

Birmingham City University

Policy: The Development and Approval of Joint and Dual Awards

General Considerations: Joint and Dual Awards

Introduction

1. The University adheres to the following principles, in its work with collaborative partners, to deliver University awards and/or credit:
 - i) Retention by the University of the ultimate responsibility for the quality of student learning opportunities and academic standards; and
 - ii) Recognition of the importance of building the capacity of partner institutions for the management of quality and standards.
2. For Dual and Joint awards, the University retains individual responsibility for ensuring that the academic standards and quality of student learning opportunities for its award are maintained, *irrespective of where and by whom they are delivered*.

Definition of Dual and Joint Awards

3. The University adopts the following definitions of Dual and Joint Awards:
 - i) A **Dual Award** refers to an arrangement under which the University, together with another awarding body, provide a single jointly delivered programme (or programmes) leading to separate awards (and separate certification) being granted by both awarding bodies.
 - ii) A **Joint Award** refers to an arrangement under which the University collaborates with one or more degree-awarding bodies to provide a programme leading to a single award made jointly by both, or all, participants. A single certificate or document (signed by the competent authorities) attests to successful completion of this jointly delivered programme, replacing the separate institutional or national qualifications.

Specific Considerations for the Development of Joint Awards

4. *In view of the unique challenges and potential risks posed to the University's academic standards by the delivery of Joint awards, where the University may be considered to be 'pooling' its degree awarding powers with another awarding institution, additional considerations will apply to the approval of such awards by the University.*
5. Approval by the University of a Joint programme and award, will include the additional considerations detailed in this section, when the proposal is considered through the University's prevailing due diligence and collaborative approval processes.
6. The development of Joint awards will only be considered for initial approval by the University's Academic Portfolio Group (APG), of the business case for development, where the following criteria are satisfied, that:
 - i) The University's due diligence process has been fully completed for APG consideration and includes specific reference to the legal capacity of the University and proposed partner to grant academic awards jointly (particularly where this

involves pooling or combining awarding powers granted within different legal jurisdictions) and to enter into an agreement to deliver a joint programme and award;

- ii) In the case of transnational provision, confirmation that the proposal to develop a Joint award is founded upon a national regulatory requirement for the potential partner to do so, and necessary local, or governmental approval, has been received. Any consequences for prospective students, drawn from jurisdictions where there may be limited recognition of the proposed joint award, must also be clarified in the proposal to APG;
- iii) In the case of transnational provision, the national quality assurance arrangements should be stable, resilient and consistent (e.g. the national quality assurance agency/body is formally recognised by the QAA);
- iv) The proposed partner has an existing, long term and successful relationship with the University and has been assessed as capable of providing a stable partnership for the governance, delivery and student experience of joint awards;
- v) The proposal for a joint award is the outcome of a distinctive educational programme that the University and proposed partner are unable to offer individually outside of the proposed partnership, and is based on a fully articulated proposal supporting the case for its development;
- vi) The learning experience is innovative and will be enhanced by genuinely joint development and programme delivery;
- vii) The programme proposal is joint in all aspects, including equal contribution to the development, day-to day management and decision-making in relation to the programme and award;
- viii) Mutual quality assurance arrangements are specified, detailing how the standard quality assurance and governance requirements of the University will be met. Arrangements for the provision of clear and accurate programme material must also be specified; and
- ix) Progression of the proposal to the University's institutional and programme approval process stages, may only occur once APG has confirmed i) to viii) above in relation to the proposal. A full meeting of APG is required to confirm approval of the proposal; approval by Chair's Action will not be permitted.

7. Evidence demonstrating how the above criteria are satisfied must be included within the Faculty's submission to APG.

Joint and Award Characteristics and Requirements

Governance and Academic Oversight

8. Specific governance arrangements must be approved by the University and proposed partner, together with the operational procedures specific to the award of the qualification. Day-to-day programme management must be undertaken jointly and the processes by which this is undertaken are to be set out and agreed as part of the University's approval processes.

9. The joint award qualification must be jointly overseen by the University and partner awarding body. This will be managed by a joint board of studies, established at the point of approval, and which will be accountable to the University's Academic Board and the parallel highest academic authority of the partner institution. The responsibilities of the Joint Board of Studies include approval of any changes to the programme, assessment strategies, appointment of examiners (including external examiners) and proposals for any changes to regulations.
10. Decisions of the Board of Studies require approval by the University through its prevailing academic governance procedures. The University and partner will maintain joint oversight of the academic standards of the award, through the operational academic decision making structures set out at the point of initial approval. *There must be no delegation of the University's responsibilities for the oversight of academic standards and the quality of education provided.*

Academic Regulations Governing Joint Awards

11. The University and proposed partner degree-awarding bodies will jointly determine the academic regulations that will govern the award of the joint qualification. In certain circumstances bespoke regulations may be agreed and approved by the University and partner, ensuring that the academic standards of the University and partner degree-awarding body will be secured. The requirements of the University may be exceeded in certain instances, to take account of a particular partner's requirements, but may never be compromised. The specific regulations governing the award require approval by Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC) and Academic Board.

