

Prifysgol **Wreccsam**
Wrexham University

Academic Partnerships Procedure

2023/24



Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Purpose of this Procedure | 2 |
| 2. Key Principles | 2 |
| 3. Definitions of Academic partnership initiatives | 4 |
| <i>Figure 1: Committee Structure for quality oversight of academic partnership arrangements</i> | 5 |
| 4. University governance related to Academic partnerships | 6 |
| <i>Figure 2: Workflow showing the consideration and approval of new academic partnership proposals (commissioning process)</i> | 8 |
| 5. Roles and Responsibilities | 8 |
| 6. Academic partnerships processes | 10 |
| <i>Figure 3: Academic partnerships grid</i> | 12 |
| 7. Articulation | 12 |
| 8. Validated / franchise / dual degree | 14 |
| 9. Due Diligence | 15 |
| <i>Figure 4: Risk explanations & mitigations for the identification of high risk academic partnerships</i> | 18 |
| 10. New / additional partner delivery site | 24 |
| <i>Figure 5: Approval of new / additional partner delivery site process</i> | 25 |
| 11. Operational Administration | 26 |
| 12. Quality Review | 27 |
| 13. Agreement Review and Renewal..... | 27 |
| 14. Termination | 28 |
| 15. Accessibility..... | 30 |

1. Purpose of this Procedure

1.1 *Academic partnerships* is understood by the University to refer to any educational provision leading to an award, or to specific credit towards an award, of an awarding institution that is delivered (in whole or part) and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with another organisation.

1.2 This procedure for academic partnerships applies to provision that leads to the award of academic credit and that is delivered, assessed or supported in academic partnership between the University and one or more organisation.

1.3 The Board of Governors has oversight of all academic partnership arrangements and for the 2024/25 academic year will be the final approvers for any new academic partnership proposals. Further information on this can be found within paragraphs 2.3, 4.1, 5.1, 6.2, figure 2, 8.4, 8.6, 9.2, 9.6, 9.13, 14.1, 14.4, 14.6 and 14.9 within this procedure.

1.3 This procedure is informed by [the UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) and the [Academic partnership Principles](#), developed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

2. Key Principles

2.1 As an overarching principle guiding the design of the processes described in this procedure, the University accepts responsibility for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name, noting that the University is accountable to HEFCW, CTER, QAA, PSRBs and other awarding bodies for the quality and standards of the provision it offers in collaboration with partner organisations.

2.2 The University's academic partnership procedure enables us to effectively discharge our responsibilities for the standards and quality of the University's academic partnership arrangements with other HE organisations, including mechanisms to ensure that:

- i. The University's Vision and Strategy is supported through a targeted, sustainable, risk-based and effective process, ensuring that the University's academic quality and standards are robustly maintained.
- ii. The academic standards of awards delivered through an academic partnership arrangement are equivalent to those awards delivered at the University.
- iii. The academic standards of such awards meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. The University is also mindful of the need to meet EU and overseas expectations and in fulfilling the requirements of any professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) that has approved or recognised the programme or qualification, in relation to aspects of its delivery and any associated formal agreements. The status of the programme or qualification in respect of PSRB recognition is made clear to prospective students.
- iv. The quality of learning opportunities offered through academic partnership arrangements are sufficient to enable students to achieve the academic standard for the award to which the programme of study leads.

- v. Due diligence is exercised in the selection of partner organisations, in respect of assuring the good standing of any proposed partners, and that their educational objectives are compatible with the University.
- vi. Agreements/contracts drawn up by the University are legally binding, comply with the Higher Education (Wales) Act 2015, set out the rights and responsibilities of both parties in the delivery of specific provision (which can only be extended to additional provision by going through a further approval process), and prohibit any serial arrangements.
- vii. Degree awarding bodies clarify which HE Provider is responsible for admitting and registering a student to modules or programmes delivered with others and ensure that admissions are consistent with their own admissions policies.
- viii. Students admitted to a University programme are enabled to complete their studies in the event of the partner HE provider withdrawing from the academic partnership, or the University terminating the academic partnership.
- ix. The University and HE provider maintain records (by type and category) of all arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with others that are subject to a formal agreement.
- x. The University has control over the accuracy of all information provided for students, and of any promotional material relating to programmes leading to its awards through academic partnership arrangements.
- xi. The University retains responsibility for the academic standards of all credit and qualifications granted in their name. This responsibility is never delegated.
- xii. The University will ensure that the standards of any of their awards involving learning opportunities delivered by other HE providers are equivalent to the standards set for other awards that they confer at the same level.
- xiii. The University has sole authority over the arrangements for awarding the University certificates and transcripts to students on partner provider programmes.
- xiv. Partner HE providers adhere to the approved programme specification in respect of admission to, and the delivery (including the assurance of the quality of teaching) and assessment of the programme/s which they are approved to offer in the University's name.
- xv. All University programmes delivered by partner HE providers have an external examiner assigned to them, through the University's normal arrangements for appointing external examiners.
- xvi. Where Dual Degree arrangements are in place these are subject to all key principles as listed above and therefore subject to all policies, procedures and regulations of the University.
- xvii. Where bilingual or dual language delivery arrangements are to be put in place, additional and appropriate measures must be made with regards to effective oversight and management of programmes delivered and assessed in another language other than English and Welsh. This includes providing a proposed plan for the appointment of bilingual Academic Link(s) and external examiner(s) during the commissioning stage.

2.3 Where the following initiatives are proposed, the University through the Partnerships Office and in consultation with VCET, AQSC and the Board of Governors will need to consider how the provision may be effectively delivered and monitored before giving permission to proceed to the Commissioning stage, these initiatives include:

- i. Academic partnership arrangements for programmes which fall outside the subject expertise of its own staff.
- ii. Devolving responsibility for the establishment of formal academic partnership arrangements to agents.
- iii. Arrangements involving mid to long-term University investment and/or resources.

3. Definitions of Academic partnership initiatives

3.1 The University acknowledges that different types of arrangements have different implications for the respective responsibilities of the University and the HE provider in relation to recruitment and selection, student registration, programme delivery, the quality of the student learning experience and financial matters.

