University of Staffordshire

PERIODIC PARTNERSHIP REVIEW POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Quality Assurance and Enhancement

September 2026



Periodic Partnership Review Policy and Procedure for Existing Collaborative Academic Partners (including apprenticeship sub-contractors)

Introduction

1. University of Staffordshire's quality framework is in place to ensure that all its courses meet appropriate standards, provide current and coherent curricula and deliver a high-quality student learning experience and positive outcomes. The framework:
    - Supports the University's Academic Strategy and achievement of institutional KPIs.
    - Provides assurance of the quality and standards of the provision.
    - Facilitates quality enhancement.
    - Facilitates the assessment of risk, focusing attention where it is most required.

2. Periodic partnership review exercises are a key component of this framework. The periodic partnership review procedure outlined below applies to arrangements with providers of learning opportunities leading or contributing to the award of academic credit or a qualification from University of Staffordshire. Its main purpose is to assess the continued suitability of an existing partnership and establish whether the arrangement continues to be a good strategic and operational fit for the University.

3. The University's approach to academic partnership review outlined in this document is aligned to the requirements derived from the Office for Student's Conditions of Registration and has been informed by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2023).

4. Requests for any variations from the provisions outlined below will require approval by the University's Collaborative Academic Partnerships Committee.

5. While the partnership review exercise is led by Quality Assurance and Enhancement, it is the collective assessment of the effectiveness of the partnership by all Departments/Schools and Professional Services involved in that partnership.

6. Transparency in the governance and oversight of partnership review exercises is supported by the obligation of internal decision-making bodies to declare potential conflicts of interests including legal, financial and personal relationships following the University's Declaration of Interest Policy. This applies to members of the Collaborative Academic Partnerships Committee, University Executive Board, Executive, and the Board of Governors. Both university staff and partner staff involved in managing and attending partnership review activity will also be asked to declare potential conflicts of interest affecting the partner under review.

Review Schedule

7. Partnership review activity will normally commence 18 months before the expiry of the University's legal agreement with the partner. A review may also be brought forward at the request of the Chair of Collaborative Academic Partnerships Committee (CAPC) on the advice of the Head of Collaborative Academic Partnerships, Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement or the Head of Business Engagement for apprenticeship provision, if risk indicators determine that a shorter review period would be beneficial.

8. Prior to the commencement of the review activity, the Head of Collaborative Academic Partnerships (or Head of Business Engagement for apprenticeship provision) will discuss with the relevant Dean(s) of School(s) and Collaborative Academic Partnerships Committee Chair to determine whether they support the continuation of the partnership in its current form in principle. This initial endorsement will factor in academic and operational experiences of the partnership,

any changes in university strategy and School priorities and capacity and will be subject to the outcomes of the partnership review.

9. Should the stakeholders outlined above determine that it would be advisable for the partnership to end, a recommendation for termination will be submitted to Collaborative Academic Partnerships Committee in line with the University's requirements for terminating a partnership.

Legal and Financial Due Diligence

10. Following the agreement in principle to continue the partnership, Quality Assurance and Enhancement will liaise with the partner to commence the review process. The first stage is undertaking legal and financial due diligence to re-establish the legal status of the organisation and its capacity to enter into a collaborative agreement with the University. The partner will be asked to highlight any changes since the last approval/review. Please refer to the Due Diligence Procedure for New and Existing Collaborative Academic Partners for further information.

Partnerships Review Event

Purpose

11. The purpose of the partnership review event is:
    - To confirm the strategic compatibility between the partner and the university.
    - To review the partner's approach to managing and assuring the academic quality and standard of the University's awards in line with internal and external reference points.
    - To review the quality of learning opportunities provided by the partner and the partner's approach to enhancing these.
    - To review the performance of the University's courses delivered by the partner.
    - To review the partner's mechanisms for monitoring and supporting student progress.
    - To provide a full understanding of the student experience and the student's expectations regarding their own relationship with University of Staffordshire.
    - To confirm the suitability of resources (including staffing) to deliver the university courses for which the partner is approved.
    - To explore the potential for further developments with the partner (subject to the relevant strategic approvals)

      In addition, for apprenticeship provision:
    - To review compliance with apprenticeship funding and regulatory requirements (where applicable)
    - To consider the effectiveness of employer engagement and tripartite working
    - To review the quality and integrity of End-Point Assessment processes (where applicable)
    - To consider the monitoring and delivery of off-the-job training (where applicable)

