



QAA

A large graphic composed of several interlocking puzzle pieces. The central piece is a dark grey circle containing the text 'UK Quality Code for Higher Education'. Surrounding it are several other pieces in shades of grey and green, some of which are partially cut off by the edges of the page.

UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Part B: Assuring and enhancing
academic quality

Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements

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Introduction

The following supersedes Section 2A of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), and forms a Chapter of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). As when published in 2010, the amplifications to the second edition of Section 2 (2004) are given below in red outlined boxes.

Section 2B of the *Code of practice* is now published in *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching* of the Quality Code.

The Quality Code

The Quality Code is the definitive reference point for all those involved in delivering higher education which leads to an award from or is validated by a UK higher education provider. It makes clear what institutions are required to do, what they can expect of each other, and what the general public can expect of all higher education providers. These Expectations express key matters of principle that the higher education community has identified as important for the assurance of quality and academic standards.

Each Chapter of the Quality Code comprises a series of Indicators which higher education providers have agreed reflect sound practice, and through which institutions can demonstrate that they are meeting the relevant Expectations.

About this Chapter

Each Indicator has been developed by QAA through an extensive process of consultation with higher education providers; their representative bodies; the National Union of Students; professional, statutory and regulatory bodies; and other interested parties. Indicators are not designed to be used as a checklist; they are intended to help institutions reflect on and develop their regulations, procedures and practices to demonstrate that the Expectations in the Quality Code are being met.

Each Indicator is numbered and printed in bold and is supported by an explanatory note giving more information about the statement's purpose and context.

Introduction to this Chapter

In this Chapter of the Quality Code, collaborative provision denotes educational provision leading to an award, or to specific credit toward an award, of an awarding institution delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation (see Appendix 2).

In the past, the majority of collaborative provision tended to involve a higher education institution (HEI) as the awarding institution, with another publicly-funded education provider, or an overseas education provider, as a partner. Contemporary higher education (HE) involves a much wider range of collaborative partners and arrangements. Activities now include joint, dual/double or multiple awards, awarded

in conjunction with one or more awarding bodies; a much larger number of private providers, particularly at pre-HE and Foundation stages prior to admission to undergraduate or taught postgraduate programmes; non-academic providers (or those whose purpose is not primarily education); employer-responsive provision; and a greatly increased transnational education portfolio, including off-campus provision. This wider spectrum of collaborative activity provides a continuum of opportunities for learning delivery, assessment, learner support and the location of learning. Collaborative arrangements range from the delivery of whole programmes on the one hand to elements of programmes or individual modules, or credit-rating, on the other. Institutions may also collaborate in providing alternative sites or contexts for learning, or perhaps in providing support or resources for learning. The purpose of this amplification of Section 2 is to reflect on how individual Indicators or their explanations might relate to this wider range of collaborative arrangements now in existence, and how Indicators might appropriately be applied as befits the arrangement in question.

The inclusion in this definition of 'specific credit toward an award' has raised questions of the type 'how much specific credit is needed before this code is applied' to a particular collaborative arrangement. Such questions are for an institution itself to answer by using this Chapter of the Quality Code as a reference point against which to consider and test its own arrangements. There are no boundaries to the applicability of a particular Chapter of the Quality Code. Instead, QAA wishes to emphasise that the Quality Code as a whole should be regarded as a reference to widely agreed approaches to good practice in the relevant areas, not as a document specifying required compliance by institutions. What is important is that institutions should carefully consider whether and how an Indicator should be applied in their own particular circumstances, bearing in mind the explanation of the Indicator given in the Quality Code. It is equally important that the Indicators should then be used in a way that can provide the institution with justified confidence in the effectiveness of its management of the quality of its provision and the security of its academic standards.

This Chapter of the Quality Code is based on the key principle that collaborative provision, wherever and however organised, should widen learning opportunities without prejudice either to the academic standard of the award or the quality of what is offered to students. Further, the arrangements for assuring quality and standards should be as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as those for programmes provided wholly within the responsibility of a single institution. The assurance of quality and standards in collaborative arrangements creates particular challenges for awarding institutions in the management of the potential risks associated with the complexity of such arrangements. This chapter of the Quality Code is intended to help institutions to manage these risks effectively, and to ensure that the quality of their collaborative provision and the academic standard of the awards to which such provision lead are adequately safeguarded.

UK HEIs' collaborative links encompass many types of organisation in the UK and overseas, are frequently complex, and often reflect the slow maturing of long-standing and successful partnerships. Over the years, levels of trust may have developed which might appear to render some of the more formal aspects of this chapter of the Quality Code's Indicators unnecessary. The best of these mature relationships are characterised by equity, integrity and honesty. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that the

formal responsibility of an awarding body for its awards and qualifications places upon it an obligation to make certain that its academic standards are secure. This does suggest a conscious formality in some aspects of the management of a collaborative relationship, which may sometimes seem to run counter to the notion of the equality of the partners. But the formality offers protection to all, students as well as collaborating organisations, and its adoption in this spirit should help to bolster, not undermine, mutual confidence in the operation of partnerships.

Outcomes vs. process

The publication of a revised version of Section 2 of the *Code of practice* in 2004 took account of the development, since the first edition of the UK-wide Academic Infrastructure (1999). In particular, references to the equivalence of aspects of collaborative provision were largely replaced by making use of the reference framework offered by the Academic Infrastructure. With this new approach, there is no longer a need to find ways of expressing the equivalence of collaborative programmes to UK-wide expectations for quality of provision and academic standards of awards. This approach removes the need to categorise different types of collaborative arrangement by a type of process, such as franchise or validation, or to refer to different types of collaborative relationships, such as accreditation or articulation. Overall, the revision may be characterised as moving from the process-based style of the earlier version to a more outcome-based approach. The focus now is on ends rather than means. Institutions that have made use of the earlier version in developing their quality assurance procedures will see that the basics remain in the content of the revised version but will, it is hoped, appreciate the flexibility now offered by the greater attention to outcomes.

That having been said, it would be a pity not to take the opportunity to consider equivalence of learning opportunities when collaborative provision does have an equivalent home programme leading to the same named award. In such cases, an institution could well find value in considering how the learning opportunities available to students compare between the collaborative provision and the 'home' provision. For example, in comparing the appropriateness of physical learning resources, the question to consider is not whether there are identical resources available to the two groups of students, but whether one group is being significantly disadvantaged in learning opportunities relative to the other (taking into account different learning contexts and environments). If so, this suggests that there could be a difference in process that might impact upon equivalence of outcome and should be investigated further.

Serial arrangements

A serial arrangement is one in which an awarding institution enters into a collaborative arrangement with a partner organisation which, in turn, uses that arrangement as a basis for establishing collaborations of its own with third parties, but offering the awarding institution's awards. QAA's experience in audits of collaborative provision leads it to believe that the safeguards offered by the Indicators in this chapter cannot be fully provided through serial arrangements that limit the awarding institution's ability to control the academic standards and quality of the provision which leads to its awards. If it is to discharge its awarding responsibility properly, and to be in a

position to manage potential risk, an awarding institution should have an effective link, as described in Indicators 19 and 20, to the assessment of the academic achievement of students on all programmes that lead to its awards. While this responsibility may be readily manageable through a direct relationship with a partner organisation, it becomes much more difficult once the chain of responsibility is extended. Serial arrangements can seriously jeopardise an awarding institution's ability to know what is being done in its name.

Language of study and assessment

Some awarding institutions choose to offer collaborative programmes in languages other than those in which they ordinarily work. While this may extend the range of students they can reach, it raises important questions about the capacity of an awarding institution to satisfy itself about the quality of the provision that leads to its awards. Similarly, assessment of students' work in a foreign language poses serious challenges to the ability of an institution to be in proper control of the academic standards of awards made in its name. Institutions which do permit assessment in languages other than those in which they ordinarily work will need to be confident that they have a continuing availability of external examiners who are both able to work easily in all the languages concerned and fully trained to perform their role effectively. Any intervention between the examiner(s) and the work produced by the student, such as language translation, introduces another level of risk in making reliable and valid judgments about student achievement. An awarding institution will need to be especially vigilant in ensuring that students are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged by the use of translations of assessed work.¹

Preface to the amplified version of Section 2 (2010)

Background

Since publication of the second edition of Section 2 of the QAA *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)* in 2004, there has been an increase in the types of collaborative activity and a diversification of the range of partners with which higher education institutions (HEIs) engage. As a result of these developments in collaborative provision, and, in particular, the publication by QAA of *Employer-responsive provision survey: A reflective report*;² the two colloquia on joint degrees held by QAA in 2005 and 2006; and the recommendations of the Universities UK (UUK) research report *The growth of private and for-profit higher education providers in the UK*,³ QAA decided to review whether Section 2 remained fit for purpose.

¹ Institutions may find it useful to refer to the QAA publication *Guidelines for higher education institutions in Wales for effective practice in examining and assessing in a language other than the language of tuition* www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/guidelines-assessing-Welsh.aspx which contains useful advice on a related matter.

² *Employer-responsive provision survey: A reflective report* is available at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Employer-responsive-provision-survey---a-reflective-report.aspx>

³ *The growth of private and for-profit higher education providers in the UK* is available at: www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/Privateandforprofitproviders.aspx.

