

## Policy for the Consideration and Approval of Educational Partnerships

### Purpose

The revised [UK Quality Code for Higher Education \(3 May 2018\)](#) sets out the following Core Practices for providers working in partnership with other organisations:

- 'Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them'
- 'Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them'

This policy has been drawn up after due consideration of the QAA Quality Code and associated Advice and Guidance and is designed to ensure that the University College meets the above requirements. It sets out the policy and procedures for developing and approving educational partnerships provision and for assuring the standards and quality of University College courses delivered in partnership.

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 Educational partnerships involve the delivery of AECC University College courses or units in partnership with an approved external organisation which formally assumes a level of responsibility for the delivery, assessment or resource provision. These partnerships may involve institutions in the UK or overseas.
- 1.2 The University College takes a rigorous approach to managing educational partnerships. As the degree-awarding body, the University College has ultimate responsibility for its awards and for students admitted to all courses, including courses delivered in partnership. We will use the provisions within this policy to ensure that the standard and quality of our courses and awards and the interests of students are protected, wherever these courses are delivered and whichever of our approved educational partners provides them. The University College will ensure that the standards of awards involving educational partnerships are equivalent to the standards set for other awards that the University College confers at the same level, meet UK threshold academic standards as described by the qualifications descriptors set out in the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (October 2014), and in addition, relevant international standards where applicable.

- 1.3 Regardless of where delivery takes place, the University College must have confidence that the partner institution has the appropriate human and material resources to provide and sustain learning opportunities, and a learning experience appropriate for the delivery and support of UK higher education in the subject(s) concerned and at the relevant HE level.
- 1.4 The level of inquiry at each stage of the Partner Consideration process will be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the educational partnership arrangement and perceived risk to the University College's ability to secure the quality and standards of the award and the interests of students.
- 1.5 The processes for approval of all taught courses at the University College, including those delivered with an approved Partner, are covered by the Course Consideration Approval and Periodic Review Policy, with variations as set out under Stage 2 and Stage 3 below. Final approval of courses delivered in partnership rests with Academic Board.
- 1.6 No partnership arrangement may commence until the consideration process has been completed, the related activity has been approved and the underpinning legal agreement has been signed by the authorised signatories of all parties.
- 1.7 A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), to record an intent to collaborate, without a formal commitment to specific activities but signalling an intention to work towards a binding agreement), may be signed at any time, following appropriate due diligence activities and with SMG approval– see the Procedure for the consideration and approval of Memoranda of Understanding, but should be in place at the latest once Initial Partner approval has been granted (see para 7.35).

## 2. Definitions

- 2.1 Educational partnerships can take a range of forms - the following are covered under this policy.

Term	Definition	Additional Information	Level of potential risk associated with the activity.
<b>Articulation arrangement</b>	An arrangement under which the University College formally recognises achievement of a specific qualification or credit awarded by a Partner as guaranteeing entry with advanced standing to a subsequent stage of a named course(s) at the University College. No University College credit or award results from the study undertaken at the partner, and only marks obtained through study at the University College contribute to the final award.	For international partnerships entry is guaranteed subject to the meeting of AECC University College's English language requirements and the issuing of an appropriate visa.  Students on originating courses are not registered with the University College and have no entitlement to our services unless written into the contract by exception.	Low
<b>Dual award</b>	An arrangement under which the University College and a partner institution (or institutions) with degree awarding powers collaborate to provide a course which leads to an award from both or all institutions, so the student can qualify for awards from both or all institutions	Each degree-awarding body is responsible for its own award but the components form a single package, and both parties are involved in creating/managing the course. Each award has its own set of criteria and learning outcomes and a student may receive only one qualification if they do not meet the separate criteria or learning outcomes for the other qualifications.  Some partner institutions may use credits achieved at the	High

Term	Definition	Additional Information	Level of potential risk associated with the activity.
		University College to contribute towards their own award. This is not a dual award as it is not a joint enterprise which involves all parties in creating/ managing the course. In such instances the University College makes its own award based on recognition of prior learning at the partner (where applicable) and the credits achieved at the University College.	
<b>Franchise</b>	<p>An arrangement under which the University College authorises a partner institution to deliver the whole or part of one or more University College courses leading to an award or credit from the University College.</p> <p>Franchise may also involve the development of a course jointly by the University College and a partner for franchise to the partner.</p>	<p>The University College owns the curriculum and maintains responsibility for course content. The partner institution is responsible for the delivery of the franchised course, learning resources and student support. The University College remains ultimately responsible for academic standards of the award(s) and the quality of the student learning experience. In some instances some units in a franchised course may be delivered by University College staff, in which case this is known as a '<b>part-franchise</b>' arrangement.</p> <p>Every franchise course will be allocated to a School within the University College</p>	High
<b>Joint Award</b>	An arrangement under which the University College and one or more degree awarding bodies together design and deliver a course leading to a single award made jointly by both, or all institutions.	The course has only one set of aims and learning outcomes and the student will receive a qualification only if they meet all these criteria. Each institution remains individually responsible for the quality and academic standard of the joint award.	High
<b>Off-site delivery with Partner Support ('flying faculty'):</b>	An arrangement under which an AECC University College course is delivered by University College staff in a different location	Not all off-campus delivery necessarily involves a partner institution. An off-campus delivery arrangement which has no involvement from another organisation apart from providing rooms need not be treated as an educational partnership and no partner approval process is required. In this instance the off-campus delivery should be approved through the standard Course approval process (or modification process if the arrangement involves an existing course being delivered off-campus in this way). Particular attention paid to the learning and	Medium

Term	Definition	Additional Information	Level of potential risk associated with the activity.
		teaching environment and access to resources, and rooms should ideally be inspected by the university college before use. A legal contract should still be put in place for this type of delivery. In all cases the University College is responsible for academic standards and quality assurance as for the equivalent course(s) delivered on campus	
<b>Validation.</b>	An arrangement under which the University College judges that a course designed, delivered and assessed by a partner institution without UK degree-awarding powers is of an appropriate standard and quality to lead to an award of the University College. Such courses may on occasions be designed with support from the University College	The University College remains ultimately responsible for the quality and academic standard of the award. The University College will only validate courses in areas in which we have expertise, and which are equivalent to our own in terms of standards of award and quality of provision. All courses validated from a partner institution will be assigned to an AECC University College School.	High

- 2.2 The arrangements for Admissions Agreements are set out in a separate policy.
- 2.3 Any potential partnership arrangement, which does not fall into one of the above categories should be discussed with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance), who will determine consideration and approval processes which are suitable for and proportionate to the scale of provision proposed.

