

Royal Agricultural University

Policy for Collaborative Provision

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. This policy relates to academic provision that does not require student attendance at the Royal Agricultural University (RAU) for all or part of a specific award.

For the purposes of this policy the term 'Collaborative Provision' relates to educational provision leading to an award, or to specified credit towards an award, of the Royal Agricultural University that is delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation or individual.

- 1.2. The RAU recognises the importance of collaboration in the development and delivery of academic provision, and of the benefits such activity brings to all parties.
- 1.3. The University will therefore seek to engage in collaborative academic activities that:
- broaden the academic provision of the University;
 - complement the mission of the University;
 - contribute to the University's policy of widening participation;
 - meet an identified gap in academic provision;
 - can meet the University's procedures for quality assurance;
 - enhance the reputation of the University through association;
 - provide a positive contribution to the academic and financial strengths of the University.
- 1.4. In approving partners for collaborative activities, the University will take due consideration of the following criteria:
- the profile, reputation and standing of the proposed partner;

- the complementarity of mission;
 - the financial security of the proposed partner;
 - the ethical nature of the partner's activities;
 - the compliance with equal opportunities for both staff and students;
 - the safety of University staff involved in periodic visits to the partner.
- 1.5. Prior to engaging in any collaborative activity with a new partner, the School responsible will be required to submit to Academic Board a collaborative partner risk assessment as part of the Concept Note for approval for further development and progress towards programme validation. No new partner will be considered for any collaborative activities without at least one visit being conducted by an appropriate member of RAU staff.
 - 1.6. Depending on the nature of collaborative activity, it may be necessary for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to be signed between the partner and the University once approval to proceed has been granted by Academic Board.
 - 1.7. Further development of new collaborative provision leading to an award, or to specified credit towards an award, of the University will require compliance with the agreed procedures as detailed in the Teaching Quality Handbook Part 3b: Collaborative Programme Validation and Review.

2. Key principles of collaborative activities

- 2.1. The RAU is responsible for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name, including those delivered under collaborative agreements with a partner.
- 2.2. The academic standards of any awards delivered under a collaborative agreement must be equivalent to those of comparable awards delivered wholly at the RAU and comply with the UK Academic Infrastructure, particularly the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- 2.3. The selection, operation and management of the arrangement must comply with the University's policies and procedures for the management of collaborative activities and the [QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B10 Managing Higher Education With Others \(December 2012\)](#).
- 2.4. The quality of learning opportunities offered through a collaborative arrangement should be comparable to those of students undertaking equivalent academic provision based wholly at the RAU and of sufficient quality to enable students to achieve the appropriate academic standards.

- 2.5. All collaborative activities leading to an award or to specified credit towards an award conferred by the RAU will be subject to a detailed signed agreement and to review and re-approval on a three-year rolling cycle. The signed agreement will make clear respective responsibilities and act to safeguard academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities.
- 2.6. A record of the RAU's collaborative partnerships and programmes will be maintained by the Academic Registrar. All RAU programmes are delivered in English.
- 2.7. PSRBs are kept fully informed of any possible or actual collaborative arrangements relating to PSRB recognised programmes and prospective students are made fully aware of the status of RAU programmes in respect of PSRB recognition.
- 2.8. The RAU will have sole authority for awarding certificates and transcripts relating to programmes delivered through collaborative arrangements. The certificate and/or the transcript will record the name and location of any partner organisation engaged in the delivery of the programme.
- 2.9. An annual check is carried out by the Academic Registrar (or their nominee) on the accuracy of publicity materials published by partner organisations about RAU provision.

3. Categories of Collaborative Provision

- 3.1. The nature of collaborative activities may take a number of forms, each requiring specific approaches to their management and approval for an award, or part of an award, of the RAU.
- 3.2. The following arrangements constitute collaborative provision under the terms of this policy:

3.2.1. Sandwich placements

A sandwich placement is a period of work experience resulting in the achievement of specified learning outcomes and the award of credit as part of an approved programme of study. Learning outcomes will be determined and assessed by RAU staff, with the involvement of an employer limited to simple confirmation of work activities and an assessment of key employment criteria.