The changing context

Prior to 2004, the majority of collaborative provision tended to involve a HEI as the awarding institution, with another publicly-funded education provider or an overseas education provider as a partner, typically collaborating in an articulation arrangement or a validated or franchised relationship for taught programmes. Contemporary higher education involves a much wider range of collaborative partners and arrangements. These have developed both as institutions have increased their stake in a global marketplace, and also as Government has progressively sought to accommodate new forms of provision and types of provider to widen participation, to promote lifelong learning and to increase student employability and third-stream funding by promoting partnerships with business and employers. Alongside these initiatives, the Bologna Process has facilitated the development of joint programmes within Europe. As a consequence, institutions are now likely to have broader and more diverse portfolios of collaborative provision which, alongside more traditional arrangements, embrace:

- validated or franchised programmes, or articulation arrangements, delivered in collaboration with non-awarding bodies (typically publicly funded)
- joint, dual/double or multiple awards awarded in conjunction with one or more awarding bodies (nationally or internationally)
- collaboration with private providers, which includes both:
 - programmes leading to awards
 - study at pre-HE and Foundation stages, prior to admission to undergraduate programmes or as preparation for taught postgraduate programmes.
- non-academic providers (or those whose purpose is not primarily education) including employers
- a wider range of employer-responsive provision, which might involve delivery of individual modules or elements of programmes only, or which might involve using the workplace as a site of learning
- a greatly increased transnational education portfolio (including branch campuses which may have aspects of collaborative provision)
- inter-institutional collaboration on the delivery of Gaelic and Welsh-medium provision
- collaboration on research degree provision.

This wider spectrum of collaborative activity provides a continuum of opportunities for learning delivery, assessment, learner support and the location of learning. These range from delivery of whole programmes on the one hand to elements of programmes or individual modules on the other. HEIs, and sometimes other organisations, collaborate in providing alternative sites or contexts for learning, or perhaps in providing support or resources for learning. In parallel, the recruitment of international students now operates in a more regulated environment in terms of national legislation, and the delivery of transnational education is subject to complex and fast-changing legislative requirements among different national jurisdictions.

The broadening and growth of collaborative activity in these ways present a range of benefits and opportunities for learners, institutions and employers, such as:

- more flexibility in entry routes and modes of study
- provision for off-campus working in a range of sites, including the workplace
- programmes enriched by the opportunity to study abroad at a range of awarding institutions
- curricula which offer learning related to contemporary working practices and the needs of both employers and employees
- continuing professional development including skills development
- opportunities for employer-related engagement and internships
- international cooperation
- increased mobility of students and staff
- new forms of teaching delivery
- human, social, cultural and economic benefits
- increased sustainability for Gaelic and Welsh-medium teaching and learning delivery.

Responsibility of the awarding institution

The underpinning principle of collaborative provision is that the awarding institution is responsible for the academic standards and quality of learning delivered on its behalf wherever this takes place. Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning and by whomever this is undertaken. The awarding institution is responsible for the academic standards of any awards granted in its name (whether these are academic credit or qualifications), as well as for the accuracy of any transcript summarising these.

Managing risk

Collaboration with a partner organisation inevitably carries risks. The nature of the risks and whether these present opportunities or threats depends on the partner and nature of the activity. It is incumbent on the awarding institution to assess the risks involved and manage these appropriately. The risks presented by the different forms of collaboration now practised are variable, as are the risks associated with different providers and potential partners and the experience of the awarding institution. The range of collaborative opportunities now available means that awarding institutions will need to adopt a risk-based approach to developing and managing collaborative activity. This implies that the effort invested should be commensurate with the complexity of the proposed collaboration, the nature of the partner organisation, the risks associated with these and the risks associated with the experience of the awarding institution in managing collaborative provision.⁴

HEIs have established detailed processes and procedures for negotiating, developing and managing collaborative arrangements. What is increasingly clear in the current context is that a one size fits all approach to the negotiation, development and approval of collaborative provision is neither sufficient nor appropriate. Awarding institutions need to develop and approve (through the relevant institutional bodies) a range of different practices and procedures for the negotiation, approval and

⁴ See *Employer-responsive provision survey: A reflective report*, paragraphs 28-37.

oversight of collaborative provision which are tailored and appropriate to the risks of the collaboration involved. Given the increasing complexity, quantity and range of provision, institutions also need clarity as to the locus of responsibility for the management and oversight of collaborative provision at institutional level and the ways in which accountability for this activity is assured in a consistent manner throughout the institution.

Equally, institutions may need to be flexible in the application of the detail or the design of quality assurance processes in order to ensure that they are appropriate to the different timescales and contexts within which they may need to operate. This can be achieved without undermining the broad principles which underpin the assurance of academic standards and quality.⁵ It is acceptable for procedures and processes to differ depending on the context in which they operate, as long as they are relevant to the context and equally robust. For example, institutions can formally adopt fast-track programme approval processes, for use in some contexts, without compromising the level of scrutiny.

It remains the case that, in order to assess the risks involved and to put appropriate arrangements in place to mitigate these and safeguard the student experience, the awarding institution will need to undertake some form of due diligence. Depending on the nature of the proposed collaboration, the due diligence enquiries which need to be undertaken will vary. An assessment will need to be made of the conditions which are necessary to enable the proposed arrangement to succeed, and the extent of the due diligence enquiries will need to be tailored and proportionate to these and the risks they may present. No single practice or procedure will be fit for all purposes, but institutions will need to satisfy themselves that they have adequately assessed the financial, legal, academic and reputational risks and have determined appropriate due diligence procedures to provide the necessary information. Chapter B10 of the Quality Code does not prescribe any particular form of due diligence or formal agreement, nor can it provide detailed guidance as to how to negotiate and manage the development of partnerships. As Indicator 10 indicates, institutions will want to take appropriate legal advice. Increasingly, there is a range of advice and guidance available to the sector. Institutions involved in international collaboration will find it useful to make reference to the document *International Partnerships: A Legal Guide for UK Universities*⁶ and the *UNESCO/OECD Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education*.⁷ Institutions developing joint degrees will find it useful to refer to the European University Association (EUA) publications *Developing Joint Masters Programmes for Europe and Guidelines for Quality Enhancement in European Joint Master Programmes*.⁸ The UUK research report *The Growth of private and for-profit higher education providers in the UK* outlines issues which institutions might wish to consider in negotiating

⁵ See *Employer-responsive provision survey: A reflective report*, paragraphs 28-30 and 35-37.

⁶ The International Unit's *International Partnerships: A Legal Guide for UK Universities* (July 2009) is available at: www.international.ac.uk/our_research_and_publications/index.cfm.

⁷ The UNESCO/OECD *Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education* (2005) are available at: http://www.oecd.org/document/11/0,2340,en_2649_201185_35793227_1_1_1_1,00.html.

⁸ The publication *Developing Joint Masters Programmes for Europe* can be accessed at: www.eua.be/eua-work-and-policy-area/building-the-european-higher-education-area-bologna-process/joint-degrees. *Guidelines for Quality Enhancement in European Joint Master Programmes* is available at: www.eua.be/eua-work-and-policy-area/quality-assurance/qa-of-joint-masters.aspx.

activity with private providers. The Council of Validating Universities (CVU)⁹ has published a *Handbook for Practitioners*⁹ and offers workshops offering practical advice.

Similarly, it is crucial that any form of collaboration is subject to a formal written agreement. However, the nature of formal agreements and types of contract and their content will differ depending on the nature of the collaboration and will need to be tailored accordingly. For example, there will be differences in the scope and coverage of a formal articulation agreement as compared with an agreement for dual or joint awards between two awarding bodies. The nature of an agreement between two publicly-funded education providers may well be different to that between an awarding institution and a private provider.

Awarding institutions need to ensure that they have adequate resources and staff to undertake not only the initial investigation, negotiation and development stages, but also the ongoing oversight of portfolios of collaborative activity, which may be both wide-ranging and complex. This will involve staff with expertise in the assurance of quality and standards and those with the necessary financial, legal and management skills as well as the relevant academic and, where appropriate, cultural knowledge and experience. As noted above, there also needs to be a clear locus of responsibility for management and oversight of the activity across the institution. It is prudent for awarding institutions to adopt a strategic approach to collaborative activity and to be clear about how it fits with their institutional mission and corporate plans. Partnerships are most likely to be successful when they are purposeful, strategic and well aligned with the mission of the institution and its academic objectives.

The review of Section 2 and conclusions reached

In the light of the wider range of collaborative arrangements now in existence, and the reflections above, QAA decided to review whether individual precepts or their explanations in Part A of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning) (2004)* were still fit for purpose. An Advisory Group was established to undertake the review and to consider the implications of the following publications for *Section 2 of the Code of practice* now Chapter B10 of the Quality Code:

- the QAA statement published in July 2008 on *Quality assurance and the HEFCE priority for higher education learning linked to employer engagement and workforce development*
- the *Employer-responsive provision survey: A reflective report*
- the UUK research report *The growth of private and for-profit higher education providers in the UK*.

