

Procedure for Establishing Research Degree (PhD and EngD) Collaborative Programmes and Awards

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This procedure should be read in conjunction with “Quality Assurance and Standards when Developing and Managing Higher Education Provision with others: [Guidelines for Establishing and Reviewing Collaborative Provision](#)”
- 1.2. College will not normally participate in any or dual (double) or multiple degree awards.
- 1.3. The College will not normally participate in any joint PhD and EngD research awards with another UK institution.
- 1.4. The College does not expect to receive proposals for joint MD(Res) or MPhil awards.
- 1.5. This procedure can be used for the establishment of the following:
 - Joint awards (a programme of study which leads to a qualification – PhD or EngD - which is jointly awarded by Imperial and, normally one other, non-UK institution with degree awarding powers)
 - Collaborative Imperial award (a programme of study leading to an award by Imperial which is either wholly or partially collaboratively designed, delivered and/or assessed by Imperial and partner(s) with or without degree awarding powers.
- 1.6. Under collaborative provision arrangements, the programme is normally quality assured by both (or all) institutions/organisations according to bespoke arrangements set up in the governing Memorandum of Agreement signed by both (or all) collaborating institutions.
- 1.7. When establishing a collaborative research activities the following must be taken into account:
 - i. Research students undertaking collaborative research degree awards would be expected to undertake a selection of professional skills development modules during their programme, as required for all those registered for an Imperial research degree. They should also be encouraged to attend one of the residential courses provided by the Graduate School.
 - ii. Students will normally pay the fee of the university where they are currently working. However, in exceptional circumstances, a modification of this can be considered. This must be agreed as part of the formal agreement.

- iii. In order to receive an Imperial College award, normally at least one year of a 3/4-year full-time programme would need to be spent at Imperial College (or pro rata for part-time/longer programmes). The duration and timing of work at the partner institution(s), together with fee levels, must be determined as part of the formal agreement.
 - iv. Research students on collaborative programmes must meet all milestones for Imperial College research students. Relevant information provided by the partner institution on a student's academic progress would be given due consideration at each stage but the decision of the College on the progression of the student would be final.
- 1.8. Before a collaborative programme can be commenced, the proposal must satisfy the requirements at each of the following stages of approval and review:
- Stage 1** – Strategic Approval for the Partnership by the Provost's Board
Stage 2 – Programme and Award Approval by the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC) and Senate (this stage includes full due diligence checking for new partnerships and scrutiny of the detailed programme of study, including confirmation that regulations and standards conform to Imperial norms and approval of the award type).
Stage 3 – Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)
- 1.9. At each stage in the process, proposals will be evaluated according to a set of criteria covering strategic benefits, academic benefits, academic governance, resource and financial issues, as outlined in the document "[Key criteria for consideration when establishing collaborative arrangements](#)". Proposals can be rejected at any stage in this process.
- 1.10. Decisions about the academic probity of the collaborative award are taken separately from the negotiations about the financial implications and arrangements with other parties (though these may be conducted concurrently).
- 1.11. Proposals for collaborate provision can originate from a variety of sources. When proposals originate from a department, support from the Faculty should be obtained before strategic or programme approval is sought. The College does not expect to receive proposals which have not been properly costed at a Faculty level with a full business plan.
- 1.12. In the first instance, plans for collaborative provision should be discussed with the Registry's Quality Assurance Team who will be able to advise on the process and whether there are any precedents or obstacles to the proposed partnership or programme. A separate guidance note on arrangements for CDT programmes is available under the [Academic Policy](#) section on the website.

- 1.13. In the first instance plans for collaborative degree programmes should be discussed with the Registry's Quality Assurance Team who will be able to advise on the process and whether there are any precedents or obstacles to the proposed programme or partnership.

2. Stage 1 – Strategic Approval for the Partnership

- 2.1. A draft proposal for the collaboration should be sent to the Quality Assurance Team who will work with the academic lead for proposal to complete a due diligence check (see "[Collaborative Provision: Due Diligence Check](#)") and prepare the papers for consideration by the Provost's Board.
- 2.2. The draft proposal should be no more than two pages long and would normally include the following:
 - i. A short description of and rationale for the collaboration;
 - ii. A statement setting out how the partner institution's or organisation's mission, vision, strategy, quality and ethos are compatible with the College's (this should include reference to ranking tables);
 - iii. For international programmes, the proposal should include an assessment on how such a collaboration fits with the College's international strategy from the Director of the International Office.
- 2.3. An initial due diligence check is completed by the Registry Quality Assurance Team in consultation with the academic lead. The Registry summarise the findings for consideration by the Provost's Board with the full diligence check undergoing scrutiny by the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC) at the programme approval stage. After consideration by the PRQC it is lodged with the Senior Assistant Registrar (Senate and Academic Review). The full requirements for each due diligence check will be determined on a case by case basis and may include a requirement for a site visit (see "[Collaborative Provision: Site Visits](#)"). If required, the fact-finding site visit to the proposed partner institution/organisation will normally take place before an individual programme is considered by the PRQC but, at the very latest, before the Memorandum of Agreement is drawn up. The decision whether an initial site visit is required is taken by the Vice Provost (Education). Depending on the nature of the proposed partner, due diligence checks can take up to 6 weeks to complete.
- 2.4. The Provost's Board will evaluate the proposal according to set criteria covering strategic benefits, academic benefits, academic governance and resource (see "[Key criteria for consideration when establishing collaborative arrangements](#)").
- 2.5. The Provost's Board approves only the strategic concept of the partnership with the institution/organisation and whether this is to be institution/organisation wide or only with specified departments/subjects within the institution/organisation. The academic content of individual programmes and awards will still be subject to further checks that they will

