

Guidelines for Collaborative Provision Quality Assurance

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and Quality Unit

Issue 13



University College Birmingham

GUIDELINES FOR COLLABORATIVE PROVISION QUALITY ASSURANCE Issue 13

Introduction

Collaborative partner institutions, colleges and schools undergo a rigorous initial assessment to determine their ability and suitability to deliver the agreed programme of study for which University College Birmingham (UCB) has awarding body authority or which has been developed and validated by UCB. The assessment process is a planned and detailed investigation to ensure the applicant institution, college or provider is capable of ensuring the quality of the student experience and maintaining strict academic standards in relation to the chosen programme (Refer to the Collaborative Provision Procedure).

The collaborative proposal is considered initially by the Collaborative Provision Working Group (CPWG) and may then be forwarded for evaluation and consideration at a meeting of the UCB Validation and Approvals Committee, which will be convened with an appropriate membership to assess the basis of the application (Refer to the Validation and Approvals Procedure). The Validation and Approvals Committee will review the 'Quality Assessment Visit Report', which details the outcomes of the UCB investigation into the suitability of the applicant Institution. Every collaborative provision agreement will be time constrained and subject to a review and re-validation process at set intervals, usually annually or as determined by the Validation and Approvals Committee of UCB.

Approved collaborative partners must be monitored to ensure that standards are maintained and the good name of UCB as a high quality provider of educational programmes is not compromised. Students on the collaborative programme must, as far as possible, experience a similar quality of experience as if they were studying at UCB.

The responsibility for monitoring the quality of this third party programme delivery and ensuring that standards are being maintained rests clearly with UCB and its Senior Management. The Academic Quality, Standards and Enhancement Committee will receive and review Quality Assessment Visit Reports on each of the collaborative programmes and will report and make recommendations to the Academic Board on the progress of the collaborative arrangements and the integrity of collaborative provision.

The Liaison Manager

UCB will identify a Liaison Manager who will be the primary contact for collaborative partners in issues relating to quality monitoring and quality reporting visits. The primary mechanism for assessing and monitoring the quality and progress of the collaborative programme at the partner institution is the 'Quality Assessment Visit.'

The Liaison Manager will liaise with the collaborative partner or school programme contact on all matters relating to the quality and progress of the collaborative programme. The Liaison Manager will provide or organise advice and guidance sessions and provide the collaborative partners with the necessary paperwork and support mechanisms to enable the effective delivery and assessment of the programme.

The requirement for Quality Assessment Visits shall normally be two visits each year. The dates of each visit will be determined by the Liaison Manager in consultation with the collaborative institution, school or trainer programme contact so as to be mutually convenient to both institutions. Consideration should be given to the availability of students at the collaborative institution, school or trainer as the Quality Assessment Visit should wherever possible include meetings with students on the collaborative programme. On occasions, unannounced Quality Assessment Visits may be conducted at the discretion of the Liaison Manager and Director of Quality Systems. However, consideration will be made as to the availability of staff, students and teaching to maximise the effectiveness of each visit.

The Liaison Manager will inform the Director of Quality Systems of the dates of Quality Assessment Visits and discuss any concerns or ongoing issues before or after the visit takes place. The Director of Quality Systems may accompany the Liaison Manager on a collaborative provision Quality Assessment visit.

During the Quality Assessment Visit, the Liaison Manager is a representative of UCB and has the delegated authority of the Vice Chancellor & Principal of UCB in carrying out his/her duties.

The Liaison Manager will use the Quality Assessment Report form to record details and outcomes of the visit. Copies of this form are available from the Director of Quality Systems. The draft Quality Assessment Report should be completed within 14 working days of the Quality Assessment Visit and forwarded to the Director of Quality Systems. On approval, the Liaison Manager will forward copies of the completed form as follows:

The Collaborative Institution -

The Centre Principal
The Centre Programme Contact

University College Birmingham -

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning)
The Executive Dean of School
The Deputy Dean (Quality and Student Experience)
The Director of Quality Systems
The Relationship Manager

In addition, the Liaison Manager will present the outcomes of his/her report at the next available meeting of the Academic Quality, Standards and Enhancement Committee.

The Liaison Manager will report to the School Relationship Manager in matters regarding the progress and performance of the collaborative programme and delivering institution. The Relationship Manager will normally be the Head of Department or Deputy Dean from the School delivering and assessing the programme at UCB and will have the responsibility of overseeing the progress of the collaborative programme and supporting module delivery as necessary.

The Liaison Manager will advise the Relationship Manager on matters relating to appropriate support strategies to maintain expected academic standards regarding the delivery and assessment of the collaborative programme. For example, UCB subject and module specialists may be needed to train staff from the collaborative institution and/or to provide appropriate materials to facilitate delivery and assessment.

Guidelines for Quality Assessment Visits

The Liaison Manager will use the headings within the Quality Assessment Report form to provide a guide to the structure of the visit to the collaborative institution. Wherever possible, the Liaison Manager will clarify with the collaborative institution programme contact, the details of the documentary evidence that must to be made available and the requirement for meetings with students and staff relevant to the collaborative programme.

The quality criteria for visits fall within the four broad areas of, Quality Assurance and Control, Resources, Learning, and Assessment. The objective is to ensure as far as practicable, that the programme is being delivered at a level of quality and to an academic standard comparable to that at UCB and that collaborative agreements and standards are being honoured and maintained.

Marketing information must be reviewed to confirm that the programme is marketed with integrity and that the status of the programme as a collaborative programme from UCB is clear.

