

Academic Quality and Standards Handbook

Section 11: Academic Partnerships

2024-25

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Aims

1.1.1 This section describes:

- (a) How the University approves new Academic Partners and partner delivery sites/campuses.
- (b) How the University approves new courses and reapproves existing courses at Academic Partners.
- (c) How the University approves the delivery of existing UWL courses and validated modules by Academic Partners.
- (d) How the University monitors and reviews the Quality and Standards of delivery at Academic Partners
- (e) How the University manages the closure of Academic Partnerships and the suspension and closure of Academic Partner courses.

1.1.2 The aims of the Academic Partner Approval, Monitoring and Review, and Suspension and Closure processes are to ensure that the University meets the obligations and expectations of its staff, students and regulators by:

- (a) Ensuring compliance with the University's obligations under its conditions of registration with the Office for Students (OfS), and broader compliance responsibilities (i.e. Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Guidance).
- (b) Ensuring that Academic Partners have sufficient facilities, staff and resources to support delivery of Higher Education provision.
- (c) Monitoring Academic Partners to ensure the quality of Higher Education provision remains consistent.
- (d) Responding to the individual circumstances of each Academic Partnership to ensure that all quality requirements are met and managed appropriately.
- (e) Ensuring the withdrawal of Academic Partnerships is managed and communicated with relevant stakeholders.

1.2 Regulatory Framework

1.2.1 To meet its responsibilities, UWL's Quality and Standards Framework must comply with the OfS Conditions B of registration, irrespective of where or how courses are delivered (including through an academic partnership). The University also seeks to meet the Sector-Agreed Principles and Key Practices of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code for Higher Education. This is detailed further in the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook Section 1 (Quality and Standards Framework).

1.3 Responsibilities

- 1.3.1 Academic Board has the responsibility and authority to set, maintain and assure academic standards.
- 1.3.2 Academic Partnerships Committee (APC) has the responsibility for maintaining an overview of Academic Partnerships and their development.
- 1.3.3 Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) has the responsibility for ensuring that an appropriate regulations and quality assurance framework is in place for awards granted by the University, including those delivered by Academic Partners.
- 1.3.4 Academic Quality and Standards Office (AQSO) is responsible for:
- Managing and facilitating key quality processes involving academic partnerships.
- 1.3.5 The Global Partnerships Office (GPO) is responsible for:
- Managing the operations of academic partnerships, including liaison with partners and key University stakeholders.
 - Ensuring compliance with the University's requirements, policies, and regulations through the management of Partnership Reviews, and ongoing risk monitoring.
- 1.3.6 Academic Quality Leads in each School or College are responsible for ensuring that colleagues observe the relevant quality procedures and requirements.
- 1.3.7 Academic Partnership Link Tutors (APLTs) are responsible for:
- Ensuring that the delivery of academic courses and the student experience for provision at Academic Partners is appropriately supported by both the Partner and the University.
 - Oversight of the Academic Standards for the courses delivered at Academic Partners.
 - Oversight of the Quality of the academic partnership students' learning experience on the course(s).
 - Oversight of the reliability of the related course information.
 - The provision of training and support to Academic Partners on academic matters.
- 1.3.8 The University Secretary and Registrar is responsible for CMA compliance and the requirements of the Student Protection Plan.

1.4 Interpretation

- 1.4.1 This document refers to named positions (e.g. Academic Quality Lead, Course Leader, Academic Partnership Link Tutor) to detail required activities or authorisations.

1.4.2 Where a department does not have the identified position, an alternative must be identified, with comparable seniority and remit, such that all required activities or authorisations are undertaken.

1.4.3 Further Guidance

For further guidance colleagues should contact the GPO at UWL.GPO@uwl.ac.uk or on 020 8231 2553 and AQSO at quality@uwl.ac.uk or on 020 8231 2997.

1.4.4 The University Secretary and Registrar should be consulted where CMA compliance guidance is required, including dealing with issues that may lead to complaints and appeals. Advice can be provided on the provisions of the Student Protection Plan.

2 PARTNER QUALITY APPROVAL, COURSE APPROVAL AND REAPPROVAL, AND AMENDMENT PROCESS

2.1 Site or Campus Approval

2.1.1. The site or campus approval involves a visit to the partner's proposed site or campus(es) to undertake a full tour of the premises to ascertain its suitability as a delivery site for academic courses or modules approved by the University. For new partners, this is undertaken prior to the New Academic Partnership Quality Approval (outlined in 2.2. below). The visit is normally carried out by a senior member of the GPO, on behalf of the AQSO, and other University colleagues as relevant. Where a course involves the use of specialist teaching or lab space, a representative from the link School or College is expected to be part of the visit.

2.1.2. A site or campus approval must take place for each new campus or delivery site being proposed by an academic partner prior to any delivery taking place at the site, including instances where an academic partner has been previously approved.

2.1.3. The main purpose of the visit is to establish whether the location is appropriate for delivering the proposed academic course(s) or module(s). Checks of the new location include:

- a) Resources including teaching rooms, IT, library, and laboratories in relation to the course(s) or module(s) – and academic staffing for additional site or campus only.
- b) General campus layout and accessibility (including local transport links).
- c) Student Support and guidance arrangements in relation to approved courses.
- d) Administrative and/or technical support in relation to approved courses.
- e) Information provided about the learning opportunities and whether it is appropriate and fit for intended audiences.

2.1.4. The formal written Report of the site or campus approval will be received by the New Academic Partnership Quality Approval Panel and used as part of the evidence base by the Panel in reaching a decision about the proposed partnership.

- 2.1.5. For existing Academic Partners, a change of and/or addition of a delivery site will require a formal Site or Campus Approval as identified in 2.1.1. above, plus the following approvals:
- a) Business approval. This would normally take the form of a Business Case or approval by the Vice-Chancellor's Executive (VCE) representatives for academic partnerships and the link School or College.
 - b) Quality approval through the course amendment process.
- 2.1.6. The nature of the business and quality approvals for site or campus approval for existing academic partners will be determined on a risk-based approach, utilising the following information:
- a) Type of academic partnership.
 - b) Proximity of the new site to the existing site(s) that the partner is already operating under the UWL partnership.
 - c) Whether existing students will transfer to or be taught at the new site.
 - d) The course(s) to be delivered at the new site.
 - e) Proposed student numbers for the new site.
 - f) Proposed staffing arrangements for the new site, and whether this includes the approval of new academic staff to deliver on UWL provision.
- 2.1.7. A template for the site or campus Approval is available from the GPO.

