

Policy: International Progression and Articulation Partnerships (Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate)

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy outlines Staffordshire University's approach for formal progression and articulation pathways with overseas institutions while meeting its obligations to maintain the academic standards of its courses and provide positive experiences to all its students.
- 1.2. This policy supports the delivery of the University's academic and internationalisation strategies. Progression and articulation arrangements grow and diversify undergraduate and postgraduate taught recruitment pipelines, strengthen the University's profile in target countries and contribute to its objectives on widening participation and fostering global talent. They can also provide a basis to build deeper interinstitutional relationships through student and staff mobility, validated or franchised provision, and/or research collaborations.
- 1.3. Progression and articulation are recruitment and admissions arrangements; as such, they differ from and are not part of collaborative degree provision where a Staffordshire degree is delivered by or together with an academic partner (e.g. validation, franchise and dual awards)
- 1.4. Provisions in this document apply only to formally established progression and articulation arrangements with overseas institutions. Individual requests for recognition of prior learning and experience from international applicants are dealt with by International Admissions following existing policies and regulations. Progression and Articulation agreements with UK partners, managed by the School and College Liaison Team and the Post-16 Partnership Team, are covered by separate policies and processes. Individual UK requests are managed by Connect U, part of the School and College Liaison Team.

2. Progression

- 2.1. Progression agreements enable qualifying students to progress directly from a progression partner institution course onto a Staffordshire University programme of a higher level, provided they meet set entry requirements.
- 2.2. The university does not validate or endorse the quality of the progression partner's award, but assures itself that the curriculum and academic standards of provision under a progression agreement will prepare students appropriately for entry to specific university courses.
- 2.3. While progression arrangements do not involve credit recognition and advanced standing, the University will undertake formal checks (e.g. through ECCTIS) to satisfy itself that the progression partner award is of the right level and curriculum to equip the candidate to meet university entry requirements and succeed in its programmes.
- 2.4. Progression arrangements do not guarantee a place on Staffordshire University programmes: each candidate is considered on an individual basis and subject to the usual UKVI compliance checks.
- 2.5. A framework will be developed to support international admission whereby lists of progression partners and courses showing progression routes, e.g. establishing that where a student has studied a particular course at a given progression partner, they can pursue

specific related programmes at Staffordshire University. Progression partners will be allowed to advertise these progression routes for example subject to approval from Staffordshire.

- 2.6. Progression partners will be set up in similar ways to agents, following the university agent systems and processes; this will enable Admissions to track applications and receive student details.

3. Articulation

- 3.1. In articulation arrangements, the university recognises all or part of another institution's awards as providing credits towards specific Staffordshire University programmes. Articulation agreements provide student cohorts from particular articulation partner courses with guaranteed entry onto certain Staffordshire University degrees at predefined points, provided they fulfil set entry criteria (including UKVI compliance).
- 3.2. Staffordshire University does not validate or endorse the quality of the articulation partner's award; it assures itself that course contents and academic standards of provision under articulation agreements enable students to enter specific university courses at identified points.
- 3.3. Articulation agreements entail careful curriculum mapping of the relevant articulation partner and Staffordshire University courses to ensure a good academic fit and enable candidates to succeed in their studies. Articulation arrangements will also consider the status of students on these programmes with regards any professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) accreditation or exemptions.
- 3.4. Agreements for articulation with advanced standing will confirm the credit amount to be awarded to articulation partner students at entry point in line with university policy on Recognition of Prior Learning.
- 3.5. As with Progression agreements, a matrix will be developed for International Admissions to check what programmes and what levels students can transfer to.
- 3.6. Articulation partners will be set up in similar ways to agents following existing university agent systems and processes; this will enable Admissions to track applications and receive student details.

4. Progression and articulation with collaborative academic partners

- 4.1. The University may explore arrangements with its collaborative academic partners for individuals or cohorts to start the collaborative programme at the overseas institution and continue their studies in the UK at Staffordshire University at an agreed point. As the degree is awarded by Staffordshire University, these pathways will be considered as transfers rather than as progression or articulation from another institution's award. Admissions of students from courses validated and franchised by the university to its on-campus provision will need to be considered from relevant regulatory perspectives (including OfS, UKVI and HESA requirements among others).
- 4.2. Such arrangements must consider any academic and student support implications of the proposed transfer. They must also establish whether the transfer will be offered to cohorts as a formal study route from the advertising and recruitment stages; or to individual students who, once enrolled in the collaborative degree, choose to apply for a transfer to Staffordshire University. Even where cohort arrangements are agreed, student cases will need to be considered and processed individually due to visa implications.

- 4.3. A schedule with key milestones for the student journey must be included in any agreement to ensure that students can be transferred effectively taking into account in-country and UK-based visa processing timescales.
- 4.4. Advertising, recruitment, and financial considerations together with maximum transfer numbers must be agreed with the partner in advance to avoid conflicts of interests and provide students with a clear offer and a consistent message.
- 4.5. Provisions for these transfer arrangements with collaborative academic partners need to be captured in a transfer agreement, separate from the agreements governing validation and franchise. Clauses 6, 7, 8 and 9 on partnership approval, review and termination will apply.
- 4.6. Staffordshire University and its academic partners may also pursue progression and articulation agreements for partner provision not awarded by Staffordshire, concurrently with validated, franchised and/or transfer agreements.

