

University of Greater Manchester:

Partnerships and Collaborative Provision Oversight Policy

Preface

This Policy outlines the principles, framework, and operational procedures for the University of Greater Manchester's engagement in oversight of academic partnerships and collaborative provision. It is designed to ensure that all such arrangements uphold the University's commitment to academic standards, quality enhancement, and an excellent student experience, while complying with regulatory requirements and University policies and procedures. This policy is designed to ensure compliance with the Office for Students' Condition of Registration E10 (Subcontracting) and the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education, securing high standards and student protection in all partnerships. Compliance with Office for Students Condition E10 is demonstrated through defined key performance indicators, annual partnership assurance reporting, and formal escalation to Senate via the Education Committee. The Board of Governors retains ultimate responsibility for institutional oversight of risks associated with collaborative provision and receives assurance through the University's governance, audit and risk management framework.

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Collaborative Provision:** Educational provision leading to an award or to credits counting towards an award of the University of Greater Manchester, which is delivered, assessed, or supported through an arrangement with a partner organisation.
- **Franchised Provision:** An arrangement where the University validates a programme but licenses a partner institution to deliver the entire programme using the University's curriculum,

assessment methods, and quality assurance processes, with the University retaining ultimate responsibility for the award.

- **Validated Provision:** An arrangement where the University formally approves programmes of study designed and delivered by a partner institution as being of an appropriate standard and quality to lead to a University of Greater Manchester award. The partner institution is responsible for the delivery and often the assessment.
- **Articulation Agreement:** An agreement facilitating student progression from a programme of study at a partner institution onto a specific stage of a programme at the University of Greater Manchester, with agreed credit transfer.
- **Flying Faculty:** An arrangement where staff employed by the University of Greater Manchester travel to deliver programmes or parts of programmes at a partner institution's location, typically overseas.
- **Joint Award:** An award given and formally recognised by two or more degree-awarding bodies, with a single certificate indicating the contributing institutions.
- **Dual Award:** An award where a single programme of study leads to two separate awards from two different degree-awarding bodies, each with its own certificate.
- **Office for Students (OfS):** The independent regulator for higher education in England, setting conditions of registration that universities must meet to operate.
- **Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA):** The independent body that safeguards standards and improves the quality of UK higher education.
- **Subcontracting:** (commonly known as "franchising") as an arrangement where a registered higher education provider—the lead provider—contracts with another organisation—the delivery provider—to deliver all or part of a course on its behalf.

Partnership Assurance Framework

Assurance is derived from:

- Due Diligence
- Operations Manuals
- Partnership Development Meetings
- Annual Review of Partnership Operations
- ATLAS Strategy
- GLOBE Strategy
- Risk Registers
- Live Action Partnership Plans
- Enhanced Quality Monitoring
- Focussed Area Reviews
- Internal Audits
- External Examiner Reports
- Student Feedback
- Annual Assurance Reporting

The University of Greater Manchester (UGM) values strategic academic partnerships as a means of enhancing its mission to provide high-quality education, foster research, and contribute to local and global communities. This Policy provides the overarching framework for the effective and compliant management of all collaborative provision leading to a University of Greater Manchester award. It ensures consistency, mitigates risk, and guarantees that academic standards and the quality of the student experience are maintained, equitable to those delivered on campus.

2. Scope and Principles

2.1 Scope: This Policy applies to all forms of collaborative provision and subcontracting (franchised, validated, articulation, joint/dual awards, flying faculty, etc.) where UGM awards or credits are involved. It covers processes from initial planning and approval through to monitoring, periodic review, and termination or withdrawal.