2.2 New Academic Partnership Quality Approval

- 2.2.1 The ownership, management and organisation of the New Academic Partnership Quality Approval process is the responsibility of the AQSO.
- 2.2.2 Following the approval of the Business Case for a new academic partnership by the VCE, the AQSO will organise and conduct the New Academic Partnership Quality Approval, supported by the GPO.
- 2.2.3 The proposed academic partner's strategy, management, quality processes and physical environment are considered to ensure a high-quality educational experience for students.
- 2.2.4 The New Academic Partnership Quality Approval event with the proposed partner will normally be held online.
- 2.2.5 Documentation and information in support of the New Academic Partnership Quality Approval should be gathered by the proposed partner, including the strategic plan, annual reports, external body reports, policies, procedures and handbooks. The documentation and supporting information should be submitted to the AQSO by the proposed partner normally at least two weeks before the agreed date for the New Academic Partnership Quality Approval meeting.

- 2.2.6 The AQSO will provide an indicative list of the documentation and supporting information required for the New Academic Partnerships Quality Approval.
- 2.2.7 The Panel for a New Academic Partnership Quality Approval Panel normally comprises:
- a) The Director of Academic Quality and Standards (or nominee) as Chair.
 - b) A senior member of the GPO (may also act as Chair).
 - c) Two senior representatives from the relevant University School or College.
 - d) A representative from Academic Registry (normally the Assistant Registrar assigned to the University's School or College).
 - e) A representative from the AQSO (normally the Senior Quality Officer: Approval, Accreditation, Amendment).
 - f) Other members of University staff as appropriate.
 - g) A minute taker from the AQSO will attend the event
- 2.2.8 Where possible, the senior member of the GPO who leads the Site or Campus Approval will also be the GPO representative on the Panel.
- 2.2.9 The University requires the attendance of appropriate members of the proposed partner's management team who are able to respond to queries relating to the areas of consideration described in Section 2.2.11. The representation from the proposed partner should also include the proposed partner's Course Leader(s).
- 2.2.10 During the New Academic Partnership Quality Approval Panel, the academic partner will deliver a Presentation, to include an overview of the following:
- a) The mission and purpose of the proposed academic partner as related to its partnership with the University.
 - b) Current course deliveries including relevant achievement data.
 - c) Current partnerships.
 - d) Projected student numbers for the UWL partnership.
- 2.2.11 Following the presentation and a private meeting of the Panel, the Panel and the proposed partner will discuss the following areas of enquiry, in consideration of the Presentation and the documentation and supporting information provided by the academic partner:
- a) Strategic and Organisational Management
- Discussion of the proposed academic partner's strategic approach to HE quality and its operational procedures, including:

- Management of its organisational structures
- Strategic and operational committees
- Professional development for academic and/or support staff

b) Resources to Support Delivery

Discussion of appropriate resources to support the delivery of UWL courses, including:

- Findings from the Site or Campus Approval Report
- Staffing
- Teaching resources

c) Administrative Processes

Discussion of the following:

- Administrative support for UWL courses
- Student recruitment processes (including use of recruitment agents)
- Admissions processes
- IT provision, servers and security, e-mail, data management
- Library resources
- University policies

d) Quality Assurance and Enhancement Processes

Discussion of the following:

- Management, maintenance and sustainment of academic standards
- Assessment: Feedback on assignments
- Examination control and management
- Course and module evaluation
- Student diversity (including inclusive recruitment and student support)
- Student mobility (including progression opportunities)
- Student support arrangements: academic, pastoral
- 'Prevent' (for UK partnerships only)
- University protocols and policies

e) Public Information

Discussion of the following:

- Partner website
- Course information
- Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) compliance

f) Roles and Responsibilities of both Partners

Confirmation of arrangements for the following:

- Monitoring and review
- Responsibilities under OfS requirements and QAA guidance
- Student Protection Plan: change of Partner, course closure

- 2.2.12 Following the discussion outlined above, the Panel will meet privately to decide on an outcome, which is then communicated verbally to the Academic Partner prior to the event's conclusion.
- 2.2.13 The New Academic Partner Quality Approval may identify conditions and or recommendations which might need to be met prior to commencement of the partnership.
- 2.2.14 If the partner does not meet the conditions and/or recommendations within the given timelines, the partnership is not fully approved, and no courses will be permitted to run.
- 2.2.15 When a proposed partner has met the conditions and/or recommendations, they will be notified in writing via email by the AQSO. This notification will also be provided to the link School or College and relevant Professional Services at the University for noting. The APC will also be notified once a new partner has been approved.
- 2.2.16 If a partner has been approved but does not enter into a legal Validation or Subcontract Agreement with the University, the approval of the partnership can be withdrawn by the Director of Academic Quality and Standards following consultation with the GPO, Legal Services and the link School or College.
- 2.2.17 In addition to a successful partnership approval, the partner must also seek approval for courses as follows:
- Course Approval (for new courses designed by or for an academic partner, normally to be delivered under a **validation** arrangement).
 - Approval to Deliver (for existing University courses to be delivered by an academic partner, normally under a **subcontract** arrangement).

2.3 Reinstatement of Partnership Approval

- 2.3.1 Where an academic partnership has lapsed into inactivity or has been terminated, and a mutual decision has been taken by the University and the academic partner to investigate a reinstatement of the partnership, the Reinstatement of Partnership Approval process will be invoked.
- 2.3.2 The Reinstatement of Partnership Approval process follows the same principles and format of the New Academic Partnership Quality Approval process outlined in Section 2.2. However, the list of documentation requested, and the emphasis of the Panel event will be customised by the AQSO in conjunction with other internal stakeholders, depending on the specific circumstances relating to the inactivity or termination of the partnership.