3.2.2. Work-based learning (WBL)

WBL is the completion of learning activities, for the award of credit as part of a programme of study that is based, and assessed, within a working environment. It requires mentoring and guidance from an employer, and close liaison between RAU staff and the employer, to set, and assess, key learning outcomes.

3.2.3. Off-campus delivery by RAU staff

Such provision is that delivered and assessed through traditional classroom-based teaching activities by RAU employees, but based at a distance from the RAU campus. The role of the partner institution is limited to the provision of appropriate accommodation and specific teaching and learning resources.

3.2.3.1 Contract teaching activities

Contract teaching relates to situations whereby full-time, part-time and/or peripatetic staff of the RAU, undertake teaching activities on behalf of a partner institution, and where the outcome of such activities results in an award of the partner. This category differs from 'off-campus delivery by RAU staff' in that it does not lead to the award of an RAU qualification.

The role of the RAU is limited to the provision of teaching and assessment according to any pre-determined contract and according to the regulations of the partner institution. All other aspects are the responsibility of the partner institution.

3.2.4 Off-campus delivery by non-RAU staff (excluding 3.2.7 franchised and 3.2.8 validation provision)

Such provision is that delivered off campus by RAU approved staff of an external organisation, including other educational institutions, training providers, industry and professional bodies. Responsibility for all marking and assessment decisions is retained by the RAU.

3.2.5 Exchange programmes

Exchange programmes, such as Erasmus and 'Study Abroad Programmes' are those activities that provide an opportunity for students to undertake part of their academic programme at an approved partner institution and to complete credits towards an award of the RAU.

3.2.6 Articulation

Articulation describes the recognition by the University of specific credit to students completing a named programme of study validated and delivered in a partner institution for entry with advanced standing to an RAU award. Articulation differs from Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) by the fact that it guarantees entry at the specified level, whereas there is no guarantee of entry for a student presenting with APL credits.

3.2.7 Franchised provision

Franchised provision describes the delivery of all or part of an RAU validated award by a partner institution. In so doing, the RAU retains overall and direct responsibility for the programme's content, assessment and quality assurance arrangements. In such a situation, the RAU will normally provide sufficient funded student places to the partner institution for the delivery of the programme.

3.2.8 Validated provision

Validated provision describes the process by which the RAU judges that a programme of study designed and offered by a partner institution is of sufficient quality and standard to be awarded a qualification of the RAU. The RAU will retain overall responsibility for the standards of the award, but may delegate responsibility for quality assurance arrangements to the partner. A validated programme should normally be in a subject that has synergy with the RAU's mission and subject expertise. The RAU will not normally provide funded student places to a partner institution for the delivery of a validated programme.

3.2.9 Joint programme delivery

Joint delivery is used to define activities where the University collaborates with a partner academic institution, who will normally also have degree awarding powers, to provide a programme of study leading to the award of an RAU qualification, but where programme delivery is split between the two institution centres.

3.2.10 Third-party enhanced delivery

Third-party enhanced delivery is an enhanced aspect of off-campus delivery and refers to situations where the University enters into an arrangement with an external organisation, including academic, industry and professional bodies, for the provision of specialist facilities, and/or resources and/or expertise, to enhance delivery of its own internal academic provision.

RAU staff will, at all times, retain full responsibilities for curriculum design and development, module teaching programmes and for the setting and marking of student assignments and examinations.

Examples of such collaborative activity will include:

- access to specialist laboratory facilities to enhance the delivery of agricultural and food science teaching which could not currently be provided on the RAU campus;
- staff and student access to specialist resources and/or learning materials to enhance those available at the RAU;
- access to facilities and resources to support student learning activities whilst on extended periods based away from the main RAU campus.