The Approval of a Joint Award Programme

12. A Joint Award programme will be approved through a single approval process involving representation from the University and partner awarding body, including the approval of all programme modules. The standard approval processes of the University must operate, with additionality as required by the partner awarding body. The University retains responsibility for determining whether the proposed programme holistically delivers and tests programme outcomes at the appropriate level for the award. This includes detailed consideration of the assessment strategy. The University maintains oversight of the academic standards of the programme at the point of approval and in delivery.

Assessment Strategy

13. The University will be responsible for the assessment of modules of the programme that it delivers. A holistic view of the assessment strategy is taken at the point of approval and, in delivery, by the Joint Board of Studies that oversees the programme. In particular, a decision is made about whether a single marking scheme will be adopted and a single set of assessment regulations. These must be agreed in line with University and partner requirements at the point of programme approval and must adhere, wherever practically possible, to the University's standard assessment regulations.

Examination and Assessment Boards

14. A joint, bespoke, examination board will be established to oversee progression through the programme and final award of a qualification. Assessment decisions are taken by the examination board, which conforms to the requirements of the University and

partner awarding body. The decisions of the Joint Examination and Assessment Board require approval, through the University's assessment approval procedures for award outcomes, in force at the time of consideration. The partner awarding body requirements for approval of assessment decisions, made by examination boards, will also be observed by the University.

External Examining

15. The University's requirements for external examination of the award must be observed and there will be consideration and agreement of any additional requirements to satisfy the requirements of the partner awarding body. Joint or dual external examiner appointments may be considered through the University's standing external examiner approval process. The University's external examining arrangements apply to individual programme modules and also, holistically, to the award of the joint qualification.

Annual Monitoring and Periodic Review

16. The University agrees the monitoring and review procedures to be adopted to satisfy requirements of the University. This may involve additionality but will not compromise the minimum requirements of the University's Annual Monitoring and Periodic Review processes, which will operate for the Joint Award. All outcomes from annual monitoring and periodic review will be reported, via the University's standard processes, and the outcomes shared with the partner institution.

Award Certification and Transcripts

17. On successful completion of a Joint Award programme, a student receives a single award certificate and transcript, which lists the title of the qualification, as recognised in all of the legal frameworks of the University and partner awarding body.
18. Where a single certificate is awarded for a Joint Award the University will retain production of all award certification agreeing the processes for the secure storage and usage of the partner institution logo, holographs and authorising signatures.

Specific Considerations and Requirements for the Development of Dual Awards

Characteristics of Dual Awards

19. Each award within the Dual award programme has a separate awarding body but, two award components, which form a single programme that may require some elements of joint management and oversight. A Dual award programme is therefore developed with two subsets of learning outcomes and assessment criteria, to achieve two independent qualifications.

Due Diligence and Initial Approval by Academic Portfolio Group (APG)

20. A full meeting of APG is required to confirm approval of the proposal for a Dual award. Approval by Chair's Action will not be permitted. The following criteria will be considered by APG, that:
 - i) The University's due diligence processes have been fully completed, during which there has been specific consideration, of the legal capacity of the

University and proposed partner to enter into an agreement to deliver a dual award programme;

- ii) In the case of transnational provision, there is confirmation that there is no bar in the relevant jurisdiction, to the development and delivery of a dual award qualification programme and that all required local approvals have been received;
- iii) In the case of transnational provision, the applicable national quality assurance arrangements are stable, resilient and consistent to support dual award programme delivery;
- iv) Sufficient additionality is demonstrated within the proposed programme to warrant the granting of dual awards to students, on successful completion of the programme;
- v) The proposed partner has been assessed as capable of providing stable management, staffing and resource arrangements for the governance, delivery and student experience of the programme leading to dual awards;
- vi) Quality assurance arrangements are specified in detail, concerning how the standard quality assurance and governance requirements of the University will be met. Arrangements for the provision and approval of clear, consistent and accurate programme material must also be specified. The University must retain approval of all publicity material;
- vii) Progression of the proposal to the University's institutional and programme approval process stages, may only occur once APG has duly confirmed approval of the proposal and that due diligence has been completed; and
- viii) Evidence demonstrating how the additional criteria for the dual award programme are satisfied, must be included within the Faculty's submission for approval of the programme.

Governance and Academic Oversight

- 21. *The University's extant processes of governance, academic oversight, programme approval, programme delivery, regulations, assessment, external examining, monitoring and review apply equally to Dual Awards. The statements within this policy are additional considerations.*
- 22. Specific governance arrangements must be approved by the University and proposed partner, together with the operational procedures specific to the award of dual qualifications. Normally some aspects of day-to-day programme management are undertaken jointly. The processes by which this operates to effectively manage the student experience of the programme, should be set out and agreed as part of the University's approval processes.
- 23. The Dual award qualifications are, in the case of the University award, awarded by the University. The partner awarding body awards the second qualification. It is recommended that a joint board of studies, is established at the point of approval, which will be accountable to the University's Academic Board and the parallel highest academic authority of the partner institution. The responsibilities of the Joint Board of Studies include approval of any changes to the programme, assessment strategies,

appointment of examiners (including external examiners) and proposals for any changes to regulations.