2.3.3 In addition to the Reinstatement of Partnership Approval process, the AQSO working with the GPO will identify if any other quality assurance activities are required (e.g., Site or Campus Approval, Course Approval, Approval to Deliver) before the partnership is reinstated. This will be determined on a risk-based approach depending on the circumstances relating to the inactivity or termination of the partnership.

2.4 Approval to Deliver

2.4.1 Overview

2.4.1.1 An Approval to Deliver Event takes place where a course is an existing course of the University being approved for delivery by an academic partner. The process involves reviewing the academic partner's structures and resources, including staffing, to manage and deliver the course. A Business Case is required for a proposed Approval to Deliver. Refer to the Global Partnerships Operations Manual for further information on Business Case approval.

2.4.2 Developmental Event

2.4.2.1 Approval to Deliver Developmental Events (which may be conducted online or in person) are mandatory and are organised by the supporting UWL School or College in liaison with the academic partner. Failure to hold a Developmental Event prior to the Approval to Deliver event will likely result in the event being rescheduled.

2.4.2.2 The Approval to Deliver Developmental event will normally comprise:

- a) Representatives from the supporting UWL School or College
- b) Representatives from the academic partnership Course Team
- c) Representatives from the GPO
- d) Representatives from AQSO
- e) Representatives from Academic Registry

2.4.2.3 As part of the Developmental Event process, the Academic Partner is required to transfer the following existing UWL course documentation to the most up to date templates and customise them:

- a) Course Specification
- b) Course Handbook (Indicative)*
- c) Module Specifications (all levels)

***An indicative Course Handbook must be produced for the Approval to Deliver process. Following the completion of the process, the UWL School or College must approve the final version of the Course Handbook prior to the delivery of the course.**

2.4.2.4 In addition to the customised course documentation, the academic partner is required to produce the following supporting information:

- a) Academic Calendar (Form CA10)
- b) Staffing Grid (to include staff names, role, contract type, specialist areas, highest qualification and the module(s) to be allocated to)

2.4.2.5 The customisation of the course documentation should reflect the Academic Partner's:

- a) Delivery location
- b) Student support arrangements
- c) Details about academic staff
- d) Links with employers/industry and
- e) Anything else specific to the academic partner

2.4.2.6 Following the Approval to Deliver Developmental Event, the supporting UWL School or College must review the final version of the customised course documentation and the additional supporting information. Once the School or College are satisfied the course documentation has been fully customised and is in order, they should email the final version of the course documentation and the supporting information to the AQSO who will circulate it to the Approval to Deliver Panel Event members.

2.4.3 Approval to Deliver Panel Event

2.4.3.1 In an Approval to Deliver Panel Event, the final versions of the customised course documentation and supporting information (as detailed in section 2.4.2.3 above) are presented to an Approval to Deliver Panel for consideration.

2.4.3.2 The Panel will normally comprise:

- a) Chair: Normally one of the following:
 - Director of Academic Quality and Standards
 - Deputy Head of the GPO (Quality and Compliance)
 - Senior member of Academic Staff from a School or College not associated with the course or academic partnership.
- b) Senior Representative from the GPO
- c) Director of Apprenticeships (or their nominee) (where an apprenticeship is part of the Approval to Deliver)
- d) Two senior representatives from the supporting UWL School or College Course Team, including where possible the School or College Academic Quality Lead
- e) An Academic Registry Adviser (Assistant Registrar)

- f) An Academic Quality Adviser (normally the Senior Quality Officer: Approval, Accreditation and Amendment).

2.4.3.3 A minute taker from the AQSO will attend the event.

2.4.3.4 The following areas of discussion will usually form the agenda for the Approval to Deliver event:

- a) Recruitment and admissions
- b) Delivery plan and arrangements
- c) Role holders: course and module leaders
- d) Specialist resources: sessional staff, library resources, computer software
- e) Student support arrangements: academic, pastoral
- f) Student Voice (including module evaluation)
- g) Academic Calendar for non-standard deliveries
- h) UWL regulatory and guidance processes
- i) External Regulatory and Quality Processes

2.4.3.5 The Approval to Deliver Panel have the authority to:

- a) Approve without conditions or recommendations.
- b) Approve subject to conditions and/or recommendations.
- c) Refer for resubmission to the Panel at a later date to be agreed by the relevant stakeholders.
- d) Reject the course.

2.4.3.6 The Panel does not have the authority to approve additional resources for the delivery of the course beyond that already approved in the Business Case.

2.4.3.7 The Panel should not create conditions around the accuracy of the documentation; these will be included as editorial amendments on the Approval to Deliver Outcomes and Record of Event (Form CA8A) and must be responded to by the specified deadline.

2.4.3.8 The Panel will be asked to identify features of good practice, as appropriate.

2.4.3.9 The normal deadline date to be specified by the Panel for meeting any conditions of approval will be four weeks from the date the course was considered by the Panel. Recommendations should be addressed through annual monitoring.

2.4.3.10 The Approval to Deliver Outcomes and Record of Event (Form CA8A) must be used to record the decision of the Panel and any conditions, recommendations and editorial

amendments and will be completed after the event by the AQSO minute taker. The AQSO will send the completed CA8A Form to the academic partner and supporting UWL Course Teams, the UWL Dean or Director or Head of School or College and the UWL Academic Quality Lead.

- 2.4.3.11 Once the Chair of the Approval to Deliver Panel has granted final approval (following the meeting of any conditions, recommendations, or editorial amendments), the AQSO will send a formal notification of approval email (which will include the approved and final versions of the course documentation) to the academic partner and supporting UWL Course Teams, the UWL Dean or Director or Head of School or College, the UWL Academic Quality Lead, and the relevant Professional Services.