The group reviewed the definition of collaborative provision which is used in *Section 2* as denoting 'educational provision leading to an award, or to specific credit toward an award, of an awarding institution delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation'. It noted that the relationship between *Section 2* and *Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* (now Chapter B3) is described as one where *Section 2* covers general arrangements for collaborative

⁹ www.cvu.ac.uk

¹⁰ Council of Validating Universities (2005) *CVU Handbook for Practitioners, The Quality Management of Collaborative Provision*.

provision and Section 9 is intended to provide guidance on the specific aspects of work-based and placement learning where these are an integral part of the award. It concluded that the definition of collaborative provision in Section 2 remained fit for purpose for the extended range of collaborative activity currently taking place, and embraced employer-responsive provision and collaboration with a range of diverse partners.

The individual precepts and guidance were considered, and it was concluded that these remained relevant and appropriate. Nevertheless, it was felt that some amplification would be helpful to demonstrate how the precepts and guidance could be applied flexibly to a wider range of contexts and could be applied to individual modules or parts of programmes where applicable, or where there might be particular considerations (for example joint awards). Given that the Academic Infrastructure was being evaluated which could potentially lead to a revision of the scope, format and remit of the *Code of practice*, QAA agreed that a full review and revision of Section 2 should not be undertaken until the evaluation was complete and any implications for the *Code of practice* determined. It was agreed that, in the interim, a statement on Section 2 should be published, together with a commentary on some of the precepts and guidance contained in the current edition of Section 2 (without alteration to any of the existing precepts). These additional comments are set out in an amplified version of B10 below, supported by an updated glossary of terms in Appendix 2. It remains the case that the Indicators and guidance relate to the principles which should underpin the activity (and which can be realised by institutions in a number of different ways) and do not prescribe the processes themselves.

The focus of this current interim review was on Part A of Section 2 (now B10). The Advisory Group did not address Part B of Section 2 (Aspects specific to flexible and distributed learning (now see B3)), recommending instead that this be reconsidered as part of any wider review of the *Code of practice*, in the light of its applicability to all forms of teaching and learning delivery, rather than a specific association with collaborative provision.¹¹

Expectations about collaborative arrangements

The Quality Code sets out the following specific Expectation about collaborative arrangements which higher education institutions are required to meet:

Higher education providers have effective processes for the management of collaborative provision.

It should however be understood that all Chapters of the Quality Code contain material which is applicable to provision delivered through the various types of collaborative activity outlined above, and therefore those concerned with the quality assurance of such delivery will need to consult the Quality Code in its entirety.

¹¹ A commentary and critique of Section 2 which includes discussion of Part B has been produced by the Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement in e-Learning Special Interest Group. This is available at: http://qaqe-sig.net/?page_id=154.

Indicators of sound practice

Responsibility for, and equivalence of, academic standards

Indicator 1

The awarding institution is responsible for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name.

The legal power of a higher education institution in the UK to grant awards and qualifications carries with it a responsibility to ensure that the academic standards of all its awards and qualifications are consciously and carefully secured.

This Indicator applies equally to joint awards (awarded jointly by two or more awarding bodies), and dual/double or multiple awards (separate qualifications awarded by each awarding body involved in a joint programme). The awarding institution retains responsibility for ensuring that its own academic standards are maintained in the context of making an award with one or more awarding institutions. The collective responsibility for a joint or multiple award does not remove the responsibility of the individual awarding institution to ensure that its academic standards are safeguarded.

The guidance in of this Indicator also apply to credit awarded by a higher education institution and to the academic standards of modules or parts of programmes delivered in its name. Accordingly, the awarding institution is responsible for securing the academic standards of elements of programmes or individual modules delivered in its name wherever they are delivered, by whomever they are delivered, and through whatever collaborative arrangement they are delivered.

Indicator 2

The academic standards of all awards made under a collaborative arrangement should meet the Expectations of the Quality Code.

The UK Quality Code provides a set of common reference points that enables comparable academic standards to be established in different higher education institutions, without jeopardising their autonomy and diversity. Explicit use of the Quality Code enables awarding institutions, their students, employers and the general public to have confidence that an award or qualification is of a standard recognised and acceptable within the UK.

The aims, learning outcomes, teaching, learning, and assessment methods of a collaborative programme of study can be described in a programme specification that shows how the programme content relates to relevant subject benchmark statements, and that the award is appropriately located within the relevant framework for higher education qualifications.

Because the awarding institution is a UK institution, and the award a UK award, it is appropriate to make reference to relevant UK subject benchmark statements. There may, however, be cases where the cultural context of an overseas collaboration

requires some divergence from the UK-centred subject benchmark statement and, indeed, cases where points of reference other than UK references legitimately apply to cross-border collaborative arrangements. This may be entirely reasonable, as it might equally be reasonable in a collaboration within the UK, but such divergences can lead to misunderstandings if not explicitly acknowledged and explained. The programme specification provides a ready means for addressing these matters. Guidance on programme specifications is available in Chapter A3 of the Quality Code.

In the context of joint awards, and dual/double or multiple awards, the academic standards will need to satisfy the expectations both of the relevant framework (either *The Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) or *The Framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland* (FQHE13)) and any national expectations (such as a national qualifications framework) of the partner awarding bodies.

Where an awarding institution validates programmes leading to the same award offered by different partners and with different curricula, it should ensure that the standards of the different programmes are equivalent to each other and equivalent to the standards of the awarding institution's other programmes leading to awards at the same level.

Where an awarding institution awards credit for modules delivered in partnership with other providers, it will need to ensure that credits are awarded through a process which is consistent with the awarding institution's policies on the assignment of credit level and volume and which also takes account of guidance embodied in national credit frameworks.

Where institutions collaborate on the delivery of research degrees, the awarding institution will wish to ensure that the Expectations of *Chapter B11: Postgraduate research programmes* of the Quality Code are met, and that the appropriate skills identified in the Researcher Development Statement (developed by Vitae) are acquired. Where such collaboration leads to joint awards, any national Expectations, in terms of academic standards, of the partner awarding bodies will also need to be met.

Policies, procedures and information

Indicator 3

Collaborative arrangements should be negotiated, agreed and managed in accordance with the formally stated policies and procedures of the awarding institution.

Collaborative arrangements that are firmly based on the commitment and support of both the awarding institution's and the partner organisation's central authorities reduce the risk of the arrangement foundering. By formally stating in writing the policies and procedures that underpin any arrangement, the chances of this happening will be minimised. See also Indicator 10.

Institutions will need to determine their institutional strategy toward collaborative provision and how this relates to their mission and corporate plan. Collaborative arrangements which derive from a considered strategic approach, rather than responses to individual initiatives, are more likely to secure institutional commitment and to facilitate planned allocation of appropriate resources to support them.

Given the range of collaborative activities in which institutions engage, the frameworks, policies and procedures under which the various forms of collaboration operate will inevitably differ; so too will the contractual arrangements and the consequential entitlements of participating students. Institutions need to be clear as to what the various types of activity in which they engage will entail in terms of:

- negotiation and development
- formal approval and agreement
- management/oversight and quality assurance
- student entitlements.

Institutions may find it useful to develop a taxonomy of different collaborative arrangements clarifying the policies, procedures and student entitlements which each entails. At a minimum, they will need to develop, and formally adopt, policies and procedures which are fit for purpose and proportionate to the type of collaborative provision involved. Institutions will need to be aware that a single 'one size fits all' approach is unlikely to be sufficient. Institutions will need to demonstrate that they have adequately assessed the financial, legal, academic and reputational risks, have determined appropriate due diligence procedures (see Indicator 9) to provide the necessary information, and have the ability to put appropriate safeguards in place to manage the risks of their various arrangements.

Indicator 4

An up-to-date and authoritative record of the awarding institution's collaborative partnerships and agents, and a listing of its collaborative programmes operated through those partnerships or agencies, should form part of the institution's publicly available information.

A higher education institution's public credibility depends in part on its willingness to be open and informative about its activities. Collaborative activities carry risks and can be viewed with suspicion. Public confidence in the awarding institution and its collaborative provision will be enhanced if its activities are conducted openly.

Indicator 5

The awarding institution should inform any professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB), which has approved or recognised a programme that is the subject of a possible or actual collaborative arrangement, of its proposals and of any final agreements which involve the programme. The status of the programme in respect of PSRB recognition should be made clear to prospective students.

PSRBs sometimes limit their accreditation, approval or recognition of programmes or awards to particular modes or locations of delivery. On occasion the status of an award or programme delivered away from the awarding institution may not be clear. It is very important that students or applicants are not misled, through accident or design, into thinking that a programme they are applying for, or are already pursuing, is accredited, approved or recognised, when this is not the case. A definitive ruling on this matter can be obtained from the relevant PSRB.

Indicator 6

The awarding institution's policies and procedures should ensure that there are adequate safeguards against financial or other temptations that might compromise academic standards or the quality of learning opportunities.

An awarding institution's arrangements with other organisations can on occasion create opportunities for corrupt practices and illegal financial transactions. If these are allowed to happen they inevitably degrade the value of an institution's awards and are likely to damage its own reputation and that of UK higher education more generally. They can also give rise to heavy legal costs. Financial considerations may also have a bearing on standards and quality in matters of recruitment and progression, and in policy and practice in resourcing. The introduction of safeguards against these opportunities occurring may therefore be seen as a basic requirement of any sound collaborative arrangement that involves third parties.