24. Decisions of the Board of Studies require approval by the University through its current academic governance procedures. The University maintains oversight of the academic standards of the University award, through the operational academic decision making structures set out at the point of initial approval. There may be no delegation of the University's responsibilities for the oversight of academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities provided by the programme.

University Approval and Academic Regulations Governing Dual Awards

25. At the point of approval, the University approval panel will satisfy itself that the programme, holistically, offers sufficient additionality to warrant the award of dual qualifications and confirm that it is legally permissible for the University and partner to do so.
26. A minimum of one third of the credit contributing to the University award must be taught and assessed by the University.
27. The responsibility for the award of the University's qualification and its academic standards remain with the University and cannot be shared or delegated with a partner institution. The University approval panel will therefore:
- i) Ensure through University approval processes, the outcome of which is considered by ASQEC and Academic Board, that the academic standards of both (dual) programme awards meet the expectations of the UK Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ);
 - ii) Confirm that sufficient additionality is demonstrated in the curricula and assessment of the proposed programme to warrant the granting of dual awards to students, on successful completion of the programme.
 - iii) Confirm that students may not double-count credit awarded for successfully completed modules and for credit transfer and accumulation purposes;
 - iv) Verify through the University's programme approval process, that the assessment requirements for both awards are mapped, clearly prescribed, adhere to University regulations and are robust. Particular attention will be given, at the point of approval, to the clarity of dual award learning, teaching and assessment information for stakeholders, prospective applicants and students;
 - v) Establish and approve the processes for the development and approval of programme information for publication; and
 - vi) Ensure that the rights and responsibilities of students, are clearly and consistently stated in agreement with the partner.
28. Where a proposal for the development of a dual award is being considered by the University, and a programme/award that will form part of the dual award is already being offered by the partner institution, the Faculty and partner will be made aware of the implications of the University approval of a programme that is already being offered as an award by the partner institution. University programme approval panels will have the right to request that programme and content changes are made to the provision

under validation, which may have a consequent impact on the programme/award offered by the partner institution.

29. The University will be responsible for the assessment of modules that it delivers. A decision will be made at the point of approval about whether a single marking scheme will be adopted and a single set of assessment regulations, stipulating the requirements of both awarding bodies for their respective awards.

Examination and Assessment Boards

30. A University Examination Board will be established to oversee progression through the programme and final award of the University qualification. Assessment decisions are taken by an Examination Board, which conforms to the requirements of the University. Partner awarding body requirements and arrangements for approval of assessment decisions, outside the scope of the University award, will also be observed by the University. A single schedule of assessment activity and all Examination Boards for the programme will be produced and agreed for approval purposes.

External Examining

31. The University's requirements for External Examination of the award must be observed and there will be consideration and agreement of any additional requirements to satisfy the requirements of the partner awarding body. Dual External Examiner appointments are considered through the University's standing External Examiner approval process. The University's External Examiner arrangements apply to individual programme modules and also, to the University award for the programme. All outcomes from External Examiner Reports will be considered via the University's standard processes and the outcomes shared with the partner institution.

Annual Monitoring and Periodic Review

32. The University agrees the monitoring and review procedures, to be adopted to satisfy requirements of the University, for a dual award programme. This will not compromise the minimum requirements of the University's Annual Monitoring and Periodic Review processes, which will operate for the Dual Award programme. All outcomes from annual monitoring and periodic review will be reported via the University's standard processes and the outcomes shared with the partner institution.

Award Certification and Transcripts

33. Students receive award certificates from each of the degree-awarding bodies for the programme. In this instance the University award certificate, transcript or diploma supplement, must clearly refer to the other partner and state clearly that the programme is a single, joint programme of study and assessed learning, which leads to more than one separate qualification. Wherever legally permissible, the same reference to the University is included on the documents issued by the other degree-awarding body.
34. The degree classification scheme for the partner award must be equivalent to that stipulated by University regulations, consistent with the FHEQ and any requirements of the partner jurisdiction. The title of dual degree awards should be consistent with each other. The University approval panel should consider and confirm consistency with the FHEQ and of the dual award titles.

Dual and Joint Awards Programme Information

35. The University will retain rights of approval of all programme information and will ensure clarity for stakeholders, prospective applicants and students. Communications must be jointly agreed with the partner institution.

Dual and Joint Awards External Reference Points

36. When considering the development of joint or dual awards, Faculties and programme teams are advised to take account of the following external reference points:

- [QAA UK Quality Code – Chapter B10 \(Working with others\)](#)
- [QAA Characteristics Statement \(Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body\)](#)