

Procedure for establishing Undergraduate and Master's level collaborative programmes and awards

Introduction

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](#)"
2. This procedure may be used for establishing collaborative programmes for the following awards:
 - Bachelor of Science (BSc)
 - Bachelor of Engineering (BEng)
 - Master of Engineering (MEng)
 - Master in Science (MSci)
 - Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS)
 - Master of Science (MSc)
 - Master of Research (MRes)
 - Master of Education (MEd)
 - Master of Business Administration (MBA)
 - Master of Public Health (MPH)
3. As Imperial will not normally participate in any dual (double) or multiple degree awards, this procedure can be used for the establishment of the following:
 - Joint awards (a programme of study which leads to a qualification which is jointly awarded by Imperial and, normally, one other 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).
4. Under collaborative award 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.
5. To be eligible to obtain an undergraduate degree awarded by Imperial, students must be in full-time attendance at Imperial for a minimum of 12 months. To be eligible to obtain a Master's degree

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awarded by Imperial students must be in full-time attendance at Imperial for a minimum of 16 weeks. The university does not expect to receive proposals for joint Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma Awards as study for these awards must be centred on the university.

6. 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 Education and Student Experience Committee

Stage 2 – Programme and award approval by the relevant quality committee and QAEC (on behalf of Senate). This stage includes full due diligence checking for new partners 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)

7. 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.
8. Decisions about the academic probity of the collaborative programme are taken separately from the negotiations about the financial implications and arrangements with other parties (though these may be conducted concurrently).
9. Proposals for collaborative programme 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. Imperial does not expect to receive proposals which have not been properly costed at a Faculty level with a full business plan.
10. 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.

Stage 1 – Strategic approval for the partnership

11. A draft proposal for the collaboration should be sent to the Quality Assurance Team who will work with the academic lead for the proposal to complete a due diligence check (see "[Collaborative Provision: Due Diligence Check](#)" and prepare the papers for consideration by the Education and Student Experience Committee.
12. The draft proposal should be no more than two pages long and would normally include the following:
 - a. A short description of and rationale for the collaboration;
 - b. A statement setting out how the partner institution's or organisation's mission, vision, strategy, quality and ethos are compatible with Imperial's (this should include reference to ranking tables);

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- c. For international programmes, the proposal should include an assessment on how such a collaboration fits with Imperial's international strategy from the Director of the International Office.
- 13. An initial due diligence check is completed by the academic lead in consultation with the Registry Quality Assurance Team. The Registry summarise the findings for consideration by the Education and Student Experience Committee with the full diligence check undergoing scrutiny by the relevant quality committee at the programme approval stage. After consideration by the relevant quality committee it is lodged with the Assistant Registrar (Partnerships, Monitoring and Evaluation). 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 relevant quality committee 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 and Student Experience). Depending on the nature of the proposed partner, due diligence checks can take up to 6 weeks to complete.
- 14. The Education and Student Experience Committee 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](#)").
- 15. The Education and Student Experience Committee 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 type of awards will still be subject to further checks that they will conform to, or are equivalent to, university standards and regulations. Essentially, at this stage, the Education and Student Experience Committee only confirms that the proposal supports Imperial's strategy for education and can be pursued. Proposals can be rejected at this stage.
- 16. Collaborative partnerships will normally be subject to review every 5-6 years by the Education and Student Experience Committee. Such matters should be considered by the Education and Student Experience Committee at least 6 months before an arrangement is due to expire so that appropriate action can be taken. The review by the committee, which will focus on the strategic benefit of the partnership to Imperial, is in addition to review of the individual programmes as set out in their Memorandum of Agreement.

Stage 2 – Programme and award approval

- 17. Imperial only expects to receive proposals for collaborative provision where the programme offers exciting and innovative approaches to teaching, learning and research.
- 18. 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 Imperial norms. The detailed proposal will then be scrutinised by the Programmes Committee. Proposals for a programme in a new discipline or subject not currently taught at Imperial and/or which is distinct in format or structure from existing programmes at the university must have strategic

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approval from the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC) before they can be considered by the Programmes Committee (PC).