### 3. Principles for the establishment of educational partnerships

- 3.1 To meet the University College's strategic aims, and ensure that academic standards and quality are maintained, all educational partnerships must meet the following principles

<b>Principles: Educational Partnerships must</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support the aims set out in the University College's strategic plan, bring clear benefits to the University College and not be in direct competition with University College awards</li> <li>• operate with institutions that share the mission and vision of the University College and are deemed sound in terms of their legal status, reputation, management and/or governance</li> <li>• be in alignment with or complementary to our existing academic provision so that the University College has expertise to be able to judge the standard of awards and the quality of student learning opportunities</li> <li>• comply with internal and national (UK and EU) legislative requirements and, for international partnerships, the legislative requirements of the partner's home country</li> <li>• ensure that the academic standards of awards and the quality of student learning opportunities offered in partnership are equivalent to those of comparable awards delivered by the University College</li> <li>• be framed such that if delivery and assessment are delegated to a partner, the University College retains oversight and approval of the academic staff appointed to deliver the course(s) (where appropriate)</li> <li>• comply with the Qualifications Framework, any relevant QAA subject benchmark statements and, where relevant, professional standards</li> </ul>

#### Principles: Educational Partnerships must

- operate with institutions that are able to provide the human and material resources and have the academic/professional capacity to deliver and support UK higher education in the subject(s) concerned and at the relevant HE level
- deliver and operate the arrangement successfully and at the appropriate levels.
- where students will be enrolled on courses leading to University College awards, normally be taught and assessed in English
- make a viable contribution to the University College's finances, be financially robust and have a clear financial rationale for both parties
- be appropriately resourced and supported by the partner institution
- not be franchised to a third party or organisation
- for international partnerships, be in a country which is assessed to be safe and where the political, ethical and cultural context of the institution are consistent with the University College's diversity policies

3.2 In all cases separate decisions must be made about the academic credibility of a proposed partnership and the strategic and business aspects of a proposed partnership.

#### 4. Responsibility for educational partnerships

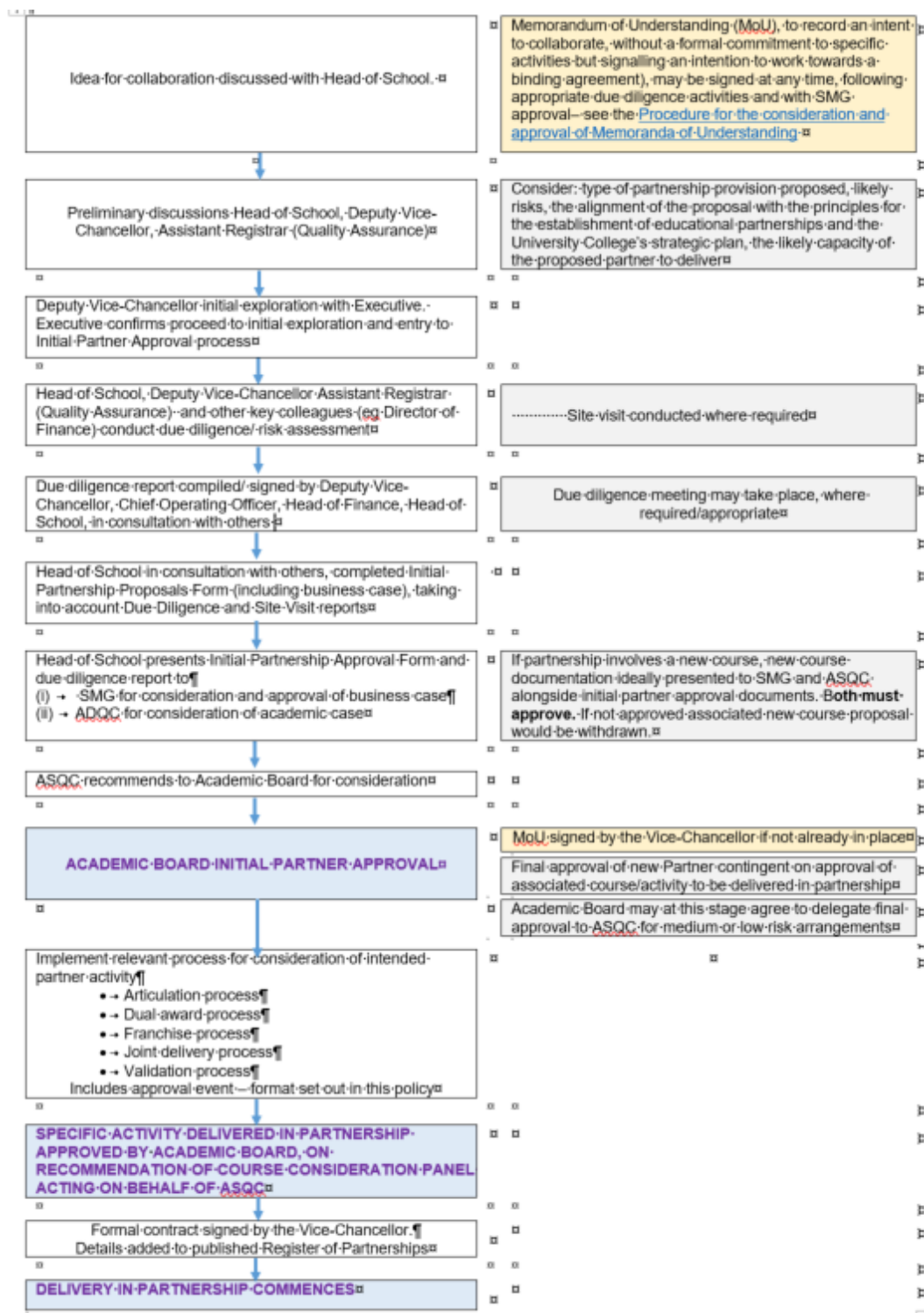
- 4.1 *Senior Management Group* is responsible for considering and approving the business case for all educational partnerships, as a separate process to academic approval.
- 4.2 *Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC)* has overarching responsibility for the standards and quality of all educational partnership provision and considers initial proposals for new educational partnerships for recommendation to Academic Board.
- 4.3 *Academic Board* approves the policy for approving and managing educational partnerships and approves proposals for new educational partnerships and courses delivered under those partnerships.
- 4.4 *Course Consideration Panels*, appointed by ASQC, consider and make recommendations regarding new courses delivered in partnership on behalf of ASQC, in line with the Course Consideration, Approval and Periodic Review Policy.
- 4.5 The *Vice-Chancellor* signs approved Memoranda of Understanding and contracts for educational partnerships on behalf of the institution.
- 4.6 The *Deputy Vice-Chancellor* provides academic leadership for the University College's educational partnership activities and is the first point of contact in relation to any new proposals.
- 4.7 The *Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)* is responsible for providing operational management of the approval, monitoring and review processes of all proposals for educational partnerships, and will guide colleagues through the processes. The Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) maintains the published **Register of Partnerships**.
- 4.8 *Registry* is responsible for making practical arrangements in respect of institutional visits for educational partnerships.
- 4.9 The *relevant Head of School* is responsible for working with key colleagues both within the institution and at the partner organisation to develop the initial proposal for educational partnerships and to progress this through the relevant University College committees. The relevant Head of School is responsible for arranging for an appropriate Memorandum of Understanding to be drafted on behalf of the University College at the appropriate stage in the process (if this has not occurred previously) and initiating the drafting of the formal contract, to be signed following final approval of partnership activity.