3.2 Academic partnership arrangements are categorised as follows, according to the nature and scope of the responsibilities devolved to the partner organisation, this may include both UK and non-UK-based HE delivery partners:

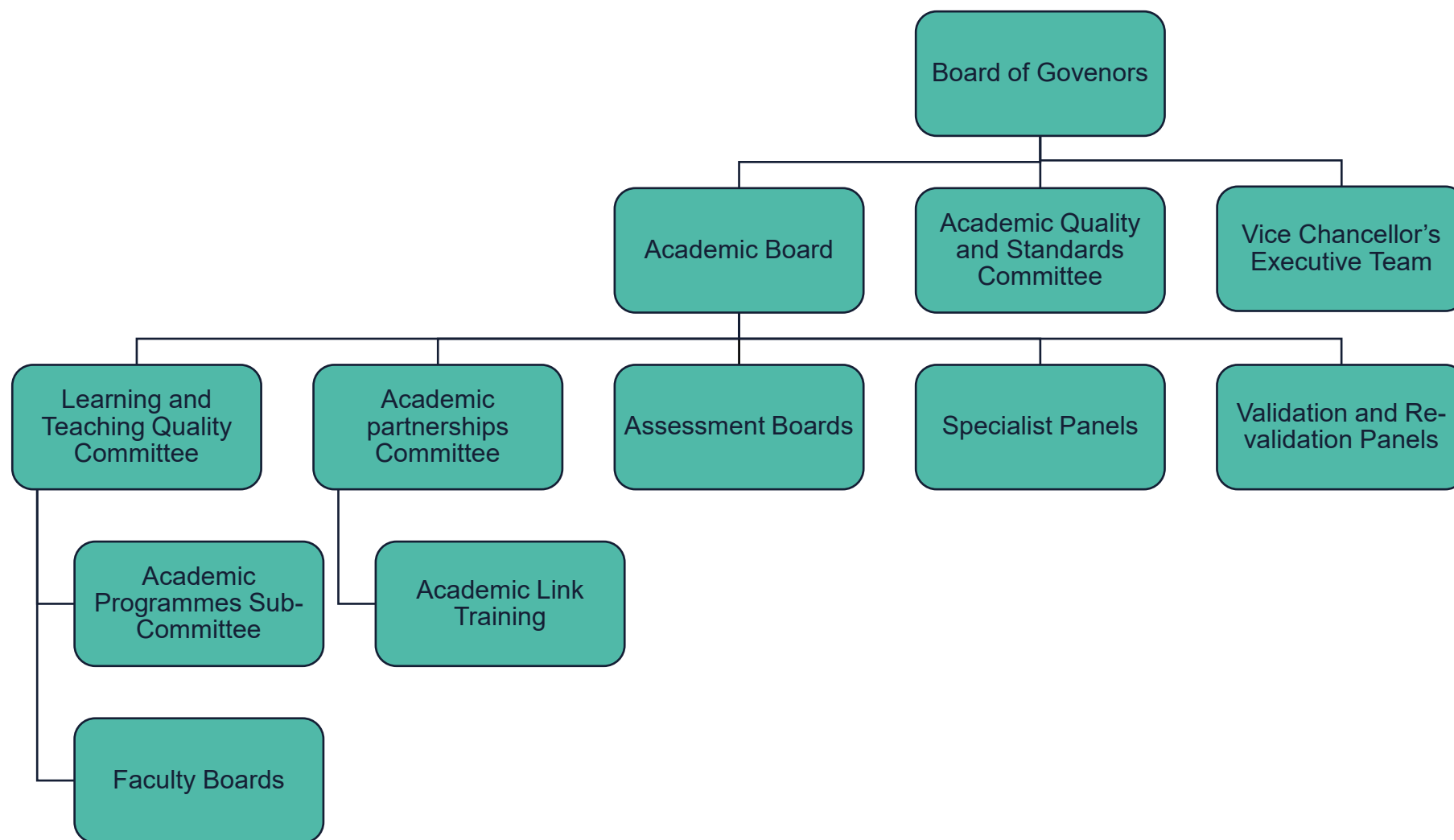
3.3 **Articulation:** a formal agreement for students, who satisfy academic criteria, to be automatically entitled to progress from an identified programme with another organisation to a named University programme at an advanced level via credit accumulation and transfer, which together leads to a single award from the University as the awarding body. The University is responsible for students on articulation arrangements once they join the University.

3.4 **Dual Degree:** a programme delivered by the University and one or more organisation(s) leading to separate awards being granted by all institutions. The programmes at the various institutions may overlap entirely in content and delivery or may have some separate elements unique to each award. Each award and certificate should normally reference the other. Each degree awarding body is responsible for its own award, and in all cases the University will operate its own regulations, policies, procedures and assessment processes, and will make its own decisions on conferring its own awards independent from any award offered by the partner organisation(s).

3.5 **Franchising:** Whole or part of a University programme is delivered by staff employed by the partner organisation. The University has overall responsibility for quality and standards of provision and the partner operates within University regulations, policies and procedures.

3.6 **Validated provision:** The University validates a programme designed for delivery by a specific partner as appropriate to lead to a University award. This programme would not normally be delivered at the University. The University has overall responsibility for quality and standards of validated provision and the partner operates within University regulations, policies and procedures unless otherwise stated within the partner specific agreement.

Figure 1: Committee Structure for quality oversight of academic partnership arrangements



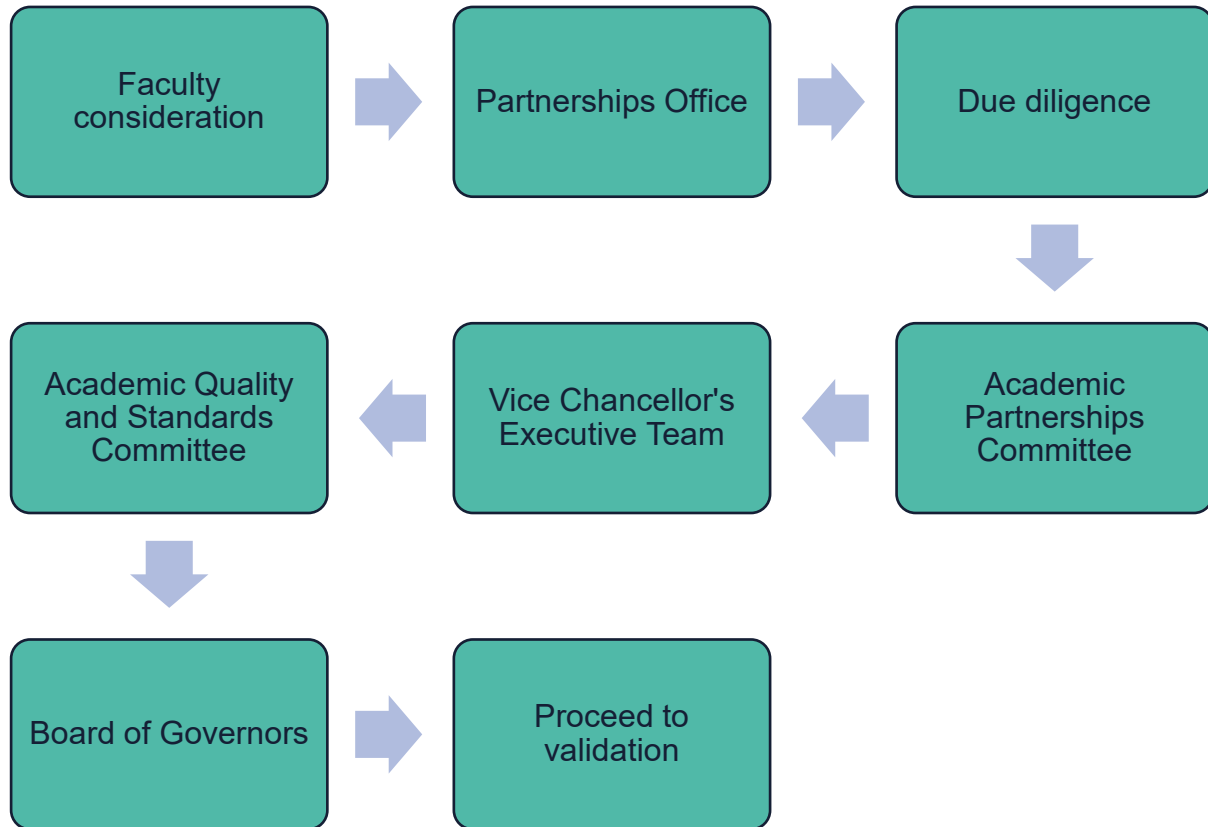
4. University governance related to Academic partnerships

