

BPP University – University Policies and Procedures

Partnerships and Collaborations



Scope	Staff
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Purpose	Outlines the University's Policies and Procedures in relation to Partnerships and Collaborations.

Regulatory Mapping

BPP University General Academic Regulations
Section D: Awards and Programmes Framework

BPP University
University Policies and Procedures
Partnerships and Collaborations

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Partnerships and Collaborations Policy sets out to outline the University's approach to approving partners and endorsed providers, the approach the University takes when approving employer partners for work-based learning opportunities, and the approach taken to approve clinical partners for clinical observation opportunities.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the General Academic Regulations (GARs), Part D: Awards and Programmes Framework.

2. Approved Partners and Endorsed Providers

Introduction

2.1. The procedure aims to:

- i. be transparent, robust and responsive;
- ii. allocate time and resources appropriately;
- iii. recognise that the degree of risk varies from one proposal to another and alter the level of scrutiny accordingly;
- iv. address the principles set out in the Apprenticeship funding and performance management rules, Version 4;
- v. address the principles set out in the Quality Assurance Agency's *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*.

Approval Process

2.2. The process aims to adopt a proportionate approach depending on the scope of the proposed collaboration and the level of risk. Consequently, it addresses two aspects of collaboration:

- (1) the approval of an institution as an approved partner or endorsed provider;
- (2) the approval of a specific collaborative venture that involves delivery by an approved partner or support by an endorsed provider.

2.3. The University shall apply its existing policies for the approval of goods or services that support student learning, where a service level agreement is sufficient to ensure appropriate control.

2.4. The University academic staff who are considering the development of a proposal for collaborative provision should seek advice and support from the Academic Quality Team.

2.5. The Office for University Academic Quality will support and guide staff through the formal approval process, which is outlined below. The Office for University Academic Quality will maintain an audit trail to demonstrate that the University has met its own

standards for collaborative provision. Proposals may only be put forward with the knowledge and agreement of the Dean of the relevant School.

Approval Process: Stage One

- 2.6. The procedure for approval is a two-stage process.
- 2.7. Stage 1: the Dean of School¹ shall submit to the Vice-Chancellor, through the Office for University Academic Quality, a proposal. The Vice-Chancellor will evaluate the viability of the proposal and determine whether or not to:
- (a) allow the proposal to proceed to Stage Two of the process; or,
 - (b) refer the proposal back to the Office for University Academic Quality for further development;
 - (c) reject the proposal.
- 2.8. Where the Vice-Chancellor determines to progress the proposal to Stage Two of the approval process, the proposal shall be submitted to the Academic Regulations and Awards Committee (ARA) for information.

Approval Process: Stage Two

- 2.9. Stage 2 is a detailed consideration for full approval. Stage 2 may be sub-divided into the following two processes. It is expected that these will usually happen concurrently:
- (a) the approval of the proposed partner (based on the business case, an assessment of their standing, national context and suitability, and their ability to enter into a legal agreement with the University);
 - (b) the approval of the proposed Specific Collaborative Venture – based on an assessment of the academic case (e.g. pedagogic value, compliance with the UK's *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies* and the QAA's *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*).

Academic Due Diligence

- 2.10. To assure itself that an institution is an appropriate collaborative partner the University shall carry out an 'Academic Due Diligence' investigation which shall be summarised in a report ("Academic Due Diligence Report"). The Office for University Academic Quality shall report to the Vice-Chancellor and the relevant Dean of School on the

¹ In cases where the provision is cross-school the Deans of all affected Schools must support the proposal. Such cross-school initiatives shall be led by the Dean of Academic Quality.

outcome of the due diligence process, summarising the findings, providing a recommendation and attaching the full report. Legal due diligence shall follow as is appropriate in the formation of the contract.

Business Case

2.11. The relevant Dean of School or, in the case of sub-contracted provision, the Director of Professional Apprenticeships shall provide the Vice-Chancellor with a business case assessing the viability of the collaborative activity as a whole. This shall include:

- (a) the awards, programmes (including programme specification), modules or other learning activities under consideration;
- (b) the timescales for implementation;
- (c) the target market and typical student characteristics and behaviours;
- (d) the evidence for the demand for the qualification;
- (e) the evidence for the market for graduates from the qualification;
- (f) the full costs including additional demands on resources, accounted for accurately and fully;
- (g) the financial (direct and indirect) benefits to the University;
- (h) a risk analysis of the collaboration breaking down, and the responsibilities and liabilities of the University in the event that it does.