4.10 The *Link Tutor* is responsible for maintaining and developing the relationship with the partner institution and assuring the quality of the provision via ensuring engagement with key monitoring and other quality assurance /enhancement activities

## 5. Summary

5.1 A summary of the process in diagrammatic form is set out below:



### Stage 1 The Partner Consideration Process

## 6. Preliminary discussions

6.1 Proposals for educational partnership developments may originate within a particular School, or may be the result of approaches made through the Executive. However in all cases proposals must be rooted within a School and a lead School must be identified which is able to

support and develop the proposal as an enhancement to its academic development. The Head of the identified School should then take forward the proposal as outlined below.

- 6.2 Staff who have an idea for a new arrangement, should in the first instance raise this with their Head of School and obtain their initial support. The Head of School should then discuss the proposal with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance).
- 6.3 In all cases, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, with the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) and the Head of School, will consider:
- the type of partnership provision proposed and the likely risks involved.
  - the alignment of the proposal with the principles for the establishment of educational partnerships (section 3 above) and the University College's strategic plan.
  - the likely capacity of the proposed partner to be able to provide and sustain learning opportunities and a learning experience appropriate for the delivery and support of UK higher education in the subject(s) concerned and at the relevant HE level.

There may be informal discussions with the proposed partner at this stage. However it must be clear in these discussions that they are preliminary and that any decisions rest on the outcomes of the separate formal consideration and approval processes, and that any partnership activity will require the signing of a formal contract.

- 6.4 If as a result of these initial discussions it is considered that the proposed educational partnership should be pursued the Deputy Vice-Chancellor will discuss with the Executive to seek confirmation that the Executive is content for more work to be undertaken (including appropriate legal and academic due diligence) and for the proposal to proceed into the Initial Partnership Consideration process.

## **7. Initial Partnership Consideration Process**

- 7.1 Through the Initial Partnership Consideration Process the University College ensures that all proposed educational partnerships are appropriate to the University College's vision, mission and strategy, and are financially viable. Due diligence and risk assessment are carried out to ensure the reliability of each prospective partner institution in terms of financial, legal, academic and reputational factors. This is to ensure the quality of education delivered as part of the partnership, and to protect the University College's reputation and finances.
- 7.2 The Head of the relevant School will normally take the lead in coordinating the required documentation, compiling the business case and progressing the proposal through the Initial Partnership Consideration Process but may delegate this to an appropriate senior colleague if required.
- 7.3 The questions and template set out in appendix 1 can assist in the development phase of any type of educational partnership and can be used for internal discussions and discussions with the prospective partner institution to gain greater clarity of the roles and responsibilities assigned to each party.

### **Due diligence and risk assessment**

- 7.4 The purpose of due diligence is to identify any issues that may place the University College at risk, legally, financially, academically or reputationally, and to anticipate future developments which could jeopardise the standards or viability of a course or a partnership. Due diligence provides the opportunity to mitigate corporate risk and ensure that students' interests are protected. Due diligence and initial risk assessment normally involves consideration of the following broad areas: partner standing and reputation; legal / organisational issues; financial/resourcing issues; academic and quality assurance considerations; country status and related matters (for international partnerships).
- 7.5 As part of the due diligence process the potential risks of engaging in a specific partnership are identified. To proceed with a partnership the following requirements must be met, (or any risks identified in these areas must be explicitly mitigated :

- Low risk country politics (for international partnerships)
- Proposed partner supports University College mission and vision
- Academic or social benefit to the University College or to the local community
- Proposed partner has stable financial record and governance
- Proposed partner has academic credibility, accountability and appropriate quality assurance and enhancement structures
- Course to be delivered in partnership at least breaks even financially

7.6 Evidence that should be considered in initial due diligence and risk assessment includes the information below. However this is not an exhaustive list. Nor will all documents be required for each proposed partnership.

<b>international partnerships]</b> <b>Low risk country politics,</b> <b>Human rights and equal opportunities record</b> <b>HR and tax issues</b>	<b>Partner standing and reputation</b>	<b>Partner supports University College's mission, vision and values</b>	<b>Legal due diligence and effective governance</b>	<b>Financial stability /probity</b>	<b>Credibility, accountability and appropriate QME structures</b>
<b>Evidence:</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Evidence:</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Evidence:</b>	<b>Evidence:</b>
Foreign and Commonwealth Office report	Website searches	Prospectus	Constitutional documents in English	Financial Statements for previous 3-5 years;	National Quality Assurance Agency reports
QAA transnational education reports (where applicable)	National/ international university rankings	Mission Statement	Governance and management structure documents	Partner's insurance documents	Professional body reports (where applicable)
Advice from Ministry of Education in the jurisdiction, the British Council and/ or relevant Embassy as required	National Quality Assurance Agency, funding body, FCO etc reports	Strategic Plan	Charity Commission or Companies House records	Charity Commission or Companies House records	Endorsement from relevant professional organisations or equivalent
Amnesty International, Liberty or similar reports	Current/previous partners' experiences	Risk Register	Partner's anti-bribery, money laundering and corruption and whistleblowing policies	Other financial documents provided by the partner	Current / previous partners' experiences
Evidence from site visits	Experience from previous engagement with partner	Experience from previous engagement with partner	National Quality Assurance Agency or equivalent report		Experience from previous engagement with partner
Proposed partner's policies on equal opportunities			Health and safety policies		Partner's quality assurance and student facing policies
QAA reports			Partners policies regarding intellectual property and data protection		Partner's HR policies etc
Consultation regarding any specific Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements			Information provided by partner		Evidence from site visits
					Consultation regarding any specific PSRB requirements
					External examiner reports



