

Introduction

1. Staffordshire University's quality framework is in place to ensure that all its courses meet appropriate standards, provide current and coherent curricula and deliver a high-quality student learning experience and positive outcomes. The framework:
 - Supports the University's Academic Strategy and achievement of institutional KPIs.
 - Provides assurance of the quality and standards of the provision.
 - Facilitates quality enhancement.
 - Facilitates the assessment of risk, focusing attention where it is most required.
2. Annual partnership review exercises are a key component of this framework. The annual partnership review procedure outlined below applies to arrangements with providers of learning opportunities leading or contributing to the award of academic credit or a qualification from Staffordshire University. The main purpose of an annual review is to assess the continued suitability of an existing partnership and establish whether the arrangement continues to be a good strategic and operational fit for the University.
3. The University's approach to annual partnership reviews outlined in this document is aligned to the requirements derived from the Office for Student's Conditions of Registration and has been informed by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2023).
4. Requests for any variations from the provisions outlined below will require approval by the University's Partnerships Committee.
5. While the partnership review exercise is led by the Head of International Partnerships/Head of Post-16 Partnerships (as appropriate) it represents the collective assessment of the effectiveness of the partnership by all Departments/Schools and Professional Services involved in that partnership.
6. Transparency in the governance and oversight of partnership review exercises is supported by the obligation of internal decision-making bodies to declare potential conflicts of interests including legal, financial and personal relationships following the University's Declaration of Interest Policy. This applies to members of the University Partnership Committee, Executive Board, Executive, and Board of Governors. Other university staff involved in managing and attending partnership review activity will also be asked to declare potential conflicts of interest affecting the partner under review.

Annual Review Process Overview

7. Post-16 and International Partnership Teams will undertake a holistic, rigorous, continuous monitoring and review of the University's collaborative academic partnerships (CAPs) which will culminate in an annual report to the Partnership Committee highlighting any amber or red outcomes for due consideration with input from financial, legal and academic representatives.

8. The Partnership Committee will make decisions on the continuation of each CAP based on the information provided in this annual report. (Note -there may be other situations where a decision is made to terminate a partnership that does not fall under this annual monitoring procedure).
9. This process will consider the partnerships at both strategic and operational levels, and will report on the financial, quality and operational aspects of the arrangements.
10. The partner course monitoring for the University's collaborative provision is undertaken through a process led by the Academic Quality Service working with Schools; the outcomes of this course-level monitoring will inform the overall appraisal of the partnership at an institutional level.
11. This continuous monitoring of CAPs will consist of the following:
 - Completion and maintenance of a CAP Risk Analysis and Development Plan (CAPRAD) for each partner
 - An annual financial review of each partner (including student numbers)
 - An annual CAP Review meeting (including strategic oversight of continuous course monitoring)

CAP Risk Analysis and Development Plan (CAPRAD)

12. The CAPRAD is the main oversight document which is used by the University to provide a summary of the current risks and opportunities with each of its CAPs.
13. The CAPRAD is completed and regularly updated by the Post-16 and International Partnership Teams for each of their CAPs. The document is internal to the University and is not shared directly with partners, although they will be aware of areas of concern and development opportunities.
14. The section in the CAPRAD relating to development activities should be completed and agreed with partners in the Spring/Summer for implementation in the next academic year.
15. The CAPRAD enables the University to understand and manage any risks and opportunities with each CAP. Oversight through this process includes analysis of external, commercial, operational and academic risk and opportunities. It allows sensible consideration of risk and appropriate control mechanisms and mitigation to be applied.
16. Outcomes from the annual financial review outlined below, bi-annual partner course monitoring and resulting partner plans, and the annual CAP Review meeting will be inputted into the CAPRAD.
17. A summary of the information held in the CAPRADs will form the basis of the annual Partnerships report to the Partnership Committee.

Annual Financial Review (including student numbers)

18. Once a year, the Post-16 and International Teams will collect the updated company accounts and management accounts (where available) to allow the University Finance Team to undertake an appraisal of the current financial situation. A short report will be provided with an overall RAG rating for each partner.
19. The Finance team will provide a summary of income per partner per course for the last 3 years. Within this financial report, the University Finance Team will also summarize the partners' payment behaviour over the last year and provide a RAG rating to assess future payment activity. Any concerns will be followed up by the Post-16 and International Partnership Teams, escalating them where necessary.