2.5 Course Approval and Re-Approval Panel

- 2.5.1 Where a new course is proposed by or for an academic partner, this course will be considered using the **Course Approval and Re-Approval Panel process**. This is outlined in the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook Section 3 (Course Approval and Re-Approval).
- 2.5.2 This process can also be utilised where a course is required to undergo re-approval, either following the expiry of the seven-year approval window for the course or where the partner and/or School or College wish to make substantial changes to the course which are not suitable to be managed through the Course Amendment process.
- 2.5.3 In addition to the Course Approval and Re-Approval Panel event documentation outlined within Section 3 of the Handbook, Academic Partners proposing a new course must also submit the following additional supporting documentation:
- Academic Calendar (Form CA10)
 - Staffing Grid (to include staff names, role, contract type, specialist areas, highest qualification and the module(s) to be allocated to)

2.6 Approval of Validated Modules

- 2.6.1 Individual validated modules which are not linked to a specific course will be considered for approval under the **Non-award (credit bearing) course/module proposals** process outlined in the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook Section 3 (Course Approval and Re-Approval).
- 2.6.2 Partners who only deliver validated modules are required to seek approval for each individual module that they wish to deliver. In instances where more than one partner delivers the same validated module, the module will need to be approved separately for each partner.

2.7 Framework for Bilingual and Second Language Delivery with Academic Partners

- 2.7.1 Partners who have been approved to deliver a course or part of a course in a language other than English are expected to comply with the requirements of the [Framework for Bilingual and Second Language Delivery with Academic Partners](#). This Framework outlines how such provision should be operated by the partner and the associated quality assurance activities by the University.

- 2.7.2 The Framework operates on the key principle that there will be no translation of student assessment and that appropriate language expertise will be in place at the partner and within the University to ensure that work can be assessed and moderated in the second language.
- 2.7.3 The Framework outlines the various options available to Course Teams when appointing External Examiners who moderate bilingual or second language delivery to ensure the University's ability to assure academic standards in this provision.
- 2.7.4 The Framework for Bilingual and Second Language Delivery with Academic Partners is managed by the AQSO in liaison with the GPO.

2.8 Course Amendments

- 2.8.1 Where an academic partner is proposing an amendment to an existing course this will be considered using the Course Amendment process. This is outlined in the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook Section 4 (Course Amendments).
- 2.8.2 Amendments to courses also delivered by the University must be led by the relevant UWL Academic School or College. UWL Schools or Colleges are required to consult with Partner institutions and their students prior to the submission of any course amendment to a course also offered at Academic Partners. Academic Partners are expected to facilitate the consultation with Partner students. Partners are encouraged to discuss any proposed amendments with the Academic Partnership Link Tutor. Any resulting amendments arising from feedback raised by the Academic Partner must be submitted by the UWL School or College.
- 2.8.3 Amendments to courses only delivered at Academic Partners may be proposed and submitted by the Partner but must be discussed in advance with the relevant UWL School or College following the process outlined in the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook Section 4 (Course Amendments).

2.9 External Qualifications Review

- 2.9.1 The External Qualifications review (Form CA11) should form part of the documentation to be completed in preparation for approving delivery of a Level 6 top-up course by an academic partner, where there is no associated Level 4 and Level 5 of a UWL course to map a partner's entry qualification against.
- 2.9.2 Where UWL does not have an existing Level 4 and 5 of the course, it is intended that the UWL supporting Course Teams will use the External Qualifications Review form to document the process of reviewing the equivalency of the entry qualifications proposed for admission onto a Level 6 top up to potentially be delivered by an academic partner, against the requirements of the relevant qualification framework. These entry qualifications will normally be a separate Level 4 and 5 award delivered by the academic partner.
- 2.9.3 The AQSO will support this process by co-ordinating a technical check of the proposed entry qualification in terms of Level, credits and learning hours in conjunction with relevant UWL colleagues. This will enable the UWL supporting Course Teams to focus on academic judgements relating to the suitability of the entry qualification.

3 EXTERNAL EXAMINING

The below information should be read in conjunction with the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook Section 7 (External Examining) of which provides detailed information on External Examiner applications and annual reports and responses.

3.1 Application

- 3.1.1 Where an academic partner is delivering a course they have designed, the Course Leader at the academic partner should identify a suitable External Examiner candidate in conjunction with their University Academic Partnership Link Tutor and the link School or College Academic Quality Lead.
- 3.1.2 Where an academic partner is delivering a course designed by the University, the University will take the lead on identifying a suitable External Examiner candidate.

3.2 Responding to External Examiner annual reports

- 3.2.1 The Course Leader at the academic partner is responsible for drafting the formal written response to the External Examiner annual report for this provision and sending it to their University Academic Partnership Link Tutor for review in sufficient time to meet the University's deadline.

4 MONITORING OUTCOMES

The below information should be read in conjunction with the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook Section 6 (Monitoring Outcomes), which contains detailed information on Monitoring Outcomes at the University.

4.1 Course Monitoring Reports

- 4.1.1 Academic partners should use the Academic Partner delivered provision Course Monitoring Template for their course monitoring.
- 4.1.2 Prior to submitting their Course Monitoring Report to the relevant Academic Quality Lead and the AQSO, the Academic Partner should send it to their Academic Partnership Link Tutor **and** the Head of Subject or Partnership Lead (or designate) in their link School or College for review. This should be done in sufficient time to ensure the submission deadline to the AQSO can be met.

4.2 Education Review

- 4.2.1 Academic Partner data is considered at the relevant link School or College Education Review meeting(s).
- 4.2.2 Where an Academic Partner delivered course has reached the seven-year reapproval window the Education Review Panel will consider the proposal from the link School or College and make a decision about the reapproval status of the course. The academic partner should be involved in discussions with the link School or College about the proposal ahead of the link School or College Semester One Quality Committee.

