



# Approval of New Academic Partnerships

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This code of practice sets out how the University approves new academic partnerships through a risk-based, multi-stage process. It defines governance, due diligence, academic approvals and legal requirements to ensure partnerships align with strategy, maintain quality and standards and manage financial, regulatory and reputational risks.

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## Related documents:

- University Risk Framework



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## 1 Introduction

1.1 As a research-intensive university committed to extending high quality educational opportunities and delivering outstanding experiences and outcomes for students that transform the lives of individuals, their families and their communities, the University of Hull will enter academic partnerships only where such arrangements clearly support its Education Strategy and institutional mission.

### A Institutional Context

1.2 Academic partnerships **should**:

- a. Support delivery of the University's Education Strategy by bringing expertise capability and resources that complement those of the University of Hull
- b. Align with the University's values and educational mission
- c. Extend and enhance the University's reputation for educational excellence
- d. Be financially sustainable and deliver value for money for students.

### B Key Principles

1.3 This Code applies to the approval of new academic partnerships, whether UK based or International, for the delivery of undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes and modules leading to:

- a. University of Hull awards, and/or
- b. University of Hull credit or recognition of equivalence.

1.4 This Code does not apply to:

- a. Collaboration undertaken solely for research
- b. Staff mobility
- c. Knowledge exchange
- d. Medical or health related provision delivered with a clinical partner
- e. Apprenticeships, where the academic delivery is by the University
- f. Placement learning.

## 2 Governance, Risk and Approval – overview

### A Distinction between partnership and activity

2.1 The University distinguishes between:

- a. Approval of an Academic Partnership (the institutional relationship), and
- b. Approval of Partnership Activities (the specific arrangements undertaken within that relationship, defined in Appendix 1: Definitions and Approval Routes).

2.2 This Code governs the processes for Academic Partnership Approval. No Partnership Activity **may** be approved unless the relevant Academic Partnership has first been approved in accordance with this Code.



**B** Risk based approach

- 2.3 All academic partnerships carry inherent risk. The University applies a risk-based approach to approval, scrutiny and governance.
- 2.4 Risk assessment is informed by factors including, but not limited to:
  - a. Nature and scale of activity
  - b. Financial exposure and sustainability
  - c. Reputational risk
  - d. Regulatory compliance (including OfS requirements)
  - e. Geographical location and regulatory environment
  - f. Partner experience of UK higher education.
- 2.5 Where a proposed partnership displays one or more high risk characteristics, it shall be treated as high risk for the purposes of approval, irrespective of other mitigating factors.

**C** Stages of Approval

- 2.6 Approval of a new Academic Partnership follows four sequential stages:
  - a. Stage 0 – Initial Scoping (strategic intent and initial risk)
  - b. Stage 1 – Due Diligence and Business Case (strategic approval of the partnership)
  - c. Stage 2 – Academic Case (quality, standards and delivery approval)
  - d. Legal Agreement.
- 2.7 Stages **may** run concurrently and **may** be approved in parallel.

**D** Approval

- 2.8 Approval is determined by the risk profile of the proposed partnership:

Risk level	Example of activity	Authority to Approve
<b>Low</b>	Progression, Incoming & Outgoing Study Abroad, Exchange	Executive Director of Marketing, Communication and Student Recruitment (MCSR)  (Reported to SPB)
<b>Medium</b>	UK validated only	Senate
<b>High</b>	Sub-contracted provision (OfS E10), International Branch Campus, Joint Institute	Council

- 2.9 This Code articulates the minimum level of approval and assurance required. The PVC Education **may** require additional scrutiny and/or approvals were deemed necessary.
- 2.10 All high-risk partnerships **must** be assigned a University Leadership Team (ULT) sponsor, normally the relevant Executive Dean.
- 2.11 For the avoidance of doubt, all subcontracted provision within the scope of OfS Condition E10 will be treated as high risk for approval purposes.



