



University of
Staffordshire

DUE DILIGENCE PROCEDURE FOR NEW AND EXISTING COLLABORATIVE ACADEMIC PARTNERS

Quality Assurance and
Enhancement
January 2026

Due Diligence Procedure for New and Existing Collaborative Academic Partners

Introduction

1. Due diligence is the process of examining the legal and financial underpinning of an organisation as a key step towards establishing or continuing a partnership. University of Staffordshire works effectively with partners and an integral part of this is to ensure that any risks are identified and eliminated or mitigated.
2. The purpose of carrying out due diligence is to safeguard the University from any potential reputational damage which could be caused by entering or continuing a relationship with a partner. It is also key in ensuring that our partners are compliant with OfS Conditions of Registration. Therefore, it is vital that all members of staff engaging with this process do so carefully and thoroughly.
3. Due diligence is a structured process that must be followed whenever a potential new partnership is being explored, or an existing partnership is due for periodic review and contract renewal. Please follow these links for further details regarding the approval of new partners and periodic review of existing partners.
4. The following steps detail the due diligence procedures for new and existing partners.

New Partner

1. In most instances, an initial partnership enquiry will be received from a potential partner institution. Occasionally, the University may make the initial contact with a potential partner. If this contact is made by a member of School staff, it must be discussed with the Head of Collaborative Academic Partnerships (HCAP) first (or Head of Business Engagement (HBE) for apprenticeship provision). In both instances, HCAP (or HBE for apprenticeship provision) must manage the communications between the two institutions during this initial phase.
2. The HCAP (or HBE for apprenticeship provision) will decide at this stage whether the proposal can proceed to the initial business case and due diligence stage. If the proposal can proceed, Collaborative Academic Partnerships (CAP) (or Business to Markets (B2M) for apprenticeship provision) will send the initial due diligence questionnaire to the potential partner. CAP (or B2M for apprenticeship provision) will complete the relevant internal sections of the questionnaire. If the proposal cannot proceed (for example, if the proposed institution's strategy does not align with that of UoS or financial issues are identified), HCAP (or HBE for apprenticeship provision) will contact the institution notifying them of the decision.
3. The potential partner will return the questionnaire to CAP (or B2M for apprenticeship provision) and the HCAP (or HBE for apprenticeship provision) will then work with the respective School(s) on the joint initial business case and due diligence. The completed information is then presented by the respective Executive Dean(s) at the University Executive Board (UEB).
4. Notification of the UEB decision is communicated by the Executive Dean(s) to the HCAP (or HBE for apprenticeship provision). If the proposal has not been approved to proceed to the next stage of the process, the HCAP (or HBE for apprenticeship provision) will contact the institution notifying them of the decision.
5. If the proposal is approved, the HCAP (or HBE for apprenticeship provision) will contact Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) to commence the second stage due diligence process.
6. QAE send the second stage due diligence questionnaire and OfS Framework mapping template to the potential partner institution. At the same time, CAP (or B2M for apprenticeship provision) will undertake the approval of the sites of delivery at the potential partner (please refer to the 'Academic Partnership Approval Policy and Procedure' for further information). Site approval forms will be included in the information that is presented to UEB.
7. Within an agreed timeframe, the potential partner institution will return the due diligence questionnaire and OfS framework mapping template to QAE with appropriate supporting evidence. If any required information is missing at this stage, QAE will request this from the potential partner institution.

8. QAE then share the aforementioned information with the CAP (or B2M for apprenticeship provision), Legal and Finance teams for review. Again, if any further information is required, then the respective team should contact QAE, who will then request this from the potential partner.
9. Following consideration of this information by the respective teams (and completion of the required sections of the Summary Outcome Report), QAE will then send the information to the Head of Risk and Resilience, who will complete the relevant sections of the Summary Outcome Report and provide an overall statement on the level of risk of the proposed partnership. This statement will be informed by the University Risk Management Framework.
10. QAE then submit the due diligence information pack to the Executive Director of Curriculum and Academic Affairs for final consideration and decision by UEB.
11. Notification of the UEB decision is communicated by the Executive Director of Curriculum and Academic Affairs to the HCAP (or HBE for apprenticeship provision) and Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement. The HCAP (or HBE for apprenticeship provision) then notifies the partner of the outcome.

Existing Partner

1. Due diligence information is reviewed and refreshed prior to the renewal of a partner contract and is considered as part of a partnership periodic review.
2. QAE contact the partner and send them the due diligence questionnaire and OfS Framework mapping template.
3. If a partner has sites of delivery that require approval, CAP (or B2M for apprenticeship provision) will be notified and the site approval procedure will be initiated.
4. Within an agreed timeframe, the partner institution will return the due diligence questionnaire and OfS framework mapping template to QAE with appropriate supporting evidence. If any required information is missing at this stage, QAE will request this from the potential partner institution.
5. QAE then share the aforementioned information with the CAP (or B2M for apprenticeship provision), Legal and Finance teams for review. Further information can be requested by these teams at this stage.
6. Following consideration of this information by the respective teams (and completion of the required sections of the Summary Outcome Report), QAE then send the information to the Head of Risk and Resilience, who will then complete the relevant sections of the Summary Outcome Report and provide an overall statement on the level of risk of continuing the partnership. This statement will be informed by the University Risk Management Framework.
7. QAE then submit the due diligence information pack to the Chair of Collaborative Academic Partnerships Committee. At this stage it is confirmed whether the partnership periodic review will be carried out online or face to face.
8. Following the Partnership Periodic Review event, a Due Diligence and Outcomes report (which will include the due diligence information) will be submitted to Collaborative Academic Partnerships Committee (as part of a set of documentation that also includes the review event report) and a decision will be made on the future of the partnership.
9. It should be noted that, in addition to the above, it may be necessary to carry out due diligence on existing partners in other circumstances. These may include, but are not limited to:
 - A change in ownership of the partner (this is particularly relevant to privately owned institutions).
 - A merger with another organisation or the partner entering into another partnership with an institution that may cause reputational damage to the University.
 - An incident which raises concerns about the financial status of the organisation.
 - Significant change in the nature of the arrangement with the outside party.
 - Relocation to a new country, or the activities with the University are to be managed from a different country.
 - A report from an external body which raises significant concerns about the standard of the work of the partner.