3.2.11 Serial franchising

A serial franchise arrangement is one in which an awarding institution enters into a collaborative arrangement with a partner who, in turn, uses that arrangement as the basis for entering into further collaborative arrangements with third parties, but offering the awarding institutions qualification/award. Such an arrangement **will not** be approved by the RAU.

4. Management of Collaborative Provision

Each category of collaborative provision requires clear and careful management to ensure academic quality and standards are maintained and that the degree awarding powers of the RAU are not put at risk through inappropriate activities and poor quality standards of a partner institution. Thus an assessment of the risk to the RAU's academic standing lies at the heart of the following management requirements.

4.1. Sandwich placements

All sandwich placements will be managed within the individual School of study responsible for the programme for which the placement provides credit. A placement coordinator will be appointed by the Dean of the School to manage the placement process, including the prior approval of, and periodic communication with, placement employers, coordinating placement visits to students and the final assessment of student assignments for credit. A three-way agreement between the placement coordinator, student and employer will be established.

Specific requirements of the procedures involved are set out within the module handbook and placement guide approved by AQSC.

4.2. Work-based learning (WBL)

WBL involves a closer relationship between the University, student and employer and as such will require a greater staff input per student.

As with sandwich placements, WBL activities will be managed within the School of study responsible for the programme for which the WBL activity provides credit. The Dean of School will appoint a WBL coordinator with the responsibilities of coordinating WBL activities, of liaising with employers, setting up learning agreements between the University, student and employer, for providing support and guidance to employers and for the oversight of the assessment of WBL outcomes for the award of credit.

4.3. Off-campus delivery by RAU staff

Management of such activities will mirror those for on-campus provision with the addition of the need for a signed agreement between the relevant School of study and the external partner for the provision of appropriate accommodation and learning resources required for programme delivery.

Validation of such provision will require confirmation that appropriate accommodation and learning resources will be provided and a signed binding contract will be required between the RAU and the external partner relating to such provision as a condition of validation.

The quality assurance arrangements will otherwise be the same as for on-campus provision.

4.3.1 Contract teaching activities

Since such activities do not result in any RAU award being made, there are no validation requirements associated with these activities. Nevertheless, it is

important for the RAU, in terms of its reputation and moral obligation to students taught and/or assessed by RAU staff, to be confident that the quality and standards of teaching and assessment are appropriate for the academic level of the programme and equivalent to that of any similar RAU award.

Therefore, the management of such activities will require the RAU to enter into a teaching contract agreement with the partner institution, which will specify the delivery subjects, the RAU staff involved, and the nature of that involvement. RAU staff engaged in contract teaching are expected to undertake their activities in accordance with this contract, and RAU policy regarding scrutiny and moderation of assessments. Furthermore, the Dean of the relevant School must submit a report on the contract teaching activities to AQSC at the end of the RAU academic year, corroborated by the Dean's equivalent at the partner institution.

4.4. Off-campus delivery by non-RAU staff (excluding 3.2.7 franchised and 3.2.8 validation provision)

A signed Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) will be a requirement of approval, detailing the provision to be delivered, personnel (RAU and/or non-RAU) involved in delivery, the financial arrangements of the partnership and the management of the arrangement. The MoA must also detail requirements for mentoring, peer observing and training non-RAU staff (all of which will be supported by the Link Tutor). The agreement will be for a period of three years, renewable after this time, but subject to annual review.

The non-RAU staff and physical resources involved in delivery off-campus are approved by the RAU. Experiential assessment of new non-RAU delivery staff may be undertaken by the Link Tutor, with a recommendation, supported by a full CV, presented to AQSC for final approval.

Unless otherwise approved by AQSC, such non-RAU staff will be approved for delivery only and not assessment. Assessments may be given to students by the partner but all assessment briefs must be approved by the Link Tutor and the RAU will retain sole responsibility for all marking and assessment decisions.

