

## 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 Revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education:

*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 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.*

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

- 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) Revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education defines partnerships as, *'[Partnership] covers all arrangements where a provider works with others to design and/or deliver courses and/or to award qualifications. These can include validation and subcontracting (or franchising) arrangements, work-based learning arrangements and collaboration with employers (including to deliver apprenticeships), transnational education (TNE) arrangements, and international partnerships and collaborations. The processes that providers will need to follow in order to assure high quality will vary considerably depending on the type of partnership concerned, and the risks involved.'*

2.2 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.

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

2.4 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 partnership must achieve an end which the University would not be able to achieve

acting alone; in other words, the partnership must be necessary to the University's strategic objectives. In this context, a partnership will also be expected to promote one or more of the following:

- widening participation and access to the University's programmes
- strengthening the University's position in the recruitment and selection of students
- contributing to the research activities of the University or enhancing the scholarship of the University's staff
- enhancing the quality and availability of provision
- attainment of the University's strategic objectives

3.5 The adoption of a partner and the operation of a partnership arrangement must be consistent with both existing University and national principles, policies, regulations and procedures governing quality and standards in academic partnerships and the delivery of University programmes of study.

3.6 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.

3.7 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 objectives of internationalisation at Lincoln are four-fold, and mutually reinforcing:

- Preparing our students to be global citizens and succeed in a global society
- Enriching our research and enabling it to have global impact
- Enhancing our global reputation for innovation and thought leadership
- Increasing and diversifying our income streams

4.3 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.

4.4 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.

4.5 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.

4.6 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, a standing at least commensurate with that of the University of Lincoln.

4.7 Independent evidence is required to establish the forms of standing specified in 4.6. 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 and from the UK NARIC database.

4.8 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 proposed partner is of the standing and quality that would be expected of a University of Lincoln partner.

5.2 The principles established in section 4 regarding standing of the institution shall apply equally to international collaborative arrangements.

5.3 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.

5.4 The proposed academic objectives cannot be attained by an arrangement other than a collaborative agreement (e.g. a cooperative agreement).

5.5 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.

5.6 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 following definitions apply in relation to joint and dual awards:

**Joint Award:** This is defined as an arrangement whereby the University jointly develops and delivers a single programme with one or more degree-awarding bodies leading to a single qualification and certificate awarded jointly by both or all participants.

**Dual Award:** This is defined as an arrangement whereby the University jointly develops and delivers a single, shared or concurrent programme with one or more degree-awarding bodies leading to separate qualifications and certificates being awarded by the University and one or more of the other degree-awarding bodies. These arrangements may also be referred to as **double or multiple awards**.

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 degrees 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 degree 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 degree 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 arrangement must be consistent with the requirements of regulatory and quality assurance bodies and in particular with the QAA Revised 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 degree arrangements will only be entered into with degree-awarding bodies with a status equal to or greater than the University's. The standing of the degree-awarding body shall also be in line with the principles established in 4.5 and 4.6.

- 6.9 College Research Degrees Board will determine the equivalency of each institution's regulations to govern the award of the joint or dual degree 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.

Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships

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