Format

12. The review will be undertaken by a panel normally comprising:
    - A senior member of University staff with partnership expertise (and, where possible, external to the departments where the provision is based) as Chair. For apprenticeship provision, the Chair will also need to have apprenticeship expertise.
    - An external panel member from another UK HEI or with extensive experience of the UK HE system – together with a suitable background in management and oversight of collaborative academic partnerships. For apprenticeship provision, the external panel member must also have experience of apprenticeship delivery and management.
    - Head of Collaborative Academic Partnerships (or their nominee) or Head of Business Engagement (or nominee) for apprenticeship provision.
    - Quality Assurance and Enhancement representative

- One member of university academic staff from outside the Department(s) in which the partner provision sits; where the Chair has an academic background, a senior member of support staff can be considered for this role.
- A Quality Officer who will act as the Review Secretary.

13. Periodic partnership reviews are managed by Quality Assurance and Enhancement. The final selection of internal panel members will be undertaken by Quality Assurance and Enhancement (on behalf of CAPC). All Chairs and panel members should be provided with access to a briefing on the periodic partnership review process by Quality Assurance and Enhancement before the review event.

14. The formal review exercise comprises consideration of a document submission by the individual members of the panel followed by a review event, which will normally take place over one day.

Documentation Submission

15. The Review Secretary will circulate the review submission to the Review Panel six weeks before the Review Event. This normally comprises documents prepared/collated by the partner and the University.

16. Documents provided by the partner are as follows:
    - A strategic overview document to include: -
        - Introduction to the organisation and brief history of the partnership
        - Strategic overview of approach to education and the future development and expansion of the partnerships
        - Details of other HEI/educational partners and experience of programme delivery
        - Organisational/Management structure diagram
        - Reports from external review or bodies e.g., QAA
        - Overview of Quality Assurance processes
        - Overview of Teaching and Learning strategy/approach
        - Overview of Student Support
        - Overview of staff expertise and development relating to the partnership

    - A report prepared by the partner on the operations of the partnership i.e., how the partner and University of Staffordshire work together to support the students and manage the relationship. This report should include areas of good practice and areas for improvement and cover the whole student lifecycle.
    - A list of all the module tutors teaching on the courses together with their updated CVs and staffing course profile.
    - A completed Partnership Audit Document.
    - **Apprenticeship Provision (where applicable)**
    - For partnerships involving apprenticeship provision, additional documentation and/or evidence may be required to demonstrate the partner's role in the delivery and oversight of apprenticeship-specific requirements. This may include:
    - Partner understanding and application of Apprenticeship Agreements and Commitment Statements
    - Compliance with the Department for Education (DfE) funding rules in delivery
    - Delivery and recording of off-the-job training
    - Involvement in apprentice onboarding and initial assessment
    - Contribution to apprentice progress monitoring and tripartite reviews
    - Safeguarding and Prevent arrangements in workplace contexts
    - Employer engagement and feedback mechanisms
    - Staff expertise and development relating to apprenticeship provision
    - Clarity of the partner's role and responsibilities in apprenticeship delivery

- Functional Skills delivery (where applicable)

The specific requirements will be proportionate to the nature and extent of the partner's involvement in apprenticeship delivery.

17. Documents provided by the University are as follows:
    - A list of all University courses/apprenticeships being delivered by the partner including current student numbers.
    - Current programme specifications for the courses delivered at the partner.
    - A report prepared by the University on the operations of the partnership i.e., how the partner and University of Staffordshire work together to support the students and manage the relationship. This report should include relevant student performance metrics, areas of good practice and areas for improvement and cover the whole student lifecycle.
    - Course Monitoring Action Plans for the current academic year.
    - The last annual partnership review report and action plan.
    - External Examiner / External Quality Advisor reports and responses for the last three years.
    - Academic link tutor reports for the last three years.
    - Report from Library and Learning Services based on partner information on their library and learning resources.
    - For overseas partners – the UK Naric and British Council Country overviews (where available)
    - **Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Assessment Provision (where applicable)**
      For partnerships involving apprenticeship provision and/or Apprenticeship Assessment (previously known as End Point Assessment), additional documentation and/or evidence may be required to support the review. This may include:
    - Apprenticeship Assessment policies and procedures
    - Gateway to completion processes and decision-making evidence
    - Apprenticeship Assessment outcomes data
    - Apprenticeship Assessment appeals and complaints procedures
    - Arrangements for ensuring independence and consistency of Apprenticeship Assessment (including conflict of interest, standardisation and sampling)
    - Apprenticeship performance data (including achievement, retention and progression)
    - Requirements will be proportionate to the nature and extent of the provision delivered through the partnership.