4.1 The following table provides a summary of governance activity related to Academic partnerships. Further information on the groups listed below, including Terms of Reference for Committees, can be found within the Academic Board Handbook. For Validation and Re-validation Panels, further information can be found within the *Academic Quality Handbook, Chapter 1*.

| Governance | Responsibility |
|--|---|
| Academic Board | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure the academic standards and quality of the University's academic partnership. AB will consider and approve recommendations from APC. |
| Academic partnerships Committee (APC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> academic quality and standards oversight of academic partnership arrangements through the receipt and consideration of Annual Partner Review reports. receives regular reports from APSC in relation to business conducted. considers new academic partnership proposals and makes recommendations to VCET, AQSC and BoG. |
| Academic Programmes Sub Committee (APSC) | <p>considers and approves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> modifications to programmes. advanced standing arrangements for academic partnership arrangements. |
| Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides further scrutiny to new partner proposals by reviewing the commissioning paperwork along with the minutes from VCET. provides recommendations to the Board of Governors on new academic partnership proposals. Consider whether there is sufficient evidence that the proposed partner organisation is of appropriate standing, has professional/academic credibility and that there is no evident reputational risk to the University should the academic partnership be approved. That the proposed organisation's mission and strategic goals are compatible with those of the University. |
| Award/Progression Assessment Boards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure the maintenance of appropriate standards of assessment. ensure that students are assessed in accordance with the approved regulations and procedures. determine each student's progress. |
| Board of Governors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider and approve all new and existing academic partnership arrangements that have been recommended to them by VCET and AQSC. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • receive informal updates on the progression of new academic partnership proposals from the Partnerships Office. |
| Faculty Boards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that partner providers adhere to the University's CME and EE processes. • receive and consider partner CME and EE reports, agreeing upon actions to be taken. • coordinate responses to EE reports. |
| Learning and Teaching Quality Committee (LTQC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recommend to AB the establishment and development of policies, procedures and regulations as they relate to academic partnerships. • the oversight of partner CME and EE reports. • Identifying and sharing examples of enhancement and good practice. |
| Module Assessment Boards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider students' marks, for both home students and students studying at partner organisations. |
| Specialist Panels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Appeals and Integrity, Complaints and Extenuating Circumstances cases received from partner providers. |
| Validation and Re-validation Panels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsible for assuring standards of academic provision and the quality of the learning opportunities that will be afforded to students studying University programmes within partner organisations. |
| Vice Chancellor's Executive Team (VCET) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consider and assess the strategic, academic, business case and risk assessment for a proposal. • approve new partners and deciding whether the proposal is to proceed to the next stage of the relevant approval process. • report to the Board of Governors on such academic partnerships which are new or raise concern. • whether there is a sound business, strategic and academic rationale for the proposed academic partnership. • consider whether the proposed academic partnership is consistent with regional or national agendas. • consider whether it would be appropriate to undertake the proposed academic partnership in view of the University's existing arrangements and other commitments. • consider whether the proposed academic partnership presents commitment and support of the faculty and senior management of the University and of the prospective partner organisation. • consider what risks the proposed arrangements poses to the University and how these will be managed. |

Figure 2: Workflow showing the consideration and approval of new academic partnership proposals (commissioning process)



5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 The following table provides a summary of the roles and responsibilities related to Academic partnerships.

| Role | Responsibility |
|---|---|
| Academic Link (who can also be a Programme Leader) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for liaison with staff in partner organisations on all academic related matters to ensure that partner providers deliver programmes / modules in accordance with the required quality and standards of the University, including making appropriate arrangements for the local scrutiny of documentation. act as the internal panel member for validation and re-validation events where possible. |
| Associate Dean (International and Academic partnerships) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> undertakes strategic and operational leadership in relation to academic partnerships. |

| Role | Responsibility |
|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to afford reasonable access to the HE provider premises, relating to the provision it offers in collaboration with the University, and to the students enrolled on this provision. carry out all activities as outlined within the partner specific agreement. |
| Dean of Faculty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for active academic partnership arrangements. overall responsibility for assuring the quality and standards of the academic provision. providing strategic leadership on curriculum development. |
| Deputy Vice Chancellor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may initiate the procedure for consideration of a new partner proposal or the termination of academic partnership agreements where causes of concern cannot be resolved. |
| Director of Strategic Planning and Student Administration (SPSA) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> overall responsibility for the management and delivery of quality assurance, supported by the Head of Quality. |
| Head of Academic partnerships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> manages the Academic partnerships Office Team and is the lead for academic partnership acquisition and development activities. Supports the Head of Quality in academic partnership internal reviews. responsibility to oversee the operational management of academic partnerships within the University. Academic Partnerships Office Team is responsible for the development and operational aspects of the University's academic partnerships for proposed and current partners. keep the Board of Governors informed of new academic partnership proposals and seek advice where required. the Academic Partnerships Office liaises with partner staff to oversee the enrolment and induction of students that takes place at partner providers. the Academic Partnerships Office conducts induction sessions for staff at partner organisations advising on administrative, operational processes and procedures. |
| Head of Quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> acts as the lead reviewer for academic partnership internal reviews. They may also choose to appoint an alternate to act in this role. manages the Quality and Regulation Team. the Quality and Regulations Team are responsible for overseeing all quality assurance related to active academic partnerships, including the validation, re-validation, modification, programme suspension and withdrawal, CME and EE processes. |

| Role | Responsibility |
|--|--|
| Academic Partnership Organisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide the documentation and any other evidence that may be required through the University's quality assurance processes. For example, reflect on the progression and degree outcome data through the CME process. carry out all activities as outlined within the partner specific agreement. |
| Partner Programme Leader | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> appointed by the partner organisation to coordinate the delivery and management of the programme. foster regular communication with the University's designated Programme Leader and/or Academic Link for academic delivery-related matters. |
| Academic Partnerships Quality Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for the quality oversight of the University's academic partnerships. to provide advice and guidance to partners on quality assurance matters for existing and potential new partners. overseeing the delivery of all quality assurance processes related to partner provision. arrange and carry out monthly catch-up meetings with validated partners. |
| Programme Leader (WU) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for quality assurance and standards matters on their programme, including any instances of delivery at partner institutions. |
| WU Professional Service Departments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From time-to-time partner organisations will need to contact counterpart colleagues in the University's various Professional Services Departments on strategic management, operational and administrative matters as and when required. |