19. 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.
20. The Programmes Committee will only consider proposals which have Faculty level approval. The Faculty Education Committee (FEC) with responsibility for the lead department, will be designated the 'parent' committee and as such will be responsible both for the review of the programme proposal and the on-going quality assurance of the programme following its approval by QAEC (on behalf of Senate). However, members of the other Faculty Education Committees or PC may be invited to attend for discussion of the programme, where appropriate. The Director of the International Office should also be invited to attend for discussion of international programmes.
21. When preparing the documentation for consideration by the relevant quality committee the academic lead should follow the procedure for the approval of new programmes as detailed within the [Procedures for the Approval and Review of New and Existing Undergraduate Programmes](#) or the [Procedures for the Approval and Review of New and Existing Master's Level Programmes](#).
22. A template for new programme proposals is available from the [programme design and modification webpage](#).
23. This includes completing the document "[Academic and Governance Issues checklist](#)" relating to the academic governance and regulation issues for the proposed programme. The Academic Governance and Regulation Issues checklist 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.
24. If the proposal is with a new partner, as part of the programme approval process, the PC also receives the completed [due diligence check](#) together with any other information which was required by the Education and Student Experience Committee.
25. Proposals for establishing Master's level programmes and awards with partners without degree awarding powers should make reference to the document "[Criteria to be considered when establishing Master's level programmes and awards with industrial partners](#)".
26. The PC will decide on the frequency and nature of continuing site visits to partner, if any (see "[Collaborative Provision: Site Visits](#)"). The PC will also approve the award type. It should be noted that the PC may recommend an alternative award type is used (e.g. joint award instead of collaborative Imperial award or vice versa).
27. The PC may recommend to Senate approval of the proposal with or without modification, or may reject it.
28. If approved by the PC, programmes and partnerships can only be advertised and announced by either party as "*subject to Imperial College approval*" with the permission of Imperial's Academic Registrar.

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Stage 3 – Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)

29. Senate's approval, (currently delegated to QAEC), for the programme is subject to the creation of a suitable Memorandum of Agreement. Registry, in consultation with the 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).
30. 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 Assistant Registrar (Partnerships, Monitoring and Evaluation) who will also add the programme to the Imperial'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.
31. 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 Assessment Records team as appropriate.
32. All collaborative programmes are normally subject to the university's monitoring and review procedures as outlined in the [Procedures for the Approval and Review of Undergraduate Programmes](#) or the [Procedures for the Approval and Review of Master's Level Programmes](#).

Document Control

Document title:	Procedure for Establishing Undergraduate and Master's Level Collaborative Programmes and Awards
Version:	1.5
Location:	R:\7.Quality Assurance\3. Policy Framework\8. Collaborative Provision\Collaborative Provision\Procedure for Establishing Collaborative Taught Programmes
Initially approved by and date:	QAEC 16 Jan 2014 / Senate: February 2014
Version approved by and date:	n/a
Version effective from:	October 2024
Originator:	Assistant Registrar (Partnerships, Monitoring and Evaluation)
Contact for queries:	Assistant Registrar (Partnerships, Monitoring and Evaluation)
Cross References:	Guidelines for establishing and reviewing collaborative provision Procedure for establishing collaborative modules Key criteria for consideration when establishing collaborative arrangements Due diligence check Site visits Academic and governance issues Criteria for consideration when establishing collaborative master's level programmes with industrial partners
Notes and latest changes:	Modified March 2015 to include QAEC approval for new/distinct programmes Formatting changes made on 07/03/2016 Modified April 2017 to reflect changes in the committee structure Updated Feb 2025 to reference new strategic approval committee (ESEC) and reflect new branding guidelines