    Additional documents/evidence may also be requested by the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement to support the review exercise.

Initial Analysis of Submission

18. Panel members will be asked to submit initial comments on the documentation two weeks in advance of the meeting. All initial comments will be made available to the other panel members.

Confirmation of Partnership Review Event Agenda

19. Quality Assurance and Enhancement, the Review Secretary and Panel Chair will review the initial panel member comments and use these to confirm the Programme for the Review Event. A virtual pre-meeting of the Review Panel may also be arranged to facilitate this if necessary. The final Programme will be circulated at least one week before the Partnership Review event.

20. The Partnership Review Event will normally be conducted over one day. The event will include meetings with the following partner staff:
    - Senior Member of staff who provide institutional support for the collaboration
    - HE Manager/Academic Partnerships Manager or equivalent

- Colleagues knowledgeable about the Partner's Quality Assurance/Enhancement process in relation to educational programmes
- Learning Resource/Library Manager or equivalent
- Student Support Manager or equivalent
- Teaching staff
- Students

21. Academic Link Tutors should also normally be available to support the partner and meet with the panel. Students meeting the Panel should represent the full range of University courses offered by the partner where relevant (e.g. both undergraduate and postgraduate provision and a range of levels and modes of study). Full details of those meeting the Panel will be finalised through the confirmation of the Programme.

Review Outcomes

22. Periodic partnership review panels will both highlight good practice identified during the review and make recommendations to Collaborative Academic Partnerships Committee, which can be defined as either essential or desirable.

23. Good practice is a process or way of working that makes a particularly positive contribution to academic standards and the quality and/or enhancement of learning opportunities and should be disseminated across the University/its partners[1].

24. Essential recommendations are made to address issues that in the Panel's opinion are putting quality/standards at risk or have the potential to do so and must therefore be addressed. The Panel will recommend a timeframe to meet the recommendations. Where an essential recommendation relates to a particular aspect of the partner's provision -e.g. a specific subject area, course, level or central service support area- this should be specified by the Panel.

25. Desirable recommendations are set where the Panel considers action could further enhance the quality of the provision. These should be considered by the partner together with the relevant Department(s) and/or School(s) and addressed as appropriate.

26. The review event panel will report indicative outcomes of the review event to the partner orally at the end of the event.

27. Following the review event, a full report will be produced by the Review Secretary and agreed by the Panel. The partner under review will have the opportunity to comment on the factual accuracy of the report. Once any resulting queries are addressed the report will be signed off by the Chair of the Panel and will be used to inform final recommendations to Collaborative Academic Partnerships Committee on the continuation of the partnership.

Final Report to Collaborative Academic Partnerships Committee

28. Quality Assurance and Enhancement will prepare a Due Diligence and Outcomes report which will include the review event report as an appendix.

29. Collaborative Academic Partnerships Committee determines whether the partnership can continue based on the recommendations made in the Final Due Diligence and Outcomes report.

30. Should Collaborative Academic Partnerships Committee establish that the partnership should not continue, the Head of Collaborative Academic Partnerships (or Head of Business Engagement for apprenticeships provision) will inform the partner and put in place a teach-out plan in line with University policies and any contractual considerations in the partnership agreement.

[1] Adapted from QAA definition of Good Practice

31. If Collaborative Academic Partnerships Committee confirms that the partnership can continue, Quality Assurance and Enhancement will draft a partnership review follow-up action plan and the Head of Collaborative Academic Partnerships (or Head of Business Engagement for apprenticeships provision) will progress contractual arrangements towards partnership renewal.

Partnership Review Follow-Up

32. A partnership review action plan, outlining measures to be taken to respond to the recommendations arising from the partnership review, should be agreed upon between the partner and the Head Collaborative Academic Partnerships (or Head of Business Engagement for apprenticeships provision) normally within a month of approval of the final Due Diligence and Outcomes report.

33. Progress against the agreed Plan will be monitored by Quality Assurance and Enhancement until all actions are complete. Quality Assurance and Enhancement will forward the agreed action plan to the School(s) for their internal dissemination – including noting at School Academic Committee and actioning with ALTs as required.

34. An update on progress should also be received by Collaborative Academic Partnerships Committee no later than nine months after approval of the original Review Report by the Committee (unless an earlier timeframe for reporting was determined at the time the Report was originally considered). Good practice identified at partnership review panels will also be disseminated to the University by QAE through the QAE SharePoint/Workvivo and the Annual Quality and Standards and Student Success Report.