- 7.7 Where the proposed partner has already signed a relevant Memorandum of Understanding with the University College, the Executive will consider and determine whether a truncated due diligence process may be appropriate.
- 7.8 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) will work with the relevant Head of School, Head of Finance and the prospective partner to source the relevant documentation and undertake the necessary enquiries. Other colleagues may be involved as appropriate to the type of partnership and planned delivery and the nature of due diligence enquiries to be made. Where appropriate, specific external expertise will be sought as part of this process – for example from external colleagues with specific knowledge of working with the prospective partner.
- 7.9 Evidence may be provided electronically by email, or via web links. For non-UK partners, any original documents which are not written in English should be translated by a certified translator before being submitted to the University College.
- 7.10 Where PSRB accreditation is to be sought for a course delivered by or with a partner, the PSRB should be consulted as part of due diligence, particularly for international partnerships, as there may be specific requirements or in some cases the PSRB might not accredit courses delivered outside the UK, or in particular countries.
- 7.11 The Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) will coordinate the compilation of the due diligence report (using the Due Diligence Report Form), which will be completed and signed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the relevant Head of School and the Head of Finance. If those involved in the process consider it necessary or desirable a meeting may be held for them to discuss their finding and compile the report. The Due Diligence Report Form will be part of the documentation submitted for Initial Partner Consideration.
- 7.12 It is recognised that requiring prospective partners to share information for the purpose of due diligence and risk assessment may be highly sensitive. The University College will not ask for information and documentation that it would not, in turn, be prepared to share with the prospective partner. Information provided will be treated in confidence. The University College anticipates that the potential partner will scrutinise our practice, operations and finances as required by their own internal quality assurance systems, and will cooperate with all such reasonable enquiries.
- 7.13 Due diligence enquiries will be refreshed periodically, and at least at the point of partner and/or course periodic review, to enable the University College to identify whether information which underpinned the original approval decision has changed.

### **Site Visit**

- 7.14 Unless the organisation is already known to the University College a site visit (or visits) is normally required as part of due diligence and risk assessment. The Executive will consider and determine in each case whether a visit is required.
- 7.15 The University College participants in a site visit will be agreed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance), to be determined as appropriate to the proposed partner and the potential level of risk, in discussion with the proposed partner with respect to costs (see below).
- 7.16 The site visit is to ensure that the facilities and infrastructure are appropriate for the proposed provision. Site visits provides opportunities (particularly for international partnerships) for the University College to meet with relevant staff, and to satisfy itself about the partner's understanding of the standards and ethos of UK higher education, quality assurance and enhancement and the adequacy of operational structures required for course delivery and management. For international partnerships there should also be the opportunity to explore any cultural assumptions or differences that may affect HE delivery.
- 7.17 It is expected that the proposed partner institution will normally cover costs associated with

the site visit, and these costs will be agreed in advance of the visit.

- 7.18 A report on the visit (or visits) should be completed using the Site Visit Report Form. This will form part of the documentation submitted for Initial Partner Consideration.

#### **Initial Proposal for Educational Partnership Form**

- 7.19 The Initial Proposal for Educational Partnership Form includes information about a range of issues that the University College needs to consider before accepting a new partner. This includes a requirement for an appropriate business case and costings.
- 7.20 The Head of the relevant School, in consultation with appropriate colleagues is responsible for completing the form, and bringing together all the required documentation.

#### **Consideration and initial approval of the proposal: SMG, ASQC and Academic Board**

- 7.21 The Head of the relevant School will be responsible for submitting the documentation and presenting the proposal separately to SMG and ASQC. The Secretary of ASQC will forward documentation to Academic Board for final approval of the initial proposal.
- 7.22 Where setting up the arrangement will also involve approving a new course SMG and ASQC should normally consider the Initial Course Proposal for the specific course or courses (as required under the Course Consideration, Approval and Periodic Review Policy) at the same time as the completed initial proposal for partnership documentation.
- 7.23 The documentation required for consideration is normally as follows:

- Initial Proposal for Educational Partnership Form
- Due Diligence Report Form
- Site Visit report(s) (where applicable)

The detailed documentation that supports the Due Diligence Report Form will not be circulated in full to SMG but is available to members on request to the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance).

- 7.24 SMG will primarily consider the business case, due diligence, financial viability and assurances that the proposed partnership does not expose this institution to unnecessary risk.

SMG should consider such issues as whether:

- all relevant evidence has been provided
- the proposal meets with the University College's strategic mission and portfolio
- the proposal poses any significant risk to the University College in terms of reputation and financial status
- the due diligence is satisfactory
- there are any legal factors which would pose a risk to the University College
- the University College has adequate resources to support the proposal
- there is a clear business case and the proposal is financially viable
- there are any specific concerns with regard to human rights and/or quality and diversity
- there is adequate demand for the proposed activity involving the partner
- the proposal provide benefits to the University College

- 7.25 SMG may give initial approval to the proposed partnership, ask the School or the proposed partner to provide more information, or it could reject the proposal outright. If it rejects the proposal, the Vice-Chancellor, as Chair of SMG, will inform the proposed partner.
- 7.26 ASQC will consider the academic case, and academic due diligence and associated risk, to ensure that threshold academic standards (at least) are maintained, irrespective of the apparent financial viability of a particular arrangement.

ASQC should consider such issues as whether:

- all relevant information has been included

ASQC should consider such issues as whether:

- the proposal accords with the University College's academic portfolio and the current portfolio of the partner
- the proposed partner institution has the required academic infrastructure
- the proposed partner has an understanding of UK higher education, including the Quality Code and the Framework for Higher Education Qualification, as appropriate to the proposed partnership arrangements
- the proposal will ensure that quality and standards are maintained (with reference to the University College's policies and procedures and quality assurance requirements)
- there are any language restrictions that would affect the ability of the partner to assure quality and standards
- the University College has appropriate academic expertise to support the partnership
- there are any other quality or academic issues that may need to be considered
- there are any specific concerns with regard to human rights and/or quality and diversity.