2.2 Guiding Principles: All collaborative activities of the University of Greater Manchester will adhere to the following principles:

- **Student Interests and Protection:** In all decisions relating to collaborative provision, the University will prioritise the protection of students, the continuity of study, academic standards, consumer protection obligations and the quality of the student experience. Where competing considerations arise, the interests of students shall take precedence.
- **Student-Centredness and Equity:** UGM will safeguard students' interests in all partner arrangements, ensuring equitable academic standards and support.
- **Risk Management:** All partnerships are subject to initial and ongoing risk assessment, supported by a formal Partnership Risk Register reviewed at least annually.
- **Ultimate Responsibility:** The University retains ultimate responsibility for the academic standards of its awards and the quality of the student learning experience, regardless of where or how the provision is delivered.
- **Strategic Alignment:** Partnerships will align with the University's strategic goals, academic plans, and commitment to widening participation and collaborative engagement.
- **Comparability of Standards:** The academic standards and quality of learning opportunities for students on collaborative provision will be demonstrably comparable to those on equivalent programmes delivered solely by the University.

- **Student Experience:** The student experience in collaborative provision will be of high quality and provide appropriate academic and pastoral support, access to resources, and clear information.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** All aspects of partnership management will be conducted with transparency, clear lines of accountability, and robust documentation.
- **Compliance:** All partnerships will operate in full compliance with the requirements of the Office for Students (OfS), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), relevant Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), and all applicable national and international laws and regulations.
- **Performance Monitoring and Management:** Partnerships are monitored against defined indicators including student outcomes, continuation, satisfaction, and assessment performance.

3. Types of Collaborative Provision

The University of Greater Manchester engages in various forms of collaborative provision, each managed according to the principles outlined in this policy and specific operational procedures.

Key types include:

- **Franchised Provision:** Delivery of a University of Greater Manchester programme by a partner, with the University retaining full academic oversight.
- **Validated Provision:** Approval by the University of a partner's programme leading to a UGM award.
- **Articulation Agreements:** Formal pathways for student progression.
- **Joint/Dual Awards:** Collaborative programmes leading to shared or separate awards.
- **Flying Faculty:** University staff delivering UGM provision off-campus.

4. Partnership Lifecycle: Approval, Monitoring, and Review

4.1 Initial Exploration and Due Diligence: Prospective partnerships undergo a rigorous due diligence process. This involves:

- **Strategic Fit Assessment:** Evaluation against University strategic priorities.
- **Academic Suitability:** Assessment of partner's academic capacity, quality assurance processes, and resources.
- **Financial Viability:** Thorough review of the partner's financial health and sustainability.
- **Legal and Regulatory Compliance:** Verification of the partner's legal status and ability to comply with relevant regulations in their jurisdiction.
- **Risk Assessment:** Identification and mitigation of potential risks (academic, financial, reputational, legal).

4.2 Approval Process: Formal approval for new collaborative provision is conducted through the University's established academic governance structures, including relevant Committees and Boards. Final approval of new collaborative provision rests with Senate (or its delegated authority), following recommendation from the Education Committee. The steps involved are:

- Submission of comprehensive proposals.
- Internal and external peer review.
- Consideration of due diligence findings and risk assessments.
- Formal academic and quality assurance scrutiny.

4.3 Legal Agreements: All approved partnerships will be formalised through a comprehensive, legally binding contract, which clearly defines the responsibilities of each party, intellectual property arrangements, financial terms, review mechanisms, and termination clauses. These are underpinned by an Operations Manual, which are reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

4.4 Roles and Responsibilities: Clear roles and responsibilities are assigned for the management and oversight of partnerships. Ultimate institutional accountability rests with Senate; operational responsibility is delegated as follows:

- **Head of the Off Campus Division:** Overall strategic oversight and management.
- **Head of the Centre for Academic Partnerships:** Leadership of partnership management, development and relations functions.
- **Head of Quality and Compliance:** Strategic oversight of ATLAS and GLOBE initiatives. Leadership of operational strategies related to the Quality and Compliance roles, including:
 - Academic Risk Manager
 - Teaching, Learning and Assessment Lead
 - Student Engagement Coordinator
 - Quality and Standards Oversight Manager
 - Lead for Academic Partnership Oversight
- **Lead for Quality and Compliance (Academic Partnerships):** Senior academic responsible for the partnership.
- **Partnership Coordinator:** Operational management of the collaboration.
- **Link Tutor:** Designated academic staff member responsible for maintaining academic liaison with the partner institution, supporting the effective operation of the programme, and contributing to the oversight of academic quality, standards and enhancement.
- **Partnership Enhancement Panel:** University-level Committee providing governance and oversight.