Equally, institutions will wish to consider establishing appropriate safeguards to protect against wider potential conflicts of interest or competing priorities, either for the organisation or individuals, which might compromise the integrity of arrangements or the education provided. In this context, institutions will wish to consider the implications of The Bribery Act 2010. Further information may be accessed at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/23/contents

Indicator 7

Collaborative arrangements should be fully costed and should be accounted for accurately and fully.

The purpose of this Indicator is to remind awarding institutions that financial risks associated with collaborative arrangements can be considerable, especially if they provide an important element of an institution's income. It is incumbent on an institution to ensure both that its financial management arrangements are strong enough to manage the risks effectively, and that the financial arrangements themselves do not jeopardise the integrity of the academic standards and quality of the provision or the interests of students.

In particular, institutions will need to have effective risk management procedures in place to safeguard the long-term interests of students. The awarding institution retains responsibility for ensuring that students admitted to a programme can complete it in the event that a partner withdraws from an arrangement. They will therefore need to agree appropriate mechanisms to protect the position of students; these also need to be fully assessed. Similarly, in the context of collaborative arrangements with employers, institutions will need to be clear as to their obligations to students who are also employees in the event that their employment is terminated.

Likewise, awarding institutions will need to consider contingency arrangements, and their costs, were the ownership of a partner, or its status, to change in such a way as might lead to the termination of the agreement.

Institutions that are subject to the financial regulations of public funding bodies may find that there are specific requirements or limitations in respect of the use of publicly-provided resources for the purpose of collaborative arrangements and other similar activities. Likewise, institutions may be subject to statutory financial obligations in some foreign jurisdictions.

These obligations may include payment of tax, guarantee bonds, or limits on level of fees and transfer of funds outside the country.

Selecting a partner organisation or agent

Indicator 8

The educational objectives of a partner organisation should be compatible with those of the awarding institution.

A relationship where educational objectives are well matched can enable both the partner organisation and the awarding institution to achieve developments and benefits that neither could gain alone. Equally, basic incompatibility of values, outlook, objectives and methods between partners can lead to an unsatisfactory relationship with serious adverse consequences for students, programmes and awards.

In collaborations with employers, private providers, or organisations which are not primarily educational or academic providers, it is important to establish that there is a shared understanding about the ethos, culture, expectations and standards of higher education. It is important that these partners have a full understanding of the awarding institution's expectations for the assurance and maintenance of academic standards and quality; they may require some support in achieving this. It is also important to establish that prospective partners share the same vision for the collaboration.

Equally, institutions may need to be flexible in the application of the detail or design of quality assurance processes in order to ensure that they are appropriate to the timescales and contexts within which, for example, employers may operate. For instance, specific fast-track curriculum approval processes can be developed and approved which are swifter and more responsive without compromising the degree of scrutiny or taking short cuts with existing procedures. Procedures and processes can differ, for some collaborative activities, provided that they are equally robust and do not undermine the broad principles which underpin academic standards and quality.

In the context of transnational education it is important for the awarding institution to make itself aware of the legal and cultural context and the higher education structures in which a partner organisation is operating. This may involve it ascertaining any requirements for the partner to be recognised by the appropriate authorities in the relevant country, and for it to be apprised of any requirements for validated programmes to have the approval of the relevant national authority.

Awarding institutions will need to ensure that they maintain a full understanding of UK legislation affecting the admission of international students (including immigration and

visa requirements) and of the implications for partner organisations collaborating in the delivery of programmes leading to UK awards.

Institutions will need to ensure that they have appropriate staff capacity, with the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to elicit and analyse the information relevant to selecting and deciding upon a partner. They will also wish to be satisfied that subsequently they can commit the necessary resources to the negotiation, development and oversight of collaborative partnerships.

Indicator 9

An awarding institution should undertake, with due diligence, an investigation to satisfy itself about the good standing of a prospective partner or agent, and of their capacity to fulfil their designated role in the arrangement. This investigation should include the legal status of the prospective partner or agent, and its capacity in law to contract with the awarding institution.

Depending on the nature of the collaboration, the due diligence enquiries which need to be undertaken will vary. They need to be relevant to the collaboration envisaged and proportionate to the complexity and volume of the provision involved and the risks which it may present. So the nature of the enquiries will differ depending, for instance, on whether a full programme is being delivered collaboratively or whether the awarding body is delivering the programme but the learning is taking place off-site in the workplace. An assessment needs to be made of the conditions which are necessary to enable the proposed arrangement to succeed, and the extent of the due diligence enquiries needs to be tailored to and proportionate to these. No single practice or procedure will be fit for all purposes. Institutions will need to determine what enquiries are relevant to the collaboration envisaged and what assurances they will need. Institutions will need to satisfy themselves that they have adequately assessed the financial, legal, academic and reputational risks and demonstrate that they have determined appropriate due diligence procedures to provide the necessary information.

There are a number of areas where experience has shown that due diligence enquiries are needed to ensure that a satisfactory relationship can be established with a reliable and effective partner. These include:

- the public and legal standing of a prospective partner organisation or agent in their own country

In the context of transnational education, institutions need to be fully apprised of the different legal and regulatory frameworks which operate in different countries and the implications which this may have for collaborative activity and/or the recognition of qualifications for progression to further study or employment (especially within the public sector) in those countries. Joint degrees need to be awarded in accordance with the national legal frameworks of all the awarding institutions involved. Institutions will wish to draw on a range of performance Indicators to assess the academic and public standing of a prospective partner organisation.

- the standing of a prospective partner organisation or agent in the UK determined in the light of experience of other UK institutions and from public documents such as reports of QAA and its predecessor bodies on collaborative arrangements with UK institutions

- the financial stability of a prospective partner organisation

As noted in the comment on Indicator 7 above, the awarding institution has obligations to students admitted to a programme. Therefore, they will wish to ensure that they have thoroughly considered the financial standing of prospective partners involved in funding educational provision leading to an award. Awarding institutions will need to be satisfied that they have adequately assessed the financial risks of undertaking collaborative provision in a volatile marketplace or commercial environment and have agreed appropriate mechanisms to protect the position of students admitted to a programme.

- the ability of the prospective partner organisation to provide the human and material resources to operate the programme successfully
- the ability of the prospective partner organisation to provide an appropriate and safe working environment for students on the programme
- in the case of overseas collaborative arrangements, the ability of the awarding institution to operate within the legislative and cultural requirements of that overseas country and, at the same time, address the points of reference offered by the Quality Code.

Other areas might include the following.

- In the case of private providers of HE, non-educational or academic providers, or overseas providers, the awarding institution will need to be satisfied as to the ownership of the prospective partner organisation and its governance structures (in particular whether academic and business decision-making are separate), whether it is registered as a company or a charity and the nature of any accreditation. Awarding institutions will also need to satisfy themselves about the range of business interests and links which private or overseas providers may have, both within the UK and overseas, and whether these would present potential risks to the proposed arrangement.
- If a partner organisation is going to be directly involved in the delivery and/or assessment of learning, awarding institutions will need to assess the ability of the prospective partner organisation to manage processes for quality assurance in HE and to meet the Expectations of the Quality Code. They will also need to assess whether there is an adequate operational structure (including record-keeping) in place to support this in a valid, reliable and robust manner.

Written agreements with a partner organisation or agent

Indicator 10

There should be a written and legally binding agreement or contract setting out the rights and obligations of the parties and signed by the authorised representatives of the awarding institution and the partner organisation or agent.

Partnerships are more likely to succeed when all partners fully understand their rights and responsibilities. For this a written and legally binding agreement or contract is indispensable.

The nature of formal agreements will differ depending on the nature of the collaboration and will need to be tailored accordingly.

Institutions will, of course, want to take advice from their legal advisers on the content of all agreements and contracts.

Institutions will wish to ensure that there is a clear and well-publicised institutional policy on who is authorised to sign institutional agreements and contracts. Details of the authorised signatories need to be regularly updated and widely available.

The following list highlights some important matters which relate particularly to academic standards and quality and which may, with advantage, be borne in mind when considering the drafting of an agreement or contract for a collaborative partnership.

- The need to distinguish between those aspects of the arrangement that relate to the institutional-level relationship between the parties, and those aspects particular to the programme(s) of this collaborative arrangement.
- Clarification of the extent to which the agreement represents the approval of the partner organisation to engage in collaborative activity with the awarding institution and/or approval to deliver specific programmes leading to named awards.
- The need to agree on the source and location of any published quality-related information that may be required, for example by a funding council.
- The need to define the role, responsibilities and delegated powers of any agent in each arrangement.
- The need to be secure in respect of matters relating to copyright and intellectual property rights.
- Specification of the role of external examiners in ensuring that the awarding institution can fulfil its responsibility for the academic standards of the awards.
- Termination and mediation provisions and financial arrangements to be followed if the arrangement ceases.
- Specification of the legal jurisdiction under which any disputes would be resolved.
- Inclusion of provisions to enable either institution to suspend or withdraw from the agreement if the other party fails to fulfil its obligations.
- Specification and adequacy of the residual obligations of both parties to students on termination of the collaborative arrangement, including the obligations of the awarding institution to enable students to complete their studies leading to the award.
- The possibility of establishing a formal agreement of responsibilities between the student, the awarding institution and the collaborative partner(s).