The academic provision may be jointly developed or based on an existing RAU award. Validation of provision and partner organisation is dependent upon credit value as detailed in Part 3b of the Teaching Quality Handbook. The provision will be delivered by the partner organisation according to the rules and regulations of the RAU.

The quality assurance arrangements will mirror those for other collaborative programmes with the exception that modules not belonging to an approved RAU FHEQ award (60 credits or more) must be reviewed annually using the Module Leader Review Sheet template and submitted to AQSC by 31st October each year.

A separate examination board will be held for this category of collaborative provision and External Examiner attendance at this examination board will be required at the discretion of AQSC based on volume of credit and cohort size.

4.5. Exchange programmes

Academic exchange programmes will only be undertaken with partner institutions approved by Academic Board and with which the University has a signed MoU for exchange activities.

Management of exchange activities will be the responsibility of the International Exchange Officer (IEO), who will be required to liaise with the student and relevant RAU programme manager to identify appropriate modules from the partner institution. The IEO will be required to submit details of the proposed exchange programme, setting out the modules being substituted from the agreed RAU programme specification and demonstrating the match between the level and quantity of credits to be studied at the receiving institution, to AQSC for approval in advance of the proposed exchange period.

Following AQSC approval, the IEO will be required to confirm the approved exchange programme in writing to the student and receiving institution, prior to the commencement of the exchange, to maintain contact with the student throughout the exchange period and to submit confirmation of achieved credits to Registry for inclusion on the student's RAU transcript.

Unless specific agreement has been reached between the RAU and the partner institution, no marks will be awarded by the RAU for such exchange activities and the student's final award will be based solely on marks achieved through study undertaken at the RAU.

4.6. Articulation

Management of articulation agreements will normally be overseen by the Academic Registrar, supported by the programme manager for the receiving programme at the RAU. Requirements will involve the initial approval of the feeder institution as an appropriate partner by Academic Board, together with a benchmarking exercise, ratified by AQSC, demonstrating the appropriate matching of outcomes and credits to enable students to articulate directly to a specific RAU programme.

A signed progression agreement detailing the exact programme structure, including that of the feeder programme, will be a condition of final approval. Such agreement will normally be restricted to three years with the opportunity to renew after this time.

Annual monitoring will be completed as part of the normal RAU programme review process, with the addition of input from the feeding institution confirming the continuation of the approved programme structure and content.

Changes to academic provision by either the feeding institution or the RAU will be subject to notification and consultation prior to implementation, and will

require the modification of the progression agreement with the option to terminate should changes on either side lead to a breakdown in progression requirements.

4.7. Franchised provision

Franchised provision involves the delivery of an RAU academic programme by a partner institution, according to the rules and regulations of the RAU.

Such activity will require the approval, by Academic Board, of the partner for delivery of a specified RAU award and the signing of a MoU.

This will be followed by an institutional approval visit by the Validation and Review Board (VRB) as part of the validation process to confirm the soundness and academic standing of the partner institution. Such a process will also require the validation of the specified award, if not already an approved RAU programme, and confirmation that appropriate resources are available at the partner institution for delivery and the support of students.

A signed MoA will be a requirement of approval, detailing the programme to be delivered, members of teaching staff involved in delivery, the financial arrangements of the partnership and the management of the arrangement. The agreement will be for a period of three years, renewable after this time, but subject to annual review.

The RAU will appoint a member of staff to act as Link Tutor for the programme and the partner institution will appoint a programme manager. Responsibilities of both positions will be detailed within the MoA. The Academic Registrar will also provide additional managerial support to the partnership.

The RAU will appoint an External Examiner for the programme who will be required to visit the partner institution as part of their duties, to complete an annual report, and to attend the end of year examination board.