5 PARTNERSHIP REVIEWS

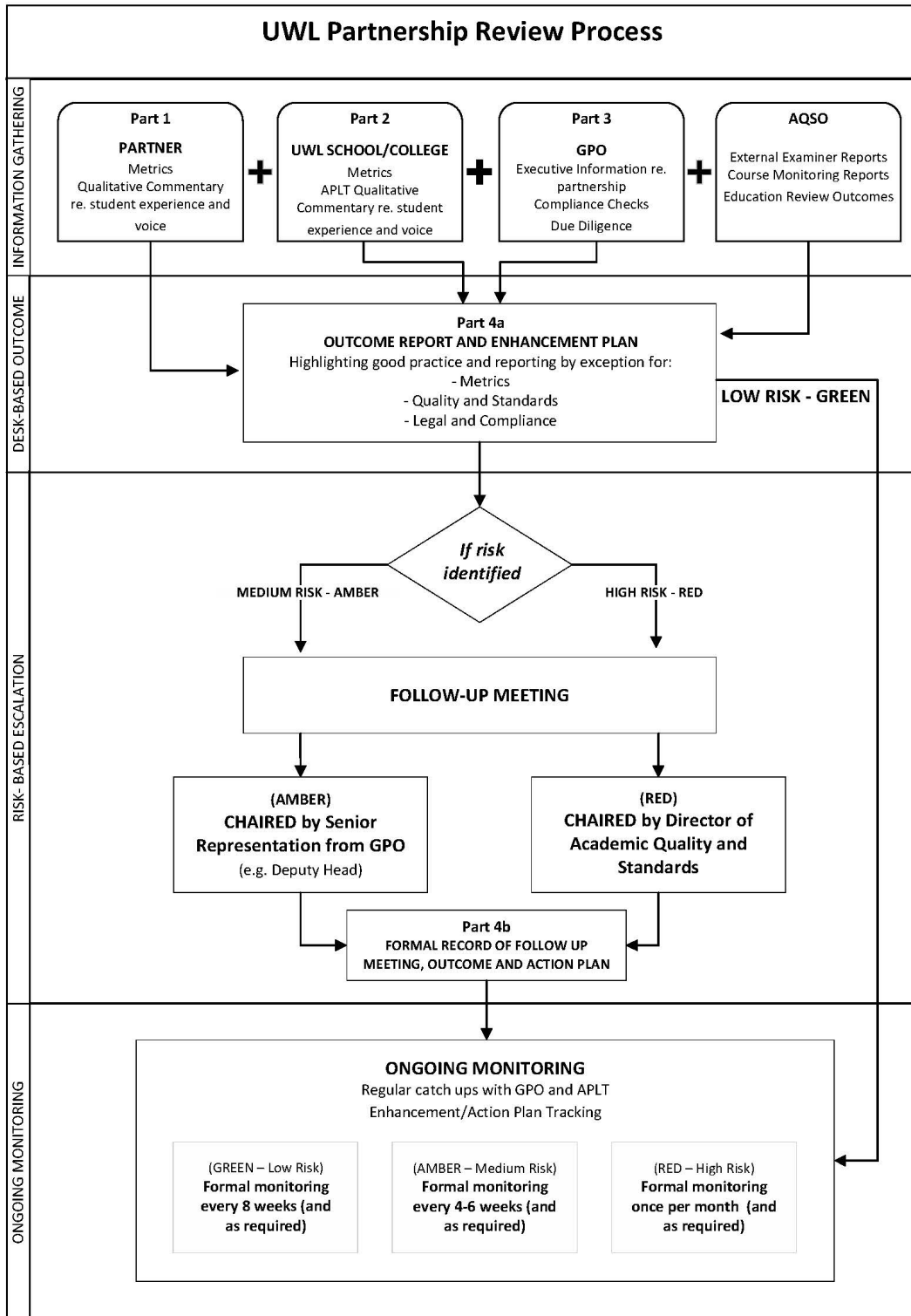
5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 Academic partnerships are subject to a Partnership Review on a risk-based approach - where any significant concerns emerge from ongoing monitoring, a Partnership Review can be expedited. Partners can normally expect to receive a Partnership Review every other year, which takes into account all of the data available since the previous review. The review considers the partnership as a whole, including how the University is supporting the partner and the student experience.
- 5.1.2 The Partnership Reviews will be scheduled and managed by the GPO. The Partnership Review Report contains sections to be completed by the academic partner, the appropriate School or College, and the GPO. The nominated member of senior partner staff is responsible for coordinating and preparing the partner sections of document. The Partnership Review and related processes will be subject to ongoing review.
- 5.1.3 The indicators and outcomes of the Education Review should inform the content of the Partnership Review. Information on the Education Review Report and the annual reporting processes is provided in the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook Section 6 (Monitoring Outcomes).
- 5.1.4 The Partnership Review will monitor the management and effectiveness of the partnership, drawing on evidence from a variety of information, activities undertaken and metrics and data. The review will also consider the agreement and the operation of the provision, especially recruitment, Quality Assurance, External Examiner Reports, resources, student feedback and the progression and achievement of students.
- 5.1.5 The partner's metrics, data and information, normally dating back to the previous Partnership Review, is prepared by the AQSO, the Strategic Planning Team and the GPO. Annual due diligence procedures monitor the safeguards against financial risk or potential conflicts of interest that might compromise academic standards and or the partnership.
- 5.1.6 Documentation and information to support the Partnership Reviews includes:
- a) Overview of formal student feedback (eg Module Evaluations) and actions taken over the applicable years
 - b) Education Review outcomes and indicators
 - c) Previous Partnership Review Report
 - d) Student statistical data – entry, progression, retention and completion, etc. based on Education Review
 - e) Other key metrics monitored over the applicable years
 - f) External Examiner report(s) and response to the report(s)
 - g) APLT Visit Report(s)
 - h) Current Risk Assessment document and any recorded compliance matters (eg CMA, Prevent)
 - i) Contract and schedule(s) and partner's fee payments
 - j) Current financial and legal due diligence documentation

- k) Volume of staff changes
- l) Staff development activities of staff delivering and supporting the course(s)
- m) PSRB accreditation or external review report (where relevant).

5.1.7 Partnership Review Process and Outcomes

The flowchart below outlines the process for the UWL Partnership Review.



