

## ACADEMIC BOARD

### POLICY ON UK AND INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy articulates the University's general principles in respect of academic partnerships, both in the UK and internationally. This will guide both the management of existing relationships and the development of new ones.
- 1.2 The University adopts the following overarching principles in respect of academic partnerships, consistent with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education and Office for Students Ongoing General Conditions of Registration:

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

*Where the University works in partnership with other organisations,*

- *It will ensure 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.*
  - *It will ensure 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.*
  - *It will ensure that students are provided with a high-quality academic experience with adequate resources and support, and qualifications that meet sector standards. The University will ensure that any partner organisations deliver well-designed courses that are reliably assessed, give students the support they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education, and ensure that the qualifications awarded hold their value.*
- 1.3 Ultimate authority for the strategic approval of academic partnerships rests with the Senior Leadership Team. Ultimate authority for the academic approval of academic partnerships rests with the Academic Board

#### 2. Definition of Academic Partnerships

- 2.1 The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education defines partnerships as, 'An arrangement between two or more organisations to deliver aspects of teaching, - learning, assessment and student support. It refers to collaborative arrangements involving students and/or awards which include those

*involving guaranteed progression and sharing of services. Partnership arrangements may apply to the delivery of whole courses of study or to elements of courses, individual modules, or self-contained components of study. Alternative sites and contexts for learning or assessment, or specialist support, resources or facilities for learning, may be provided, for example, by organisations offering work-based or placement learning opportunities, or employers supporting employees on higher education courses where the workplace is used as a learning environment. They may operate either within the UK or transnationally and include, for example, different modes of delivery such as online, validation arrangements, franchised courses, branch campuses, multiple awards, apprenticeships and provision by 'embedded colleges' of integrated foundation courses.'*

2.2 Furthermore, the Office for Students defines the Partnership Student Population as:

- i. Registered by the provider in question and taught elsewhere, at another provider, under a subcontractual partnership arrangement (subcontracted out); or
- ii. Neither taught nor registered by the provider in question, but that provider acts as the awarding body for the qualification that a student is studying (validation-only).

2.3 For operational purposes and clarity, the University draws a distinction between cooperative and collaborative arrangements.

**Collaboration** is the delivery by a partner of any part of a programme of study leading to an award of the University or award for which the University is responsible.

**Cooperation** does not involve delivery by a partner of any part of a programme of study leading to an award of the University. Cooperation may include, but is not limited to:

- cooperation in research;
- cooperation in scholarship and consultancy;
- cooperation in academic dialogue, such as the running of seminars and conferences;
- the delivery of guest lectures;
- the exchange of academic materials;
- the exchange of staff for the purposes of teaching and supervision;
- the exchange of students;
- Jointly carrying out research and other academic activity, such as guest lectures, consultancy, developing academic materials
- the admission – with or without advanced standing – onto University programmes of students from cooperating institutions.

2.4 UK and international collaborative partners must have sufficient quality, standing and authority to form an arrangement with the University of Lincoln.

2.5 Due diligence will be undertaken to confirm the quality and status of local, national, and international institutions. A fundamental principle underpinning the quality and standards of international collaboration is that partnerships overseas will be managed to the same quality assurance threshold as UK partnerships.

### **3 Principles governing all Academic Partnerships**

- 3.1 A partnership is only acceptable to the University, and therefore may only be entered into, when it is consistent with this policy on academic partnerships.
- 3.2 The quality of a partner must reflect the University's strategy, mission and vision and must reflect current Academic Board and Strategic Plan requirements for the quality and standing of a partner, and in particular reflect the requirements of the University's Internationalisation Strategy.
- 3.3 The University's partnerships will be based on the principles of mutual esteem, reciprocity, and mutual benefit; will reflect the University's strategy, mission and vision; will be sustainable and offer the prospect of a long-term relationship; will enable the University to achieve ends which it could not achieve alone; and will contribute towards the attainment of the University's strategic objectives.
- 3.4 The adoption of a partner and the operation of a partnership arrangement must be consistent with both existing University, national and international principles, policies, regulations and procedures governing the delivery of higher education, quality and standards in academic partnerships and the delivery of University programmes of study.
- 3.5 The University must be satisfied as to the financial soundness of any proposed partner and must evaluate the cost to the University of entering and maintaining a partnership relationship.
- 3.6 As a general rule, partnerships must be sustainable and offer the prospect of a long-term relationship between the University and the partner.

### **4 Principles underpinning International Cooperation**

- 4.1 It is the responsibility of those proposing an international partnership to establish that the substantive requirements of this policy and the University's Internationalisation Strategy are satisfied. These requirements will be tested through the strategic and academic approval processes.
- 4.2 The vision of internationalisation at Lincoln is to be a globally recognised University, connected worldwide through excellence in its partnerships in education, research, industry and knowledge exchange, built collegiately by its community of inter-culturally knowledgeable students and staff.
- 4.3 The objectives of internationalisation at Lincoln are five-fold, and mutually reinforcing:
  - We will maximise the quality, impact, visibility, and international reach of our research and knowledge exchange;
  - We will build a global community of students and staff that is welcoming, supportive, and inclusive;
  - We will internationalise the student and staff experience;
  - We will enhance the University's reputation and standing overseas by working with the most appropriate partners;
  - We will apply our values of respectfulness and sustainability in all our international activities and in our interactions with those who engage with us.