- 7.27 ASQC may recommend initial approval to the proposed partnership, ask the School or the proposed partner to provide more information, or recommend rejection the proposal outright.
- 7.28 ASQC's recommendation will be forwarded to Academic Board for consideration.
- 7.29 If Academic Board rejects the proposal, the Chair of Academic Board will inform the proposed partner.
- 7.30 Both SMG and Academic Board must give initial approval at this stage. If either committee rejects the proposal outright any proposal for a new course that is contingent on the approval of the educational partnership will necessarily also be rejected at this stage.
- 7.31 Following initial approval the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, working with the Head of the relevant School will initiate the appropriate consideration/ approval process for the type of partnership being proposed.
- 7.32 Initial approval of the partner at this stage does not constitute formal approval to participate in delivery of courses leading to University College awards. This is conferred only once the relevant course approval process has been completed. Final approval of the new Partnership is contingent on approval of the associated course or other activity to be delivered in partnership.
- 7.33 Where a particular partnership arrangement and or educational partner is agreed by Academic Board at the initial approval stage to be of low of medium risk (for example an articulation arrangement or an off-site delivery arrangement of an existing course with a partner well known to the University College), Academic Board may delegate final approval to ASQC.
- 7.34 If it is intended that the proposed partnership will relate to courses covered by the work of a PSRB, the PSRB should be notified of the outcome of the initial consideration process at this stage by the relevant Head of School.
- 7.35 A Course Consideration Panel for the new partnership activity will not take place until the University College is satisfied that it has sufficient information about the proposed partner to understand and minimise the potential risks; further evidence may be requested before the Panel meeting to confirm that the potential risks have been identified and addressed.

### **Legal Agreement**

- 7.36 If an appropriate Memorandum of Understanding with the proposed partner has not already been signed this should be completed at this stage.
- 7.37 The relevant Head of School should commence discussions with the chief Operating Officer and the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) to arrange for an appropriate legal contract to cover delivery of the relevant course(s) to be drafted on behalf of the University College. This should be initiated as soon as initial approval of the Partnership has been granted, as at an early stage the contract will also need to be considered and approved by the partner. See section 11 of this policy.

## **Stage 2 – Process for consideration and approval of a new activity with a partner institution**

### **8. Arrangements for consideration and approval of articulation arrangements**

- 8.1 Articulation arrangements will normally be considered only where the originating course at the partner institution is taught and assessed in English.
- 8.2 The maximum amount of credit that can be the subject of an articulation arrangement will be in line with that permitted in the AECC University College Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.
- 8.3 The key issues to be considered in the consideration of an articulation agreement are whether the learning outcomes achieved through the course at the partner institution are comparable to those attained by students at the University College, and whether a student who has completed the course or relevant credit at the Partner will be appropriately prepared for study at the University College.
- 8.4 The consideration process for an articulation agreement should take into account the following:-
  - the equivalence of the subject matter and the volume and level of credit with the course at the University College and the partner
  - the equivalence of the student teaching, learning and assessment experience to that at the University College and its fitness to prepare students to enter and succeed on the course at the University College.
  - The coherence of the curriculum when viewed as a single entity rather than two separate courses.
- 8.5 The relevant Course Leader, in discussion with the Head of School should conduct a curriculum mapping exercise to evaluate the match of the curriculum and learning outcomes of the course at the partner institution to the curriculum delivered by the University College, in terms of subject matter, FHEQ level, and credit. The teaching methods and assessments should be similarly compared.

#### *Consideration process*

- 8.6 A Panel, nominated by the Chair of ASQC and the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) and approved by ASQC will be set up to consider the proposed arrangement (approval may take place in circulation).
- 8.7 The Panel will normally comprise:
  - AECC University College Chair (normally a senior academic member of ASQC)
  - An internal Academic Representative with good knowledge of quality assurance policies and processes
  - the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) (or representative) who will be a member of the Panel and also act as secretary.
- 8.8 The Consideration Panel will take place at the University College, and may take place virtually.
- 8.9 Consideration of the proposal will be based on a review of applicable documentation and may involve a meeting with the Course Leader from the receiving course at the University College.

#### *Documentation*

- 8.10 The following documentation is required for consideration and should be prepared by the Course Leader in consultation with relevant colleagues:

- Articulation Arrangement Template, signed by the Head of the relevant School  
This includes a rationale for the proposal, proposed entry requirements including English language, details of the curriculum mapping exercise undertaken, information about the management of the assessment process at the partner institution and how students will be supported on entry to the University College.
- Copy of the documentation submitted for initial partner approval
- Course and unit specifications (or equivalent) from which the articulation is proposed
- Draft contract (where available)

## 9. Arrangements for consideration and approval of taught courses delivered in partnership

- 9.1 In considering partnerships for validation and franchise arrangements, particularly in an international context, the University College will need to make informed judgements regarding the capacity of the prospective partner to deliver the course(s) in line with UK Higher Education reference points and the University College's requirements. The establishment of joint award partnerships will require careful consideration of the best way to align the regulations, academic policies, quality assurance requirements and approval processes of both institutions. The University College will ensure that its own academic standards are maintained.

### Validation

- 9.2 All courses validated for a partner institution will be assigned to a 'home' School within the University College. The School is expected to provide the partner institution with assistance in preparing the course for validation and bringing together the relevant documentation, and will also take responsibility for establishing how quality assurance and management processes will operate.
- 9.3 The same procedures will be followed as for new courses to be delivered at the University College, as set out in the Course Consideration, Approval and Periodic Review Policy (including arrangements for internal scrutiny of documentation), with the variations set out below.

### Consideration process

- 9.4 The Course Consideration Panel will normally take place at the partner institution.
- 9.5 The Panel may hold an additional and longer pre-meeting – for example the day before the Course Consideration event, in order to discuss issues and finalise the agenda, to ensure that all relevant issues will be explored and addressed.
- 9.6 There will be variations to the standard agenda, to ensure that all relevant issues regarding the management of quality assurance procedures are explored and addressed, and that it can be confirmed that appropriate resources and student support arrangements will be in place for the course. There is no specific template agenda, as this will vary depending on the specific partner and course under consideration; however guidelines regarding the issues that must be covered are available on the Staff Information Portal (SIP). Depending on the agenda it may be necessary for the Panel meetings to be spread over a number of days.

### Documentation

- 9.7 The following documentation is required for the Course Consideration Panel:

- Standard documentation as required for new course consideration (Course Summary and Resources – Partnerships document replaces standard Course Summary and Resources document)
- Copy of the documentation submitted for initial partner approval (where a new partner is involved)
- Draft Operations Handbook for the course (see section 12)
- Draft contract (where available)



### **Franchise: new courses**

- 9.8 For all new courses to be delivered under a franchise arrangement the consideration process will be as for validated courses (paras 9.2 – 9.7 above), including external Panel membership. This applies irrespective of whether the arrangement is with a new or an existing partner.
- 9.9 The relevant School is expected to provide the partner institution with assistance in preparing and bringing together the relevant documentation for the consideration process.