6. Academic partnerships processes

6.1 There are a number of processes in place to oversee the effective management of partner provision at the University, they include:

6.2 **Commissioning:** the first stage of the process for the approval of new partner proposals. Proposers complete the paperwork as set out in paragraph 8.5, which is then submitted for approval. Details of which committee approves the commissioning paperwork is set out in figure 2, the academic partnership grid below. The commissioning stage includes a robust due diligence process which reviews proposals based on qualitative basis. Proposals may be categorised low, medium or high based on one or many criteria set out within the due diligence review form. The due diligence process requires representatives from quality, legal and financial amongst other areas to review the merits of the proposal, from this the Partnerships Office will determine the risk level based on the completed form and proceed to submit the proposal for approval or inform the proposed academic partner that the University will not be progressing the proposal any further. **All academic partnership proposals for**

the 2024/25 academic year must receive final approval from the Board of Governors to complete the commissioning stage and move forward to validation.

6.3 **Validation:** the second stage of the process for the approval of new partner proposals. Once the proposal has been approved through the commissioning stage it is forwarded to the Quality and Regulations team who convene a validation for consideration of the programmes that will be delivered as part of the academic partnership arrangement. Further information can be found within Chapter 1 of the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH), including the procedure for module and programme delivery approval for Franchised programmes which fall outside of the home programme validation/re-validation cycle.

6.4 **Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation (CME):** the AQH CME process focuses on an action plan for continuous review at programme team meetings throughout the academic year. The process introduces module level review based on module performance, student, and external examiner feedback to identify outliers and enable specific enhancement actions to be identified at module level to inform programme level review and action planning. Partners will complete a CME end-of-year report which can be edited throughout the year when sources of evidence become available. The Academic Link will contribute comments to the partner CME end-of-year report for approval and sign-off by the Dean of Faculty for submission to Faculty Board. The approved CME end-of-year reports will then be submitted for consideration by APSC who will produce an annual overview report. LTQC will receive an annual overview report of the outcomes of the CME process, including academic partnership arrangements, which will identify any issues of concern regarding specific areas and instigate any action required at an institutional level.

6.5 **Academic partnership Internal Reviews:** The purpose of the academic partnership internal review is to ensure that an academic partnership arrangement remains effective and delivers on the expectations set out within the academic partnership agreement. If concerns are raised through the CME process and they are not addressed satisfactorily, then an internal review of the academic partnership arrangement will be triggered. The review will involve a desk-based review by the lead reviewer and meetings with the partner and University staff to go through any findings. The lead reviewer will draft a report, which may contain conditions and/or recommendations which the relevant owners will need to review and respond to. The conditions and/or recommendations and their resolution will be tracked to completion using the action log template.

6.6 **External Examining (EE):** the ongoing monitoring of partner provision must include external engagement. This is achieved through the appointment of external examiners to partner programmes. See chapter 5 of the AQH for further information.

6.7 **Modification:** this process allows partner organisations to submit changes to the programmes and modules that form part of the academic partnership provision for consideration and approval through the University's governance structure. Further information can be found within Chapter 1 of the AQH.

6.8 **Re-validation:** following the completion of the commissioning and validation process of a partner the arrangement will be subject to further re-validations, this usually occurs every five years. Further information can be found within Chapter 1 of the AQH.



6.9 **Programme suspension and withdrawal:** this process allows partner organisations to submit requests for the suspension or withdrawal of programmes delivered through the partner arrangement for consideration and approval through the University's governance structure. Further information can be found within Chapter 1 of the AQH.

6.10 There may be instances where a new partner may wish to add additional programmes to those originally proposed. In such cases, these will be considered via the validation process as set out within Chapter 1 of the AQH.

Figure 3: Academic partnerships grid

| Type | Approval route | APPF | Due diligence | Partner visit | Business case | Curriculum mapping | Agreement |
|---------------------|-----------------------|------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Articulation | APSC | Y | N | N | Y | Y | Y |
| Dual Degree | APC, VCET AQSC BoG | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Franchise | APC, VCET AQSC BoG | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y |
| Validated | APC, VCET AQSC BoG | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y |

7. Articulation

7.1 New Articulation proposals must complete the commissioning process by preparing:

- i. An Academic Partnerships Proposal Form (APPF) – which will be considered and approved by APSC.
- ii. A curriculum Mapping document – following commissioning approval the University proposer and the partner will complete a curriculum mapping exercise. Once completed this will be considered by APSC for consideration and approval.

7.2 Following the completion of the APPF and curriculum mapping exercise and once APSC have granted their approval the decision to proceed with the new articulation arrangement will be reported to Academic Board. At this point a notification will be sent to the Dean of Faculty (or their designated nominee), Academic, Programme Leader and professional services teams.

7.3 The University will draw up a Memorandum of Agreement. The Memorandum of Agreement between the University and the prospective partner will then be signed by the University's Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice Chancellor. A copy of the final Memorandum of Agreement will be retained by the University.

7.4 For articulation arrangements it is important to identify any omissions in the curriculum and agree on appropriate alterations, the amount of credit exemption provided and/or any additional content that might need to be delivered as a bridging module by either party. These details should be provided with the curriculum mapping document.

7.5 It is necessary to monitor articulation arrangements to ensure that any changes to the curriculum at either institution do not invalidate the arrangement or lead to situations where students arriving at the University under these arrangements are ill-prepared to undertake the programme of study.

7.6 The Memorandum of Agreement will state that the curriculum delivered at the partner organisation will be subject to review to ensure that the curriculum delivered at the partner still covers all the relevant material required for a student to study at the University (or vice-versa, as appropriate). Any changes to the content of either programme will require an updated mapping exercise to be undertaken to satisfy both parties that the agreement is still appropriate. If it is found that changes to either curriculum have caused a situation where the curricula no longer map across appropriately, discussions will take place about how to address this. The revised mapping exercise will be submitted to APSC for approval.

7.7 The clerk to APSC will contact the designated member of academic staff who is responsible for monitoring the agreement at the University and ask them to review the curriculum as outlined above. The revised mapping exercise will normally take place four months in advance of a new intake.

