

## Dual Awards - Policy Statement

### 1. Reference points

1.1 This policy reflects:

- *the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*
- *QAA Characteristics Statement, 'Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding Body' (October 2015)*

### 2. Background

2.1 Staffordshire University is committed to maintaining and developing educational partnerships with international universities, colleges and other organizations. These partnerships are crucial to the future success of Staffordshire University. They provide the opportunity for students in many countries in the world to engage with innovative teaching and learning experiences and study for Staffordshire University awards in their home country.

2.2 Staffordshire University has a range of collaborative activity with partner organizations, including franchise, validated, outreach and dual award models. All activity comes within the scope of the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*.

2.3 This policy relates to the provision of dual (or double/multiple) awards with partner organizations that have their own degree-awarding powers. The *UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B10* defines a dual/double or multiple award as:

"arrangements where two or more awarding bodies together provide a single jointly delivered programme (or programmes) leading to separate awards (and separate certification) being granted by both, or all, of them."

The significant defining feature of qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body is that they are the outcome of genuine collaborations which create distinctive courses that cannot be replicated by one body working independently. *Chapter B10* clarifies that jointly delivered "refers to the education provided rather than the nature of the award."

2.4 The QAA recognises in its *Characteristics Statement, 'Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body' (Oct 2015)* that dual awards have developed through a varied range of arrangements, which may not always reflect the patterns for such awards developed, defined and embedded within the European context. They may emerge from long-standing collaborations and reflect the need to take account of other organisations as they mature and develop. For example, a UK degree-awarding body has had an established collaborative arrangement with an international provider that subsequently gains their own powers to award higher education qualifications. The international provider may wish to continue the partnership with the UK provider, and

award a UK degree in addition to providing their own. In such a case delivery may involve one partner more than another and mobility between partners may not be an essential part of the arrangement, but the design and development of the course, aspects of its management and oversight, and the ultimate decision-making on student achievement are all carried out jointly by both degree-awarding bodies.

### **3. Key principles of Staffordshire University Dual Awards**

#### **3.1 Definition and ethos of Dual Awards**

Staffordshire University defines dual award provision as a combined package of study leading to two separate qualifications awarded by two separate awarding bodies. While a dual award course may be based on an existing course either at the partner or at Staffordshire University, it must be a truly joint initiative, designed and developed by both partners to offer a distinctive learning experience, which is enhanced by the strong partnership of the degree-awarding bodies. All Staffordshire University dual awards will be distinctive educational courses that no individual partner could offer, in that form, independently of the others, creating a unique educational experience.

3.2 This document refers to dual awards but also covers any instance in which Staffordshire University works with multiple degree-awarding bodies to design and deliver a distinctive course.

#### **3.3 Responsibility for standards of Dual Awards**

Chapter B10 of the UK Quality Code states that:

“the collective responsibility for joint or multiple awards (and the need to accept the academic standards of the other partners) does not remove the responsibility of the individual degree-awarding body to ensure that its own academic standards are safeguarded”.

Staffordshire University is responsible for the standards of any award issued in its name and for ensuring that any award meets the required UK Higher Education descriptors and benchmarks.

#### **3.4 The respective involvement of partners in Dual Awards**

The QAA requires that each partner must make “substantial contributions” to the creation, management and decision-making related to the course and the award. Ongoing and effective joint arrangements for assessment, course design/development, and management must be in place. For assessment this will include attendance at Award Boards; leading on the assessment of modules for which the partner concerned has primary responsibility; and being engaged, usually through moderation activity, in the assessment of modules delivered by the other partner. For course design there should be joint activity in the initial course design and development and in all ongoing course monitoring, review and enhancement activity. Joint course management structures must be established and run to a schedule agreed between the partners.

##### **3.4.1 Involvement in Course delivery**

Each partner involved in Staffordshire University dual awards must also be involved in course delivery. One partner may have a greater commitment than the other/others with regard to delivery, and this commitment may vary over time. This will be agreed

at the point of course approval or re-approval. The Course Specification will detail the volume of credit delivered by each partner at each level. Each partner will generally deliver a substantial proportion of the course at the level of the qualification they award, as required by the QAA.

3.4.2 Delivery may be via face-to-face or distance learning modes, or a combination of these (blended learning), and may not necessarily require students to attend both institutions in person. Creative and innovative course design, enabling students to engage pro-actively with all partners, will often be a feature of Staffordshire University dual awards. For example, a course may utilise the virtual learning environment (VLE) extensively to deliver synchronous and asynchronous content, including the use of interactive on-line forums and blogs, video streaming and lecture capture, virtual seminars and webinars etc. This will maximise both opportunity and engagement with the different partners.

3.4.3 Any exceptions to the principles regarding the respective involvement of partners in delivery of dual awards must be approved by the University's Quality Committee.