conform to, or are equivalent to, College standards and regulations. Essentially, at this stage, the Provost's Board only confirms that the proposal supports the College's strategy for education and can be pursued. Proposals can be rejected at this stage.

- 2.6. Collaborative partnerships will normally be subject to review every 5-6 years by the Provost's Board. Such matters should be considered by the Provost's Board at least 6 months before an arrangement is due to expire so that appropriate action can be taken. The review by the Provost's Board, which will focus on the strategic benefit of the partnership to the College, is in addition to review of the individual programmes as set out in their Memorandum of Agreement.

3. Stage 2: Programme and Award Approval

- 3.1. The College only expects to receive proposals for collaborative provision where the programme offers exciting and innovative approaches to teaching, learning and research.
- 3.2. Following approval of the partnership (or where partners are already established), the academic lead for the programme must work with the Registry to prepare a detailed programme proposal and to confirm that the standards and regulations of the proposed programme will conform to College norms. The detailed proposal will then be scrutinised by the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee. The Director of the International Office should also be invited to attend for discussion of international collaborative programmes.
- 3.3. The programme proposal should address the following points:
 - (i) A detailed plan for the programme, including how and where student will meet Imperial's research degree milestones (including those related to professional development skills training);
 - (ii) A statement explaining how the expectation and indicators of the [QAA UK Quality Code in Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education provision with others](#) will be addressed.
 - (iii) A statement explaining how the College's [Precepts for Collaborative Research Degree Programmes](#) will be addressed.
 - (iv) A completed [Academic Governance and Regulation Issues](#) checklist. This information helps form the basis of the Memorandum of Agreement for the programme and it is essential that as much detail as possible is clarified at this stage in the process.
- 3.4. The proposal will include a statement on which partner will act as the lead partner and take overall responsibility for programme administration and quality assurance, as well as designating a lead department within Imperial and a lead academic.

- 3.5. If the proposal is with a new partner, as part of the programme approval process, PRQC also receive the completed [due diligence check](#) together with any other information which was required by the Provost's Board.
- 3.6. The academic lead for the programme is normally required to present the proposal at the PRQC.
- 3.7. The PRQC may recommend to Senate approval of the proposal with or without modification, or may reject it. If approved, the PRQC will also decide on the frequency and nature of continuing site visits to partner, if any (see "[Collaborative Provision: Site Visits](#)"). The PRQC will also confirm the award type.
- 3.8. If approved by the PRQC, programmes and partnerships can only be advertised and announced by either party as "subject to Imperial College Senate approval" with the permission of Imperial's Academic Registrar.

4. Stage 3 - Memorandum of Agreement

- 4.1. Senate's approval for the programme is subject to the creation of a suitable Memorandum of Agreement. Registry, in consultation with the College's Legal Services team and the academic lead for the programme, must arrange for the Memorandum of Agreement to be drawn up. The Memorandum of Agreement must be approved by the Central Secretariat prior to signing by the Provost and the appropriate officer at the partner organisation/institution(s).
- 4.2. The approved Memorandum of Agreement must be signed by all parties before the programme can commence. All original signed agreements must be lodged with the Senior Assistant Registrar (Senate and Academic Review) who will also add the programme to the College's Register of Collaborative Provision. In the event of irreconcilable differences with the partner being uncovered during the creation of the Memorandum of Agreement, the programme will be withdrawn.
- 4.3. Once the proposal has been approved and the Memorandum of Agreement signed, the design, production, security and issue of an appropriate degree certificate and diploma supplement will require approval by the Academic Registrar, who will consult with the Communications Division as appropriate.
- 4.4. All collaborative programmes are normally subject to the College's monitoring and review procedures as outlined in the [Procedures for Review of Postgraduate Research Programmes](#). In cases where a collaborative research programme is not owned by an academic department within the College but is instead established at College or Faculty level with students placed in a number of different departments, the programme will be subject to the Procedures for the [Review of Collaborative Research Programmes not Owned by Departments](#).

Approved by QAEC
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