7.8 If it is found that students on an articulation arrangement are not achieving comparable results within their cohort, work will need to be undertaken by the relevant academic staff to identify areas where the students appear to be weak and raise these concerns with the partner provider with a view to revising the curriculum to address the issue. Changes caused by this activity will require that a mapping exercise be undertaken and submitted to the APSC for approval to demonstrate that the issues have been addressed.

7.9 If the issues cannot be resolved the articulation agreement may be terminated as outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement.

7.10 If either the University or the partner provider is aware of planned changes to the curriculum, they must inform the other organisation during development or as soon as possible after approval has been given so that a revised mapping exercise can be conducted, and any issues identified in good time.

7.11 A decision to terminate, or immediately terminate the agreement may be recommended by APSC to Academic Board, should the partner provider breach any of the clauses outlined in the contract. In each case, once the decision has been taken by APSC, the Academic partnerships Office and Admissions are to be notified.



8. Validated / franchise / dual degree

8.1 A proposal for a new academic partnership for validation, franchise or dual degree may be initiated by a prospective partner organisation or by a member of staff at the University. All proposals received are to be directed to the Head of Partnerships for initial consideration.

8.2 Initial assessment of the academic partnership proposal will be carried out by the Head of Academic partnerships or the Academic partnerships Development and Liaison Manager. The initial assessment is intended to capture information around the nature and scope of the proposal and the benefits to both parties and to determine whether the proposal meets the aims within the University's Vision and Strategy.

8.3 Where an initial proposal is deemed viable, the Head of Academic partnerships or Academic partnerships Development and Liaison Manager will meet with the partner to progress the proposal. The meeting is necessary to complete the full commissioning proposal.

8.4 At the meeting discussions will include:

- i. The nature and scope of the full proposal.
- ii. Drafting of a timeline.
- iii. procedural and documentary requirements,
- iv. The financial and funding arrangements between parties, including initial approval costs and recurring costs upon commencement of the provision.
- v. Student numbers.
- vi. Fees and funding arrangements.
- vii. The contractual obligations of each party.
- viii. Quality assurance procedural and documentary requirements.

8.5 The proposal will be considered for approval by the University's Vice Chancellor's Executive Team (VCET) and Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) and the Board of Governors, where required, see 4.1.

8.6 **Commissioning:** Once the above preparations as noted above have been completed the commissioning submission will be presented to APC and then VCET. Following VCET approval the full proposal and minute will be submitted to AQSC and the Board of Governors for final approval (see figure 2). For new arrangements, the submission will comprise:

- i. Academic partnership Proposal Form
- ii. Due Diligence Partner Evidence and Information Request List
- iii. Due Diligence Review Form
- iv. Business case costing Model
- v. Faculty Supporting Statement
- vi. Vice Chancellor's Executive Team (VCET) minutes



8.7 Following partner approval through the commissioning process, the application will progress to the validation stage which is overseen by the Quality and Regulations Team (see paragraph 6.1). Following validation approval, the partner will be expected to follow the University's Regulations, Policies and Procedures, unless otherwise stated within the specific partner agreement. All University Regulations, Policies and Procedures can be found here. Further guidance on quality assurance can be sought by contacting academic partnershipsquality@wrexham.ac.uk.

8.8 Following the completion of the commissioning and validation process, the academic partnership procedure for new partnerships will be concluded by the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement by the Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

8.9 Existing provision will be subject to re-validation as per the process detailed within paragraph 6.3 and Chapter 1 of the AQH. Where franchise programmes are due for re-approval this will be carried out at the same time as the re-validation for the home programmes. This may include programme suspensions and withdrawals. This will ensure that any changes proposed to the home programme can be assessed to ensure there is no adverse impact on the franchise programmes and the partners are able to deliver the changes as well as the University.

8.10 For new Franchised arrangements, for module and programme delivery approval, which fall outside of the home programme validation/re-validation cycle this will be subject to a separate process detailed within Chapter 1 of the AQH.

8.11 Where a partner wished to seek approval for changes to their provision, they should submit a change request through the University's modification process as set out within Chapter 1 of the AQH.

9. Due Diligence

9.1 The University, as part of its obligations under the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, conducts a rigorous due diligence process as part of the Commissioning process. Prospective partners are asked to provide evidence in support of the information requested which is reviewed by designated officers at the University. The University officers will consider the evidence and where risks are identified, will outline these, and propose mitigation, as part of the Due Diligence process.

9.2 At any point during this process, where significant concerns are raised, the Head of partnerships can determine that the Commissioning process is terminated. Where this action takes place, it will be noted and reported back to APC, VCET, AQSC and the Board of Governors.

9.3 The process can be varied depending upon the location of the partner. For instance, political unrest or human rights considerations would be more relevant to TNE partners rather than UK partners. The same templates will be used for this process, but some sections will not be applicable, in these instances NA should be added to the relevant field within the template.



9.4 The prospective partner will be asked to provide documented evidence as listed within an Evidence and Information Request List. The list may be individually tailored to ensure the investigations undertaken are appropriate and proportionate to the nature and scope of each proposal received. The proposer will be asked to submit the completed list and provide documented evidence to determine:

- i. the financial and funding status of the prospective partner.
- ii. the good standing, capacity and former higher education experience of the prospective partner.
- iii. the legal status of the prospective partner and their capacity in law to enter into a contract with the University.
- iv. the ownership status of the institution/organisation.

9.5 The Head of Academic partnerships or nominee will collate the evidence received from the proposers and attach a Partner Due Diligence Review Form and send relevant sections of the submission for review by designated senior officers responsible for (a) academic partnerships quality, (b) legal and (c) finance at the University.

9.6 Once these are completed, the outcome will be included within the full commissioning submission for new partner proposals to APC and VCET. However, if the Partnerships Office identify or are notified of any significant risk to the University's financial stability and/or reputation they will immediately terminate the due diligence process without submitting the commissioning documentation to APC and VCET and inform the proposed partner accordingly. AQSC and the Board of Governors will also be informed.

9.7 The University assesses that the risk in academic partnership provision is impacted by a range of factors, of which the following are identified as critical:

- i. Partner previous experience in delivering higher education.
- ii. Partner institution status (university or college).
- iii. Partner reputation.
- iv. Partner experience of academic partnership working.
- v. Partner subject expertise.
- vi. University experience in subject area.
- vii. University programme team experience in collaborative delivery support.
 - i. Partner's resourcing and financial standing.
 - ii. Local licensing requirements and complexity.
 - iii. The recognition of UK awards/degrees delivered in TNE.
 - iv. Local political stability.

9.8 The categorisation of low, medium, and high risk in relation to academic partnerships refers to the level of potential challenges, uncertainties, and negative outcomes associated



with the collaboration. These risk categories enable the University to assess the potential benefits and drawbacks of engaging in a particular academic partnership.

9.9 The below definitions are overall risk ratings and should be read in conjunction with the rest of the procedure, specifically the criteria set out within the Due Diligence Review Form. Guidance on the due diligence criteria and potential mitigations is detailed within figure 4 of this procedure.