20. Corporate Information will provide a report by partner detailing the student numbers on courses for the last 3 years. This summary will enable the Post-16 and International Partnership Teams to discuss areas for concerns relating to small student numbers and how the University can support the partner to increase recruitment.
21. The outcomes of the financial review will be inputted into the CAPRAD for the partner summary. Where the resulting risk rating is amber or red, matters will be raised with the University Partnership Committee Chair, who will escalate them to University Executive as appropriate. Arising concerns will be addressed immediately where necessary and discussed in the Annual Partnership Review meeting as appropriate.

Collaborative Academic Partnership Annual Review Meeting

22. Once a year there will be an Annual Review Meeting with the Partner, led by the Post-16 and International Teams to allow open and honest discussion around the strategic and operational priorities for each partnership.
23. Prior to the meeting with the Partner, each School will hold formal internal discussions to review all its partnership provision. These formal discussions will be arranged and led by the Post-16 and International Partnership Teams and will involve the Dean, members of SMT, academic link tutors and a representative from SaAS. They will be held via online platforms to facilitate full engagement and participation of all relevant colleagues from Schools and Services. The Post-16 and International Partnerships Teams and/or AQS will retain the prerogative to schedule synchronous or physical internal meetings where sensitive or high-risk themes are identified in the process.
24. As part of these discussions, both the partners and the University will contribute to a report similar to a Self-Evaluation Document, where each party will comment on the operations of the partnership over the last year. School representatives will highlight significant academic items on their respective provision, drawing on ALT reports and partner course monitoring plans for their course portfolio. The CAPQM will help to identify cross-School themes affecting a single partner and provide additional quality considerations. The Post-16 and International Partnership teams will complete the report including outcomes from the financial review, strategic discussions with partners and day-to-day operational practices drawing on input from relevant services. Partner counterparts will complete the partner report.
25. In addition to reviewing the operational and quality processes, the meetings with both the Schools and the partners will discuss future developmental activities such as new provision and wider activities to include staff and student visits and exchanges and research potential.
26. A Partnership Enhancement Action Plan (PEAP) will be produced following the meetings to address and follow up on any actions arising at a Partnership level. These PEAPs will be monitored at a School level through SACs and disseminated to ALTs and Course Directors/Leads as appropriate; follow up of these actions will be done on a continuous basis with actions being addressed on an on-going basis rather than reviewing the activity at the next formal Partnership Review Meetings.

27. The Post-16 and International Partnership Teams will update the CAPRAD as appropriate following these meetings.

Summary of Procedure

28. The diagram below details the formal annual review and reporting process for collaborative academic partnerships. It enables the University to take a holistic approach to the oversight and management of CAPs. The information gathered comes from a variety of processes and sources to ensure that resources are used in the most effective way and reported at an appropriate level.

	Input from partner course monitoring and ALT reports	Post-16/Int'l partnership Review Meetings with Schools & partners	Finance & Student number reports	Update CAPRADs
August				
September				
October				
November		Annual Review meetings (<u>Interim Health check update provided on cycle completion</u>)		
December				
January				
February		5-yearly Reviews (where applicable)		
March				
April				
May				
June				
July				
Autumn	Collaborative Academic Partnerships Report to Partnership Committee			

29. The Partnership Committee is the most senior committee with oversight of CAPs and therefore has the capacity to make decisions on their continuation or terminations. The process for undertaking these decisions will be following the Committee's annual appraisal of CAPs.
30. Terminations for serious quality or other concerns may be taken outside this annual process and will be managed through the University Executive.
31. CAPs who have been subject to a 5-yearly Partnership Review event in the same academic year will have the information and conclusions for those events inputted into this annual process as appropriate and the CAPRADs will be updated and feed into the Annual report to the Partnership Committee.

Academic Quality Service

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Key to abbreviations

AQS: Academic Quality Service

HIP: Head of International Partnerships

HP16P: Head of Post-16 Partnerships

SMT: Senior Management Team

UPC: University Partnerships Committee