4.5 Escalation & Termination: If a partner underperforms or breaches contractual terms, escalation is enacted through the Live Action Partnership Plan and reported through the Partnership Enhancement Panel to the Education Committee. Escalation is triggered where defined thresholds are breached, including continuation rates below agreed benchmarks, external examiner concerns, regulatory non-compliance, or financial instability. Our

“contingency” approach can be executed with authorisation from the Education Committee (e.g. “if a partner is revoked by PSRB or OfS conditions are breached, UGM may appoint a teach-out lead or seek alternative delivery”).

5. Integration with Existing University Policies by Category

All partner institutions are contractually required to comply with the following University policies as a condition of partnership. Partner-delivered courses are subject to the same quality assurance procedures as on-campus programmes. The Partnerships and Collaborative Provision Oversight Policy works in conjunction with, and signposts to, a suite of existing University of Greater Manchester policies that govern specific aspects of academic activity and student life. Partners and staff involved in collaborative provision are expected to be familiar with and adhere to these relevant policies.

5.1 Admissions

All admissions to University of Greater Manchester awards, including those delivered through collaborative provision, are governed by the University's Admissions Policy. The University will conduct regular checks on admissions standards at partner institutions to ensure that our requirements are being met, maintaining the integrity and consistency of our student intake. This includes procedures for application, selection, and the recognition of prior learning, detailed in the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy. Student enrolment procedures are further outlined in the Student Enrolment Policy.

5.2 Teaching

Partnership provision is monitored through External Examiners, Annual Programme Reviews, and feedback, with outcomes reported to the Partnership Enhancement Panel. Any deficiency triggers action plans or review as per UGM's Academic Regulations. The principles of effective teaching, curriculum design, and student engagement for all University of Greater Manchester programmes, including collaborative provision, are guided by the University's overarching frameworks and policies. To assure teaching quality, the University requires partners to facilitate teaching observations conducted by University staff, ensuring adherence to pedagogical best practices and consistency with University standards. Furthermore, the role of external examiners is crucial in providing independent oversight of teaching quality as part of their broader remit, ensuring comparability and academic rigour. Specific guidance on feedback to students is found in the Policy on Feedback to Students. The UGM will undertake teaching observations of partner colleagues. The University reserves the right to conduct announced and unannounced visits to assure teaching quality, resources, and student experience.

5.3 Learning

The University is committed to fostering a high-quality learning environment for all students. To gather valuable insights and drive continuous improvement, partners are required to implement and report on the findings of module surveys at the end of each teaching block or module. In addition, Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs) must be established and convene at least one per semester to provide a formal mechanism for student feedback, dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving regarding the learning experience. This ensures that student voices are heard and acted upon.

5.4 Assessment

All assessment for University of Greater Manchester awards, whether delivered on campus or through collaborative provision, must strictly comply with the University's Assessment Regulations, ensuring that sectoral and University standards must be met. All assessment briefs, prior to release to students, require internal moderation by the partner and external moderation via the external examiner to confirm their appropriateness and alignment with learning outcomes and marking criteria. Marked work must be returned to students within the periods stipulated in the University's Assessment Regulations, unless otherwise formally agreed and communicated. Any instances of academic misconduct identified in collaborative provision must be reported via the standard University processes, as outlined in the Policy on Academic Misconduct. Procedures for addressing specific assessment issues are also covered by the Policy for Mitigating Circumstances, Policy on Academic Appeals, Policy on Moderation of Assessment, and Policy on Exam Procedures. The Regulations for the Organisation and Conduct of Assessment Boards govern the proper conduct of assessment decision-making.

