

UK QUALITY CODE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Advice and Guidance

Partnerships

Expectations and Practices

The advice underneath the Expectations and Practices is not mandatory for providers but illustrative of a range of possible approaches.

Expectations for standards

1. The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.
 - *When working in partnership, the awarding organisation retains responsibility for the academic standards of its awards, ensuring that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualification frameworks.*
2. The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.
 - *When working in partnership, the awarding organisation retains responsibility for ensuring that academic standards at, and beyond, the threshold level are reasonably comparable with those achieved by other UK providers.*

Core practice

Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.

In practice, this means that the awarding organisation must put in place all necessary measures to ensure that it can maintain the academic standards of its awards. This will include an analysis of the risks associated with a potential partner, the type of partnership that will be entered into, the management of the partnership (and its associated risks), that an appropriate formal agreement is put in place, and that these arrangements are effectively monitored and evaluated.

Expectations for quality

1. Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.
 - *When working in partnership, the awarding organisation retains responsibility for ensuring that all aspects of the student's academic experience from admissions through to outcomes can be considered high quality. The awarding organisation is also responsible for ensuring that enhancement opportunities are available to students.*
2. From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.
 - *When working in partnership, the awarding organisation retains responsibility for ensuring that student needs are consistently met.*

Core practice

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

In practice, this means that where an awarding organisation arranges for all, or part, of the course to be delivered by another organisation, it puts in place effective processes for the management and oversight of all aspects of the students' academic experience to ensure that this is high-quality. These will include regular monitoring and review of the course(s), the teaching staff, the facilities, other resources and seeking, and acting on, where relevant, feedback from all involved in the provision with a particular focus on student feedback and outcomes.

Guiding principles

The guiding principles given here are not mandatory for any provider. They are a concise expression of the fundamental practices of the higher education sector, based on the experience of a wide range of providers. They are intended as a framework for providers to consider when establishing new or looking at existing higher education provision. They are not exhaustive and there will be other ways for providers to meet their requirements.

1. The awarding organisation will be accountable for assuring the overall quality and academic standards of the provision, regardless of the type of partnership.
An awarding organisation is accountable for the quality and academic standards of its provision irrespective of the partnership arrangements. Procedures, systems and safeguards implemented for the management of partnership arrangements should be in proportion to the level of risk to quality and academic standards posed by the arrangement.
2. The awarding organisation will have in place appropriate governance to authorise and oversee the development and closure of partnership arrangements and to monitor their effective operation.
The awarding organisation will manage the development of partnerships to ensure that there is oversight of the partnership from inception through to closure. Formal procedures may set out requirements for differential arrangements dependent on the type of partnership and the level of risk. All aspects of a partnership should be subject to monitoring and evaluation to ensure their effective operation and to establish areas for development or the timely need for closure of the partnership.
3. Due diligence enquiries are completed and legally binding written agreements are signed prior to the commencement of student registration - due diligence enquiries are refreshed periodically and before agreements are renewed.
The awarding organisation and, where relevant, the partner should conduct a range of due diligence enquiries appropriate to the type of partnership, the detailed arrangements and the identified level of risk. Legally-binding written agreements, where required, which set out the rights and obligations of all parties, should be finalised and signed before students register on the associated provision. Where relevant, the written agreements will include appropriate student protection plan (or equivalent) clauses.

4. Provision delivered through partnership arrangements will be subject to quality procedures that are at least as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as those used for the provision delivered by the awarding organisation.
The partnership agreement will include information on the quality procedures for the provision, if, and how, they differ from those used for the provision delivered by the awarding organisation. They do not need to be the same procedures but they must be as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as those of the awarding organisation. There may be additional quality procedures and safeguards depending on the nature of the partnership and the level of risk identified.
5. Awarding organisations that make arrangements for the delivery of learning opportunities with others, retain the authority and responsibility for awarding certificates and records of study in relation to student achievement.
The award of a UK higher education qualification is a highly-valued and much sought-after achievement; it is important that the award of certificates is protected and secure to ensure that this status can be maintained. Consequently, the awarding organisation will maintain records of study and achievement for students who achieve a qualification and will issue certificates to each individual student.
6. All awarding organisations maintain accurate, up-to-date records of all partnership arrangements that are subject to a formal agreement.
The governance procedures will establish the types of partnership arrangements where a formal agreement will be required; this will normally depend on the level of risk to quality and academic standards posed by the arrangement. Records of the partnership arrangements should be maintained and kept up-to-date with any changes following review or evaluation of the partnership or other relevant changes, such as financial arrangements or change of key personnel.
7. Awarding organisations monitor and evaluate their partnership arrangements to satisfy themselves that the arrangements are achieving their stated outcomes and that academic standards and quality are being maintained.
Awarding organisations will monitor and evaluate all aspects of their partnership arrangements on a continuous basis. This will include the contract between the partners (where this is required), due diligence data and the arrangements for delivery, assessment and student support (as appropriate to the partnership arrangement) to ensure that the student learning experience is of an appropriate quality and that published information/material is accurate.

