Collaborative Arrangements

Checklist

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1. Introduction

Collaborative arrangements are defined by the QAA as ‘learning opportunities leading or contributing to the award of academic credit or a qualification that are delivered, assessed or supported through an arrangement with one or more organisations other than the degree-awarding body’. (2012, p3)¹ There are many different forms of collaborative provision arrangements as well as a range of different types of partner organisation. The risks vary significantly depending on the nature and extent of the collaborative arrangement. For example, collaboration in the provision of learning support and resources can be classified as relatively low risk, whereas validating programmes delivered by a non degree-awarding body is considered higher risk.

CEM currently only undertakes relatively low risk collaboration with other partner organisations. The nature and extent of CEM’s collaborative arrangements are outlined in the CEM Code of Practice chapter on Collaborative Arrangements.

The below checklist is a guide to the areas that should be given consideration before embarking on a collaborative arrangement. The list is not exhaustive but is designed to cover all forms of collaborative arrangements, including those not currently undertaken by CEM. Not all the questions will be appropriate for each type of collaborative provision arrangement.

2. Strategic Assessment (Responsibility: Directorate)

Before pursuing collaborative provision with a new partner, consideration must be given to the following:

2.1 Does the nature and standing of the collaborative partner fit with CEM’s mission and corporate business plan?

2.2 Will this collaboration positively influence CEM’s positioning and extend market reach?

2.3 Does the collaborative partner fit with CEM’s current or proposed academic portfolio?

2.4 Has market research been undertaken to investigate projected student numbers and return on investment?

¹ QAA (2012), UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others Gloucester. QAA.
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2.5 Can the collaborative partner provide CEM students with a high quality learning experience or access to high quality facilities and resources?

2.6 Does CEM have the necessary resources (staff, material, financial) in place to manage the new partnership?

2.7 Does CEM have the financial, legal and management skills required to undertake the collaborative provision?

2.8 Does CEM have the legal capacity to undertake this form of collaborative provision?

2.9 Are there internal policies and procedures in place proportionate to the risks associated with the type of collaborative provision?

3. Risk Assessment (Responsibility: Directorate)

A risk assessment should be carried out for each individual collaborative arrangement and safeguards put in place to mitigate the associated risks identified. The risk assessment should be reviewed periodically. When completing a risk assessment, attention should be given to the following:

3.1 What are the financial risks to CEM of the collaborative arrangement? Has due consideration been given to statutory financial and regulatory obligations in the jurisdiction of the potential collaborative partner?

3.2 Does CEM have relevant internal resources and expertise to approve and monitor the teaching, learning, assessment and support services provided by the collaborative partner?

3.3 Is there adequate provision for the programmes subject to the collaborative arrangement to be delivered through the medium of the English language?

3.4 Does CEM have appropriate financial reserves in order to fulfil any obligations to students if the collaborative provision arrangement fails?

3.5 Does CEM have in place termination and mediation procedures in the event the partnership fails to ensure adequate provisions can be made to support any students affected?

4. Due Diligence (Responsibility: Directorate)

As well as a risk assessment, due diligence enquiries should be undertaken. The due diligence enquiries should be reviewed periodically to check that the other institution is still able to fulfil its assigned role. When undertaking due diligence enquiries thought should be given to the following:

4.1 What is the legal status of the collaborative partner?

4.2 Has consideration been given to the range of business links, other collaborations and ethical interests of the collaborative partner?

4.3 Is the partner recognised or accredited by the relevant authorities in the locality where the provisions are going to be delivered?

4.4 What is the reputation of the collaborative partner? Have quality assurance reports been checked?

4.5 Where the collaborative partner has been engaged in collaborative provision with another UK degree awarding institution, have enquiries been made as to the standing and effectiveness of the proposed partner?

4.6 Is the prospective collaborative partner financially stable?
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4.7 Does the collaborative partner have the appropriate insurance arrangements in respect of responsibilities and liabilities towards students and CEM?

4.8 Does the collaborative partner have the appropriate governance structures, academic and administrative infrastructures, and quality assurance arrangements in place?

4.9 Does the collaborative partner have the appropriate resources (human and material) to effectively discharge the roles and responsibilities agreed?

4.10 Does the collaborative partner have the appropriate academic capacity to effectively discharge the roles and responsibilities agreed?

4.11 Can the collaborative partner provide a safe working environment for students?

4.12 How familiar is the collaborative partner with quality assurance systems in the UK e.g. the QAA?

4.13 Has a visit to the collaborative partner been undertaken, involving meetings with management, teaching staff and students?

4.14 Is the collaborative partner compliant with the promotion of equal opportunities and the elimination of discrimination?

5. Contractual Considerations (Responsibility: Business Development / Academic Quality Unit)

No students should be admitted onto a programme delivered collaboratively until a contractual agreement has been signed by the designated representatives from both institutions. The contractual agreement should set out the rights and obligations of the parties and should be subject to regular monitoring and review.