5.5 Student Support

Partners are responsible for ensuring an equitable student experience for all students on collaborative programmes, as defined by the Office for Students (OfS) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). This means providing access to appropriate academic, pastoral, and administrative support services comparable to those available to on-campus students. The principles underpinning student conduct and support are found in the Student Success Strategy, Student Code of Conduct, and Student Protection Plan. Issues related to student well-being and conduct are addressed in policies such as the Safeguarding Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Policy on Harassment and Bullying, Complaints Procedure, Fitness to Study Policy, and Student Disciplinary Procedure.

6. Compliance and Risk Management

The University of Greater Manchester is committed to ensuring that all collaborative provision meets the requirements of the Office for Students (OfS), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), and any relevant Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). This policy underpins the University's approach to:

- **Regulatory Compliance:** Ensuring that partnership arrangements meet all conditions of registration and regulatory expectations. UGM will comply with all conditions of registration, including OfS Condition E10 on subcontracting. Partnerships shall not violate any UK laws or the CMA's guidance on higher education consumer protection.
- **Risk Identification and Mitigation:** Proactive identification and management of risks associated with partnerships, including academic, financial, reputational, and operational risks, through robust due diligence, clear agreements, and ongoing monitoring. The Off Campus Division will maintain a Partnership Risk Register and perform annual risk reviews.
- **Student Protection:** Implementing the Student Protection Plan to safeguard the interests of students in the event of partnership closure or significant change.
- **Student Outcomes:** The University will monitor continuation, completion, attainment, progression and graduate outcomes across collaborative provision and may require intervention where outcomes fall below institutional expectations or present risks to students.
- **Right of Immediate Intervention:** Where the University considers that there is an immediate risk to students, academic standards, public funding, regulatory compliance or institutional reputation, it may implement immediate intervention measures without first progressing through routine monitoring stages.

- **Single Information Source:** The University will maintain and annually review a Single Information Source (SIS) to ensure full compliance with the minimum requirements of OfS Condition E10.
- **Assurance and Reporting:** The University will produce an annual Report to the Education Committee, incorporating risk register updates, student outcome metrics, and compliance with OfS Condition E10.
- **Access to Information and Verification of Information:** Partners must maintain accurate, complete and accessible records relating to collaborative provision and provide information requested by the University in a timely manner. The University reserves the right to review, inspect, sample, audit and verify information relating to student recruitment, admissions, attendance, assessment, academic standards, student outcomes, complaints, finance and regulatory compliance. Partners are expected to cooperate fully with assurance activity and to address any identified deficiencies promptly. Failure to provide information or facilitate verification activity may result in enhanced monitoring, intervention or other action deemed appropriate by the University.
- **Public Funding and Student Finance Assurance:** The University expects all collaborative partners to operate in a manner that protects public funding, student interests and regulatory compliance. Partners must maintain accurate records relating to recruitment, admissions, attendance, assessment and student engagement and must cooperate fully with assurance activities undertaken by the University. Financial, operational and regulatory risks associated with collaborative provision will be monitored through established governance, risk management and partnership oversight arrangements. Where concerns arise regarding financial sustainability, student finance compliance, student eligibility, student engagement or regulatory risk, the University

may implement enhanced monitoring, corrective actions or other appropriate interventions.

6.1 Recruitment Agents and Third-Party Recruitment

Where partners use recruitment agents or other third parties in connection with collaborative provision, the University expects this activity to be controlled, transparent and capable of audit. Partners must maintain an up-to-date register of agents and related third parties and provide this to the University on request or through the Quality Portal. Agent contracts should be reviewed annually. All marketing, promotional and recruitment materials produced by agents must be reviewed and approved in line with University requirements before use. Partner performance, including student outcomes and any concerns arising from recruitment activity, will be monitored through normal quality assurance and risk processes. Where concerns arise, the University may require enhanced monitoring, additional controls, suspension of recruitment activity or other proportionate intervention to protect students and the University's reputation.