Other areas which could be considered for inclusion might be:

- clarification of the complaints and appeals procedure to be followed
- clarification about the services to be provided by each institution
- clarification about which institution's regulations and quality assurance processes apply
- clarification about which institution assumes the legal responsibilities in relation to data protection, equality and diversity issues, immigration and visa requirements
- clarification as to whether serial arrangements are precluded, or under what conditions any such arrangements might be allowed
- arrangements governing the use of the awarding institution's logo and provision for oversight, by the awarding institution, of public information relating to the collaboration and associated promotional activity
- an obligation on the partner to notify the awarding institution of any change to its status or ownership
- the consequences of a private provider changing ownership and what this might imply for re-recognition or revalidation.

The list is not meant to be exhaustive, but may be helpful as an aide-memoire.

It is important for the expectations of the written agreement to be communicated to all relevant staff in the partner institution.

Irrespective of the type and length of the collaborative partnership, it is important to recognise that the formal responsibility of an awarding body for its awards and qualifications places upon it an obligation to make certain that its academic standards are secure. This does suggest a conscious formality in some aspects of the management of a collaborative relationship, which may sometimes seem to run counter to the notion of the equality of the partners. But this formality offers protection to all, students as well as collaborating organisations, and its adoption in this spirit should help to bolster, not undermine, mutual confidence in the operation of partnerships.

Indicator 11

The agreement or contract should make clear that any serial arrangement whereby the partner organisation offers approved collaborative provision elsewhere or assigns, through an arrangement of its own, powers delegated to it by the awarding institution, may be undertaken only with the express written permission of the awarding institution in each instance. The awarding institution is responsible for ensuring that it retains proper control of the academic standards of awards offered through any such arrangements.

Serial arrangements can severely curtail the ability of an awarding institution to ensure that the academic standards of awards made in its name are being safeguarded. The financial value of a UK higher education qualification can make the possibility of sub-contracting a programme to a commercial enterprise particularly attractive and it can

be very difficult to unpick these arrangements once they have begun. The purpose of this Indicator is to alert awarding institutions to the potential risk if a partner organisation is authorised to offer an arrangement of its own that leads to an award of the awarding institution. The responsibility of an awarding institution to exercise effective control of awards made in its name is paramount, although it might choose to delegate some of its responsibility for the management of the quality of provision (see Indicator 12). A significant risk in serial arrangements is that the chain of information is too long for the awarding institution to be in a position to have full confidence in its ability to control its academic standards effectively.

Indicator 10 refers to the importance of drawing up a formal agreement appropriate to the nature of the collaboration involved. It is possible for agreements to be drawn up between multiple partners which make clear the nature of collaboration between each of the participating parties and their collective and individual responsibilities. It is possible for an awarding body to ensure that it has a direct relationship (and agreement) with individual partners in a collaborative activity involving multiple partners and thus to ensure that it maintains clear oversight of what is done in its name.

Assuring academic standards and the quality of programmes and awards

Indicator 12

The awarding institution is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the quality of learning opportunities offered through a collaborative arrangement is adequate to enable a student to achieve the academic standard required for its award.

An awarding institution is responsible for assuring the quality of the learning opportunities of programmes that lead to its awards, but it might choose to delegate operational aspects of this responsibility to a partner organisation where it has confidence that the partner has the capacity to accept and discharge that responsibility. The purpose of this Indicator is to remind an awarding institution that it should be able to satisfy itself, and stakeholders, on a regular basis that any delegated responsibility is being properly discharged. An awarding institution needs to consider carefully the distinction between responsibility for some aspects of quality management, which it may choose to delegate, and responsibility for the security of the standard of the award, which remains with it at all times.

For example, in considering the appropriateness of physical learning resources, the question to consider is not whether there are identical resources available, but whether resources provided by a partner organisation are relevant to the type, and adequate to the volume, of learning to be undertaken and appropriate to secure the achievement of the relevant learning outcomes. For further details on this see QAA's statement on employer-responsive provision published in July 2008, which can be accessed at: www.qaa.ac.uk/Partners/Employers/Documents/QAA_statement.pdf. It remains the responsibility of the awarding institution to ensure that the learning environment is fit for purpose, both at the outset of the arrangement and on a continuing basis. Depending on the partner organisation's experience of managing higher education provision, this may represent a variable risk and call for differing levels of oversight.

In the case of research degrees offered through a collaborative arrangement, the awarding institution will need to assure itself that the Expectations of Chapter B11 of the Code Quality can be met, in particular with respect to the quality of supervision and the provision of an appropriate research environment.

Indicator 13

An awarding institution that engages with another authorised awarding body jointly to provide a programme of study leading to a dual or joint academic award should be able to satisfy itself that it has the legal capacity to do so, and that the academic standard of the award, referenced to the FHEQ (the SCQF in Scotland), meets its own expectations, irrespective of the expectations of the partner awarding body.

Programmes of study that lead to dual awards involve the granting of separate awards by both partner organisations. The two awards are based on the same assessed student work, and an awarding institution will need to satisfy itself that it is content to make an award on this basis, and able to do so within its regulations. Despite the collaborative nature of the study, responsibility for each award, and its academic standard, remains with the body awarding it and cannot be shared between the partners. Because of this it is important that institutions are able to satisfy themselves that the standards and quality of their awards are not jeopardised by the arrangements they have entered into with partners.

Institutions offering dual awards through a credit-based structure will need to be alert to the consequences of each participating institution offering credit for the same piece of work, thereby potentially doubling the credit value (for transfer and accumulation purposes) of a module or unit that has been successfully completed.

Institutions might consider using the transcript, diploma supplement, or the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) to clarify that a single programme (and its associated credit), delivered in collaboration with one or more partner institutions, has led to dual/double or multiple awards.

Joint awards, where a single award is granted for successful completion of one programme of study offered collaboratively by two or more institutions, raise questions of the nature of the legal basis for pooling or combining powers to make awards.

An awarding institution will need to satisfy itself that it has the legal and regulatory capacity to grant awards jointly with other organisations, especially where this involves pooling or combining powers granted within different legal jurisdictions.

Institutions will need to be aware of the terms from which their degree-awarding powers derive, and whether these enable the awarding of joint degrees or whether further action needs to be taken to allow them to do so legally (for example by amending their charter). Similarly, institutions will need to consider not only whether institutional regulations permit the award of joint degrees but also under what regulatory framework any programme leading to a joint award is delivered and assessed, or whether a bespoke regulatory framework will be needed.

Equally, it would be prudent for an awarding institution engaged in collaboration leading to joint awards to satisfy itself that its partner(s) also has the legal and regulatory capacity to grant the relevant joint awards.

Indicator 14

The scope, coverage and assessment strategy of a collaborative programme should be described in a programme specification that refers to relevant subject benchmark statements and the level of award, and that is readily available and comprehensible to stakeholders.

Students, potential students, employers and other stakeholders need to be able to satisfy themselves that awards obtained through collaborative arrangements are fully equivalent to other awards offered at a similar level by the same awarding body. To this end, reference via programme specifications to the relevant qualification descriptor and subject benchmark statement will provide useful information and a source of reassurance.

Where modules or elements of programmes (rather than whole programmes) are delivered collaboratively, it is important that students and partner organisations (such as employers) are made fully aware of the intended learning outcomes of these components, the associated teaching and learning strategies, the level of learning and the potential contribution that the element might make to the full award.

Although modules or programmes offered through collaborative provision may not be identical to those delivered solely by the awarding institution, the institution needs to assure itself that, wherever these are delivered and assessed, standards achieved are comparable to those of modules or programmes delivered by the awarding institution at the same level.

In the case of research degree programmes delivered in collaboration with one or more partners, institutions may wish to consider establishing a contract with the student clarifying the responsibilities of each of the partners (including the student) and what each is expected to deliver.

Indicator 15

The awarding institution should make appropriate use of the Quality Code to ensure that all aspects of the Quality Code relevant to the collaborative arrangement are addressed by itself and/or the partner organisation, and should make clear respective responsibilities of the awarding institution and a partner organisation in terms of addressing the Indicators of the Quality Code.

The purpose of this Indicator is to emphasise that the Quality Code offers a point of reference for the assurance of many aspects of the management of academic standards and quality of provision. In the case of provision offered through collaborative arrangements, an awarding institution will wish to ensure that its partners have an explicit understanding of what is expected of them in terms of the reference points set out in the Indicators of the Quality Code.

A key issue here is that, ultimately, the awarding institution is responsible for ensuring that the Indicators of the Quality Code have been considered. Where appropriate, and depending on the nature of the collaboration, it may be expedient to ensure that a partner organisation has addressed specific Indicators in Chapters of the Quality Code relevant to the collaborative activity.

In the case of collaboration with other awarding bodies, there may need to be some accommodation as to how some principles are realised. The *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (2009) will provide a useful reference point for collaboration with partners in Europe.¹²

Indicator 16

In the case of a collaborative arrangement with a partner organisation, or engagement with an agent, the awarding institution should be able to satisfy itself that the terms and conditions that were originally approved have been, and continue to be, met.

The purpose of this Indicator is to serve as a reminder that the existence of a written agreement is not in itself sufficient to ensure that its terms and conditions are being met effectively. Regular monitoring and review, at institutional or programme levels as appropriate to the original partnership agreement, or agreement with an agent, will help to confirm this. The frequency and nature of monitoring and review may be decided best by reference to fitness for purpose.