### 3.7 Subject areas for Dual Awards

Dual award courses must be in a subject area where the University has appropriate subject expertise.

### 3.8 Partners for Dual Awards

Partners wishing to collaborate with Staffordshire University to deliver a dual award course must demonstrate that they have the legal authority to do so. The University will normally only consider proposals for dual award courses from partners with which it already has a successful collaborative relationship, or those with a track record of successful delivery in the general subject area and academic level in question. The approved Staffordshire University dual diligence process must be followed when any new partnerships are developed.

### 3.9 Language of tuition of dual awards

All dual award courses will be taught and assessed in English.

## **4. Dual Award Course Agreements**

4.1 A legal agreement, providing details of the agreed management, regulatory and quality assurance arrangements, must be signed by both parties following approval of a dual award course and prior to its commencement. Agreements will be signed for no longer than a five-year period. No students can be admitted to a course before the signed agreement is in place.

4.2 Arrangements must be put in place to ensure that students are able to complete their courses of study and be granted the relevant awards in the event that one or more of the partners withdraws from the agreement.

## Dual Award Course Approval Procedures

5. Strategic approval for a dual award arrangement should be sought via the University's normal planning processes. Once strategic approval of a dual award proposal has been obtained, the University's usual course approval procedures will be followed. A course approval panel including appropriate experience in the design and management of collaborative provision will be appointed. The course approval panel will be responsible for assessing whether the course as an entity (and its assessment strategy) delivers and tests course outcomes at the appropriate level for the award and maintains Staffordshire University academic standards, and it will be responsible for recommending approval, or not, to Quality Committee.
6. It will often be appropriate for a conjoint approval process, involving both awarding bodies, to be undertaken. This must be approved by Quality Committee in advance. Where separate approval processes are followed, both parties should be informed of the date and outcome of the other's event(s) and receive a copy of the relevant course approval reports/committee minutes. In all cases Staffordshire University must be able to assure itself that both Staffordshire University and the partner institution have approved the dual award course and that all associated conditions have been signed-off, before the students can be admitted to the course and the course can commence.
7. In recognition of the complexities of a proposal involving two awarding bodies, course approval panels will be required to pay particular regard to the roles and responsibilities of the institutions involved, recognising that the national requirements of both parties must be met. Items for consideration must include:
  - a) Teaching and Assessment Responsibilities
    - (i) The teaching and assessment responsibilities of both parties should be clearly outlined in the course approval documentation. Lead responsibility for each module must be defined within the Course Specification.
    - (ii) The panel must ensure that that the dual award is a genuinely joint venture, with both partners active in delivery of the course. In doing so the panel must ensure that the core/option split does not result in a student engaging only with one partner. The panel must ensure also that each partner delivers credit at the level of its award. Delivery can be virtual or face-to-face, or a mixture of the two.
    - (iii) Normally, Staffordshire University's policy regarding approval of partner teaching staff (that all partner staff must be approved by Staffordshire University before they start to teach on a Staffordshire University course) will apply. Where an alternative approach is requested (for example in recognition of the standing and experience of the partner involved) this must be approved by Quality Committee on the recommendation of the course approval panel.
    - (iv) An External Examiner(s) will be appointed by Staffordshire University to the course leading to the Staffordshire University award. While all formal communication with the External Examiner(s) will be made by Staffordshire University, both institutions will contribute to the responses to External Examiner reports. Where an External Examiner(s) is also appointed by the partner, joint appointments may be explored.

Such arrangements must be approved by Quality Committee on the recommendation of the course approval panel. External Examiners appointed to dual award courses must be provided with a detailed induction to each course including full details of the regulatory framework (please see section (b) below).

- (v) Each partner will normally have lead responsibility for the assessment of the components of the course that it delivers (see (b) Regulatory Issues below for further details).
- (vi) In order to ensure effective oversight of assessment, each partner will have the opportunity to review and comment on the assessment materials that the other provider/s develop. Staffordshire University will normally require that its School staff review and approve the form and content of proposed examination papers, coursework tasks and other assessments developed by the partner that contribute towards its award before their submission to the Staffordshire University External Examiner.
- (vii) Both partners should engage in moderation activity on those elements of the course that are the lead assessment responsibility of the other. Staffordshire University will also normally require that its staff see a sample of examination scripts and a proportion of summative coursework marked by the partner for modules contributing to its award to verify the standard of marking.
- (viii) The membership of the Award Boards for both awards must be defined at course approval. Where joint Boards are appointed for both awards, representatives from both partners must be present and boards should be co-chaired. Any joint board will report to the usual Staffordshire University structures.

