

## Guidance for Renewal of PGR Collaborative Partnerships



### **PGR PARTNERSHIP REVIEW AND RENEWAL**

#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1. The main purpose of the review process is to assess the continued suitability of the partnership and the programmes delivered under the arrangement. The Review Panel is tasked with determining whether the partnership remains in alignment with the strategic aims of the University of Liverpool, and continues to be of benefit. It should be an in-depth evaluation of the partner organisation's on-going ability to manage the academic standards and quality of provision leading to a University of Liverpool award.
- 1.2. The Panel will review the relationship between the University of Liverpool and the partner with regards to operational and quality assurance matters making specific reference to external quality assurance requirements and to University of Liverpool policies and procedures.
- 1.3. The Review may also provide the opportunity for the panel to appraise the academic provision to enable revalidation of the academic programmes and, where relevant, the completion and submission of any returns to Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies.
- 1.4. The University of Liverpool, through its own monitoring, review and enhancement processes, and regular scrutiny of those at its collaborative partnership organisations, is committed to providing an equitable student experience for all students, regardless of the location or mode of delivery.

#### **2. Rationale for Renewal and Faculty Level Endorsement**

- 2.1 The Academic Lead for the PGR partnership must first complete an application for consideration of its renewal, outlining the rationale for continuing the relationship, evaluating the success of the arrangement and indicating if there are any resource implications.
- 2.2 The application requires the endorsement of the relevant Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Faculty Director of PGR, in order to confirm that the PGR partnership arrangement continues to be supported by the Faculty.
- 2.3 If any significant issues or major changes since the last Institutional Review are identified, these will be highlighted by AQSD and reported to the Due Diligence Panel (DDP) for consideration, prior to any review activity taking place. The role of the DDP is to either endorse the commencement of renewal activity, request further information or, in rare cases where it is determined that the student experience, the awards made in the University's name, or the University's reputation is at risk, it may reject instigating any review and recommend the PGR partnership is not renewed. In this instance, a report would be compiled and submitted to the Senior Executive Group for approval. An Exit Strategy will be negotiated to ensure fulfilment of UoL's obligations to the students.

### **3. Mechanisms for Review**

- 3.1 The approach to the review and renewal of a collaborative arrangement is dependent on the level of risk and the maturity of the partnership. Partnerships that are relatively new, or are perceived to be of high risk, may require an Institutional Visit. Established or low risk arrangements can be assessed via a Desk-Based review. Both mechanisms involve a Panel of senior UoL academic and professional services staff, as well as external and student representation. The Panel is responsible for evaluating the appropriateness of the partnership and making a recommendation with regards to its renewal on the basis of the evidence available. Any costs associated with carrying out the review process will be met by the relevant Programme Management Team.
- 3.2 The normal mechanism for renewal of the different categories of PGR partnerships is indicated on the Taxonomy of PGR Collaborative Provision. Where the Taxonomy states that *either* a visit or desk-based review may be used, a decision on the appropriate method shall be made by the Director of the Academic Quality and Standards Division, in consultation with the relevant Programme Management Team and the Due Diligence Panel where required.

### **4. Membership of Review Panels**

- 4.1. Reviews will be carried out by a panel from the University and include the following membership:
- Faculty Director of PGR or nominee (Chair to the Panel);
  - The Director of the Academic Quality and Standards Division or nominee;
  - A senior academic member of staff external to the School(s)/Institutes directly associated with the partner
  - An External Adviser (a member of academic staff from a UK higher education institute with relevant PGR expertise)
  - A sabbatical officer of the Liverpool Guild of Students
  - PGR Quality Officer (Secretary to the Panel)

For desk-based review activity the External Adviser is normally expected to submit written feedback to the appropriate Quality Officer in advance of the review event for consideration by the Panel. If an Institutional visit is required, the External Adviser may be asked to attend in person if required.

- 4.2 In addition, other appropriate University of Liverpool staff may be in attendance, either in person or by video conferencing to advise the Panel on PGR or professional accreditation matters.