It is good practice to monitor not only adherence to the terms, conditions and processes identified in the formal agreement, but also to monitor the outcomes of learning and the student experience delivered by a partner organisation. Regular monitoring and review of entry, progression, retention and performance data in comparison with the institution's own benchmarks are advisable. The awarding institution will need to satisfy itself that the expectations of the written agreement are effectively communicated to all staff at the partner organisation involved in the collaboration, from the inception of the activity to its completion, and that these are observed.

It is good practice to ensure that written agreements, and their effectiveness, are themselves regularly monitored and reviewed.

Institutions will need to assure themselves that they have the appropriate management capacity at local and institutional levels to ensure effective communication with partner organisations and robust oversight of the implementation, operation and monitoring of the outcomes of collaborative activity.

Indicator 17

The awarding institution should be able to satisfy itself that staff engaged in delivering or supporting a collaborative programme are appropriately qualified for their role, and that a partner organisation has effective measures to monitor and assure the proficiency of such staff.

The quality of both teaching and other aspects of learning support is critically important for all students, irrespective of the mode of programme delivery. It is essential that students can rely on the quality of those who teach them and support their learning in other ways. The use of properly qualified staff, and the effective monitoring of their proficiency, are important aspects of an awarding institution's responsibility for assuring the standards and quality of its collaborative activities.

¹² www.enqa.eu/pubs_esg.lasso

Recognising that inexperienced staff are not necessarily properly qualified from the outset, this Indicator should be taken to include the responsibility of an awarding institution for ensuring that staff are properly trained and developed.

In this context, it is important to emphasise that it is the role which staff are to undertake which should be used as the starting point to determine how appropriately staff are qualified to fulfil it. If an entire programme is to be delivered by a partner organisation which is not itself an awarding institution, then the awarding institution should expect those staff involved in teaching to meet its usual requirements in terms of the qualifications to teach at a specific level. Where individual modules or parts of programmes are delivered by partner organisations, the awarding institution needs to assess the appropriateness of the staff to deliver the type of learning or support involved on the relevant modules.

In the case of joint, dual/double or multiple awards, where due diligence searches on the standing of the partner are satisfactory, it would be reasonable to acknowledge that the partner institution will have adequate mechanisms in place to ensure that staff are appropriately qualified to deliver those parts of the programme for which it is responsible.

If staff from partner organisations are less experienced in delivering higher education but are to become involved in formative or summative assessment, staff development may be required (or mentoring/supervision). The awarding institution will need to ensure that, in these cases, appropriate training, briefing and mentoring is provided (on an ongoing basis) so that those involved are competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities and to ensure that its Expectations as to the robustness of assessment can be met. The approach required should be tailored to the nature of the collaborative activity involved and the needs of the partner.

It is equally important to ensure that staff involved in the delivery of inter-sectoral or transnational education are fully prepared for, and understand, the cultural assumptions about higher education in the UK, which may differ from the expectations of other sectors or other countries in which they operate.

Indicator 18

The awarding institution should ensure that arrangements for admission to the collaborative programme take into account the Expectations and Indicators of Chapter B2: Admissions of the Quality Code.

The quality of admission procedures is an important aspect of the overall quality of an institution's academic activities. Collaborative provision arrangements create particular requirements, especially in international contexts. Areas that may require particular care include:

- entry requirements and academic prerequisites
- recognition of foreign qualifications and credits
- arrangements for the accreditation of prior learning and the assessment of prior experiential learning (AP[E]L)

- language proficiency
- information about the status of students in relation to the awarding institution
- cultural assumptions about higher education learning methods.

In addition to the particular considerations relating to setting the criteria for admission, awarding institutions will need to clarify where responsibility lies not only for decisions on admissions but also for the management of the admissions process. Awarding institutions will find it useful for this to be reflected in their formal agreements. The precise allocation of responsibilities is likely to vary depending on the nature of the collaboration (whether a validation arrangement, an articulation agreement or some form of progression arrangement) and possibly on the risks associated with different partners. Awarding institutions will need to determine arrangements which are fit for purpose.

The fifth bullet point identifies an important consideration in the context of many collaborative arrangements. It is essential to identify with which institution a student is registered and has a legal and contractual relationship. In the case of publicly funded educational providers, registration may follow funding streams. In the case of private providers, it may be important to establish of which institution the student is a member. In all cases it is important to clarify the status and rights of the student in relation to the awarding institution. In the case of dual/double, multiple or joint awards it may be that a student is registered with more than one institution.

Assessment requirements

Indicator 19

The awarding institution is responsible for ensuring that the outcomes of assessment for a programme provided under a collaborative arrangement meet the specified academic level of the award as defined in the FHEQ (or SCQF in Scotland), in the context of the relevant subject benchmark statement(s).

The FHEQ/SCQF, which has been adopted by higher education institutions in the UK, covers all academic provision, wherever and however offered. No distinction is made between provision offered directly by the awarding institution itself, on its own premises, and that offered through collaborative arrangements. To make sure that this uniformity is maintained, it is important that the assessment of students is carried out consistently, at the appropriate level for the award being assessed, and with appropriate reference to the FHEQ/SCQF and subject benchmark statements.

Equally, where modules or parts of programmes (as opposed to full programmes) are delivered collaboratively, assessment needs to be conducted at the appropriate level, and in accordance with institutional guidance, in order to ensure that standards are consistent wherever the assessment takes place.

In the case of joint and dual/double or multiple awards, it is important that due consideration is given to reaching a shared understanding of the assessment responsibilities of each of the partners vis-à-vis maintaining oversight of the academic standards of those components of the joint programme for which they are responsible.

Awarding institutions involved as one of the participating partners in a consortium of educational providers for joint or multiple awards will wish to ensure that they are involved in any assessment (or its oversight) which leads to one of their awards, irrespective of whether or not a student has attended the awarding institution. It is advisable for these arrangements to be recorded in the written agreements.

In formulating articulation agreements, awarding institutions will need to assure themselves that the programme provided by the partner organisation is at an appropriate level to articulate with the entry point to the specified programme(s) at the awarding institution. They will also need to clarify whether or not assessments from the component delivered and assessed by the partner organisation contribute to the final award.

The introduction is of key importance here in identifying the challenges, where partners are not awarding bodies, of permitting assessment in a foreign language. This applies in particular to the translation of assessed work and to securing, on an ongoing basis, staff and both internal and external examiners who are able to work in all the languages concerned.

Indicator 20

The awarding institution should ensure that a partner organisation involved in the assessment of students understands and follows the requirements approved by the awarding institution for the conduct of assessments, which themselves should be referenced to *Chapter A6: Assessment of achievement of learning outcomes*, and *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning of the Quality Code*.

UK higher education institutions that have the power to grant their own academic awards are legally autonomous bodies and can exercise considerable discretion over their assessment practices. A partner body may have little knowledge at the outset of a relationship about the requirements that will be placed upon it in assuring the security of assessments and their effective conduct. In the case of overseas partners or agents, some of these requirements may be considered surprising or unusual in the local context. It is therefore very important that all involved in the assessment of students be given explicit information and briefing about processes, acceptable and non-acceptable practices and the conduct of assessment. It is particularly important that local custom and practice are not accepted where these may jeopardise the integrity of the assessment process or the consistency of its application across the awarding institution as a whole.

This Indicator is of equal importance where partner organisations which are neither awarding bodies nor academic or educational providers (such as employers) are involved in aspects of assessment. In these circumstances, awarding institutions will need to consider whether there is a need to ensure a direct relationship between those conducting aspects of the assessment and the institution in order that the awarding institution has direct oversight of final assessment decisions.

External examining

Indicator 21

External examining procedures for programmes offered through collaborative arrangements should be consistent with the awarding institution's normal practices.

The external examiner system is a defining characteristic of UK higher education and an indispensable way of allowing an awarding institution to be sure that its academic standards are both appropriate and being safeguarded. Consistency of application of external examination procedures in collaborative arrangements is a central element in maintaining standards and quality in those activities. Any departures from external examiners' normal activity should be thought through very carefully and at the highest level, in advance of their implementation, and accepted only where it is clear that standards and quality will not be jeopardised.

In the case of joint awards, awarding institutions will need to consider what external examining arrangements are appropriate to satisfy the requirements and expectations of all the partners involved and in order to secure the academic standards of their awards in accordance with Indicator 1.

Indicator 22

The awarding institution must retain ultimate responsibility for the appointment and functions of external examiners. The recruitment and selection of external examiners should be referenced to *Chapter B7: External examining of the Quality Code*.

The recruitment, selection and appointment of external examiners is one of the key ways in which an awarding institution exercises control over assessment practices and the academic standards of awards. Delegation of this activity to a partner may be appropriate in some circumstances, but only where the awarding institution is unequivocally satisfied of the partner's capacity to undertake the task in a fully responsible, reliable and consistent manner.

In the case of joint awards, institutions will need to consider the desirability and feasibility of making joint appointments or whether dual appointments are appropriate.¹³

Indicator 23

External examiners of collaborative programmes must receive briefing and guidance approved by the awarding institution sufficient for them to fulfil their role effectively.

Awarding institutions need to be satisfied that external examiners know exactly what is required of them and have sufficient expertise and experience to enable them to play their role effectively.