2.12. The Vice-Chancellor shall then determine whether or not to:

- (1) accept both the Academic Due Diligence report and the Business Case; or,
- (2) refer the application, in whole or part, back to the Office for University Academic Quality for further work; or,
- (3) reject the application.

2.13. Where the Vice-Chancellor determines to accept the application, the Academic Due Diligence report shall be referred to ARA for consideration and comment. The application and the comments of ARA shall be considered for approval by the Board of Directors.

Prospective Partner Approval

- 2.14. Full approval of a prospective partner shall be effected through the approval of the initial, specific collaborative provision sought.
- 2.15. Approved Partner or Endorsed Provider Status shall be subject to annual and periodic review of active provision.

Specific Provision Approval

- 2.16. The process of approval of specific provision (e.g. the deployment of a programme) shall follow the principles and procedures set out in the University's General Academic Regulations and University Policies and Procedures except that the approval process will incorporate an approval event or other form of onsite validation of the provision as approved by the Vice-Chancellor, at the prospective partner's premises and must conclude with the adoption of a legally binding Agreement (see below).
- 2.17. The approval event or onsite validation shall verify that the representations made by the prospective partner are accurate and that the resources to support the collaborative venture are appropriate.
- 2.18. The composition of the University panel for the approval event shall be as set out in the General Academic Regulations, where applicable. Where the partner is well established, is in good standing with the QAA, UKVI, relevant PSRB (such as the NMC), Health and Safety Executive etc., or where informal links already exist between it and the University the requirement for a visit may be waived or the composition of the panel may be amended at the discretion of the Vice-Chancellor in relation to risk and proportionality.

Legal Agreement

- 2.19. Once the Business Case and Academic Due Diligence report has been approved, the Office for University Academic Quality will inform Group Legal Counsel's Office that the necessary stages have been completed and request that an Agreement be drafted appropriate to the Specific Collaborative Venture, and shall at the same time provide Group Legal Counsel with the Due Diligence Report, the Business Case, confirmation details of approval from the Board of Directors and any other relevant information.

- 2.20. The Agreement shall set out the rights and obligations of the parties and shall be signed by the Vice-Chancellor of the University and the Head of the Prospective Partner once the Specific Collaborative Venture has been approved by the Academic Council and the Board of Directors.
- 2.21. Group Legal Counsel will retain the original agreement for the University's files, one copy shall be lodged with Academic Quality for reference during quality assurance and monitoring, and one with the Dean of the School.
- 2.22. The Office for University Academic Quality shall be responsible for maintaining a register of collaborative arrangements. The relevant Dean of School shall be responsible for informing PSRB's, as relevant, of such arrangements and in accordance with relevant regulatory guidance.

Advertising Collaborative Provision

- 2.23. Collaborative provision may only be advertised after all approvals and formal agreements are in place. Information published by third parties regarding collaborative provision should be written in collaboration with the University where possible. In all cases, the information published by collaborative partners must be approved by the University prior to publication.

Monitoring and Review

- 2.24. All collaborative provision shall be reviewed annually and a report provided to the Academic Council. The Office for University Academic Quality will monitor and review:
- (a) all active provision;
 - (b) whether provision is being conducted in line with the contractual terms agreed, or whether there is a need to amend the terms of the contract;
 - (c) whether provision is being conducted in line with that envisaged in the Academic Due Diligence Report; the risk assessment for each collaboration, and updating as necessary;
 - (d) achievement of students on the collaborative programme(s), as compared to other comparable programmes; and,
 - (e) student satisfaction on the collaborative programme(s), as compared to comparable programmes.

Withdrawal, Suspension, or Termination

2.25. The need to withdraw, suspend or terminate Approved Partner or Endorsed Provider status may arise for a number of reasons, including:

- (a) withdrawal or suspension of approval of a relevant programme;
- (b) failure to reach agreement on contractual terms;
- (c) failure to recruit students to enrol to a Specific Collaborative Venture;
- (d) termination of a contract, or a failure to renew a fixed term contract; or
- (e) quality issues identified through annual monitoring, External/University Examiner reports, Programme teams, Quality Assurance Agency reports, Ofsted or Skills Funding Agency reports, or other external bodies.
- (f) Where a School seeks to withdraw Approved Partner or Endorsed Provider status the relevant Dean must seek to protect the interests of students enrolled on a Specific Collaborative Venture to ensure any impact on their learning experience is minimised.
- (g) Where Approved Partner or Endorsed Provider status is withdrawn, suspended or terminated, the Dean of the relevant School within BPP University must communicate any such withdrawal, suspension or termination to continuing students and advise them of the alternative or transitional arrangements to enable them to complete their studies