The following should be considered when drafting a contractual agreement. Legal advice should also be sought on the form and content of the agreement:

5.1 What are the roles, responsibilities, obligations and powers that will be delegated?

5.2 Which regulations and quality assurance processes apply?

5.3 What are the financial arrangements?

5.4 Who will be the designated management point of contact in the collaborating institution?

5.5 What is the role of the external examiners and are the procedures consistent with CEM’s practices?

5.6 What arrangements are in place for ownership of copyright and intellectual property rights?

5.7 What are the legal responsibilities relating to data protection, equality and diversity issues?

5.8 Who will be responsible for producing the quality related information for government bodies and Professional Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)?

5.9 Are serial arrangements², where the collaborative partner undertakes its own collaborative arrangements or assigns powers delegated to it by the degree-awarding body, permitted and if so what conditions apply? Please note that this arrangement is not advisable as it limits CEM’s oversight of its own awards. However, if serial arrangements exceptionally were to be permitted the

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² A serial arrangement is where the collaborative partner of the awarding body enters into its own collaboration with a third party in delivering the awarding bodies awards.
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collaborative partner must request permission in writing before pursuing any other collaborations.

5.10 What are the arrangements governing logo use, development and review of joint marketing information and oversight of information in the public domain?

5.11 Has an obligation been included for the collaborative partner to notify CEM of any changes in legal status?

5.12 Has the legal jurisdiction under which any disputes would be resolved been specified?

5.13 Are there provisions to enable either organisation to suspend or withdraw from the agreement if the other party fails to fulfil its obligations?

5.14 What provisions need to be followed in the event of termination or mediation?

5.15 What are the residual obligations of both parties to students on termination of collaborative arrangements?

6. What are the procedures for amending the agreement, the length of contract and date and mechanism for contract review and renewal?

(Responsibility: Business Development / Academic Quality Unit / Education Department)

CEM must retain a full record of all collaborative arrangements on the central Academic Quality and Enhancement drive. It is CEM’s overall responsibility to ensure the quality and academic standards of all programmes delivered by collaborative provision leading to CEM awards. When managing collaborative arrangements, attention should be given to the following:

6.1 Have relevant PSRBs been notified of proposals for collaborative provisions?

6.2 Has approval been sought by any relevant government bodies within the jurisdiction?

6.3 Have clear roles been set out for CEM staff involved in the collaborative provision arrangement?

6.4 Has a CEM academic point of contact been identified for each programme delivered by collaborative provision?

6.5 Will CEM be involved in the selection of staff involved in the delivery of the collaborative provision?

6.6 What are the admission and examination arrangements for students undertaking the collaborative provision and are they consistent with CEM admission arrangements?

6.7 Has consideration been given to the legal and contractual relationship of the students to CEM?

6.8 Are approval mechanisms in place if the collaborative partner wants to add additional programmes or modules to the existing provision?

6.9 If the collaborative partner is involved in the assessment process, has consideration been given to how CEM can ensure that appropriate standards are maintained and appropriate training, briefing and monitoring is undertaken?

6.10 Has consideration been given to the appointment and monitoring process for external examiners for the courses delivered by collaborative provision?
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6.11 Has attention been given to the approval process for jointly branded course information and marketing material?

6.12 Has consideration been given to the information that will be contained on award certificates and transcripts for the courses delivered by collaborative provision?

6.13 Are mechanisms in place to update the collaborative partner of relevant changes to CEM regulations, policies and procedures?

6.14 Will students who have undertaken an award with a collaborative partner be entitled to attend a CEM graduation?

7. Monitoring Collaborative Arrangements
(Responsibility: Business Development / Academic Quality Unit)

7.1 Are there processes in place to monitor and review the programmes and modules delivered by collaborative provision that are consistent with the provision in place to monitor and review CEM programmes?

7.2 Are there resources (staff and material) in place to support the collaborative partner in preparing the information required for annual monitoring?

7.3 Are there processes in place to monitor and review the reports received from external examiners on the programmes delivered by collaborative provision?

7.4 Are there processes in place to monitor and review feedback from students on courses delivered by collaborative provision?

7.5 Are there procedures in place for when the collaborative partner is not delivering in accordance with the agreed processes and procedures?

8. Periodic Review of Collaborative Arrangements
(Responsibility: Business Development / Academic Quality Unit)

8.1 Have dates been set for the periodic review of collaborative provision arrangements?

8.2 Is there a documented process for the procedure of periodic review of collaborative provision?

8.3 Are there resources (staff and material) in place in order to be able to undertake periodic review of all collaborative arrangements?

9. Summary

This document has been written to support the development of collaborative arrangements. It should be read in conjunction with the CEM Code of Practice on Collaborative Arrangements and the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B10:Managing higher education provision with others 2012..


Before any collaborative arrangements are finalised approval must be sought from CEM Quality Standards and Enhancement committee, CEM Academic Board and CEM Directorate. A formal legal agreement signed by the Principal must be in place prior to the commencement of any form of collaborative arrangement.
Appendix A Benchmarked Policies

Leeds Metropolitan University, Planning and Due Diligence Checklist, May 2012

QAA (2012) UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others., Gloucester. QAA.

The University of Greenwich, Full-cost Partnerships: Guidance Notes for University Staff, Jan 2006.


University of Birmingham, Collaborative Provision Policy, 2012-13

University of Kent, Collaboration Development Criteria Statement of Strategic Benefit: Due Diligence checklist.

University of Salford, Collaborative Provision Procedures.