

# UK AND INTERNATIONAL PROGRESSION AND ARTICULATION PARTNERSHIPS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Quality Assurance and Enhancement

February 2025



## **UK and International Progression and Articulation Partnerships Policy and Procedure (Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate)**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This policy and procedure outlines the University of Staffordshire's approach for formal progression and articulation pathways with UK and 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 and procedure supports the delivery of the University's recruitment and academic strategies. Progression and articulation arrangements grow and diversify undergraduate and postgraduate taught recruitment through sustainable pipelines. They can strengthen the University's profile and relationships in target regions and countries and they contribute to widening participation objectives. 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 University of 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 institutions. Individual requests for recognition of prior learning and experience from applicants are dealt with by Admissions following existing policies and regulations.

### **2. Progression**

- 2.1. Progression agreements enable qualifying students to progress directly from a progression partner institution course onto a University of Staffordshire 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 for overseas arrangements) 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 University of Staffordshire programmes: each candidate is considered on an individual basis. The usual UKVI compliance checks will be undertaken as required for international applicants.

- 2.5. A central register will hold all home and international agreements with progression partners. This will outline progression routes for each partner. Recruitment, Partnerships and Admissions teams will have access to this alongside Executive Deans and Associate Deans to support admissions processes and the advertisement and promotion of routes to relevant regions and institutions.

### **3. Articulation**

- 3.1. In articulation arrangements, the university recognises all or part of another institution's awards as providing credits towards specific University of Staffordshire programmes. Articulation agreements provide student cohorts from particular articulation partner courses with guaranteed entry onto certain University of Staffordshire degrees at predefined points, provided they fulfil set entry criteria (including UKVI compliance where required).
- 3.2. The University of Staffordshire 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 University of Staffordshire 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 the university's policy on Recognition of Prior Learning.
- 3.5. As with progression agreements, a central register will hold details of what articulation agreements are in place and what level of study students can transfer on to.

### **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 one institution and continue their studies at University of Staffordshire at an agreed point. As the degree is awarded by University of Staffordshire, these pathways will be considered as transfers rather than as progression or articulation from another institution's award. Admission 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 University of Staffordshire. Even where cohort arrangements are agreed, student cases will need to be considered and processed individually, particularly for international provision 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 for international partners.
- 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. University of Staffordshire and its academic partners may also pursue progression and articulation agreements for partner provision not awarded by University of 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 the student recruitment strategy and targets. Progression and articulation agreements should be in support of number planning.
- 5.2. Home partners should align strategically with tiered target accounts at both a central and academic school level and should have a clear focus on sustainable pipelines.
- 5.3. Internationally, progression and articulation partners must also align with the target regions, countries, organisation types and partnerships as outlined within the international strategy and action plan.

## **6. Progression and articulation partnership approval**

- 6.1 Progression and articulation partnerships must receive all levels of approval outlined below, 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 University of Staffordshire degree.
- 6.2 It is advisable for agreements to be finalised at least 9 months prior to student arrival to University of Staffordshire in order to account for the student journey, including marketing and promotion, internal system set ups and application timelines; the need for clear and comprehensive student information, advice and guidance about the arrangement; and specific support such as student visa application requirements where required. The Recruitment and Access team will lead on development of the proposal for each progression and articulation partnership liaising with internal and external stakeholders, gathering necessary evidence and shaping the proposal. The team will work closely with relevant academic staff across Schools to build the academic and business case and take the proposal through approval.
- 6.3 In order to obtain approval of a progression/articulation arrangement, a progression/articulation proposal form must be completed. For articulation arrangements, this must include a curriculum mapping.

- 6.4 The completed form, endorsed by the Head of Recruitment and Access, will be submitted to the relevant School Academic Committee(s) (SAC) for consideration and approval.
- 6.5 Subject to SAC approval, the proposal will then be submitted by the Head of Recruitment and Access to University Executive Board for final institutional approval.
- 6.6 Once institutional approval is confirmed, the Recruitment and Access team will arrange for a contract to be signed and the University's progression and articulation register to be updated.
- 6.7 Arrangements involving an existing collaborative academic partner will also be noted at Partnerships Committee.

## **7. Progression and articulation agreements**

- 7.1 An agreement template approved by University of Staffordshire will be used to outline the agreed progression and articulation arrangements with each partner. 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 with the Recruitment and Access team. Once finalised, all agreements must be signed by a designated University signatory.
- 7.2 Copies of the agreement will be held by the Recruitment and Access team. The Recruitment and Access team will also add the agreement to its register of articulation and progression partnerships and will ensure Partnerships are aware for any overlap with collaborative academic partners.

## **8. Monitoring, Review and Renewal**

- 8.1. The Student Recruitment and Access team in liaison with admissions and partnerships, will undertake an annual review of each progression/articulation partnership together with the Schools involved, and report on activity through the committee structure. Major changes required for an arrangement or university concerns on its implementation can trigger an earlier review.
- 8.2. Recruitment through progression and articulation routes and the experience of these student cohorts once at University of Staffordshire will be considered by Course Leaders, Course Directors and Heads of Department as part of the continuous monitoring process.

## **9. Termination**

- 9.1. Requests for termination will be considered by the School Senior Management Team and School Academic Committee, together with the Recruitment and Access team and will require institutional approval through University Executive Board.
- 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.