b) Regulatory Issues

- (i) As a dual award leads to two separate qualifications awarded by two awarding bodies, each partner's award will be governed by their own regulations. Combined regulations may be developed for a dual award but in no way should any combined regulations compromise the spirit and rigour of Staffordshire University regulations.
- (ii) Where separate regulations apply, and the assessment criteria and marking schemes vary between partners, a conversion scale must be developed to convert marks between the marking schemes of the two institutions. A procedure for the application of the conversion scale should also be defined. The conversion scale and procedure must be presented at course approval, with evidence that it meets Staffordshire University regulatory requirements.
- (iii) Student complaints will normally be handled in the first instance by the awarding body responsible for the delivery of the provision in question according to their own process. Subsequent stages would need to be handled collectively by both parties and full procedures must be approved as part of the course approval process. Complaints regarding the course as a whole would need to be dealt with both parties from the outset according to an agreed process. The procedures must be presented at course approval, with evidence that they meet Staffordshire University regulatory requirements. The agreed procedures must be comparable to those used on-campus at Staffordshire University.

- (iv) Full details of the management of student appeals must be agreed as part of the course approval process. The procedures must be presented at course approval, with evidence that they meet Staffordshire University regulatory requirements. The agreed procedures must be comparable to those used on campus at Staffordshire University.
- (v) Procedures for dealing with cases of academic and non-academic misconduct must be agreed as part of the course approval process. The procedures must be presented at course approval, with evidence that they meet Staffordshire University regulatory requirements. The agreed procedures must be comparable to those used on-campus at Staffordshire University.
- c) Admissions
  - (i) Admissions onto the dual award course will be in line with the standard Staffordshire University admissions policy. This will be confirmed at the point of course approval, and defined within the course documentation.
  - (ii) The responsibility of each awarding body in the admissions process must be agreed at course approval.
  - (iii) If students are admitted onto the course with advanced standing, each partner must ensure that such students will have contact (which may be face-to-face or virtual) with both of them to reflect the nature of the dual award. Admissions processes must reflect this requirement.
- d) Course Management
  - (i) Each awarding body should identify those staff at their institutions responsible for the management and oversight of the dual award course(s). Details of how the course will be collectively managed by both institutions should be provided in the course approval documentation. A Joint Management Committee will normally be established, in line with the university's guidance on this, and run to a schedule agreed between the partners.
- e) Student Support and Engagement
  - (i) Provision for student support and engagement should be comparable to that in place for students on-campus at Staffordshire University. The provision, and the responsibilities of each awarding body for this, must be clearly outlined in the course approval documentation.
  - (ii) The use of virtual learning environments, and the respective responsibility of each party for these, should also be agreed at course approval.
- f) Information
  - (i) All information relating to the dual award course must be approved by both parties before being issued to students. Any amendments to course information must also be approved by both parties, in accordance with their procedures. Course information must make reference to both awarding bodies and clearly outline the respective responsibilities of each.

- (ii) The format of course documentation will be agreed by both parties. Where feasible Staffordshire University templates should be used. Any bespoke templates should be agreed as part of the course approval process. The content of such documents must be comparable to those used for on-campus awards at Staffordshire University.
- (iii) All publicity relating to the dual award must be approved by Staffordshire University in accordance with the University's procedure.
- g) Student Records
  - (i) Students will normally be registered with both awarding bodies. Both parties must also agree as part of the course approval how student records will be kept. The status and rights of students in relation to both degree-awarding bodies must be made clear.
- h) Quality Assurance
  - (i) Arrangements for course monitoring and review must be agreed at course approval. These will normally follow Staffordshire University procedures, however, where the partner has its own monitoring and review processes, a joint process may be agreed. The procedures must be presented at course approval, with evidence that they meet Staffordshire University quality assurance requirements. Any bespoke arrangements must be comparable to Staffordshire University procedures.
  - (ii) Both parties must approve course amendments which have an impact on their awards before they are introduced. Both parties must review amendments to ensure that they do not impact adversely on the requirement for each to have an active role in course delivery.
  - (iii) All curriculum amendments impacting on the Staffordshire University award must be submitted to Staffordshire University for approval in accordance with the University Course amendment procedure. Amendments which do not have an impact on the Staffordshire University award should be reported to Staffordshire University for information.
  - (iv) For any module approvals subsequent to the initial course approval procedure, Staffordshire University will accept the detailed module approval processes undertaken at module level by its partners for those modules or components that the partners are delivering.
- i) Certificates and Transcripts
  - (i) Staffordshire University will issue both the certificate and the transcript to a student who successfully completes its award. The transcript will note that the course leads to a dual award. The location of study and language of instruction will also be included. It is expected that this will be mirrored on partners' certificates and/or transcripts. The format and content of all certificates and transcripts for dual award courses must be agreed by Staffordshire University.