### **Franchise: courses already approved as University College awards**

- 9.10 The arrangements below apply irrespective of whether the existing course is to be franchised to a new or an existing partner.
- 9.11 The relevant School is expected to provide the partner institution with assistance in preparing and bringing together the relevant documentation for the consideration process.

#### *Consideration process*

- 9.12 A Panel, nominated by the Chair of ASQC and the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) and approved by ASQC will be set up to consider the proposed arrangement (ASQC approval of membership may take place in circulation).
- 9.13 The Panel will normally comprise:
- AECC University College Chair (normally an academic member of ASQC)
  - two Internal AECC University College academic representatives with good knowledge of quality assurance policies and processes
  - Student member (nominated by the Students' Union)
  - the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) (or representative) who will be a member of the Panel and also act as secretary
- (External Panel members are not normally required, as the original course approval process included external input).
- 9.14 The Consideration Panel will normally take place at the Partner institution.
- 9.15 The process will be, based on a review of applicable documentation and meetings with relevant staff from the partner institution: The process will focus on the partner's delivery, management, and student support arrangements, to ensure their ability to deliver the course.

#### *Documentation*

- 9.16 The following documentation is required for the Course Consideration Panel:

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Course and unit specifications</li><li>• Course Summary and Resources - Partnerships document</li><li>• Draft Operations Handbook (see section 12)</li></ul> <p><i>For franchise arrangements with new partners</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Copy of the documentation submitted for initial partner approval</li><li>• Draft contract (where available)</li></ul> |
|---|

### **Off-site delivery ('flying faculty') with partner support**

#### *Existing course, with change of delivery site*

- 9.17 Where a course has already been approved for delivery on campus, the course consideration process should focus on those issues which are affected by location, for example stakeholder consultation which would focus on offsite resources and administration.

- 9.18 A Panel, nominated by the Chair of ASQC and the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) and approved by ASQC will be set up to consider the proposed arrangement (ASQC approval of membership may take place in circulation).
- 9.19 The Panel will normally comprise:
- AECC University College Chair (normally a senior academic member of ASQC)
  - one internal academic representative with good knowledge of quality assurance policies and processes
  - Student member (nominated by the Students' Union)
  - the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) (or representative) who will be a member of the Panel and also act as secretary
- External Panel members are not normally required, as the original course consideration process included external input.
- 9.20 The location of the Course Consideration Panel will be determined on a case by case basis depending on the nature of support to be provided by the partner, and whether a site visit has been undertaken as part of due diligence.

#### *Documentation*

- 9.21 The following documentation is required for the Course Consideration Panel:

- Course Summary and Resources – Partnerships document
- Off-campus delivery ('Flying Faculty') resource checklist
- Course and unit specifications
- Copy of the documentation submitted for initial partner approval (where a new partner is involved)
- Draft Operations Handbook for the course (see section 12)
- Draft contract (where available)

#### *New course*

- 9.22 For all **new courses** to be delivered under this arrangement the consideration process will be as for validated courses (paras 9.2 – 9.7 above), including external Panel membership.
- 9.23 The location of the Course Consideration Panel will be determined on a case by case basis depending on the nature of support to be provided by the partner, and whether a site visit has been undertaken as part of due diligence. However, members of the partner organisation who will be directly involved in supporting the course should normally take part in meetings with the Panel (this may be done virtually). The costs incurred in attending the meeting will normally be met by the partner.
- 9.24 The following documentation is required for the Course Consideration Panel:

- Standard documentation as required for new course consideration (Course Summary and Resources – Partnerships document replaces standard Course Summary and Resources document)
- Off-campus delivery ('Flying Faculty') resource checklist
- Copy of the documentation submitted for initial partner approval (where a new partner is involved)
- Draft Operations Handbook for the course (see section 12)
- Draft contract (where available)

#### **Dual awards**

- 9.25 For all **new courses** to be delivered under such an arrangement the consideration process will be as for validated courses (paras 9.3 – 9.7 above), including external Panel

membership.

- 9.26 The relevant School and the partner will work together to prepare and bring together the relevant documentation for the consideration process.
- 9.27 As with articulation agreements a key issue will be the comparability of learning outcomes achieved through the course at the partner institution with those attained by students at the University College, and ensuring that students will meet the requirements of the relevant University College award.
- 9.28 The proportion of provision delivered by a partner institution and accepted for inclusion in an award will be guided by the University College's [Policy and Procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\) and credit transfer for Higher Education](#).
- 9.29 Care must be taken to avoid the 'double-counting' of credit.
- 9.30 Each party will need to satisfy itself that the quality procedures of the other are sufficiently robust, to allow confidence to be placed in the other's quality assurance processes.
- 9.31 The following documentation is required for the Course Consideration Panel:

- Standard documentation as required for new course consideration (Course Summary and Resources – Partnerships document replaces standard Course Summary and Resources document)
- Copy of the documentation submitted for initial partner approval (where a new partner is involved)
- Draft Operations Handbook for the course (see section 12)
- Draft contract (where available)

### **Joint awards**

- 9.32 The course will need to be approved by both institutions, and rather than carrying out two separate processes ideally both parties will agree whose process is to be followed, and a combined course consideration/approval event will be held which will involve a Panel with representation from both institutions, with external advisers normally nominated and approved jointly by both institutions. This event may take place at either institution.
- 9.33 The Chair of ASQC, in consultation with relevant colleagues, will determine the process to be used, and report this to ASQC for note. If a joint event cannot take place the full requirements of the University College's course consideration process must be followed in order for the course to be approved as an award of this institution.
- 9.34 The documentation required for the Panel will be agreed by both parties and must be sufficient to satisfy the quality assurance requirements of both institutions. An Operations Handbook (or equivalent) agreed by both parties will be required. For the University College the proposed arrangements will be approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor as Chair of ASQC.
- 9.35 Each party will need to satisfy itself that the quality procedures of the other are sufficiently robust, to allow confidence to be placed in the other's quality assurance processes.

## **10. Outcomes from Consideration Panels**

- 10.1 In all cases the possible outcomes available to Panels considering new activity with a partner are as follows:
- To recommend approval of activity
  - To recommend approval of the activity subject to conditions and/or recommendations
  - Not to recommend approval of the activity (either with a recommendation to resubmit at a later date or not to proceed further).

### Conditions and Recommendations

**Conditions** are requirements that must be met must meet within a set timeframe, upon which the approval of the activity is conditional. The response to the conditions must be confirmed as having been met prior to final approval of the activity i.e. before the activity can commence operating.

