared with the partner in advance of the event.

5.3 Outcome of Institutional Review

5.3.1 Following a private panel meeting at the end of the event, feedback will be provided to the partner institution confirming the outcome of the event. This may include conditions and recommendations. A written report will be provided within one week of the event.

5.3.2 The Institutional Review panel may reach the following decisions with a recommendation to AQSC and hence the Vice Chancellor and Academic Board that an institutional partnership with a partner:

a) should be re-approved for a period of (normally) five years;

b) should be re-approved subject to the completion of conditions raised by a set deadline;

c) should not be re-approved and the University will terminate the partnership.

5.3.3 The Clerk to the panel will confirm the outcome of the event in writing to the partner and distribute the Chair approved institutional approval event report.

5.3.4 Once the conditions of re-approval have been met, the University and the partner can

proceed with the renewal of the partnership agreement which is renegotiated by the Business Development Office.

5.3.5 In the event of the re-approval of the institution, the programme(s) delivered at the partner will proceed to programme reapproval.

5.3.6 The programme re-approval event will follow the same process as for programme approval with the addition of student panels taking part in the process. This will ensure the University will receive feedback from students enrolled onto its programmes.

5.4 Termination of Partnership Agreement and Teach-out Arrangements

5.4.1 Should a partnership arrangement not be reapproved or be terminated by either party, formal termination of the partnership is to be considered and approved by ASPC.

5.4.2 University Senior Management and Academic Quality will meet with the partner to discuss contractual arrangements and potential teach-out arrangements which will comprise of:

a) an immediate recruitment and advertisement stop;

b) arrangements on the teach-out of current enrolled students to ensure they are able to complete their degree programme(s) while a high quality student experience remains assured.

5.4.3 In the event of a teach-out arrangement, the operation of the partnership will continue as is with increased quality monitoring undertaken by the University and the appointed Link Tutor.

5.4.4 To ensure the teach-out arrangement is completed under contractual arrangements, the Academic Quality Office with the assistance of the Link Tutor will provide a request for an extension to the existing partnership agreement to ASPC for approval.

5.4.5 Should a partner institution be insolvent, both parties agree to find the best possible solution to ensure students can complete their programme of study. Solutions may include:

a) arrangements with another institution (subject to institutional approval) to take over the students to allow them to be taught out;

b) the University makes arrangements for teach out by its own academic teaching staff, this may include arrangements for the use of facilities at another institution (see a));

c) the University will endeavor to arrange for students to join its campus in the UK subject to immigration requirements, to complete their studies.

6. Ongoing Management of Quality and Standards for Collaborative Provision

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 Delivery of programmes at Collaborative Partners that lead to an award of the Royal Agricultural University are governed by the same quality assurance and enhancement arrangements as programmes delivered at the RAU. It is the expectation of the University that partners have arrangements in place that support quality assurance activities and engagement with the RAU Academic Quality Office and Link Tutor is ongoing and continuous.

6.2 Responsibilities

6.2.1 Link Tutor

All partners delivering programme(s) that result in a RAU award, will be assigned a Link
Tutor who is the academic liaison between both institutions and who oversees the day-
to-day operation of the programme(s). Link Tutors work closely with the Academic Quality Office, Registry and RAU Programme Leaders.

In liaison with the Link Tutor, the operational schedule will be reviewed regularly to ensure liaison arrangements are up-to-date.

6.2.2 Partnership Operational Meetings

These are organised by Academic Quality and are held at strategic points of the academic year to discuss current topics, e.g. recruitment, induction, assessments, marking and moderation, graduation etc.

Participants are from both institutions and may include Academic Quality, Link Tutors, Programme Leaders, Learning Technologists, Registry staff.

Any concerns raised during these meetings will be reported to AQSC who has oversight of collaborative partner provision.

6.2.3 Annual Programme Monitoring

Partners participate in the annual programme monitoring process which is a key component of the University's quality assurance mechanisms and supports the ongoing monitoring and enhancement of the University's provision. It has been developed to demonstrably align with the guiding principles of the QAA Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Monitoring and Evaluation (Nov 2018) and to meet and exceed the Office for Students (OfS) ongoing conditions of registration B1 to B6.

The monitoring process reviews past performance and feedback on programmes that allows the University to consider evidence to confirm academic standards of its awards, evaluate student learning opportunities, identify and disseminate good practice, strengthen accountability, identify and mitigate risks; and promote discussion and debate about module and programme performance. The monitoring process provides the University's Governing Council with the information it needs to underpin

the required assurances to the Office for Students (Condition E).

6.2.4 Student Satisfaction Surveys

All Partners are expected to complete the University's internal student satisfaction survey, or an equivalent agreed version, to ensure programmes remain relevant and meet student expectations.

In addition, mid-module and end-module surveys are taking in each term, the results of which will be presented at the Student Experience Committee (or partner equivalent) and AQSC.

6.2.5 External Examiners

External Examiners are appointed to oversee and comment on the quality and standards of all RAU validated provision at both module and programme level as well as those which lead to University awards at approved collaborative partner institutions.

The University considers its arrangements for external examining an integral and important part of its quality assurance mechanism. The appointment of external examiners provides an independent external measure of the University's academic processes and ensures comparability of Royal Agricultural University awards with those of other Higher Education institutions in the United Kingdom.