9.10 **Low Risk** academic partnerships are collaborations that are relatively safe and straightforward, with minimal potential for negative consequences. Characteristics include:

- i. Well-defined objectives and outcomes.
- ii. Clear alignment of interests and goals between partners.
- iii. Established track record of successful similar collaborations.
- iv. Little to no financial or reputational risk.

9.11 **Medium-risk** academic partnerships are collaborations that involve some degree of uncertainty and potential challenges, but they do not exhibit excessive risks. Characteristics include:

- i. Moderate level of complexity.
- ii. Partners may have some differing objectives or interests to the University.
- iii. Limited experience working together and/or collaborating with other organisations using a similar collaborative model, eg franchise, validated etc.
- iv. Moderate financial and reputational risk.

9.12 **High-risk** academic partnerships are collaborations with a significant level of uncertainty and the potential for substantial negative consequences. Characteristics include:

- i. Partners have significantly different goals or expectations to the University.
- ii. No prior experience working together and/or collaborating with other organisations using a similar collaborative model, eg franchise, validated etc.
- iii. Substantial financial and reputational risk.

9.13 Considering a new collaborative model that is not outlined in paragraphs 3.1 – 3.6 would require approval at APC, VCET, AQSC and the Board of Governors prior to any commissioning paperwork being completed for an individual academic partnership proposal.



Figure 4: Risk explanations & mitigations for the identification of high risk academic partnerships

| Risk Name | Risk Description | Potential mitigating actions |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Organisation or individual reputation</p> | <p>Concerns relating to any of the following: funding sources, political influence, regulatory body registration or regulatory changes, press reports on aspects of organisation's business or researcher integrity as well as concerns relating to tobacco companies, defence/ military, territories on FCO list.</p> <p>Further examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No negative publicity / reputation plus very positive reputation / publicity • Some minor negative publicity alongside positive reputation and publicity • Some negative publicity with no positive publicity • Negative and seriously damaging publicity | <p>May be acceptable if:</p> <p><i>Issues are historic</i></p> <p>And / Or</p> <p><i>It is a multi-national company and proposed activity is with a separate section from where issue has arisen.</i></p> <p><i>Legal Due diligence should also include any connections to a company location in an embargoed country in which the University cannot ensure work to be carried out in.</i></p> <p>And / Or</p> <p><i>Faculty is satisfied that benefits of academic partnership outweigh potential negative impacts</i></p> <p>And</p> <p><i>Adherence to standard international policies Anti Bribery & Corruption, Anti-Slavery</i></p> |

| Risk Name | Risk Description | Potential mitigating actions |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Academic Governance | There are concerns the academic programme does not meet QAA and WU quality and standards requirements or if the proposal requires substantial variation to WU Academic Regulations | <p>May be acceptable if:</p> <p>Checks with UK ENIC / the British Council / National Quality Assurance / Accrediting Body / External Networks, eg ENQA, APQN, INQAAHE (with support from Global Engagement Office) show that standards are equivalent to UK expectations.</p> <p><i>And / Or</i></p> <p>School/institute is prepared to provide extra support to students if required.</p> <p><i>And / Or</i></p> <p>Quality of pastoral / academic support is proven to be high.</p> |



| Risk Name | Risk Description | Potential mitigating actions |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Due Diligence Checks | <p>Partner wishes to include legally binding clauses to agreements/contracts that may be problematic for WU. Guidance and input should be sought from University Secretary.</p> <p>For other agreements, it is not possible to omit /remove references to the UK Bribery Act 2010, GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information Act 2000. Changes to indemnity or liability clauses are also to be avoided without legal and financial advice and consultation for any special permissions required. Changes to Intellectual Property clauses should be checked with WU's Research Office and University Secretary.</p> <p>IP ownership – collaborations must ensure WU's rights are protected. Critical if the IP was exploitable and may require advice from WU's Research Office and University Secretary.</p> <p>UKVI and the recruitment of international students. If recruiting international students, are they using their own CAS and registered with the UKVI or proposing to use WUs CAS licence.</p> | <p>May be acceptable if:</p> <p>The alternative document covers the areas of the WU template and matches (but does not exceed) the commitments WU is prepared to undertake.</p> <p>And / Or</p> <p>Advice has been sought from University Secretary regarding the template or altered text.</p> <p>May be acceptable if:</p> <p>IP change is advantageous to WU.</p> <p>And / Or</p> <p>Research Office & University Secretary have reviewed and approved.</p> <p>May be acceptable if:</p> <p>They are UKVI approved with a history of good standing.</p> |



| Risk Name | Risk Description | Potential mitigating actions |
|---|--|---|
| Location of activity in a known high-risk country (as per FCO classification) | <p>For international partners, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advice should always be checked. FCO advisories against travel to countries or specific areas should be heeded.</p> <p>Regardless of FCO advice, consideration must be given to the cultural, social and political environments of the country e.g. laws about sexuality which may impact on students and staff.</p> <p>Check the proposed partner country is not an embargo country.</p> | Should always be flagged as high risk to VCET. |
| Scale of activity and sustainability | Volume of students/other income sources and longer-term sustainability should be considered, full business case needs to be prepared. | <p>May be acceptable if:</p> <p>The Faculty is satisfied that there is existing capacity to budget shortfalls and use as a loss leader for 5+ years</p> <p>And / Or</p> <p>The faculty is satisfied that these numbers have been accounted for in financial, staff, space and resource planning.</p> <p>Business case outlining initial student numbers, projections and milestones required including financial analysis / feasibility is sound</p> |



| Risk Name | Risk Description | Potential mitigating actions |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Financial risk | <p>Large value academic partnership identified involving multi sector/multi-national, multiple countries.</p> <p>Partner's financial legal capacity and financial ratio of fees to funding as against commitment to the academic partnership (e.g. solvency risk/liquidity/cashflow/overfunded against fee balance) to be considered versus role (and potential financial contribution)</p> <p>Financial analysis conducted of track record of partner or academic partnership (seeking renewal) identified a significant financial loss.</p> <p>High risk deliverables or payment/ funding terms are via a lump sum payment or payment by results), Currency risk in payment terms for that territory or exchange controls and currency affecting payments to/from proposed partner country.</p> | <p>May be acceptable if:</p> <p>Business case and financial plan and partner financial data provided given sufficient detail proportionate to the partners' contribution financially and unforeseen costs/funding gap mitigated.</p> <p>And / Or</p> <p>Confirmation of commitment of financial contribution (cash/in kind) to the academic partnership secured.</p> <p>And / Or</p> <p>Justification provided re: partner and or academic partnership that is seeking to renew regarding prior poor financial performance.</p> <p>And / Or</p> <p>Currency conversion has been factored into financial costing and contributions; legal / financial due diligence checks done satisfactorily.</p> |
| Legal (Tax, jurisdiction) | Governing Law / jurisdiction is not in line with UK law | If partner is willing to vary contract to meet UK law standards. |



| Risk Name | Risk Description | Potential mitigating actions |
|--|--|------------------------------|
| <p>Sharing of research facilities and or significant University equipment/data</p> | <p>Academic partners should be sharing the costs of maintaining facilities through contributions via grants.</p> <p>Commercial partners should be paying commercial rates for access to equipment and facilities.</p> <p>Data should be shared in compliance with GDPR and any terms on which the data was collected.</p> <p>All of the other risks (location, reputation, etc.) need to be considered when considering partnering over research facilities and equipment.</p> | |