Whenever possible, and at least once a year, the quality assessment visit will include observation of teaching or training delivery and unannounced visits may form part of the monitoring process.

The Liaison Manager must address, within the four headings, the following issues and satisfy him/herself that they meet the required standards in design, delivery, review and quality improvement. Wherever possible documentary evidence such as reports, minutes of meetings, written reviews, action plans and policies for example, will be reviewed and assessed.

1. Quality Assurance and Control

“There is a clear commitment to assuring and improving the quality of the programme and student experience”

- a) Identify the systems for assuring the quality of the programme and how they work. Are they working in practice? They must result in at least an evaluative annual quality report or review.
- b) Review the College or School Charter. How often is the Charter reviewed? Is there a student complaints/grievance procedure (are students aware of it)?
- c) Systems should include a formal organisational system of meetings involving staff and students which address issues of programme quality and report to a senior committee and/or the Principal or senior manager (academic structure of Programme Boards, Academic Board for example).
- d) Student opinion should be formally sought through a structured system of surveys and involvement in meetings in addition to support mechanisms such as tutorials and guidance and support sessions.
- e) Are students aware their programme is a collaborative programme from UCB and they have the right to complain or to comment to the Director of Quality Systems at UCB with regard to their experience? Where possible however, students should refer to the complaints and appeals systems within the collaborative college or school in the first instance.
- f) Do programme staff have formal meetings? How does the system of communication work?
- g) Is the programme subject to other internal quality audit? What are the outcomes?
- h) Do the systems result in action planning with named responsibilities and timescales for completion? Does action take place to improve quality?
- i) How are the outcomes reported to management?
- j) Are there quality control procedures for assessment practice? Look for second marking policy/practice and completed internal verification forms.
- k) What are the systems for arranging and monitoring student work placement? Are they appropriate (risk assessed for example)? Do they provide sufficient support?
- l) Is there a policy for equal opportunities and systems for implementing and monitoring the policy?

2. Resources

“Resources are provided and maintained at a level to support the programme”

- a) Monitor the staff delivering the programme. If new staff teach on the programme, check CVs for appropriate qualifications and experience. Are there sufficient staff of sufficient expertise to maintain teaching standards? You may wish to ask for the CVs of staff teaching on the programme to be made available each visit and to be informed of proposed changes.

- b) Have staff attended any recent development events, updating or relevant industrial experience? What is the staff development expenditure/budget and are there training plans for staff teaching on the programme? How are training needs identified? Do staff have the relevant assessor awards, where appropriate?
- c) Monitor the physical resources allocated to the programme, such as teaching rooms (theory and practical), support facilities (Library, study support, IT, careers advice, student support, refectory, sports and recreation facilities for example). Are they of acceptable quality? What are the opinions of students?

3. Learning

“There is a clear commitment to ensuring that learning is adequately supported and relevant to the working environment”.

- a) Are employability skills integrated and developed within the programme where appropriate?
- b) Are learning experiences relevant to current work practice within the sector?
- c) Do the programme team maintain close links with Industry (Industrial Liaison Boards, visits to Industry by staff and students, and visiting speakers for example)?
- d) Is relevant learning support available to meet the needs of individual students (access to and availability of support systems such as academic support)?
- e) Observation of learning in theory and practical sessions? Implications for teaching and delivery.

4. Assessment

“The assessment of the programme is carried out in accordance with the published requirements”

- a) Are clear and appropriate criteria for assessment specified? Are students informed of them?
- b) Are assessment methods appropriate to the range of learning outcomes and matched to the underpinning skills and knowledge developed in the programme? Are assessments of the appropriate level to assess learning and the achievement of credit?
- c) Do assignment briefs provide students with the aims, objectives and marking criteria for the task set?
- d) Is students’ work assessed using marking criteria and systems/methods approved for the programme? Is there appropriate feedback on assessed work to inform the student of reasons for the mark awarded and of further work that would have increased the given mark?
- e) Are student records of assessment kept and outcomes tracked?
- f) Is there an open and fair assessment appeals procedure available to students? Are students aware of it?
- g) Is recognition given to prior learning and achievement, including APL policy, procedures and records?

- h) Are alternative methods of assessment available, where appropriate, for students requiring special support?

The Liaison Manager will verify at each visit, the names and numbers of students on the collaborative programme. The reasons for any withdrawals will be sought and all information concerning student enrolment, withdrawal, and associated documentation will be passed to the Deputy Registrar at UCB subject to the contractual collaborative agreement.

Where systems are not in place or are deemed to be inadequate or inappropriate, the Liaison Manager will require the collaborative institution, school or trainer to implement such procedures, or to adopt, or use as a model, the relevant UCB systems or procedures.

The Role of the External Examiner in Collaborative provision

The UCB subject/programme External Examiner will also have the following responsibilities in the maintenance of academic standards of collaborative provision.

- a) The External Examiner will consider samples of student work from students on collaborative programmes and comment of assessment practice and academic performance in relation to expected National standards, the QAA UK Quality Code and in the context of assessment practice on the programme as delivered at UCB.
- b) The External Examiner will accompany the Liaison Manager on a quality assessment visit to the collaborative provider usually every two years and comment on the standards of academic delivery and opportunities for quality enhancement within the programme External Examiner Report.
- c) UCB may seek advice and opinion from the External Examiner on any proposed changes to the systems of collaborative programme delivery including teaching and learning practice, assessment arrangements or resource availability.
- d) External Examiner reports and comment in relation to collaborative programme delivery will be received and considered in the context of the overall collaborative provision agreement and performance review and will be part of the evaluation and decision making process of Periodic Review.

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