5.2 Information Gathering

- 5.2.1 Information relating to the [Office for Students B3 metrics](#) and qualitative commentary on the student experience and voice is gathered from the partner via the Part 1 forms, and relevant Schools or Colleges by the APLTs via the Part 2 forms. Schools or Colleges will be able to raise matters for consideration as part of this process and through Part 2 of the report.
- 5.2.2 Executive information regarding the partnership is provided by senior representatives of the GPO via Part 3 forms, and compliance checks and updated due diligence is also gathered by the GPO. Enhanced financial due diligence will be explored with the University's Finance Team and supported by the Global Partnerships Development Manager.
- 5.2.3 Information relating to course-level performance is also gathered via the AQSO through checks of External Examiner reports and responses, course monitoring reports, and Education Review outcomes.
- 5.2.4 Desk-Based Outcome
- The information is reviewed by the GPO (independent of completing Part 3 documentation) and compiled into an Outcome Report, which provides a documentation checklist, a summary of the review with a risk assessment outcome of low '**Green**', medium '**Amber**' or high '**Red**'.
 - The Outcome Report highlights good practice and contains reporting by exception to flag risks within the key themes of student experience and voice, metrics, quality and standards, and legal and compliance.
 - Following the desk-based review if the risk assessment outcome is '**Green**' the partnership is low risk, an enhancement plan will be completed to document any areas for improvement or future development and the partner will then move to ongoing monitoring collaboratively with the GPO, the School or College and partner. These actions and matters arising will be recorded on the Part 4 Form, which is the Enhancement Plan.
- 5.2.5 Risk-based escalation
- Medium risk '**Amber**' and high risk '**Red**' outcomes - if the outcome is '**Amber**' or '**Red**', a formal Partnership Review meeting will be convened with the partner and appropriate colleagues from the University according to the level of risk identified. The aim of this meeting is to set out an Action Plan on the Part 4 Form to mitigate and monitor actions and risks moving forward.
 - If the review outcome is '**Amber**', the follow-up meeting will be chaired by a senior member of the GPO (i.e. Deputy Head), and will have representation from the School or College and AQSO as required. Targeted support and interventions will be put into place to support and monitor specific areas of risk.
 - If the review outcome is '**Red**', the follow-up meeting will be chaired by the Director of Quality and Standards in order to allow for sufficient escalation within the University. The partner's risk rating will be confirmed as '**Red**' and actions

and targets will be set with timelines to mitigate the areas of risk. These actions and targets will be managed and monitored by the GPO and the relevant School(s)/College(s); University teams will also provide support where required to mitigate risks. The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed for the partnership, where required. If a partnership remains at high risk for 2 consecutive years without significant improvement, the partnership may be closed and the relevant Student Protection Plan will be invoked.

5.3 Ongoing Monitoring

- 5.3.1 Following confirmation of the review outcome and enhancement/action plan, partners then continue to engage with ongoing monitoring. This monitoring is facilitated by the Global Partnerships Operations Managers through regularly scheduled catch up meetings.
- 5.3.2 Meetings will take place every 8 – 12 weeks for partners identified as low risk, and every 4 – 6 weeks for those identified as medium or high risk. Meetings directly following the review will be focussed on tracking progress within Enhancement/Action Plans to ensure that Partnership Review actions are completed in good time.
- 5.3.3 Academic Partnership Link Tutors also monitor the academic operations of each partner on an ongoing basis, and the quality and standards of academic partnership provision is monitored annually by the AQSO through course monitoring reports, External Examiner reports and responses, and Education Review. Where any significant concerns emerge from ongoing monitoring, a Partnership Review can be expedited.
- 5.3.4 By exception, where new information becomes available which could significantly change the risk outcome for a partner, the following escalation process will be initiated and the outcome of the Partnership Review may be changed.
- 5.3.5 Change of Outcome
- 5.3.5.1 Where circumstances arise that necessitate an immediate change to a Partnership Review outcome, a 'Change of Outcome' notification form will be completed. This will be issued either where:
- a) any of the events listed under 5.5.5.1 occur and an outcome needs to be automatically escalated to 'Red'/high risk without conducting a new Review,
 - or
 - b) there is demonstrable reduction of risk following completion of the Partnership Review Action Plan and the outcome from a previous Review can therefore be de-escalated.

Where outcomes are escalated to an automatic 'Red' outside of the review process, this will normally be confirmed by the Director of Academic Quality and Standards in consultation with other colleagues as appropriate.

5.3.6 Reporting

- 5.3.6.1 Part 5 of the Partnership Review Report records the outcome of the Review and provides a summary to the APC for noting. The GPO will follow up any requests, actions or conditions (if requested by the APC or the School or College).
- 5.3.6.2 The Part 5 Form indicates areas of good practice and key risks are highlighted against the themes of student experience and voice, metrics, quality and standards, and legal and compliance.
- 5.4 Partnership Review checks for 'Validated Module' Partners
- 5.4.1 The review for academic partners who run validated modules would comprise the following:
- a) Check of all related External Examiner Reports
 - b) Check of Education Review metrics
 - c) Condensed Part 1 Form for the partner to report any organisational or regulatory changes
 - d) Condensed Part 2 Form for the School or College to confirm course standards and quality assurance
 - e) Condensed Part 3 Form for the GPO to check for any potential risks and annual financial checks.
- 5.4.1.1 Following the checks of Parts 1, 2 and 3, the partner will either receive confirmation that they have passed the Partnership Review checks, or where significant risk is identified, the full Partnership Review process would be initiated.

5.5 Contract Review of the Academic Partnership

- 5.5.1 All partnerships are subject to a Partnership Contract Review before the contract is due to expire. The Partnership Contract Review follows the same processes outlined above in section 5.2:
- Information Gathering
 - Risk-based escalation
 - Ongoing monitoring
 - Change of Outcome
 - Reporting
- 5.5.2 Partnership Contract Reviews provide the opportunity for a full and detailed review of the partnership and are conducted periodically according to the length of the contract (three or five years), normally in the year before the contract is due to expire. A statement completed by the Head of School or College or senior nominee on the strategic priorities and opportunities for the partner will additionally be requested to supplement the information provided by the APLT within part 2 documentation.
- 5.5.3 Partnership Contract Review Purpose and Remit
- 5.5.3.1 The Partnership Contract Review evaluates the academic partnership over a number of years and includes all of the information collated at the Information Gathering stage as described in section 5.2 above with the addition of:
- a) Year on year comparisons of key metrics

- b) Analysis of key risks
- c) Quality of the student learning experience through a meeting with student representatives
- d) Contractual agreements and partner's fee payments
- e) Financial and legal due diligence and identifying potential conflicts of interest that might compromise academic standards and/or the partnership, in order to mitigate any potential risks before the agreements are renewed
- f) Financial viability of the course/partnership

5.5.4 Partnership Contract Review Process

5.5.4.1 The steps below outline the process for the Partnership Contract Review:

1. All parties will complete the Partnership Review template as part of the information gathering outlined in 5.2 above.
2. A desk-based analysis of metrics, information and documents (outlined in 5.2 above) is undertaken by the Review Panel, alongside the completed the Partnership Review and Partnership Contract Review templates. Prior to the meeting, the University Review Panel members will record any noteworthy matters for discussion.
3. The completed Partnership Review documentation and the completed sections of the Partnership Contract Review will form the basis for the meeting with all key stakeholders from the University, the partner and partner's students.
4. Student participation is an essential feature of the Partnership Contract Review processes. A cross section of Partner's students on the course(s) will be invited to meet with members of the Review Panel as part of the review process; this may be face-to-face at the partner institution, or remotely via online video conference.
5. Following the separate meeting with students, the Global Partnerships Office will convene a Review Panel with an Agenda.