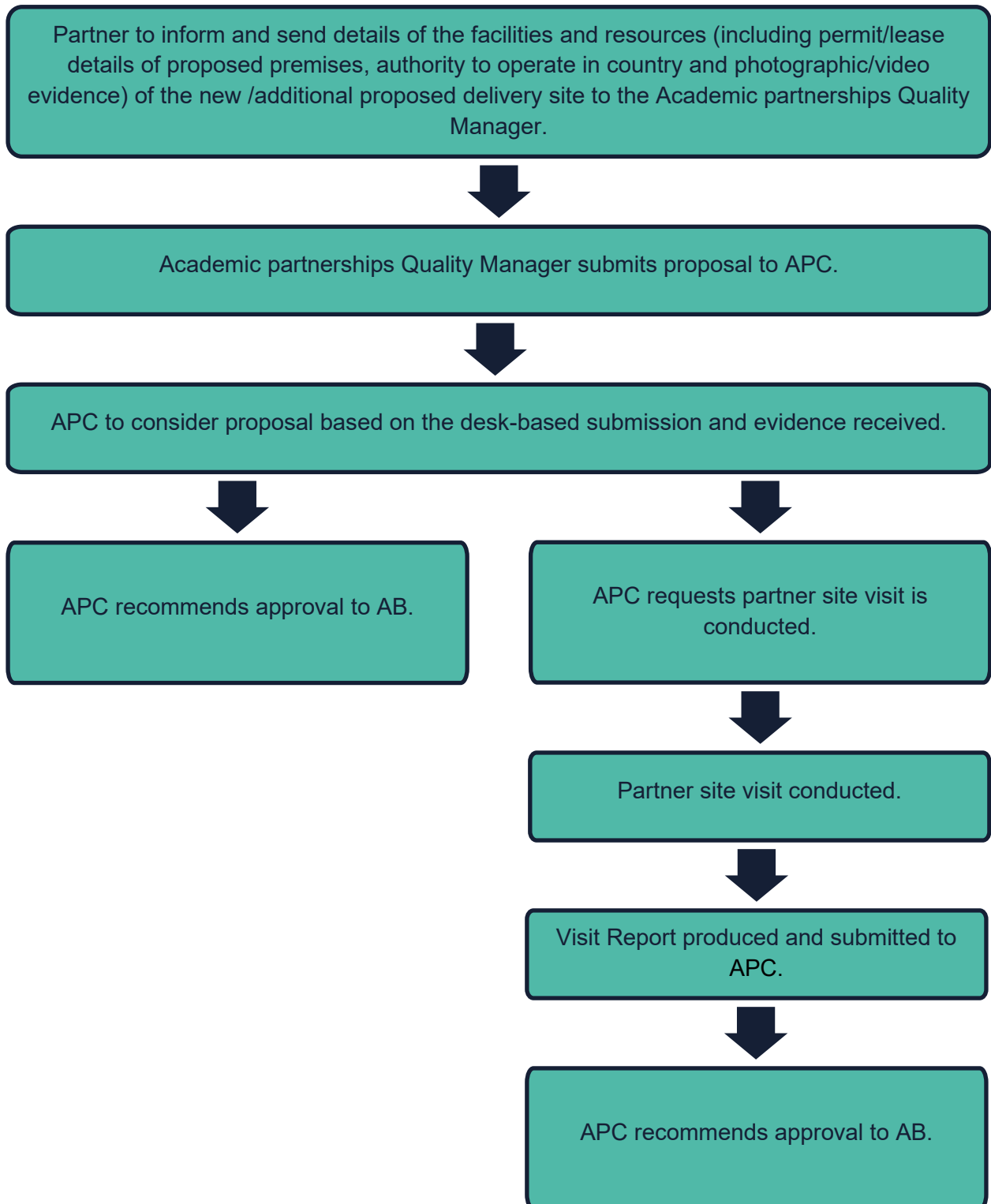
10. New / additional partner delivery site

10.1 There may be instances where a partner providers premises requires approval, or an existing partner wishes to relocate or move to new premises the following procedure for approving a new / additional site of delivery will apply.

10.2 The partner provider will submit a proposal providing details of the new and/or additional proposed delivery site/premises for consideration by APC. The submission will comprise of the Partner Additional & New Delivery Site approval submission and the Partner Learning Resources and Facilities Questionnaire (to include photographic and/or video evidence).

10.3 APC will consider the proposal and recommend approval to AB or alternatively may request a visit be conducted to the proposed partner premises. If a visit is deemed necessary by APC, arrangements will be put in place to conduct a visit to the proposed partner premises and a report will be produced setting out the findings of the visit. The report will be submitted to APC for consideration. If the report is acceptable, APC will recommend approval to AB.

Figure 5: Approval of new / additional partner delivery site process



11. Operational Administration

11.1 Once a Memorandum of Agreement has been agreed and signed by both parties, details of the academic partnership will be entered onto the University's Official Register of Academic Partnerships.

11.2 The information held on the Register includes:

- i. The name (including link to the partner website) and the nature/type of academic partnership arrangements at the partner college/organisation.
- ii. The programmes and awards involved.
- iii. Type of academic partnership arrangement, e.g., franchise, validated etc.
- iv. The language/s of delivery and assessment used in the programme.

11.3 Any changes to the details held on the Register arising from the procedures described in this procedure must be reported at the earliest possible opportunity to the Academic Partnerships Quality Manager.

11.4 There are several processes and procedures which need to be followed in sequence in order to set up partner arrangements in readiness for delivery.

11.5 Students are to be provided with, or be informed of where to find and access, the following information:

- i. Programme specification, as approved by the University.
- ii. External Examiner Reports.
- iii. Student handbook, using the standard Wrexham University Partner Template.
- iv. Where to find and access all University Academic Regulations, Policies and Procedures, including those for complaints and appeals, disciplinary and/or fitness to study procedures, and (where applicable) policies and procedures of the delivery organisation, support provider or the placement host.
- v. Entitlement to membership of student representative bodies at the University.
- vi. Entitlement and information on how to access the University services.
- vii. Channels of communication for contacting appropriate staff at the University.

11.6 The CVs of all staff who will be involved in the delivery and assessment of the programme at the partner college/organisation must be submitted for approval at the time of the validation process.

