Document Q10

PARTNERSHIPS POLICY

Approved by Academic Board – February 2020

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Partnerships Policy

1  The University of Law’s Partnership Policy has been informed by the Quality Assurance Agency’s (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education, specifically the Advice and Guidance on Partnerships and Work Based Learning. The QAA’s Quality Code is the definitive reference point for all UK higher education institutions and sets out how academic standards are established and maintained and how the quality of learning opportunities are assured and enhanced. This policy sits within the University’s Quality and Standards Code which provides a suite of policies designed to safeguard the academic standards of the University and to assure the quality of learning opportunities offered; this policy should therefore be read in conjunction with other relevant policies within the Code.

Introduction

2  The University of Law (the University) recognises that central to this policy is the University’s responsibility for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name or in any way associated with the University and the quality of learning opportunities for students. This policy sets out the scope of the University’s responsibilities for the management of arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with others, and also the principles under which the University develops and manages collaboration with others.

Responsibility for this policy

3  Ultimate responsibility for the development of transparent and effective processes and procedures associated with the maintenance of standards and quality assurance of academic provision and overseeing their application lies with the Academic Board.

Expectation

4  The University takes ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities for all its programmes, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them. Arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the University are implemented securely and managed effectively.

Key aims and principles

5  The University ensures that students whose learning opportunities are delivered via arrangements with other organisations are treated in the same way as the University’s students, and manages the risks inherent in such delivery to that end.

6  The University’s arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with other organisations are:
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6.1 conducive to meeting the strategic aims and objectives of the University;

6.2 appropriately resourced;

6.3 delivered only via methods of learning, teaching and assessment with which the University approves;

6.4 confined to partner organisations, whose educational objectives, or shared understanding about the ethos, culture, expectations and standards of higher education are compatible with those of the University;

6.5 confined to partner organisations which are securely founded, governed, financed and managed and have the legal capacity to enter into an arrangement with the University, and have therefore been subject to a transparent Risk Assessment process within the University’s appropriate committee;

6.6 In entering into arrangements with others, the University ensures that financial or other considerations do not jeopardise the integrity of academic quality or standards or risk damage to the University’s reputation. The business case for the collaboration is considered separately from the approval of the academic proposal, and;

6.7 Subject to periodic reviews

Procedural Approach

7 This policy applies to the management of all learning opportunities leading or contributing to the award of academic credit or a qualification that are delivered, assessed or supported through an arrangement with one or more organisations other than the University.

8 This policy encompasses a wide spectrum of arrangements which the University may choose to undertake. This includes:

8.1 joint awards (awarded jointly by two or more awarding bodies);

8.2 dual awards/double or multiple awards (separate qualifications awarded by each awarding body involved in a joint programme);

8.3 delivery of other credits and qualifications with others (including apprenticeships);

8.4 validated or franchised programmes, or articulation arrangements, delivered with non-awarding bodies;

8.5 workplace learning which might include the delivery of individual modules or elements of programmes;
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8.6 branch or satellite campuses, and ‘flying faculty’ arrangements which include aspects of collaboration (such as provision of resources or employment of local administrative/clerical staff through arrangements with another organisation);

8.7 credit-rating of learning/training/continuing professional development provided by employers/other organisations;

8.8 study or work abroad, including exchanges and student mobility programmes;

8.9 consultative arrangements;

8.10 provision of appropriate learning support, resources or specialist facilities;

8.11 distance learning and online delivery/massive open online courses (MOOCs) involving work with delivery organisations or support providers.

Responsibility for, and equivalence of, academic standards

9 The University takes responsibility for the quality of learning opportunities provided in its name, and the academic standards of all awards and academic credit granted in its name. This responsibility is never delegated.

10 The University places great importance upon ensuring that the academic standards of all its awards, credits and qualifications granted in its name are carefully secured. Where learning opportunities are delivered with others and lead to an award, qualification or the grant of academic credit, the University ensures that the prospective partner organisations are able to demonstrate that they meet the Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, notably the Expectations, Practices and Guiding Principles defined in the Advice and Guidance on Partnerships of).

11 Where learning opportunities are delivered with others, the University ensures that the standards are equivalent to the standards set for other awards conferred in the University’s name at the same level and that any departure from usual United Kingdom benchmarks and levels is expressly acknowledged. The responsibility for ensuring equivalence of standards applies both to whole programmes and individual modules, irrespective of where the actual delivery of the learning takes place or who delivers it.

Policies and procedures

12 All arrangements for the delivery of learning opportunities with others must be developed, agreed and managed in accordance with this policy (and its associated protocols).

13 It may not always be obvious what types of delivery of learning opportunities fall within the scope of the Quality Code and as a result, the University’s Partnerships
Committee has devised a checklist to assist in analysing prospective learning opportunities and establishing whether they may fall within the scope of the Code. The full procedure is located in the relevant protocols document.