**Recommendations** are longer term advisory points for consideration. It is not a requirement that they are met, but it is expected that they will be considered and that comment or a commitment to action as appropriate will be included in the response, and through the relevant annual monitoring for the activity.

- 10.2 The Chair of the Panel will normally report outline feedback orally at the event's final feedback session. Confirmation of event outcomes is given in the formal report following the event. The Panel Chair will also agree at that time the dates by which any conditions should be fulfilled.
- 10.3 Arrangements for the production and sign-off of the final Panel report, and for the sign-off of the response to any Conditions are as set out in the Course Consideration, Approval and Periodic Review Policy, except that final approval rests with Academic Board (see below).
- 10.4 Approval of the course delivered in partnership rests with Academic Board, on the recommendation of the Course Consideration Panel acting on behalf of ASQC.
- 10.5 Final approval of a new Partner will be confirmed when any conditions associated with the associated activity have been completed and signed off, and final approval of the activity is confirmed.
- 10.6 In all cases the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) is responsible for ensuring the publication of definitive Course Specifications on the SIP/VLE and public website, and for adding the details of the approved partnership activity to the Register of Partnerships (see section 13).

## 11. Written contract

- 11.1 All educational partnerships will be subject to a formal written contract prepared by the University College setting out the duties and responsibilities of all parties. The purposes of the contract are to:
  - define the high-level arrangements for managing the partnership.
  - ensure that the roles and responsibilities of both parties concerning the security of the academic standards of the provision are clearly set out.
  - identify clear channels of authority, accountability and executive action.
  - specify the financial arrangements for the proposed collaboration.
  - stipulate legal details, for example intellectual property rights and Data Protection matters; procedures for the resolution of disputes and action to be taken if either partner is shown to be in serious breach of the contract.
  - set out arrangements under which the contract may or will be terminated , and how the 'run out' of the course(s) associated with the contract will be handled, focusing on the rights of the students. **This must address the requirement to ensure that students admitted to a course can complete it, in the event that the partner withdraws from the arrangement** ('student protection plan clauses')
  - specify the period of validity, of the contract.
- 11.2 Each contract will normally be developed from the University College's standard templates, but may be tailored to the individual requirements of the partnership. An indication of the usual content for agreements for validation and franchise arrangements is available in [appendix 2](#). Where applicable the template award certificate should be included as an annex to the contract.
- 11.3 The University College may take legal advice on the content and drawing up of agreements. It is the decision of the partner institution as to whether they also wish to seek legal advice.

- 11.4 Normally the University College will only enter into contracts which it has prepared based on its own standard templates. Contracts with a partner institution will normally be governed in accordance with UK law. Where this is not possible or appropriate contracts provided by partners, or where partners wish to amend standard terms will normally be subject to legal scrutiny prior to acceptance. Contracts provided by international partners will always be so scrutinised.
- 11.5 The University College will only sign agreements in English or translations attached to the English version, and the signed English version will take precedence over any translations.
- 11.6 In the event of a dispute, both parties would be expected to negotiate in good faith and endeavour to resolve the matter amicably. All contracts will include specific clauses relating to dispute resolution.
- 11.7 The contract must be signed by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of the University College. It must not be entered into or signed by other individuals. The contract must also be signed by the authorised signatory at the partner institution, normally the Head of the Institution. The contract must be signed by both parties before any arrangement commences.
- 11.8 A copy of the jointly-signed contract will be given to the partner institution. The University College copy of the signed document will be held by the Vice-Chancellor's PA.
- 11.9 No partnership arrangement may commence until the contract has been signed by the authorised signatories of all parties.

#### *Contracts for articulation agreements*

- 11.10 The contract for an articulation agreement should specify approval of the level and volume of credit for a fixed period of time not normally longer than five years, and this should be reflected in the validity period of the contract. This is important to an appropriate review point to protect against the potential effects of 'curriculum drift'.

#### *Contracts for dual and joint awards*

- 11.11 The contract should specifically outline the arrangements that will be put in place to ensure that students are able to complete their course and be granted the relevant awards in the event that one or other of the partners withdraws from the arrangement.
- 11.12 The responsibilities of each party for quality and academic standards must be clearly delineated in the signed written agreement. Each party must satisfy itself that the quality procedures of the other are sufficiently robust, to allow confidence to be placed in the other's quality assurance processes

## **12. Partnership Operations Handbook**

- 12.1 For complex franchise, validation or joint award partnership, a Partnership Operations Handbook will be created by the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) and Academic Registrar in consultation with the relevant Head of School and the partner institution. Not all partnerships will require an Operations Handbook.
- 12.2 The Handbook will expand on duties and responsibilities included in the contract, and will serve as an operational manual for the course(s) and will be appended to the contract. It aims to ensure that educational partnerships are administered effectively and helps to avoid misunderstandings between the two institutions.
- 12.3 Guidance notes on the development of an Operations Handbook are available on the SIP.

## **13. Register of approved partnerships**

- 13.1 A register of approved partnerships, including the name and location of the partner, and associated courses, will be maintained by the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) and made available on the University College's website. Information will be added to the Register



once a contract has been signed by both parties.

## 14. Management, Monitoring, Review and Termination of of Educational Partnerships

### Link Tutor

- 14.1 All courses delivered in partnership must have a Link Tutor who is a member of AECC University College staff. (A link Tutor may cover more than one course where appropriate). The Link Tutor will be appointed by the Head of School, and must have appropriate experience and understanding of quality assurance and enhancement and of the course for which they are appointed. They should be of sufficient seniority, authority and personal confidence to be able to represent the School and the University College in an external context, including diplomacy to be able to intervene in an effective but sensitive way where necessary.
- 14.2 The primary roles of the link tutor are:
- to liaise with identified colleagues at the partner to maintain and develop the partner relationship and ensure effective communication
  - to support the Course Leader and key contacts at the partner institution to monitor, assure and enhance the quality of the provision, to ensure that the course is being delivered effectively, that academic standards are being met and that the University College's quality and standards policies and procedures are being implemented appropriately, in line with the course specification and the relevant Partnership contract. (This is likely to be particularly important in the first year of a Partnership).
  - to work with the partner to overseeing the quality of learning opportunities
- 14.3 Further details are available in the Role of AECC University College Link Tutor document available on the SIP.

### Monitoring, Review and Termination of Educational Partnerships.

- 14.4 The arrangements for Review and Termination of of Educational Partnerships are set out in the Educational Partnerships – Annual Monitoring, Modifications and Periodic Review Policy available on the SIP.