Partnership Agreement Renewal

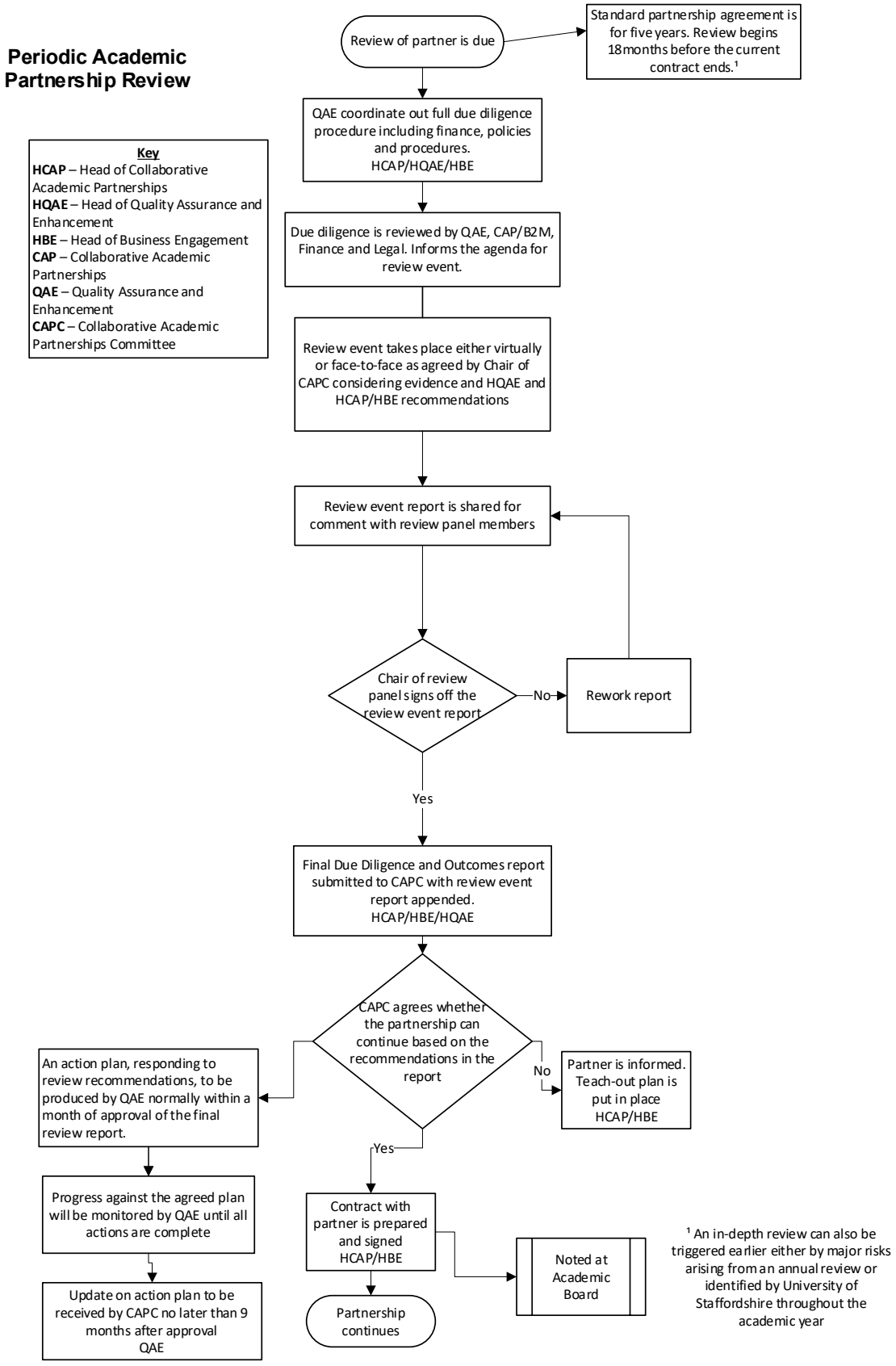
35. The Head of Collaborative Academic Partnerships (or Head of Business Engagement for apprenticeships provision) will liaise with the partner, Legal Services and other stakeholders as required to review and renegotiate contractual arrangements. A new legal partnership agreement will be drafted and signed in line with partnership review outcomes and university policies.

36. The completion and signature of a renewed partnership agreement will formally confirm the continuation of the partnership. It will also be noted at Academic Board and disseminated through relevant School Academic Committees. The Register of Collaborative Provision will also be updated at the next review point.

Quality Assurance and Enhancement

September 2026

Periodic Academic Partnership Review



University of Staffordshire

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