- 3 Stage 0 – initial scoping (strategic intent and initial risk)**
- A Purpose**
- 3.1 Initial scoping establishes alignment with institutional strategy, identifies prima facie risks, and determines whether a proposal **should** proceed to full due diligence.
- B Documentation**
- 3.2 A Stage 0 – Initial Scoping for New Academic Partnership form **must** be completed and:
- Signed by the relevant Head(s) of School and Executive Dean(s), or Head of Professional Service
  - Submitted to the Academic Partnerships Team (AP Team).
- 3.3 Initial scoping **must** include:
- Rationale for the partnership
  - Outline of proposed activities
  - Initial assessment of risk (in accordance with the University Risk Framework).
- 3.4 Detailed income, costings, or mitigation plans are not normally required at this stage.
- C Consideration and outcomes**
- 3.5 Initial scoping proposals are considered by SPB, which **may**:
- Support progression to Stage 1
  - Defer pending further information
  - Reject the proposal.
- 3.6 Where the initial assessment identifies the proposal as medium risk, the ULT sponsor **may** seek early approval from ULT and, where appropriate, Council. Where the initial assessment identifies the proposal as high risk, the ULT sponsor **must** seek early approval from ULT and, where appropriate, Council.
- 4 Stage 1 – Due Diligence and Business Case (strategic approval)**
- A Purpose**
- 4.1 Stage 1 establishes whether the University **should** enter a partnership with the proposed institution.
- B Documentation**
- 4.2 A Stage 1 – Due Diligence and Business Case for New Academic Partnership application **must** be completed by the AP Team, in consultation with:
- Relevant School(s) and Faculty(ies)
  - Professional Services.
- 4.3 The application **must** include:
- Full institutional due diligence
  - Detailed risk assessment and mitigation plan
  - Costing, including of proposed mitigation arrangements.



C Consideration and outcomes

4.4 Applications are considered by SPB.

4.5 SPB **may**:

- a. Approve the partnership (or recommend approval where escalation is required)
- b. Defer decision pending further information
- c. Reject the proposal.

4.6 Where required, recommendations are referred to ULT and Council in accordance with Section 2.

4.7 SPB **must** determine whether to recommend approval for a fixed term (e.g. three or five years), or an indefinite term.

5 **Stage 2 – Academic Case (quality, standards and delivery approval)**

A Purpose

5.1 Stage 2 confirms how academic quality will be assured and academic standards secured within the partnership and **must** demonstrate:

- a. Application of the University's Quality and Standards Framework
- b. Arrangements for academic oversight and governance
- c. Development and approval of any necessary Supplementary Regulations.

B Documentation

5.2 A Stage 2 – New Academic Partnership (Academic Case) application **must** be completed by the AP Team in consultation with the relevant School and Faculty.

5.3 A Collaborative Provision Delivery Plan **must** explicitly address how individual Codes of Practice within the Quality and Standards Framework will apply to the partnership.

5.4 The requirement for a site visit is determined by the type of partnership activity:

- a. Progression partnerships: no site visit required
- b. Exchange and Outgoing Study Abroad: site report required
- c. All other partnerships: site visit required.

5.5 Site visit reports **must** confirm the adequacy of learning resources and be included with the relevant application.

C Consideration and outcomes

5.6 Applications are considered by Education Committee (EC).

5.7 EC **may**:

- a. Approve the application or recommend approval to Senate
- b. Defer pending further information
- c. Reject the application.

5.8 Where EC recommends approval, Senate will determine final approval and duration.

5.9 All partnerships are subject to review, normally no less than every five years.



- 6 **Legal Agreement and Collaborative Provision Register**
- 6.1 All partnerships **must** be affected through a Legal Agreement drafted and authorised by the University Governance and Compliance Office.
- 6.2 Agreements are signed by the Vice Chancellor or designated nominee.
- 6.3 All approved Collaborative Provision Partnerships **must** be recorded on the University's Collaborative Provision Register, maintained by the AP Team.