Automatic Suspension

2.26. Approved Partner or Endorsed Provider status will automatically be suspended where:

- (a) a legal agreement has not been signed within twelve months of Academic Council approval of a Specific Collaborative Venture;
- (b) no students have enrolled on a Specific Collaborative Venture within twelve months of signature of a legal agreement; or
- (c) the approval of a relevant programme is suspended or withdrawn.
- (d) For the avoidance of doubt, where a Partner is Approved or a Provider is Endorsed in relation to more than one Specific Collaborative Venture, the automatic suspension of approval in relation to one Specific Collaborative Venture does not impact on the approval in relation to other Specific Collaborative Ventures.

Non-Automatic Suspension or Withdrawal

- 2.27. Where a School seeks to withdraw Approved Partner or Endorsed Provider status, the relevant Dean must submit a report to the Dean of Academic Quality, Policy & Outcomes, which will be reviewed and submitted to the Secretary of ARA, setting out the reasons and any transitional arrangements for students.
- 2.28. Where a contract has been terminated (by either party), or a fixed-term contract has expired and the University is not seeking to renew the contract, the Dean of the relevant School, or in the case of cross-School provision, the Deans of the relevant Schools, must jointly submit a report (on the prescribed form) to the Dean of Academic Quality, Policy & Outcomes within three months of the termination or expiry.
- 2.29. Where issues of quality are identified in relation to a Specific Collaborative Venture, the Vice-Chancellor may immediately suspend Approved Partner or Endorsed Provider status.
- 2.30. Where an Approved Partner or Endorsed Provider whose approval is suspended under paragraph 33 is approved in relation to more than one Specific Collaborative Venture, the suspension will be in relation to all provision, unless expressly specified otherwise.
- 2.31. Following suspension, the Dean of Academic Quality, Policy & Outcomes must conduct an urgent review of provision and the relevant Dean, or relevant Deans of Schools, must either:
- (a) seek withdrawal of the approval; or
 - (b) seek re-approval by the Academic Council of Approved Partner or Endorsed Provider status.

Effect of Suspension of Approval

- 2.32. Where Approved Partner or Endorsed Provider status is suspended, no legal agreement may be signed or new students enrolled onto the Specific Collaborative Venture, without re-approval from the Academic Council.
- 2.33. For the avoidance of doubt, where students are enrolled on a Specific Collaborative Venture, suspension of Approved Partner or Endorsed Provider status does not remove the requirement of parties to perform any contractual obligations.

3. Approval of Employer Partners for Work-Based Learning Opportunities

Principles

- 3.1. Work-based learning is where an individual is an employee and as a part of that employment is additionally enrolled on a programme of study within the University.
- 3.2. The University's approval process for Work-Based Learning opportunities:
- (a) seeks to ensure that the University only approves opportunities with appropriate employer partners;
 - (b) recognises that all employment situations are different, but will aim to ensure that a student's specific employment situation at the time of enrolment provides the opportunity for them to achieve the relevant learning outcomes of their programme or module(s);
 - (c) requires that the employer provides students with adequate time to undertake their studies as well as their tasks as employees;
 - (d) ensures that students are recognised as both employees and learners;
 - (e) ensures that commercial considerations do not undermine academic standards; and
 - (f) complies with the principles for all collaborative activity as defined in the GARs, Section D.

Approval Process

Authority

- 3.3. Specific work-based learning opportunities shall be approved by the Dean of the relevant School, and in accordance with the principles outlined here and on completion

of the specified documentation. The Office for University Academic Quality shall be responsible for monitoring the process and reporting annually to the Academic Council.

- 3.4. Whether an opportunity falls within the definition of 'Work-Based Learning' and should be approved under these regulations will be determined by the Office for University Academic Quality.
- 3.5. Where a partnership is a mixture of both Work-Based Learning and other collaborative arrangements, the approval process outlined Section 2 of this policy will be followed.