5. Strategic considerations

- 5.1. Developing and managing progression and articulation arrangements requires staff time, resources and finances to thrive. Progression and articulation partners must be selected strategically in line with institutional and School academic and recruitment priorities. Selected progression and articulation partners must also align with the target countries, organisation types and multi-School "deep" partnership approaches outlined in the Internationalisation Strategy and International Partnerships Action Plan.

6. Progression and articulation partnership approval

- 6.1 Progression and articulation partnerships must receive School and university approval leading to a signed legal agreement. Progression/articulation partnership agreements must be in place before any students can be formally considered and accepted to a Staffordshire University degree.
- 6.2 It is advisable for agreements to be finalised at least 9 months prior to student arrival to Staffordshire University in order to account for international recruitment and application timelines, the need for clear and comprehensive student information, advice and guidance about the arrangement, and student visa application requirements.
- 6.3 Each progression and articulation partnership will have a designated proposer to liaise with internal and external stakeholders, gather necessary evidence and shape the proposal. The proposer will work closely with relevant academic staff across Schools as well as with the International Partnership Team to build the academic and business case and take the proposal through approval.
- 6.4 Details of the approval process will be outlined in an approval and monitoring procedure for overseas progression and articulation agreements. Key steps will include:
 - Identification of potential progression and articulation partner and target courses.
 - Initial endorsement by Head of International Partnerships for strategic fit.
 - Institutional due diligence (lighter touch than full collaborative provision)
 - Drafting business and academic cases.
 - Formally checking the progression and articulation partner award is of the right level and curriculum. In Articulation, mapping qualifications and curriculum.
 - Confirming academic entry requirements.
 - Establishing student numbers and financial, marketing and recruitment considerations
 - Schedules with milestones for the proposed student journey, including application to progression and articulation partners and SU, proposed points to join Staffordshire

degrees including considerations regarding in-country and UK visa processing timescales, and any pre- or in-session activities required.

- Determining IAG and support needed for the target candidate personas as well as benefits derived from the arrangement.
- Determining services offer and benefits to the progression and articulation partner.
- Outlining proposed financial, risk-management and exit arrangements, including provisions to cover students in cases of progression and articulation partner default.
- School Senior Management Team approval through the School Academic Committee.
- Institutional approval through the Partnership Committee.
- Agreement negotiation and signature
- Where various courses are involved, designation of a lead responsible for academic coordination across courses and schools.

7. Progression and articulation agreements

- 7.1. Progression and articulation agreements will cover provisions for the academic, financial, legal and operational points outlined above, together with monitoring, review and termination considerations covered in sections 8 and 9.
- 7.2. New agreements need to be communicated and shared with the central services teams that will operationally manage and support these progression/articulation partnerships prior to the acceptance of any applicants to enable enrolment and services planning. Communication lines and timescales will be outlined in a forthcoming procedure for the approval and monitoring of progression and articulation partnerships.
- 7.3. An agreement template approved by Staffordshire University will be used to outline the agreed progression and articulation arrangements. Where a progression/articulation partner requires for their template to be utilised, it will need to be checked and amended as needed by Legal Services and the International Partnership Team. Once finalised, all agreements must be signed by a designated University signatory.
- 7.4. Copies of the agreement will be held by the partner and the Student Recruitment, Admissions and Partnership Team (SRAP). SRAP will also add the agreement to its register of articulation and progression partnerships.

8. Monitoring, Review and Renewal

- 8.1. Suitable Staffordshire University academic or central services representatives will undertake at least a biennial visit to progression and articulation partners, in order to check the health of the partnership, explore any issues, and support in-country recruitment.
- 8.2. Recruitment through progression and articulation routes and the experience of these student cohorts once at Staffordshire University will be reviewed by course leads, directors and Heads of Department as part of the bi-annual continuous course monitoring exercises. Course leads and directors will also consider progression and articulation pipelines as part of course annual and periodic reviews.
- 8.3. The International Partnerships team will undertake an annual review of each progression/articulation partnership together with the Schools involved, and report on activity as part of the annual SRAP report to the Partnership Committee.
- 8.4. Progression and articulation arrangements will undergo cyclical reviews to monitor the health of the relationship and shape its future direction. These reviews, informed by the annual reports together with School, central services, progression/articulation partner and candidate feedback, will take place 3 years after signing the agreement in the first instance and every

5 years thereafter. This review will lead to a renewal of the agreement for another 5 years; agreements will not be renewed without a prior review exercise.

- 8.5. Major changes required for the arrangement or university concerns on its implementation can trigger an earlier review.
- 8.6. Key points and mechanisms for monitoring, review and renewal will be included in the progression and articulation agreements.

9. Termination

- 9.1. The university has regulatory, pastoral and reputational responsibilities for candidates in programmes under its progression and articulation agreements, including students in arrangements under termination.
- 9.2. Provisions for terminating a progression/articulation partnership, suitable exit strategies and respective university and partner roles and responsibilities will be outlined in the proposal business case and developed comprehensively in the agreement.
- 9.3. Requests for termination will be considered by the School senior management together with the International Partnership Team and will require institutional approval through the Partnership Committee.

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