### **5. Arrangements Prior to Review**

- 5.1. The Academic Quality and Standards Division will be responsible for making the necessary arrangements prior to the Review. This will include:
- Requesting all necessary documentation (see section 6 below) from the partner at least two months before the Review and circulating these to the panel members at least four weeks before the event;
  - Circulating a draft agenda and itinerary for the Review to the panel and the partner four weeks before the event;

- Where a visit is required, making all travel arrangements to include flights, taxis, accommodation and travel visas (where necessary);
- Arranging a meeting of the panel at least two weeks before the visit to (external members will be invited to join via videoconferencing):
  - Discuss the documentation received from the partner and agree issues to be further explored;
  - Confirm the roles of each panel member;
  - Confirm the travel arrangements (where relevant);
  - Confirm the agenda/itinerary;
  - Confirm any dietary or individual requirements of panel members;
- Confirming all arrangements with the partner after the meeting of the panel.

## 6. Required Documentation

6.1. In order to inform the agenda and areas of questioning at the review event, the following documentation should be requested from the partner at least two months in advance. This should be provided in electronic format wherever possible.

- A Self Evaluation Document completed in collaboration with the partner and the UoL Academic Lead;
- Documentation confirming the strategic plan and mission of the partner;
- Documentation confirming the governance arrangements and organisational structure of the partner;
- Confirmation of the legal status of the partner;
- Confirmation of the financial status of the partner to include published accounts/Annual Report;
- Reports from relevant funding or external quality agencies, including Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation where applicable;
- Human Resources information to include;
  - (i) a list of key staff involved in the PGR partnership and their level of qualification and/or professional experience, and
  - (ii) staff development strategy
- Documentation confirming policies and procedures to include diversity and equality, academic and non-academic regulations, student support and IT;
- Policies and procedures to assure the quality and standards of academic provision, including student feedback and evaluation;
- Programme documentation relevant to the programmes being considered as part of the PGR partnership to include Annual Monitoring and External Examiner reports;
- Relevant student handbooks;
- Management information such as student recruitment, retention and achievement data;
- Confirmation of any other institutions that the partner is already in partnership with or has been in partnership with over the past five years;
- Previous Agreements with the University of Liverpool.

Documentation must include a list of contents and be submitted either as a single PDF or organised into a coherent file structure.

## 7. Institutional Visits

- 7.1. Institutional Visits take place over a specified period of time, usually one to three days, depending on the size and complexity of the partnership. The following meetings should be included:
- Welcome and introductions;
  - Tour of facilities to include library, IT facilities, laboratory or other specialist facilities (as appropriate), study spaces, social and recreational facilities and student support facilities;
  - Meeting with a representative sample of current students;
  - Meetings with senior management regarding the aims of the visit, the strategy and mission of the proposed partner and rationale for the PGR partnership;
  - Meetings with key academics regarding quality assurance and resources;
  - Meetings with key support staff regarding the student experience and student support.
- 7.2. It is also important to ensure that adequate refreshment breaks and private panel meetings are built into the timetable.
- 7.3. The following areas should be covered during the Visit, with Panel Members assigned specific areas on which to focus:
- Research Environment
  - Management of PGR Provision
  - Staff Engagement
  - Quality and Enhancement Management
  - Student Engagement
- 7.4. The timetable for the visit will be determined at the meeting of the panel at least two weeks before the visit and should be informed by the documentation provided in advance of the visit.

## **8. Desk-Based Review**

- 8.1 Once documentation is received, the secretary to the panel will collate and circulate this to Panel members for an electronic pre-review stage. This is an initial critical read of the paperwork, to establish any lines of enquiry or issues, request additional evidence where necessary and familiarise themselves with the PGR partnership arrangement.
- 8.2 Feedback from the Panel will be submitted, using a template form, to the PGR Quality Officer, who will produce a summary of responses. This summary will be shared with the Panel, the relevant UoL departments and to the partner to allow any matters for immediate clarification to be resolved. The feedback will also form the basis of an indicative agenda.
- 8.3 Where possible, a video-conference with students will be arranged. If required, for example if there were significant concerns identified during the meetings, or if further clarification is required, a separate video-conference meeting with senior management at the partner can be arranged at a later date. The following areas should be covered during the Review Events:
- Research Environment
  - Management of PGR Provision
  - Staff Engagement
  - Quality and Enhancement Management
  - Student Engagement

8.4 Desk-Based Review meetings should include, wherever practicable, sessions with appropriate members of staff, both academic and professional services, from UoL and the partner. These meetings may be conducted via videoconference.