Job Role Review

- 3.6. The School must assure itself that the role in which a work-based student will be employed will enable the student to undertake tasks which are relevant to the programme or module(s) of study, and will provide opportunities for the achievement of the learning outcomes of the programme or module(s).
- 3.7. Although the specific tasks that a student may undertake in the workplace throughout the programme may not be identifiable at this stage, the general availability of tasks which would be suitable at the requisite level(s) for the programme should be identified.
- 3.8. The School shall ensure that the person undertaking the job role review has sufficient knowledge of the relevant programme, the FHEQ and the relevant industry standards to make sound determinations of the job role's suitability.
- 3.9. Where there is more than one role, this review should be undertaken for each role.
- 3.10. Where more than one person will undertake the same role, the availability of sufficient tasks to meet the educational needs of all students should be established.
- 3.11. The outcomes of the job role review should be recorded and agreed by both the School and the employer.

Student Support

- 3.12. All students should be supported in their work-based learning by their employer and by the University. This will include:
 - (a) for the employer:
 - i. providing appropriate mechanisms to support the employee as a learner, as distinct from line management, e.g. through a work-based mentor or, in large organisations, by a dedicated learning and development team; and

- ii. allowing employees sufficient time to participate in University sessions, to undertake personal study or attend examinations and allowing students to undertake tasks, as agreed in the job role review, at appropriate times and in a progressive and developmental way.
- (b)for the University: providing appropriate mechanisms to support the student whilst in work, which may include flexible access to the University (electronic and/or physical), site visits, telephone calls and/or electronic support, whether academic or pastoral.
- i. Mechanisms for student support should be agreed prior to contracting and documented in the formal contract/memorandum of understanding.

Employer Checks

- 3.13. The School shall ensure that the proposed employer partner completes the due diligence questionnaire and shall obtain sufficient information to satisfy itself that:
- (a) the proposed employer partner is financially sound and is likely to continue in business for the duration of any enrolled students' programme of study; and
 - (b) the proposed employer partner does, and is likely to continue to, comply with all relevant health and safety and equality and diversity laws in the United Kingdom; and
 - (c) the proposed employer partner has all permissions in place to undertake the area of practice in which it is engaged and that there are no investigations, sanctions, negative judgments or other similar actions being taken by a relevant professional or statutory regulatory body (PSRB); and
 - (d) the proposed employer partner has not unsuccessfully provided other similar opportunities to students; and
 - (e) there are no other reasons which would make it inappropriate to offer a programme of study in partnership with the proposed employer partner.
- 3.14. The outcomes of the employer checks should be recorded by the School on the approved template.

Resignation, Redundancy, Dismissal and Programme Non-progression

- 3.15. The effect of resignation, redundancy or dismissal on the student's ability to continue on the programme and the possibility of transfer to another programme should be

identified and communicated to applicants before they are registered on the programme.

- 3.16. The effect of failure on a module or programme and of non-progression on a programme should be established with the employer and communicated to applicants before they are registered on the programme.

Concerns and Referral Procedure

- 3.17. Where there are any concerns arising from the approval process, the relevant matter should be referred to the Office for University Academic Quality prior to contracting. The Dean of Academic Quality, Policy & Outcomes may either:
- (a) allow the partnership to proceed to contract, subject to requirements; or
 - (b) refer the proposal to the Academic Regulations and Awards Committee for consideration.
- 3.18. Where it is proposed that 50 or more students will be enrolled with a specific employer (across all years), the approval documentation should be sent to the Office for University Academic Quality for review prior to contracting.
- 3.19. Where the proposed activity will take place outside the United Kingdom, the approval documentation should be sent to the Office for University Academic Quality for review prior to contracting.

Agreement with Employer

- 3.20. Prior to student recruitment, the University must enter into a formal agreement with the employer. This should usually be on the agreed standard terms and conditions, and the contract must be signed by the Vice-Chancellor.
- 3.21. Any variations to the standard agreement must be referred to the Dean of Academic Quality, Policy & Outcomes and Group Legal Counsel for approval.
- 3.22. If the employer partner is outside the United Kingdom, the contract must be referred to Group Legal Counsel prior to signing.
- 3.23. All signed contracts must be lodged with the Office for University Academic Quality and Group Legal Counsel within seven (7) days of signing.

