

Guidelines on Consultation Regarding New Award Proposals, Permitted / Exceptional Changes for Academic Partnerships

What constitutes good consultation?

Where a partner institution proposes a new award, Permitted / Exceptional Change, the following needs to be clearly articulated and explored in the following stages:

New Award Proposals

Prior to an in-principle decision to work up an ADPC submission

- Initial shape of award and proposed title; informed by discussions between partner and University staff e.g. between partner programme teams and ALPs, PU programme manager/s and FPMs. External Examiners or advisors may also be significantly helpful where the proposed award is in a subject area not taught by the University. For new subject area developments, partner proposals are likely to be led by the HE Coordinator.
- Outline rationale for a new award set in the context of the partners HE strategy and overall portfolio of HE provision; discussed between partner HE Co-ordinator, FPM, HoS and ADTL / Dean.

The aim of this work is to ensure there are no surprises for any stakeholder and to flush out any conflict of interest concerns between the partner and the University and to enable the partner to seek in principle approval from the university to enable the ADPC process to begin. All associated paperwork is available on the Plymouth portal, Academic Partnerships community/Processes and Templates.

Preparation for ADPC

- While the University does not aim to judge or control competition between partners, the case for a new programme in terms of market demand needs to be clear e.g. where will the award attract students from and how has this been researched; will the award attract new students to HE / the partner, or is the award a replacement for / reshaping of existing provision?
- [For regional partner proposals] where does the proposed award sit alongside provision at the University and within the portfolio of PU partner awards linked to a faculty / school e.g. will the proposed award add to student opportunity / choice or will it destabilise existing provision and or progression?
- Understanding what will be the likely impact on existing awards at the partner e.g. if no new numbers or staff / resources capacity, what are the knock on portfolio changes?
- What is the estimated impact on progression at the partner and the University; supported by analysis of historical progression data. This includes the impact on resources at the University e.g. lab or technical facilities, cohort size and student experience?
- Are there issues of competition with the University, especially with regard to award title, mode of delivery e.g. full / part-time or location of delivery?
- What will be the impact on SNC for the partner and the University?

Academic Partnerships' experience shows that rushed discussions, sometimes driven by ADPC deadlines, do not usually aid the consultation process and can strain ongoing relationships. Clear proposals, in writing, that include good data make it much more straightforward for PU faculties / schools to make the 'in principle' support/not support decision required for ADPC preparation within the six week timeframe outlined in the Academic Cooperation Agreements.

Approval note

While discussions of the following may take place during initial consultations, scrutiny of the following takes place at approval: the content, focus and level of the curriculum, target student outcomes [employment, professional and progression], student experience and the experience of the HE teaching and programme management team. However a record of the prior dialog and consultation can greatly assist with the approval process.

*Key areas of evidence for consideration when developing a compelling Level 6 proposal:*¹

- A significant history of HE delivery at level 4 & 5 and or level 6 where Level 6 expansion is planned.
- The history of HE delivery is either with Plymouth University or other HEIs with experience of partnership delivery.
- There is a clear and sustainable demand, both from students and the relevant industry sectors.
- There is a clear fit between proposed Level 6 developments and the partner's broad strategic direction, which has been discussed with the University.
- The current higher education within the curriculum area is of high quality, measured via key performance indicators and student and external feedback and review – backed by use of underpinning entry, achievement and progression data.
- There is a clear fit between the curriculum area proposed and the broad HE strategy of the partner.
- There are sufficient staff at the partner institution [or within the programme team - where PU staff are also involved] who are qualified above the level of the proposed delivery, together with a staffing strategy which includes succession planning.
- Demonstration of an understanding of the demands of Honours level delivery, and a preparedness to make the additional staffing commitment required.
- That those involved in level 6 delivery are supported through the partner's performance development / management processes to undertake research and scholarly activity relevant to the subject area and level of delivery and to enable teaching to be research informed. This could include working with staff from the University cognate faculty where possible and practicable.

Permitted / Exceptional Changes

While many of these proposed changes may be small in scale and straightforward in principle, in line with the advice above, AP experience suggests the following to assist with smooth sign off and avoid extended post submission dialogue

- A documented rationale with a clear evidence base
- Changes linked to and considered through award development processes e.g. APM and any relevant internal partner processes
- Evidence of need confirmed by relevant stakeholders e.g. External Examiner, employer forum, ALP
- Early liaison with wider stakeholders to ensure no issues of concern; including competition, progression and congruence with Subject Benchmarks e.g. Programme Manager for award receiving progression students

Mark Stone
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Feb 2014

¹ Adapted from Cornwall College HE Strategy.

Glossary:

ADPC – Academic Development Partnerships Committee

ADTL – Associate Dean Teaching and Learning

ALP – Academic Liaison Person

AP – Academic Partnerships

APM – Annual Programme Monitoring

FPM – Faculty Partnership Manager

HoS – Head of School

PU – Plymouth University

SNC – Student Number Control