## **9. Possible Outcomes**

- 9.1 The Panel can reach the following conclusions, for recommendation to Senate:
- i. To renew the PGR partnership (with or without recommendations)
  - ii. To renew the PGR partnership, subject to conditions
  - iii. To not renew the PGR partnership, and negotiate exit arrangements for students, to enable them to complete their named award.
- 9.2 The Panel should also highlight any areas for commendation.

## **10. Following the Review**

- 10.1 The secretary to the panel will be responsible for providing a review report. The report should be drafted within two weeks of the event and circulated first to the Chair for comment, then to the rest of the panel members. Once the report has been approved by panel members it should be forwarded to the partner for comment regarding the accuracy of the report.
- 10.2 The Programme Management Team is responsible for the completion of an action plan, based on the template provided in consultation with the partner. The completed action plan should be forwarded to the Secretary for submission, along with the Institutional Review report, and a recommendation as to whether the partnership should be renewed, for consideration at the next available meeting of the PGR Committee (PGRC).
- 10.3 Once the draft report has been endorsed by the panel and the partner this should be submitted to the next available meeting of the PGR Committee, with a recommendation as to whether the PGR partnership should be renewed.
- 10.4 If approved by PGRC the recommendation is forwarded to Senate for final approval. The secretary to the panel will contact the partner to confirm the decision of Senate and AQSD will arrange the drafting of any necessary agreements.
- 10.5 Any expenses incurred by members of the panel as part of an Institutional Visit should be submitted to the secretary of the panel.

## Annex 1

### INSTITUTIONAL VISIT REPORT

The following issues should be explored as part of the Review and should subsequently be evidenced in the Visit Report presented to PGRC:

1. Background
  - When the visit took place;
  - The purpose of the visit;
  - Details of the renewal – i.e. the programmes/subject areas involved and the nature of the partnership
  - Rationale for the development or continued involvement in the PGR partnership;
  - History/profile/reputation of the partner.
2. Panel
  - List of panel members involved in the visit.
3. Process
  - Append the timetable for the visit (if available) and a list of documentation provided by the partner prior to the visit.
4. Details of meetings<sup>1</sup>
  - a. Tour of facilities
    - What facilities are available?
    - Were all facilities available to tour as part of the visit?
    - Are the facilities adequate / appropriate for the requirements of the PGR partnership?
    - Are the library facilities adequate /appropriate?
    - Are the IT facilities sufficient?
    - Do laboratory facilities meet health and safety requirements? What Health and Safety training do students receive?
    - Do facilities meet diversity and equality requirements?
    - Are the study spaces adequate? Are these spaces suitably equipped?
    - Have the facilities changed since any previous visits? Have these changes been communicated to the University?
    - Any other information available.
  - b. Meeting with students
    - What are the students' overall impressions of the partner?
    - Do students feel adequately supported during their studies – academically and pastorally?
    - Do students have access to adequate resources?
    - Were students adequately inducted into the partner's provision?
    - Are students able to access relevant information – i.e. pre-arrival information, student handbooks etc.?
    - How does student representation operate?

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<sup>1</sup> The questions included here are indicative and should not be treated as an exhaustive list

- Do students have any concerns they wish to raise?
- Do students wish to flag any areas of good practice?
- Do students understand the nature of the relationship between the partner and UoL?
- Any other information available.

c. Research Environment, Management of PGR Provision

- What opportunities are there for students to mix with other research staff or students?
- What learning and resources tools are available?
- What opportunities are there for students to develop peer support networks?
- Are students given guidance on the ethical pursuit of research and avoidance of research misconduct?
- How are students' skills/ training needs identified and reviewed?
- Are research students involved in teaching opportunities?
- Are students encouraged to publish?
- What arrangements are in place to train and monitor performance of supervisors?
- How are supervisor workloads managed?
- How is off-site supervision managed?

d. Staff Engagement (Meeting with senior management)