Student Recruitment

- 3.24. Where employers recruit students specifically to join the programme:

- 3.25. Recruitment to the programme will ordinarily be undertaken as part of the employment recruitment process by the employer; and
- 3.26. The employer must be made aware of any admission criteria imposed by the University and must refer any preferred candidates who do not meet those criteria, to the relevant School; and
- 3.27. For the avoidance of doubt, all students must, as well as becoming an employee of the employer partner, enrol as a student of the University, prior to commencing the programme.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

- 3.28. Ensuring the standards of all learning opportunities on programmes remains the responsibility of the enrolling School, even where the learning is undertaken in the workplace.
- 3.29. Schools must therefore have adequate mechanisms through formal feedback from students, site visits and meetings with employer partners, to ensure the quality of all their partnerships and the learning opportunities provided.
- 3.30. Centralised review will be conducted on behalf of the Academic Council by the Office for University Academic Quality.
- 3.31. The review will include:
 - (a) receiving a completed Checklist for each partnership to demonstrate that the approval process has been undertaken;
 - (b) seeing a sample of the full Approval Record (minimum 10%) to ensure that decisions to contract are being made on sound information and on the basis of academic judgments alone, where this is required;
 - (c) undertaking visits to an appropriate sample of potential or existing partnerships;
 - (d) meeting with students, practitioners, mentors and employers, as well as receiving SSLC minutes, external examiner reports and progression and achievement data (including a breakdown by programme, employer and cohort) for the purpose of conducting Annual Review.

4. Approval of Clinical Partners for Clinical Observation Opportunities

- 4.1. A Clinical Observation occurs where the University provides an opportunity for a student to enter clinical premises (whether in the UK or overseas) to observe clinical practice.

Principles

- 4.2. The University's approval process for Clinical Observation Opportunities:
- (a) seeks to be proportionate to the risks posed;
 - (b) recognises that all clinical practice settings are different, but practice must be provided at a consistent level; and
 - (c) complies with the principles for all collaborative activity as defined in the GARs, Part D

Approval Process

Authority

- 4.3. Specific clinical observation opportunities shall be approved by the Dean of the relevant School, and in accordance with the principles outlined here and on completion of the specified documentation. The University Office for Academic Quality shall be responsible for monitoring the process and reporting annually to the Academic Council.
- 4.4. Whether an opportunity falls within the definition of 'Clinical Observation Opportunity' and should be approved under these regulations will be determined by the Dean of Academic Quality, Policy & Outcomes, or nominee.
- 4.5. Where a partnership is a mixture of both Clinical Observation and other collaborative arrangements, the approval process outlined in Section 2 of this policy will be followed, instead.

Approval of Clinical Observation Opportunities

- 4.6. The School shall obtain sufficient information to satisfy itself that:
- (a) the clinical practice in which the observation will take place is suitable, including being in good standing with any relevant regulator; and
 - (b) the clinical practitioner that students will observe is suitable, including registration with any relevant professional body; and

- (c) the proposed employer partner has not unsuccessfully provided other similar opportunities to students; and
 - (d) there are no other reasons which would make it inappropriate to offer a programme of study in partnership with the proposed employer partner.
- 4.7. The outcomes of the checks should be recorded by the School on the approved template.

Agreement with Clinical Observation Practice

- 4.8. Prior to students undertaking clinical observation, the University must enter into a formal agreement with the practice. A freelance lecturer contract for the provision of academic teaching with a practitioner who will be providing the clinical observation opportunity at the clinical practice will be deemed sufficient.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

- 4.9. Ensuring the standards of all learning opportunities on programmes remains the responsibility of the School.
- 4.10. Schools must therefore have adequate mechanisms through formal feedback from students, site visits and meetings with practitioners to ensure the quality of all their clinical observation opportunities.
- 4.11. Centralised review will be conducted on behalf of the Academic Council by the Office for University Academic Quality.
- 4.12. The review will include:
- (a) receiving a completed Checklist for each clinical observation opportunity to demonstrate that the approval process has been undertaken;
 - (b) undertaking visits to an appropriate sample of potential or existing clinical observation practices;
 - (c) meeting with students, practitioners, mentors and employers, as well as receiving SSLC minutes, external examiner reports, and progression and achievement data (including a breakdown by programme, employer and cohort) for the purpose of conducting Annual Review.

Policy Revision History

Version Number	Description	Author	Reviewed by	Date
1.0	Revised and re-presented policy following first stage review of regulatory framework	Director of Academic Governance & Proctor	Dean of Academic Quality & Policy	July 2022
2.0	Realignment with revised GARs	Director of Academic Governance & Proctor	Dean of Academic Quality & Policy	July 2023