11.7 Subsequently, when a partner organisation wishes to appoint additional staff or involve additional staff in the delivery and assessment of the programme, then the CVs of the additional staff must be submitted to the Partnerships Quality Manager for approval.

11.8 A central record of all staff at the partner organisation approved to deliver programmes will be maintained by the University.

12. Quality Review

12.1 In addition to the quality assurance processes set out in paragraph section 6 Programme Leaders (or designated nominees) have ultimate responsibility for the programme as it is delivered at the partner. The majority of day-to-day monitoring and liaison work around the programme will be carried out by the designated University Academic Link(s) who will advise the Programme Leader and the designated Associate Dean International and Partnerships on any development needs of the partner organisation and provide advice and guidance to staff delivering the provision in the partner organisation and assist in the production of partner CME reports.

12.2 Academic Links are expected to keep in close communication with partners on a regular basis to foster good communications between the University and partner programme teams, and to provide advice and guidance on a range of issues, such as teaching, assessment, support for learning, and quality management.

12.3 The Academic Link will normally conduct at least one annual visit to the partner and will complete an Academic Link visit report (see Academic Link Handbook) which summarises any issues, any arising actions are then added to the partner CME action plan.

12.4 The Partnerships Quality Manager may also visit partners to check on regulatory matters and to deliver briefings and advise on arrangements for quality oversight as necessary.

12.5 At the end of each academic year, a senior executive member of staff at each partner organisation is asked to complete an Annual Partner Review report. The report asks the partner to provide a self-assessment and comment on any developments that might affect their provision (either positive or negative, internal, or external) and provides an opportunity to provide general feedback on the academic partnership.

12.6 Academic partnership arrangements will also be monitored monthly through the Partnerships Office meeting. These meetings will look at all key aspects of an academic partnership and identify any key risks for action.

13. Agreement Review and Renewal

13.1 Each Memorandum of Agreement has a clause stating when the agreement is due for renewal. The Partnerships Office will contact the partner organisation when the agreement is due for renewal and carry out a review of the partner to determine whether the agreement should be renewed.

13.2 When renewing an agreement, the Partnerships Office will liaise with relevant colleagues internal to the University to ensure that all relevant sections remain current and accurate. Where the agreement differs from the standard Wrexham University template, these differences will be reviewed with relevant parties to ensure that they remain proportionate and deliverable.

13.3 Approval of renewed agreements will follow the same approval process as set out within the Academic Partnership Grid, figure 3.

14. Termination

14.1 Any member of staff (including a governor) at the University or the partner or any student at the partner has the right to raise a cause for concern with the University regarding the operation of the academic partnership. This should be raised in the first instance with the University Programme Leader (or designated nominee). It is also possible for members of the University's Senior Management Team and the Board of Governors to question the effectiveness of an active academic partnership with a view to terminate. APC, VCET, AQSC and the Board of Governors are to be informed of the review and approve its outcome.

14.2 If any concern cannot be resolved through discussion with the Programme Leader, then the matter should be referred to the designated Associate Dean of Faculty who will investigate and if appropriate seek to resolve concerns with the programme team and partner organisation.

14.3 When the matter cannot be resolved by the Dean of Faculty then it should be referred in the first instance to the Head of Partnerships for consideration.

14.4 Should concerns remain, then the Head of Partnerships may decide to initiate the procedure for recommendation to APC, VCET, AQSC and the Board of Governors for the consideration of termination of the academic partnership agreement or programme delivery arrangements.

14.5 A proposal to terminate an academic partnership may be considered in light of unresolved causes for concern, as a result of ongoing risk assessment and monitoring processes noting that termination of the academic partnership will normally be for one of the following reasons:

- i. Breach of the Memorandum of Agreement.
- ii. Change in approved University strategy.
- iii. Poor performance of the partner (as identified in the monitoring processes outlined elsewhere in the Chapter).
- iv. Strategic fit.
- v. Mutual consent.

14.6 A report will be provided outlining the rationale for termination and submitted to APC and then VCET for consideration, who in turn will make a recommendation to AQSC and the Board of Governors for approval, the outcome of which will be reported AB and its subcommittees.

14.7 A primary responsibility of the University in the case of termination of an academic partnership is the management of the student experience. Teach-out arrangements must

therefore be carefully considered, and a teach-out plan is to be produced and agreed upon by both parties.

14.8 Termination of the academic partnership may take immediate effect or take place after a period defined within the Memorandum of Agreement, depending upon the reasons for the termination and the clauses within the Memorandum. If termination is sought due to a breach of the contract or any other clauses allowing for immediate termination in the Memorandum of Agreement, the University may terminate the agreement.

14.9 Where the partner initiates the termination of the contract, the VCET will inform APC, AQSC, Board of Governors, AB and its subcommittees and arrangements will be put in place, via a formal teach-out plan, in co-operation with the partner, to formally terminate the agreement (in writing) and where applicable to make arrangements for teach out of students as outlined below.

14.10 The Dean and/or the designated Associate Dean of Faculty or other relevant committee may recommend to Academic Board that a programme delivered at a partner should be suspended or withdrawn entirely. The suspension or withdrawal of a programme must also follow due process as set out within Chapter 1 of the AQH. Such a decision would normally be taken when one of the following occurs and remedial action has not provided a satisfactory outcome:

- i. There is repeated poor student performance.
- i. There are repeated academic issues with the programme.
- ii. Resources at the partner are no longer adequate for delivery.
- iii. The intake is poorer than predicted.

14.11 The above examples are given as illustrations and are not intended to be comprehensive. There may be other reasons for the termination of a programme.

14.12 Arrangements must be made to enable students who are already enrolled on a programme subject to termination of the Memorandum of Agreement or the withdrawal of the programme to complete their studies in an appropriate learning environment; this may involve a transfer of responsibilities for the students to a third party. Students are not required to accept these arrangements but must be made aware that if this is the case, they may not be able to complete their award. The Memorandum of Agreement will set out what obligations the partner and the University will have in the teaching out of the programmes or the transfer of students to another education provider. The ultimate decision and responsibility for identifying appropriate arrangements rests with the University in respect of students enrolled on the University programmes.

14.13 A programme will usually be taught out in accordance with the existing processes and procedures in place for the academic partnership as identified in this document and the Memorandum of Agreement. Where additional measures or actions are required to support teaching out or allow students to complete their award (for example, through managed transfer to a third party), a report will be submitted to the relevant University Committee, as appropriate.

14.14 Once the decision to terminate the delivery of a programme by a partner provider has been made, the Partnerships Quality Manager, will update the University's Register of Academic Partners and will advise staff to update their records and will notify all other relevant University departments.

15. Accessibility

15.1 Wrexham University strives to be a supportive and trauma-informed university in the design and operation of all our processes and procedures. If you need adjustments to access this procedure or have any other comments to make on the accessibility, wording or any part of this procedure, please do email us on partnershipsquality@wrexham.ac.uk.