¹³ see Part 1 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (2009) www.enqa.eu/pubs_esg.lasso

External examiners for collaborative activities should be expected to participate in briefing events provided by either the awarding institution or the partner organisation. The awarding institution should note in particular Indicator 6 of *Chapter B7: External examining* of the Quality Code, which states that 'Institutions ensure that all external examiners they appoint are informed about organisational procedures, practices, and academic regulations, and the crucial value of external examiners' feedback to the institution as part of the broader system of quality assurance and enhancement.'

Certificates and transcripts

Indicator 24

An awarding institution should ensure that:

- it has sole authority for awarding certificates and transcripts relating to the programmes of study delivered through collaborative arrangements
- the certificate and/or transcript records (a) the principal language of instruction where this was not English, and (b) the language of assessment if that was not English (except for awards for programmes or their elements relating to the study of a foreign language where the principal language of assessment is also the language of study). Where this information is recorded on the transcript only, the certificate should refer to the existence of the transcript. References here to 'a foreign language' and 'a language that is not English' do not include programmes provided and assessed by Welsh institutions in the Welsh language
- subject to any overriding statutory or other legal provision in any relevant jurisdiction, the certificate and/or the transcript should record the name and location of any partner organisation engaged in delivery of the programme of study.

Certificates and transcripts represent the main sources of verification of the granting of an award or qualification. They are extremely valuable documents and can be the subject of theft and forgery.

The physical security of blank documents is therefore important, as is the authority to issue certificates and transcripts. The ultimate responsibility for the security and accuracy of certificates and transcripts has to lie with the body in whose name they are issued. If the awarding institution wishes to devolve responsibility to a partner organisation for issuing these documents, it should ensure that it has retained the means to exercise proper control over all certificates and transcripts that are issued in its name.

It is important that the information contained on a certificate or transcript should not omit anything that is needed for a full understanding of a student's achievement. The guidelines provided by UUK, SCOP and the Agency on the content of transcripts provide advice on this. The European Diploma Supplement may also be helpful as a guide to international good practice in this area. The principal language of study and/or assessment, where this is not English, is a key piece of information for those who need to refer to certificates and transcripts. Omission of this information is likely to

mislead and in some countries may cause difficulties in the recognition of all awards from the awarding institution.

In the interests of transparency, it is desirable for the certificate and/or the transcript, Diploma Supplement or HEAR to clarify for jointly-delivered programmes whether the programme leads to dual/double or multiple awards of other partner institutions involved.

In the case of joint awards, the normal expectation would be that the (single) certificate would list the names of all awarding institutions involved in granting the award and bear the signature of the competent authorities in each institution. For all jointly-delivered programmes it is good practice for the transcript, Diploma Supplement or HEAR to indicate at which institution the different parts of the programme were studied.

Information for students

Indicator 25

The minimum level of information that prospective and registered students should have about a collaborative programme is the programme specification approved by the awarding institution.

Confidence in an awarding institution's standards and quality is in great measure dependent on the completeness and accuracy of the information available about them. The programme specification provides a ready way of providing this information. It should also offer prospective and registered students a clear and explicit statement of the nature of the programme and its relationship to national expectations about the academic standards and quality of the subject being studied and the award being sought.

Where prospective and registered students are taking individual modules delivered in collaboration with a partner institution, and may not initially be registering for a programme or award, the minimum information with which such students should be provided is the learning outcomes, the teaching, learning and assessment strategy and the level of the learning involved. It is also good practice to provide information on how students will be supported and to which services at the awarding institution they will have access.

It should be noted that this is the minimum level of information suggested and that good practice would suggest that all students registered on collaborative programmes (in particular in the context of transnational education) should routinely be provided with clear statements about their rights as students and entitlements to services (including access to language support and orientation in the case of international students) and how to access services.

In the context of collaboration with an employer as a partner organisation, and where the student is an employee of that partner, it is important for the awarding institution to clarify its responsibilities to the student (for example where the student is made redundant or redeployed to another site).

Indicator 26

The information made available to prospective students and those registered on a collaborative programme should include information to students about the appropriate channels for particular concerns, complaints and appeals, making clear the channels through which they can contact the awarding institution directly.

Awarding institutions acknowledge different levels of responsibility for students registered on collaborative programmes. It is important that all students and prospective students should understand the nature of their formal relationship with their awarding institution, and which organisation is responsible for which part of their learning experience. In the case of complaints and appeals, and to avoid confusion and unnecessary dissatisfaction, the awarding institution should ensure that their own responsibilities, and those of their partners, are clearly distinguished and advertised. See also *Chapter B9: Complaints and appeals* of the Quality Code.

The general expectation is that a student at a partner institution should have ultimate right of appeal to the awarding institution and also that the awarding institution might review academic complaints once the procedures at the partner institution have been exhausted. Students at partner institutions may also bring a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) or the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) following the issue of a completion of procedures letter from the awarding body. Further guidance is available from the OIA,¹⁴ covering England and Wales, and from the SPSO.¹⁵

In the case of joint and dual/double or multiple awards, partner institutions will need to consider how any appeal or complaints will be dealt with jointly and how the processes will be administered (for example, identifying one institution to take lead responsibility). Students on jointly-delivered programmes need to be clear about the procedure to be followed and which institution(s) should initially be approached in order to lodge a complaint or appeal.

Indicator 27

The awarding institution should monitor regularly the information given by the partner organisation or agent to prospective students and those registered on a collaborative programme.

Awarding institutions may find that, despite everyone's best efforts, information for students falls short of what is needed by them. A regular check on the information actually being provided, including user surveys, can help to ensure that it remains accurate, complete and up to date.

¹⁴ www.oiahe.org.uk

¹⁵ www.spsso.org.uk

Publicity and marketing

Indicator 28

The awarding institution should ensure that it has effective control over the accuracy of all public information, publicity and promotional activity relating to its collaborative provision.

In the competitive world of higher education recruitment, especially in some overseas markets, publicity and marketing assumes great importance. Information designed to attract potential applicants can, on occasion, be over enthusiastic in its desire to establish a competitive advantage. Unsustainable assertions and claims can readily mislead. This is to nobody's benefit as it only causes dissatisfaction and resentment. It can also give a false picture of UK higher education, with adverse consequences for its national and international reputation. Because of this it is important that an awarding institution take responsibility for information about programmes leading to its awards, particularly where the information is published by others on its behalf. The awarding institution should satisfy itself that this control is exercised consistently and fairly and that the public cannot reasonably be misled about the collaborative arrangement or about the nature and standing of the programmes and awards provided under the arrangement.

The awarding institution will also wish to ensure that its logo is used in a way which appropriately reflects the nature of the relationship between the awarding institution and its partner organisation(s).

Appendix 1: the Indicators

Expectations about collaborative arrangements

The Quality Code sets out the following specific Expectation about collaborative arrangements which higher education institutions are required to meet:

Higher education providers have effective processes for the management of collaborative provision.

The Indicators

Indicator 1

The awarding institution is responsible for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name.

Indicator 2

The academic standards of all awards made under a collaborative arrangement should meet the Expectations of the Quality Code.

Indicator 3

Collaborative arrangements should be negotiated, agreed and managed in accordance with the formally stated policies and procedures of the awarding institution.

Indicator 4

An up-to-date and authoritative record of the awarding institution's collaborative partnerships and agents, and a listing of its collaborative programmes operated through those partnerships or agencies, should form part of the institution's publicly available information.

Indicator 5

The awarding institution should inform any professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB), which has approved or recognised a programme that is the subject of a possible or actual collaborative arrangement, of its proposals and of any final agreements which involve the programme. The status of the programme in respect of PSRB recognition should be made clear to prospective students.

Indicator 6

The awarding institution's policies and procedures should ensure that there are adequate safeguards against financial or other temptations that might compromise academic standards or the quality of learning opportunities.

Indicator 7

Collaborative arrangements should be fully costed and should be accounted for accurately and fully.

Indicator 8

The educational objectives of a partner organisation should be compatible with those of the awarding institution.

Indicator 9

An awarding institution should undertake, with due diligence, an investigation to satisfy itself about the good standing of a prospective partner or agent, and of their capacity to fulfil their designated role in the arrangement. This investigation should include the legal status of the prospective partner or agent, and its capacity in law to contract with the awarding institution.

Indicator 10

There should be a written and legally binding agreement or contract setting out the rights and obligations of the parties and signed by the authorised representatives of the awarding institution and the partner organisation or agent.

Indicator 11

The agreement or contract should make clear that any serial arrangement whereby the partner organisation offers approved collaborative provision elsewhere or assigns, through an arrangement of its own, powers delegated to it by the awarding institution, may be undertaken only with the express written permission of the awarding institution in each instance. The awarding institution is responsible for ensuring that it retains proper control of the academic standards of awards offered through any such arrangements.

Indicator 12

The awarding institution is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the quality of learning opportunities offered through a collaborative arrangement is adequate to enable a student to achieve the academic standard required for its award.

Indicator 13

An awarding institution that engages with another authorised awarding body jointly to provide a programme of study leading to a dual or joint academic award should be able to satisfy itself that it has the legal capacity to do so, and that the academic standard of the award, referenced to the FHEQ (the SCQF in Scotland), meets its own expectations, irrespective of the expectations of the partner awarding body.