- What is the strategy and mission of the partner and how does this fit with the University of Liverpool's strategic aims?
- What is the marketing and recruitment strategy for the PGR partnership? Has this changed since establishing the partnership?
- Is the financial arrangement already in place sufficient? Does this require further consideration?
- Staffing issues – are there sufficient appropriately qualified academic and support staff to support the PGR partnership?
- Does the partner have policies relating to staff development, health and safety, equality and diversity etc.?
- Are there any cultural differences which need to be considered in maintaining the PGR partnership?
- Are there any issues relating to equality and diversity to be considered in maintaining the PGR partnership?
- How can the University of Liverpool and the partner ensure an equitable student experience for all students regardless of location?
- Any other information available.

e. Meeting with key academics

- Does the partner have formal quality assurance procedures and processes in place and who is responsible for managing and monitoring these?
- Does the partner meet the expectations and requirements of external UK quality assurance requirements?
- Is there an overall strategy relating to complaints, student progress, academic appeals, feedback to students etc.?
- Does the partner comply with the University of Liverpool quality procedures and how is this evidenced?

- How are changes to processes discussed and approved with the University of Liverpool?
- How are the views of students sought?
- What are the entry requirements for entry to the partner programme?
- What are the arrangements for the selection of students?
- How is the quality of supervision assured and enhanced?
- Are staff at the partner organisation able to deliver supervision in the English language (where applicable?)
- Any other information available.

f. Meeting with key support staff

- What are the pastoral and welfare support mechanisms available to students?
- Is there a careers advice service?
- Is there adequate support for students with additional needs?
- What is the induction process for students?
- Any other information available.

g. Quality and Enhancement Management

- Does the partner have formal quality assurance procedures and processes in place and who is responsible for managing and monitoring these?
- Does the partner meet in-country expectations of external quality assurance agencies?
- Does the partner meet the expectations of external UK quality assurance requirements?
- Does the partner comply with the University of Liverpool quality procedures and how is this evidenced? How are changes to programmes/ quality processes discussed and approved with the University of Liverpool?
- Any other information available.

h. Student Engagement

- How effective are the mechanisms for recruitment, selection and induction?
- Are students made aware of the routes available for complaints and appeals?
- What are the pastoral and welfare support mechanisms available to students?
- Is there adequate support for students with additional educational needs?
- Do students have representation on institutional committees?
- How are the views of students sought?
- How can the University of Liverpool and the partner ensure an equitable student experience for all students regardless of location?

i. Any other meetings

5. Conclusions and recommendations

- Provide a recommendation to PGRC as to whether the PGR partnership should be renewed.
- List any areas where there are concerns regarding the partner
- List any areas of good practice to highlight regarding the partner
- List any issues which require further consideration in renewing the PGR partnership.



## Annex 2

### DESK-BASED REVIEW REPORT

The following areas should be explored as part of a Desk-Based Review and should subsequently be evidenced in the Review Report presented to PGRC:

#### 1. Background

- When and where the event took place;
- The purpose of the Review;
- Details of the renewal – i.e. the programmes/subject areas involved and the nature of the partnership;
- Rationale for the development or continued involvement in the PGR partnership;
- History/profile/reputation of the partner.

#### 2. Panel

List of panel members involved in the review.

#### 3. Process

Append the agenda for the Review and a list of documentation provided by the partner prior to the review meeting.

#### 4. Research Environment, Management of PGR Provision

Including: research culture; evaluation of skills/ training needs; employability strategies; appointment, mentoring and training of supervisors; complaints and appeals.

#### 5. Staff Engagement

Including: induction, training, development and mentoring of new staff.

#### 6. Quality and Enhancement Management

Including: monitoring; review; external examining; monitoring/ review systems; student and supervisor feedback.

#### 7. Student Engagement

Including: recruitment, selection and induction; student support; student engagement and feedback; progress and examination.

#### 8. Conclusions and recommendations

- Provide a recommendation to PGRC as to whether the PGR partnership should be renewed.
- List any areas where there are concerns regarding the partner
- List any areas of good practice to highlight regarding the partner
- List any issues which require further consideration in renewing the PGR partnership.