**Register – Managing Higher Education Provision with Others**

14 The University maintains a register of its partnership arrangements. The Register is confidential and commercially sensitive and there are restrictions on its circulation. Those with access to the Register should not copy or share its details with any other individual or organisation (internal or external to the University). Permission to share any contents of the Register must be sought from the Chair of the Partnerships Committee. It is presented to and reviewed by the Executive Management Board and by the Academic Board on at least an annual basis. The register includes the following details in respect of each arrangement:

14.1 Names and location of the partner;

14.2 programmes approved with each partner;

14.3 programme/FHEQ level (if appropriate);

14.4 date of approval of partnership arrangement;

14.5 date at which due for re-approval;

14.6 key contact at the University;

14.7 key contact at the partner;

14.8 initial risk categorisation.

15 The University informs all relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRB) (which have approved or recognised a programme that is the subject of a possible or actual partnership arrangement. It obtains any necessary PSRB approvals, including those required in other jurisdictions.

16 The University appreciates that the financial and reputational risks associated with arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with other organisations can be considerable. The University ensures that such arrangements are financially viable and feasible, and are fully costed and priced accordingly. In particular the University:

16.1 assesses the cost of continuing provision of the programme if the arrangement fails;

16.2 assesses whether the University's financial management arrangements are strong enough to manage the risks effectively and ensures that the financial arrangements do not jeopardise the integrity of its academic standards, the
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quality of the provision or the interests of students.

17 The University ensures that appropriate resources, including staff with the relevant skills, knowledge and experience, are in place to assess the risk of each arrangement from the outset and thereafter periodically. It also adopts appropriate and proportionate safeguards in respect of any risks identified.

Selection of other organisations

18 The University carries out appropriate and proportionate due diligence enquiries upon all prospective partner organisations. The due diligence enquiries are conducted separately from any enquiries required for academic approval of a proposal by the Partnership Committee.

19 A Due Diligence Checklist in relation to the proposed partner organisation is completed in accordance with detailed protocols. The nature and extent of the due diligence approach is dependent upon the nature of the proposed arrangement for delivering learning opportunities. The purpose of the due diligence is:

19.1 to ensure that the prospective partner organisation has fulfilled the aims and principles listed in paragraphs 5 and 6, and;

19.2 to ensure the educational objectives or a shared understanding about the ethos, culture, expectations and standards of higher education which are compatible with those of the University.

Written Agreements

20 The University confirms in writing all arrangements for the delivery of learning opportunities with others. The type and content of documentation depends upon the scale and nature of the proposed arrangement. All written agreements are drafted by the University’s legal department and approved by the Partnerships Committee.

21 A written agreement may only be signed by the authorised representatives of the University and the partner organisation. The written agreement covers all key provisions and must be signed in advance of the start of any arrangement.

Admissions

22 The University recognises the importance that the quality of its admissions procedures plays in maintaining the overall quality of the University’s academic activities. The University has an Admissions Policy, which has been informed by the QAA’s Quality Code for Higher Education. The University’s Admissions Policy may not, however, be applicable to all partnership arrangements, depending upon the particular nature of the arrangement to be entered into.

23 The University retains responsibility for approving entry requirements and ensures that clear admissions criteria are agreed and recorded through its Admissions
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Committee, which is a committee of the Academic Board. Admissions criteria must be consistent with the University’s own Admissions Policy. Each party must be clear as to where responsibility lies for both admissions (the decision-making and management of admissions process) and registration of students. Students are informed as to where responsibility for admissions and registration lies.

Managing and quality assuring arrangements with others

Assuring academic standards and the quality of programmes and awards

24 Responsibility within the University for developing the processes and procedures associated with the quality assurance and maintenance of standards of academic provision and overseeing their application has been delegated to the Academic Board and its committees.

25 The University is responsible for retaining control of the academic standards of awards where learning opportunities are delivered or supported by others. In such cases, the University ensures that arrangements, at an appropriate level, are in place to maintain academic standards and both assure the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students and ensure that the outcomes of the programmes or modules delivered through other organisations are assessed at an appropriate level.

26 Where the partnership arrangement results in an award from the University, then in such circumstances, the University ensures that the partner organisation is subject to the University’s quality assurance procedures and processes. A degree of flexibility as to procedures and processes may be appropriate depending upon the nature and extent of the learning opportunity to be delivered. Partner organisations are expected to meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

27 In the case of articulation agreements, the University confirms that the programme from which students progress is at an appropriate level to articulate with the designated entry point to the University’s programme(s).

28 The University's Academic Board approves, monitors and reviews the academic quality and standards of programmes or modules delivered or supported by or with others which lead to an award. In such cases, approval is undertaken by the Programme Approval Committee of the Academic Board and an annual report is received by the Academic Board from each partner organisation.