Version	1.2 Amended to take into account revisions to the University College committee structure, to amend titles, and to clarify the timing of signatures of any associated MoU Minor amendment to para 9.4 (addition of 'normally') approved Academic Board 1.7.2020. Update of titles to Vice-Chancellor/Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Minor changes so version number unchanged. September 2020 Amendments to address recommendations from BDO Internal Audit, and to include detail on role of link tutor
Approved by	Academic Board
Originator/Author	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
Owner	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
Reference source	QAA Quality Code Advice and Guidance Universities of Cumbria, London Southbank, Keele, Southampton, Suffolk, University College of Osteopathy, Rose Bruford College
Date approved	2 December 2020
Effective from	3 December 2020
Review date	Spring 2023
Target	All staff
Policy location	SIP, public website
Equality analysis	No direct impact; any potential impact relating to specific partnerships will be considered as part of the relevant consideration/approval process

## Appendix 1: Prospective partnership/partner activity development template

This template can assist in the development phase of any type of educational partnership and can be used for internal discussions and discussions with the prospective partner institution to gain greater clarity of the roles and responsibilities assigned to each party within a proposed arrangement

### PART A

1	Does AECC University College have any existing partnerships with the proposed partner institution	YES / NO / NA
2	Is the AECC University College course currently subject to any other educational partnership arrangement	YES / NO / NA
3	Will the proposal lead to an AECC University College Award	YES / NO / NA
4	Will the proposal lead to an academic award from the partner	YES / NO / NA
5	Will the students be studying for all or part of their course at AECC University College	YES / NO / NA
6	Is there currently an equivalent course at AECC University College	YES / NO / NA
7	Will any part of the course delivered in partnership be delivered in a language other than English	YES / NO / NA
8	Will any part of the course delivered in partnership be assessed in a language other than English	YES / NO / NA
9	Will the students count towards AECC University College HESA return?	YES / NO / NA

### PART B

ACTIVITY / DAY-TO-DAY OPERATION		AECC University College	Both	Partner
A	The course has existing professional body recognition at			
B	As a result of this partnership professional body recognition will be sought or valid at			
C	The course will be (or has been) designed by			
D	The course will be delivered by			
E	Taught course delivery takes place at			
F	The credit framework of the course is that of			
G	The assessment regulations of the course are those of			
H	Who will undertake the [first] marking of assessments			
J	Staff teaching on the course have their contract of employment with			
K	Learning resources for the course are provided by			
L	Changes to the course can be proposed by			
M	The home and/or partnership course will include a placement arranged through			
N	The admissions criteria are set by			
O	Student recruitment / interview / selection is carried out by			
P	Final approval in relation to student admissions rests with			
R	Claims for APL/Advanced Standing are considered by			
S	Final approval in relation to APL/Advanced Standing rests with			
T	Enrolment is conducted by/at			
U	Marketing/publicity for the course is organised by			
V	Assessments are set by			

ACTIVITY / DAY-TO-DAY OPERATION		AECC University College	Both	Partner
W	If the partner has a role in setting assessments who has the final authority			
X	If second marking ( <i>as distinct from internal moderation</i> ) is carried out, who by			
Y	Assessment takes place at			
Z	The External Examiner(s) are proposed by			
I	The External Examiner(s) are responsible for this course delivered at			
II	The Assessment Board takes place at			
III	The Award Ceremony takes place at			
IV	The Course Leader is a member of staff of			
VI	The quality management structure/arrangements are those of			
VII	Student feedback is gathered, evaluated and reported on at			
VIII	The course annual report is produced by			
IX	Course-related staff development is conducted by			
X	The regulations for Academic Appeals are those of			
XI	The regulations relating to Academic Misconduct are those of			
XII	The Complaints procedure is that of			
XIII	The Student Disciplinary procedure is that of			

## Appendix 2: Content of contracts for partnerships for franchise and validation arrangements

- Definitions of the roles, responsibilities and obligations of each of the parties.
- Definition of where the partnership will take place and the responsibility for providing/maintaining the premises
- Definition of any powers delegated (or, in the case of joint degrees, shared) in each arrangement (for example, the management of admissions, arrangements for student engagement or the conduct of annual monitoring)
- Clarification as to which regulations and quality assurance processes apply.
- Responsibilities for the recruitment and selection and the enrolment and registration of students
- The services to be provided by each organisation and arrangements for staffing, to ensure that learning opportunities are delivered to the requirements of the degree- awarding body.
- Arrangements relating to the assessment of students and the management of Assessment Boards, including responsibilities for the issue of transcripts
- Arrangements for student discipline, fitness to practice, academic offences, complaints and appeals.
- Specification of the role of external examiners in ensuring that the University College can fulfil its responsibility for the academic standards of the awards.
- Responsibilities for the issue and secure control of award certificates
- Arrangements relating to the maintenance of student and other designated records during the course of the contract, following the termination of the contract and in the event the partner ceases to exist
- The source or location of any quality-related information or statistical data to be produced, for example for a funding council or PSRB, and responsibility for submission of this information.
- The number of students permitted to be recruited onto a course
- Detailed information relating to the management of the arrangement, such as reporting channels
- Arrangements governing the use of the University College's name and logo; and provision for University College oversight of information relating to the arrangement and any associated promotional activity, (with due regard to consumer protection law
- Provisions relating to information produced for current students, with due regard to consumer protection law
- Financial arrangements (often in the form of a Financial Annex to the contract).
- Insurance and indemnity.
- A confidentiality agreement
- Arrangements for ownership of copyright and intellectual property rights.
- Obligations on the parties to comply with all relevant legislation in force (including equal opportunities, bribery, data protection, freedom of information, health and safety, immigration, taxation, bribery, employment law and environmental law) in relation to the partnership
- An obligation on the partner to notify the University College of any change of status or ownership.
- An obligation on the partner to provide the University College with appropriate information about the conduct of the course on request.
- Specification of the law applicable to the contract and the legal jurisdiction under which any disputes would be resolved. (This should normally be English law)
- Exclusivity agreement
- Warranties
- Restrictive covenants
- Limitation of liability
- Appropriate student protection clauses to ensure the preservation of continuity of study through to a mutually agreed point of completion should the partnership terminate. (NOTE: Arrangements should be reflected in student protection plans).
- Provisions to enable either organisation to suspend or withdraw from the contract if the other party fails to fulfil its obligations.
- Procedures for managing and responding to disputes, including escalation, arbitration and provision for seeking legal remedy
- Termination , including the residual obligations to students on termination of the contact, and financial obligations under these circumstances
- Contract term, and procedures for amending the contract and/or for agreeing additional appendices.
- Mechanism for review of the contract.
- Force majeure.