The Review Panel normally includes:

- Senior member of the GPO (or designate) as Chair Senior member of the of AQSO
 - Senior member(s) of staff from the relevant University School/College
 - Senior member(s) of staff from the partner.
6. The Review Panel will undertake a risk assessment of the partnership and the courses. Part 4 of the Partnership Contract Review is the Action Plan which is agreed by all parties during the meeting. As part of the review process, an Outcome Report is compiled, which provides a documentation checklist, a summary of the review with a risk assessment outcome.
 7. The Panel will agree and assign a risk assessment outcome of 'Green' (low risk), 'Amber' (medium risk), or 'Red' (high risk) will be assigned. This outcome will be signed-off by the Chair of the Partnership Contract Review. In the unlikely event that the Panel is unable to reach an agreed outcome, the Chair of the review can refer the outcome for an independent second opinion outside of the meeting as appropriate.

8. If the risk assessment outcome is 'Amber' or 'Red' a follow-up meeting will be convened with the partner and appropriate University colleagues according to the level of risk. The aim of the follow-up meeting is to review progress on the Action Plan to mitigate and monitor risks. The meeting outcome will determine options for:
 - o contract renewal;
 - o any additional measures which may be required;
 - o whether the contract will be extended for a short period of time;
 - o whether the contract will not be renewed and the teach-out options and student protection plan required.
9. 'Red - high risk' – If the risk assessment outcome is 'Red', the Student Protection Plan will be reviewed for the partnership. If a partnership has remained at high risk for two consecutive years without significant improvement the partnership may be closed and the relevant Student Protection Plan will be invoked.

The Contract may not be renewed, unless significant improvement is made by the partner. Alternatively, the current contract may be extended for 12 months to enable the partner to make the required improvements.

Follow-up meetings will be held subsequently with the partner, to continue to review progress made on the Action Plan.

10. Reporting will undertaken as outlined in section 5.3.6. above.

5.5.5 Automatic 'Red' Review Outcomes

5.5.5.1 The University takes a risk-based approach to managing partnerships. The occurrence of any items listed below would automatically incur a 'Red' review outcome for either a Partnership Review or a Partnership Contract Review:

- a) The occurrence of an event or circumstance relating to the partnership that impacts the University's compliance with the conditions of registration and therefore necessitates a Reportable Event to be submitted to the Office for Students by the University.
- b) Notification from the OfS or other relevant regulatory body (such as the Department for Education or Ofsted) of formal action or investigation against a partner that has demonstrable impact on the University, even where the notification does not directly relate to University provision.
- c) Breach of Contract
- d) External Examiner determines a course does not meet the requirements of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- e) Whole cohort serious complaint relating to quality and standards and student experience.
- f) Persistent financial non-payment of fees within timescale
- g) Matters with serious reputational impact, i.e., unacceptable behaviour of the partner or their leadership, non-compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements.
- h) Fraud
- i) Persistent poor data and metrics pertaining to OfS quality conditions.

5.5.6 Partnership Contract Duration Timescales

5.5.6.1 Following the Partnership Contract Review outcome, the contract renewal process will follow a risk-based approach to the duration of the contract as shown below:

5.5.6.2 Following a 'Green' outcome, the contract would normally be renewed for a 5-year period.

5.5.6.3 Following an 'Amber' outcome, the contract duration would be determined according to the level of risk: from 2 to 5 years.

5.5.6.4 Following a 'Red' outcome, the contract would normally be renewed for a 2-year period. This would be reviewed the following year to review the level of risk. If the risk remains very high, the University reserves the right to terminate the agreement and would serve the partner a one-year notice of intention not to renew the contract. The partner would not be permitted to recruit any new students onto their UWL courses and appropriate teach-out plans would be invoked.

5.5.6.5 All contracts for new partners would be issued for a standard duration of 3 years for level 4 entry UG and PG courses. The exception is a 4-year duration for UG courses with foundation year.

5.5.6.6 In order to enable the contracts to remain current as the regulatory landscape evolves, the University reserves the right to vary the contract to reflect regulatory changes.

5.5.7 Management of Risk

5.5.7.1 Academic Partnerships risks are managed and monitored in a number of ways:

- Regular liaison and communication with School or College, the AQSO, the GPO and key stakeholders to plan operations, monitor quality and to mitigate potential risks;
- School or College updates on key issues are reported to APC with follow-up actions;
- The GPO proactively manages and monitors identified issues and risks with School or College and partners to mitigate any detrimental impact on the student experience – key matters are escalated to the University Senior Team;
- The GPO sets up working groups when required to review specific partnership operations, to ensure they function effectively and meet the regulatory requirements;
- Good practice and practices to avoid are shared with Partners at the Academic Partnerships Conference to promote supportive and open partnership working, so that potential issues are notified as early as possible to the University by partners and can be managed more effectively.

6 CLOSURE OF ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP

6.1 Partnership Closure Process Overview

6.1.1 Partnership Closure may occur for several reasons, including:

- a) The effluxion of time, e.g. the contract has reached the end of the period and one or more of the parties do not wish to renew
- b) Service of notice (no fault termination)
- c) Breach of a material term within the contract
- d) Mutual consent, e.g. the partner is not recruiting viable numbers for a sustainable relationship; the School/College offer has changed and the partner agrees to terminate; the partner has new requirements and the School/College agrees to terminate
- e) The partner is no longer able to conduct its business and must therefore close.