All franchised provision will be supported by a Joint Board of Studies, the membership and terms of reference of which will be detailed within the MoA, and will include a requirement to ensure the programme continues to comply with the requirements set at validation, to oversee annual and periodic programme reviews, and to support the programme manager and Link Tutor in the day-to-day management of the provision. Revalidation of such provision, and re-approval of the partner institution, will be required on a three-year rolling cycle.

4.8. Validated provision

Validated provision involves the approval by the RAU of a programme of study, designed and delivered by a partner institution, for the receipt of an award of the RAU.

Validated provision will require the approval, by Academic Board, of the partner institution for delivery of a programme leading to an RAU award and the signing of a MoU.

This will be followed by an institutional approval visit by the VRB as part of the validation process to confirm the soundness and academic standing of the partner institution together with the appropriateness of the proposed programme of study. Such a process will require the VRB to confirm appropriate resources are available at the partner institution for delivery and the support of students.

A signed MoA will be a requirement of approval, detailing the programme to be delivered, members of teaching staff involved in delivery, the financial arrangements of the partnership and the management of the arrangement. The agreement will be for a period of three years, renewable after this time, but subject to annual review.

The RAU will appoint a member of staff to act as Link Tutor for the programme and the partner institution will appoint a programme manager. Responsibilities of both positions will be detailed within the MoA. The Academic Registrar will also provide additional managerial support to the partnership.

The RAU will appoint an External Examiner for the programme who will be required to visit the partner institution as part of their duties, to complete an annual report, and to attend the end of year examination board.

All validated provision will be supported by a Joint Board of Studies, the membership and terms of reference of which will be detailed within the MoA, and will include a requirement to ensure the programme continues to comply with the requirements set at validation, to oversee annual and periodic programme reviews, and to support the programme manager and Link Tutor in the day-to-day management of the provision. Revalidation of such provision, and re-approval of the partner institution, will be required on a three-year rolling cycle.

4.9. Joint programme delivery

Joint programme delivery will involve the RAU in a partnership with another academic institution for the joint delivery of a programme of study leading to an RAU award.

Joint delivery will require the approval, by Academic Board, of the partner institution for delivery of a programme leading to an RAU award and the signing of a MoU.

This will normally be followed by an institutional approval visit by the VRB as part of the validation process to confirm the soundness and academic standing of the partner institution together with the appropriateness of the proposed programme of study. Such a process will require the VRB to confirm appropriate resources are available at the partner institution for delivery and the support of students.

A signed MoA will be a requirement of approval, detailing the programme to be delivered, members of teaching staff involved in delivery, the financial arrangements of the partnership and the management of the arrangement. The agreement will be for a period of three years, renewable after this time, but subject to annual review.

The RAU will appoint a member of staff to act as programme director for the programme and the partner institution will appoint a programme manager. Responsibilities of both positions will be detailed within the MoA. The Academic Registrar will also provide additional managerial support to the partnership.

The RAU will appoint an External Examiner for the programme who may be required to visit the partner institution as part of their duties, to complete an annual report, and to attend the end of year examination board.

All jointly delivered provision will be supported by a Joint Board of Studies, the membership and terms of reference of which will be detailed within the MoA, and will include a requirement to ensure the programme continues to comply with the requirements set at validation, to oversee annual and periodic programme reviews, and to support the programme manager and Link Tutor in the day-to-day management of the provision. Revalidation of such provision, and re-approval of the partner institution, will be required on a three-year rolling cycle.

4.10 Third-party enhanced delivery

Management of third-party enhanced delivery will normally be overseen by the relevant School of study, in conjunction with the Academic Registrar.

Third-party enhanced delivery provision will require the signing of a MoU and/or contract specifying the exact nature of the service/facility/resource to be provided and the approval, by Academic Board, of the partner institution: a Link Tutor report on the appropriateness of the quality of the partner's resources must be presented to Academic Board together with a contingency plan for the provision should the arrangement with the third-party cease without notice part way through delivery of the provision.

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