- 4.4 Our international partnerships will be based on the principles of mutual esteem, reciprocity, and mutual benefit; will reflect the University's strategy, mission and vision; will be sustainable and offer the prospect of a long-term relationship; will enable the University to achieve ends which it could not achieve alone; and will contribute towards the attainment of the University's strategic objectives. All internationalisation activities must be fully in accordance with University policies on risk management, financial planning, compliance and quality assurance.
- 4.5 The acceptable purpose of international cooperation will be determined by assessing its consistency with the objectives set out in 3.2, 3.3, 4.2 and 4.3.
- 4.6 Public institutions of higher education, accredited private institutions and organisations of higher education, and other bodies authorised to undertake teaching and research commensurate with higher learning may be recognised by the University as a partner in international cooperation.
- 4.7 Where a proposed international cooperation entails either:
- an aspect of the teaching of students (for example through the exchange of students or the admission of students with advanced standing to one of the University's programmes); or an activity related to teaching (for example, the design of a programme of study or the development of teaching materials),
- then the institution or body being proposed as a partner must have:
- a standing equivalent to that of an institution authorised in the United Kingdom to provide higher education, and
  - across the range of activities encompassed by the cooperation, partners must reflect the ambition of the University in long-term and mutually supportive relationships, and be able to help us to achieve our goals.
- 4.8 Independent evidence is required to establish the forms of standing specified in 4.7. For these purposes, evidence of standing should normally be sought from state bodies responsible for the administration of national or regional public policy in respect to standards and quality in higher education, from in-country reports from trusted sources such as QAA and the British Council, and from the UK ECCTIS database.
- 4.9 Where a proposed cooperation involves research, then the institution, organisation or body being proposed as a partner must, as a minimum, have a standing equivalent to that of a United Kingdom institution capable of supporting research, whether pure or applied.

## **5 Principles underpinning International Collaboration**

- 5.1 The principles established in section 4 regarding standing and quality of the institution shall apply equally to international collaborative arrangements.
- 5.2 The principles established in 3.2, 3.3, 4.2 and 4.3 regarding the purpose of partnership shall apply equally to international collaborative arrangements.

- 5.3 The proposed academic objectives cannot be attained by an arrangement other than a collaborative agreement (e.g. a cooperative agreement).
- 5.4 Validation of an award or part of an award to be delivered by an overseas partner under a collaborative partnership arrangement should be approved and managed to the same quality assurance threshold as UK partnerships.
- 5.5 International collaborative partnerships will only be established with institutions that meet rigorous selection criteria. Risk assessment principles will be used to evaluate proposed international collaborative partnerships and will reflect national, institutional and programme level criteria.

## 6 Principles governing Joint and Dual Awards

- 6.1 The University adopts the following definitions in relation to joint and dual awards, in accordance with the QAA Characteristic Statement on Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body:

Co-dependent, mutually contingent qualifications:

**Joint Award:** These arrangements may be joint in all aspects, involving all partners (of which there may be more than two) in roughly equal proportions in all aspects of course design, development, delivery, assessment, management and decision-making on student achievement. Students may spend time studying at each of the partners involved in the arrangement. Students successfully completing the course gain a single certificate bearing the signatures of the competent authorities of all degree-awarding bodies involved, replacing the separate institutional or national qualifications.

**Double or Multiple Award:** In some jurisdictions there are legal or regulatory impediments to the award of a single certificate. In other cases, there may be difficulties with the recognition or acceptance of a single joint certificate, which mean that it is not in the interests of students to mark their achievement in this way. In these circumstances, students completing a course that is otherwise wholly joint (as described above) are awarded two (or more) certificates, one from each degree-awarding body involved.

Integrated but independent qualifications

**Dual Award:** These arrangements generally involve two separate but integrated qualifications. Students who successfully complete both courses receive separate institutional or national certificates - one for each of the two separate qualifications, granted by each of the awarding bodies involved. Each degree-awarding body is responsible for its own award, but the two components form a single package, and the overall arrangement is a joint enterprise that requires elements of joint management and oversight.

- 6.2 As established in 1.2, the University takes ultimate responsibility for the academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities of degrees awarded in its name, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them.
- 6.3 The awarding of dual awards raise questions of the double counting of credit, whereby a single volume of credit contributes to two or more separate qualifications. The

University will consider the issue of double counting of credit when entering into a dual award arrangement.

- 6.4 However, the University accepts that in some cases – for example, the operation of an Erasmus Mundus Masters programme – there will be circumstances in which a joint or dual award arrangement can achieve benefits to students which the University could not achieve by acting on its own.
- 6.5 Only Academic Board may approve a joint or dual award, and for each arrangement a case must be made to Academic Board outlining the benefits of the proposed arrangement to the University and explaining why the University could not achieve these benefits acting on its own. Academic Board may delegate the approval of the joint or dual degree to the Academic Affairs Committee. For the purposes of the following principles, references to Academic Board may be taken to include delegated authority to the Academic Affairs Committee.
- 6.6 Any joint or dual award arrangement must be consistent with the requirements of regulatory and quality assurance bodies and in particular with the OfS Ongoing General Conditions of Registration and the QAA UK Quality Code.
- 6.7 Academic Board will satisfy itself that each degree-awarding body entering into a joint or dual degree arrangement has the legal capacity to do so.
- 6.8 Joint or dual award arrangements will only be entered into with degree-awarding bodies with a status consistent with the principles established in 3.2, 3.3, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7.
- 6.9 College Research Degrees Board or the Standing Regulations Oversight Group as appropriate will determine the equivalency of each institution's regulations to govern the award of the joint or dual award as necessary and whether bespoke regulations are required. Bespoke regulations will require the approval of Academic Board.
- 6.10 Any joint or dual degree shall be quality assured to the University's own quality threshold, irrespective of quality arrangements at other degree-awarding bodies involved in the awarding of the degree.

## 7. **Data Protection**

- 7.1 Cooperative and collaborative partnership arrangements must be supported, where applicable, by information sharing and/or data processing agreements in accordance with data protection legislation.

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