6.2 Prepare Partnership Closure Form

6.2.1 Upon Notification of intended partnership closure, the GPO will consult with the partner, relevant APLT(s) and School or College Partnership Leads for all affected Schools or Colleges in order to complete the Partnership Closure Form. The form requests information relating to the reason for closure and gathers compliance information in relation to student protection plans, relevant partner insurance policies, details of planned final recruitment, assurances regarding quality assurance arrangements, planned student communications, and financial arrangements.

6.2.2 In order to complete the form, the GPO should conduct discussions with:

- The partner, Relevant APLT(s) and School or College Partnership Leads to gather more information regarding the reasons for potential closure
- The AQSO to establish the impact for courses offered by the academic partner;
- Academic Registry colleagues or the University Secretary as required to establish the regulatory requirements and the need for activating the Student Protection Plan (if applicable)
- Legal Services regarding implications for the Academic Partnership Contract and subsequent termination;

6.2.3 The completed Partnership Closure Form should be signed by the Dean or Director or Head of School or College, the Pro Vice Chancellor for Business Development, the Director of Academic Quality and Standards, the Head of the GPO, and a senior officer from the Partnership Institution.

6.2.4 Where the proposal is for a partnership involving two or more Schools or Colleges, the respective Dean or Director or Heads of each School or College should sign the form.

6.2.5 Academic Partnership Link Tutors should also liaise with the relevant course leader of any affected courses to complete a Course Suspension and Closure Form (SC1) for each course that will close as a result of the partnership closure in accordance with the Course Suspension and Closure process outlined in the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook Section 8 (Course Suspensions and Closures).

6.2.6 In completing the SC1 forms for each course, the APLT and Course Leaders will need to liaise with the partner in order to:

- Provide a teaching out plan for students on the course
- Investigate and understand the requirements of any required suspension or closure of PSRB accreditation including the costs involved.

6.3 Consideration for Approval by the Vice-Chancellor's Executive

6.3.1 Once the Partnership Closure Form and any associated Course Closure forms (SC1) have been completed, these will be received and considered for approval at the Vice Chancellor's Executive. In signing the form, VCE confirms that the proposal has been discussed and approved at executive level within the University.

6.3.2 The approval confirms that the following points have been discussed and agreed at both Executive and Operational level:

- a) The proposal is consistent with the University and Partner's Student Protection Plan (as applicable) and the decision whether to activate the plan is in line with the University's regulatory obligations.
- b) Students and applicants' interests have been thoroughly planned for at an individual and collective level.
- c) All impacts on the outcomes of current students have been mitigated or will be effectively communicated under the terms of the University or Partner's Student Protection Plan (as applicable)
- d) The plan does not affect the outcomes or experience of any group of students disproportionately.
- e) Effective plans and processes are in place to mitigate any legal and financial implications for the partnership closure.

6.4 Actions following Approval

6.4.1 Approval ensures that there are effective processes in place for Course Teams and the Global Partnerships Office to liaise with the partner institution to:

- a) Communicate effectively with students. All partner communications should be approved by the University prior to release.
- b) Plan effectively for managing student outcomes.

- c) Arrange and manage financial and legal implications as required.
- d) Ensure compliance with legislation and regulation (e.g. CMA, the student protection plan, and notifications to the Office for Students).
- e) Make any required statutory or compliance returns.

6.4.2 Once the GPO receives the approved Partnership Closure form, they will inform:

- Schools or Colleges
- The Partner Institution
- The Academic Quality and Standards Office
- Legal Services
- Academic Registry (via the Academic Registrar and the relevant Assistant Registrars)
- Strategic Planning
- Academic Administration (via the Partnerships Liaison Manager and the relevant School/College Administration Managers)
- Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions (as relevant)
- Library Services
- CELT (via the Academic Developer for Partnerships)
- Student Experience (via the Partnerships Student Experience Coordinator)

6.4.3 Any associated approved Course Closure forms (SC1) will be forwarded to the AQSO for final processing and storage.

6.4.4 The GPO will instruct the Legal Services Team to draft a formal termination notice for the Academic Partner.

6.4.5 The Academic Partnership Link Tutor and Global Partnerships Operations Manager will hold a formal Partnership Closure Meeting with the academic partner in order to initiate teach out support discussions and to ascertain which (if any) of the Teach Out Academic Regulations should be applied. This meeting will be used to initiate the Academic Planning and Monitoring of courses to be closed as a result of the Partnership Closure, as outlined within the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook Section 8 (Course Suspensions and Closures).

6.5 Ongoing Teach Out Support

6.5.1 Partners engaged in the Teach Out process will continue to be subject to all formal monitoring processes, such as Course Monitoring and Partnership Review, throughout the duration of the Teach Out period.

6.5.2 Operations Managers and Academic Partnership Link Tutors will continue to meet with academic partners throughout the teach out period in order to provide ongoing support and to regularly review the Teach Out Plans within the Course Suspension and Closure Form (SC1). The purpose of these meetings is to ensure that:

6.5.3 The delivery of each course at the partner institution continues to meet the threshold standards set by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

- 6.5.4 Appropriate communications with students and other stakeholders are proposed, monitored, and approved by the University.
- 6.5.5 There are and will continue to be sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff at the partner institution to deliver a high-quality learning experience for all students.
- 6.5.6 There are and will continue to be sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources, and student support services at the partner institution to deliver a high-quality learning experience for all students.
- 6.5.7 There is sufficient ongoing compliance with regulatory or legislative requirements.
- 6.5.8 Outcomes of these meetings will be recorded within the Course Suspension and Closure Form (SC1).
- 6.5.9 When the meetings have confirmed that all students have completed the course (or have been transferred to alternative provision or compensated under the terms of the Student Compensation Policy), a Partnership Closure Report will be completed by the Academic Partnerships Link Tutors with the support of the Global Partnerships Operations Manager and submitted to the Academic Partnerships Committee for noting. The Partnership Closure Report summarises the actions taken to close the partnership, the management of academic standards during closure, the management and administration of the closure, and provides a formal record of the resolution of any outstanding legal and financial concerns so that the University can assure itself of its regulatory obligations.