Periodic Review of Partnerships (PRP)

29 The University undertakes a periodic review of partnerships (PRP) in line with its Periodic Review of Partnerships Protocol.

30 The University's Partnerships Committee monitors on an ongoing basis the implications of any legislative and regulatory framework changes on a partnership.
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31 From time to time, the University may delegate operational matters to a partner organisation. The University, however, retains overall responsibility and, through the auspices of the Academic Board, regularly reviews matters to reassure itself that any delegated responsibility is being properly discharged.

32 The Chair of the University’s Partnerships Committee reports to the Academic Board on a regular basis on the management of quality assurance procedures relating to partnership provision. The University, through its Academic Board, regularly monitors and reviews academic quality and standards of such arrangements.

33 In circumstances where a partner organisation is selected, but subsequently found to be under-performing or failing to meet the terms of any formal written agreement, the University takes all necessary steps to address matters with the partner organisation. If matters remain unresolved from the point of view of the University, then the University takes steps to end the relationship, as set out in detailed protocols and in accordance with the terms of the written and legally binding agreement or other document between the parties.

34 The University retains responsibility for ensuring that students admitted to a programme who wish to complete it under their awarding authority can do so in the event that a delivery organisation or support provider or partner withdraws from an arrangement or that the degree-awarding body decides to terminate an arrangement.

35 Periodically, due diligence checks are renewed to ensure that the partner organisation continues to have the capacity to meet its obligations.

36 To safeguard quality and standards, the University ensures that all staff engaged in the delivery of such provision, both at the University and the partner organisation, are suitably qualified, properly trained and developed; and works in association with partner organisations to monitors and review staff performance.

**Information for students and partner organisations**

37 In appropriate cases, where the partnership arrangement results in any award from the University, then to ensure that all stakeholders (including students, potential students and employers) are fully satisfied as to the identity of the organisation with which they are registered and the nature and level of any award made through an arrangement with a partner organisation, a programme specification is made available to them.

38 The University ensures that partner organisations are provided with all information necessary for the effective delivery of the agreed provision. Where the partnership arrangement relies upon the provision of relevant programme or module information from the University, the University ensures that this information is made available to the partner organization.

39 Students not registered with the University are also provided with information on the following, as appropriate:
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39.1 their entitlement to services and how to access services;

39.2 their relationship to the University;

39.3 the University’s Disciplinary Policy and Regulations (if appropriate);

39.4 the University’s Complaints and Academic Appeals Policy (if appropriate);

40 In cases of provision resulting in a University award, the University provides registered students and staff with a designated link tutor. This helps to ensure there is a single point of contact through which enquiries can be monitored and co-ordinated.

41 The University monitors and regularly reviews information provided to prospective students and registered students by the partner organisation.

Assessment requirements

42 The University is responsible for ensuring that all assessments for programmes delivered through or with others are conducted consistently, at the appropriate level and in accordance with University Assessment Regulations and Protocols. The University ensures from the outset that, where relevant, the partner organisation understands and follows the University’s Assessment Regulations and Protocols (as appropriate), thereby maintaining academic standards and assuring the security of assessments to be delivered by the partner organisation.

43 Where required, joint Assessment Regulations will be developed and approved in advance of the start of delivery. These will be reviewed as part of regular monitoring.

44 The University recognises the important role played by external examiners in assuring and, indeed enhancing, quality and standards on its programmes. The University is responsible for appointing external examiners for all its programmes, including those delivered by or with others. External examiners are appointed in accordance with the University’s External Examiner Policy and the University’s ‘Criteria for the Appointment of External Examiners’. External examiners of programmes delivered by or with others are fully briefed to enable them to carry out their duties effectively.

Certificates and Transcripts

45 The University recognises that certificates and transcripts are extremely valuable documents and can be the subject of theft or forgery. The University takes security of certificates and transcripts, and the authority to issue these important documents very seriously. When the University is the awarding institution, it is solely responsible for awarding certificates and transcripts relating to programmes delivered through partnership arrangements. The University maintains all records and exercises proper control over all certificates and transcripts that are issued in its name.

46 The University ensures that all certificates and transcripts relating to partnership provision record the name and location of the partner organisation engaged
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in the delivery of the programme. In the case of joint awards, the University lists the names of all awarding institutions involved in the granting of the award and the certificates and transcripts bear the signature of the competent authorities in each institution.

Publicity and Marketing

47 The University retains control over publicity and marketing arrangements with the partner organisation. This includes oversight by the University of all public information regarding the arrangement and the use of the University's logo and branded content. The University implements procedures on the approval of all marketing materials and marketing-related communications to be used in relation to Partnership arrangements.

Monitoring and evaluation of the policy

48 Responsibility for reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the Partnership Policy lies initially with the Partnerships Committee. Formal responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of this provision lies with the Academic Board.

Date for next review

September 2023
## Version history

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