

Academic Partnerships, OfS Registration Status Policy

Introduction

To align with the ambitions of the University's Strategic Plan 2022-27, transforming lives and communities starts with working in partnership. This includes forging key strategic academic partnerships, nationally and internationally, that significantly enhance the institution's teaching and research.

The University, as the awarding institution, is responsible for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name no matter where delivered or by whom. These standards must be both equivalent to those for comparable awards delivered by the University and be compatible with any/all relevant benchmarks for all programmes including those delivered under collaborative arrangements.

Where a programme is delivered by a partner institution, however funded, the quality of the student experience must be of an equivalent standard to that for a student of the University studying on-campus and the management of the responsibility must accord with University and sector-wide requirements. The University retains overall responsibility for the quality of the student experience.

Office for Students Registration Status

Under the 2017 Higher Education and Research Act (HERA), a higher education provider in England is required to register with the Office for Students (OfS) if it wishes to:

- access public grant funding (such as funding to support teaching), and/or student support funding (such as enabling students at a provider to access student finance)
- apply to the Home Office for a student sponsor licence to recruit international students, or to maintain an existing licence (from 4 January 2021, the student sponsor licence has replaced the Tier 4 Sponsor licence as the route for providers to sponsor students who wish to study in the UK)
- apply for degree awarding powers in order to award their own degrees, and/or university title

The University of Lincoln is fully registered with the OfS.

Where potential partners are not registered with the OfS, the associated risk of that partnership is significantly increased. The University would be required to take on the following risks:

- The partner would not be subject to the general Ongoing Conditions of OfS Registration so the University would need to assume full liability for the partner's graduate outcomes and other quality indicators under its own general Ongoing Conditions of Registration and in particular would need to ensure the partner's compliance with Conditions B1 to B6 (see Annex One)

- Partner students would need to be included as part of the University's HESA return, affecting any existing and future student number controls and would also be included in any TEF (B6) / B3 metric
- Partner students would need to apply for SLC funding through the University, as without OfS registration the partner students do not have access to funding
- The University would have to sponsor any international students on our Tier IV license

University of Lincoln Policy Position

Proposals for new academic partnerships must be approved by the Senior Leadership Team through the International and Regional Partnerships Group (IRPG).

In order to avoid the increased level of risk, and to ensure the University is working with the correct quality of academic partners as required through the Strategic Plan, proposals that involve any sort of delivery of a University of Lincoln programme by or with a non-OfS registered organisations will need to demonstrate significant mitigation against the risk factors identified above, in particular in relation to Ongoing Conditions of Registration B1 to B6, and will only be considered by exception.

In very exceptional circumstances the University may support a potential partner's application for OfS registration. Where a potential partner is making an application for OfS registration, all of the above policy applies. In addition, any submission to the OfS either by the partner indicating support from the University or by the University itself in support of the potential partner must have explicit prior approval from SLT/IRPG. No documents which name the University should be submitted to the OfS without this explicit approval.

Director of Planning and Corporate Strategy

September 2022

Annex One: General Ongoing Conditions of Registration B1 to B6

Condition B1 – Academic Experience	<p>Summary: The provider must ensure that the students registered on each higher education course receive a high quality academic experience. A high quality academic experience includes but is not limited to ensuring that each higher education course:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. is up-to-date; 2. provides educational challenge; 3. is coherent; 4. is effectively delivered; and 5. requires students to develop relevant skills.
Condition B2 – Resources, Support and Student Engagement	<p>Summary: The provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. students registered on a higher education course receive resources and support to ensure: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. a high quality academic experience for those students; and b. those students succeeding in and beyond higher education; and 2. effective engagement with students to ensure: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. a high quality academic experience for those students; and b. those students succeed in and beyond higher education.
Condition B3 – Student Outcomes	<p>Summary: The provider must deliver positive outcomes for students on its courses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the outcome data for each indicator/split indicator must be at or before the relevant numerical thresholds – continuation, completion, progression.
Condition B4 – Assessment and Awards	<p>Summary: The provider must ensure that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. students are assessed effectively; 2. each assessment is valid and reliable; 3. academic regulations are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible; 4. academic regulations are designed to ensure effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a manner that appropriately reflects the level and content of the course; and 5. relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously.
Condition B5 – Sector-Recognised Standards	<p>Summary: The provider must ensure that, in respect of any relevant awards granted to students who complete a higher education course provided by, or on behalf of, the provider (whether or not the provider is the awarding body):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. any standards set appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards; and 2. awards are only granted to students whose knowledge and skills appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards.
Condition B6 – TEF	<p>The provider must participate in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework.</p>