Indicator 14

The scope, coverage and assessment strategy of a collaborative programme should be described in a programme specification that refers to relevant subject benchmark statements and the level of award, and that is readily available and comprehensible to stakeholders.

Indicator 15

The awarding institution should make appropriate use of the Quality Code to ensure that all aspects of the Quality Code relevant to the collaborative arrangement are

addressed by itself and/or the partner organisation, and should make clear respective responsibilities of the awarding institution and a partner organisation in terms of addressing the Indicators of the Quality Code.

Indicator 16

In the case of a collaborative arrangement with a partner organisation, or engagement with an agent, the awarding institution should be able to satisfy itself that the terms and conditions that were originally approved have been, and continue to be, met.

Indicator 17

The awarding institution should be able to satisfy itself that staff engaged in delivering or supporting a collaborative programme are appropriately qualified for their role, and that a partner organisation has effective measures to monitor and assure the proficiency of such staff.

Indicator 18

The awarding institution should ensure that arrangements for admission to the collaborative programme take into account the Expectations and Indicators of *Chapter B2: Admissions* of the Quality Code.

Indicator 19

The awarding institution is responsible for ensuring that the outcomes of assessment for a programme provided under a collaborative arrangement meet the specified academic level of the award as defined in the FHEQ (or SCQF in Scotland), in the context of the relevant subject benchmark statement(s).

Indicator 20

The awarding institution should ensure that a partner organisation involved in the assessment of students understands and follows the requirements approved by the awarding institution for the conduct of assessments, which themselves should be referenced to *Chapter A6: Assessment of achievement of learning outcomes*, and *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning* of the Quality Code.

Indicator 21

External examining procedures for programmes offered through collaborative arrangements should be consistent with the awarding institution's normal practices.

Indicator 22

The awarding institution must retain ultimate responsibility for the appointment and functions of external examiners. The recruitment and selection of external examiners should be referenced to *Chapter B7: External examining* of the Quality Code.

Indicator 23

External examiners of collaborative programmes must receive briefing and guidance approved by the awarding institution sufficient for them to fulfil their role effectively.

Indicator 24

An awarding institution should ensure that:

- it has sole authority for awarding certificates and transcripts relating to the programmes of study delivered through collaborative arrangements
- the certificate and/or transcript records (a) the principal language of instruction where this was not English, and (b) the language of assessment if that was not English (except for awards for programmes or their elements relating to the study of a foreign language where the principal language of assessment is also the language of study). Where this information is recorded on the transcript only, the certificate should refer to the existence of the transcript. References here to 'a foreign language' and 'a language that is not English' do not include programmes provided and assessed by Welsh institutions in the Welsh language
- subject to any overriding statutory or other legal provision in any relevant jurisdiction, the certificate and/or the transcript should record the name and location of any partner organisation engaged in delivery of the programme of study.

Indicator 25

The minimum level of information that prospective and registered students should have about a collaborative programme is the programme specification approved by the awarding institution.

Indicator 26

The information made available to prospective students and those registered on a collaborative programme should include information to students about the appropriate channels for particular concerns, complaints and appeals, making clear the channels through which they can contact the awarding institution directly.

Indicator 27

The awarding institution should monitor regularly the information given by the partner organisation or agent to prospective students and those registered on a collaborative programme.

Indicator 28

The awarding institution should ensure that it has effective control over the accuracy of all public information, publicity and promotional activity relating to its collaborative provision.

Appendix 2: Glossary of terms

In the vocabulary of collaborative arrangements, many words are given different meanings or are used in different ways by different institutions and in different countries. This is a source of actual and potential confusion. It is important that readers of this Chapter of the Quality Code should be aware of the way in which its compilers have chosen to use words relevant to collaborative arrangements. As an aid to clarity for readers of this Chapter of the Quality Code, a glossary of terms is given below. The glossary is here to provide descriptions: it does not imply endorsement, approval, or disapproval by QAA of any of the functions, processes or arrangements that are described in the glossary.

Agent: is used to describe a person or organisation employed by the awarding institution to facilitate a collaborative arrangement.

Articulation arrangement: a process whereby an awarding institution reviews provision at another organisation and judges that the curriculum of a specified programme (or a specified part) provides an appropriate basis, and is of an appropriate academic standard, to be deemed equivalent to the identified components of one or more specified programmes delivered by the awarding institution and thus to enable direct entry to year two, three or four of these programme(s). Arrangements normally involve credit accumulation and transfer, so that credit achieved for the approved study at the first institution is transferred to contribute to the programme and award completed at the second institution (the awarding institution). The two separate components are the responsibility of the respective institutions delivering them but together contribute to a single award (of the awarding institution). The arrangements include a formal agreement whereby an awarding institution agrees that any students who have satisfactorily completed the specified programme (or a specified part) at the partner organisation and satisfied the stipulated assessment requirements are entitled to enter directly into subsequent stages of one or more specified programmes delivered by the awarding institution. Students normally have a contractual relationship with the partner organisation which delivers the first component and subsequently with the awarding institution.

Award: is any UK higher education award or qualification as defined by the *Framework for higher education qualifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*, or for Scotland.

Awarding institution: is a university or other higher education institution empowered to award degrees, diplomas, certificates or credits by virtue of authority given to it by statute, Royal Charter, or the Privy Council, or under licence from another authorised body. It is the UK institution whose academic award is the award to which a programme of study leads.

Dual award: describes collaborative arrangements under which two or more awarding institutions together provide programmes leading to separate awards being granted by both, or all of them.

Dual/double or multiple awards: describes collaborative arrangements under which two or more awarding institutions together provide a jointly-delivered programme (or programmes) leading to separate awards being granted by both, or all, of them.

Framework for higher education qualifications: (FHEQ) for institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland sets out the descriptors of the five levels of higher education qualifications awarded by universities and colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The FHEQ for institutions in Scotland sets out the six levels of higher education qualifications awarded by universities and colleges in Scotland; this is part of the wider *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)*. Qualification descriptors in both consist of a statement of the outcomes and achievements that a student should be able to demonstrate for the qualification to be awarded, and a statement of the wider abilities that the typical student could be expected to have developed in the process of attaining that award.

Franchising: a process by which an awarding institution agrees to authorise another organisation to deliver (and sometimes assess) part or all of one (or more) of its own approved programmes. Often, the awarding institution retains direct responsibility for the programme content, the teaching and assessment strategy, the assessment regime and quality assurance. Students normally have a direct contractual relationship with the awarding institution.

Jointly-delivered programme: describes a programme delivered or provided jointly by two or more institutions, irrespective of the award (ie single, joint, dual/double or multiple). It refers to the education provided rather than the nature of the award.

Joint award: describes a collaborative arrangement under which two or more awarding institutions together provide a programme leading to a single award made jointly by both, or all, participants. A single certificate or document (signed by the competent authorities) attests successful completion of this jointly-delivered programme, replacing the separate institutional or national qualifications.

Level: is a broad indicator of the relative demand, complexity, depth of study and autonomy of learning associated with a particular award. Descriptions of the levels of UK higher education awards are given in the FHEQ and the SCQF.

Partner: or partner organisation, is the term used to describe the institution or other body or individual with which the awarding institution enters into an agreement to collaborate. It is also used to describe an institution or other body which the awarding institution commissions to deliver aspects of an FDL programme and/or to provide learner support. It does not presuppose any particular form of legal relationship between the organisations involved.

Programme: (of study) is the approved curriculum followed by a registered student. A programme may be multidisciplinary, or refer to the main pathways through a modular scheme. In this Chapter of the Quality Code it is used to mean the academic provision which is the subject of a collaborative arrangement. The provision might be only part of a full programme, in which case it is referred to in this Chapter of the Quality Code as an element of the programme of study.

Programme presenter: is the term used to indicate the body charged with delivering a programme to the student. In many cases the programme presenter will be a part of the awarding institution, but the programme presenter could be an organisation that is not part of the awarding institution. The programme of study might be designed by the awarding institution, or the programme presenter, another body approved by the awarding institution, or a combination of these, but the definition of a 'programme designer' is not needed in these notes since it is a basic precept that the ultimate responsibility for approving the design of a programme of study leading to an academic award must lie with the awarding institution.

Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs): is used to denote organisations which are authorised to accredit, approve or recognise specific programmes in the context of the requirements for professional qualification. Some such organisations have a prescribed statutory or regulatory responsibility to accredit, approve or recognise programmes and/or to determine the academic standards and professional or vocational components of such programmes.

Programme specifications: provide concise published statements about the intended learning outcomes of programmes of study, information about the teaching, learning, learning support and assessment methods used to enable the learning outcomes to be achieved and demonstrated, and show how the units of study that make up the programmes will relate to levels of achievement.

Quality assurance: is the means through which an institution ensures and confirms that the conditions are in place for students to achieve the standards set by it or by another awarding body.

Support provider: is the term used to indicate the organisation, group or person(s) charged with providing learner support to students of a programme. Learner support may be provided directly by the awarding institution or by the programme presenter, but learner support could also be made available to students through a separate support provider, particularly in the form of 'local' support for students remote from the awarding institution and programme presenter.

Validation: a process by which an awarding institution judges a module or programme developed and delivered by another institution or organisation and approves it as of an appropriate standard and quality to contribute, or lead, to one of its awards. Students normally have a direct contractual relationship with the partner institution.

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