6.2 Enhanced Quality Monitoring

As an outcome of a Partnership Development Meeting (PDM), Annual Review of Partnership Operations (ARPO), a Risk Register entry, audit activity, student outcome monitoring, regulatory concern or other internal or external trigger, the University may implement Enhanced Quality Monitoring (EQM). EQM is a risk-based intervention designed to provide increased oversight where concerns have been identified regarding academic standards, quality assurance, student outcomes, student experience, regulatory compliance, operational effectiveness or institutional risk.

The scope, duration and frequency of EQM activity will be determined by the University and may include additional monitoring meetings, enhanced reporting requirements, increased

sampling activity, targeted audits, action plans or other assurance measures. Where concerns persist, or where sufficient improvement cannot be demonstrated within agreed timescales, the University may initiate a Focused Area Review (FAR) to undertake a more detailed examination of the area(s) of concern.

Failure to demonstrate sustained improvement following a FAR may result in further intervention, including additional monitoring requirements, restrictions on recruitment, suspension of activity or other actions deemed appropriate by the University.

The University reserves the right to recover reasonable costs associated with additional monitoring, investigation or review activity where concerns have arisen as a result of the Partner's actions, omissions or failure to comply with University requirements.

6.3 Conflicts of Interest

Individuals involved in the establishment, oversight, management or review of collaborative provision must declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest. Conflicts must be managed in accordance with University governance requirements and recorded where appropriate. The University reserves the right to exclude individuals from decision-making, monitoring, approval or review activities where a conflict of interest may compromise independence, objectivity or the interests of students.

6.4 Whistleblowing and Protected Disclosures

The University is committed to promoting a culture of openness, integrity and accountability across all collaborative provision. Partners must maintain arrangements that enable staff, students, contractors, agents and other stakeholders to raise concerns regarding actual or suspected wrongdoing, misconduct, regulatory breaches, fraud, academic malpractice, misuse of public funds, risks to students, breaches of consumer protection requirements, safeguarding

concerns, or any matter that may adversely affect academic standards, quality, student outcomes or compliance with regulatory requirements.

Partners must ensure that individuals can raise concerns without fear of detriment, victimisation or retaliation. Concerns may be raised through the partner's own whistleblowing procedures or directly with the University where appropriate.

The University reserves the right to investigate any concern relating to collaborative provision and may require access to relevant information, records, reports and personnel as part of its assurance activities. Concerns raised through whistleblowing arrangements may inform risk assessments, audits, Enhanced Quality Monitoring (EQM), Focused Area Reviews (FAR), regulatory reporting, partnership intervention measures or other assurance activity.

Partners must notify the University promptly of any whistleblowing matter that relates to academic standards, quality assurance, student recruitment, admissions, attendance, assessment, student outcomes, public funding, student finance compliance, regulatory compliance, safeguarding, fraud or any matter that may present a material risk to students, the University or the public interest. Failure to disclose material concerns may result in enhanced monitoring, intervention or other action deemed appropriate by the University.

Partners must maintain appropriate arrangements for identifying, declaring, recording and managing conflicts of interest arising in connection with student recruitment, admissions, assessment, quality assurance, public funding, student finance compliance, contractual arrangements and the use of recruitment agents or other third parties, and must provide evidence of such arrangements to the University upon request.

7. Review of this Policy

The Off Campus Division shall produce an Annual Partnership Assurance Statement for consideration by the Education Committee. The statement will summarise partnership performance, regulatory compliance, student outcomes, risk management activity, audit findings, student protection matters and compliance with the requirements of OfS Condition E10.

The Off Campus Division maintains a central register of all partnerships and agreements. Annual reports on partnership performance (student numbers, complaints, audit findings) will be submitted to the Senate's Education Committee. This Policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner in response to regulatory change, with revisions subject to approval by the Education Committee and Senate.

Partnerships and Collaborative Provision Oversight Policy	
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