

# Agreement Review

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# Agreement Review

**This section of the Framework covers the Agreement Review process for academic partnerships in the UK and overseas.**

The Agreement Review process has been designed to help UWE and its partners fulfil their obligation to ensure that the terms, conditions and expectations that were originally approved have been met. On approval, a formal agreement between the University and the partner, known as the Academic Agreement, sets out the principles underpinning the partnership and the division of responsibilities. The Academic Agreement is normally made for a period of five years, after which an Agreement Review would take place.

**The purpose of the Agreement Review process is for UWE to satisfy itself that;**

- The agreement reflects what is happening in the partnership. If the operation at the partnership and the agreement differ this should be explored further
- The extent that the partners have engaged with the systems and processes in place with the other is appropriate
- Enabling strategies are in place to facilitate engagement
- The partners' goals continue to complement and align with each other and that the partnership adds value to both parties
- The risks (financial, reputational and others) of the partnership from each partner's perspective have been considered
- The level of engagement between the partners continues to be appropriate to ensure the partnership is able to meet its original objectives
- The programmes continue to be offered at a satisfactory standard within the defined resource base
- The staffing at the partner remains appropriate to support the UWE programmes
- There continues to be appropriate staff development and research to underpin delivery at the partner
- Sufficient and appropriate staff links are in place between UWE and the partner
- The quality assurance and management of the UWE programmes at the partner continue to be accommodated within the UWE Faculty and partner's processes as appropriate
- Whether the student experience is comparable to that of a student taking a similar programme at UWE

In addition, the Agreement Review process is not intended to be just a backward-looking evaluation confined to judgements on past performance. It also provides an opportunity for the partners to raise and discuss possible future developments of the partnership.

Above all, the agreement review provides an opportunity for a candid and constructive discussion and an exchange of ideas between the University and the partner in the spirit of professional partnership.

Student and Academic Services is responsible for selecting the method of review, and unless otherwise agreed in advance, coordinating/conducting the activity. Student and Academic Services (or other lead professional service/faculty as agreed) will nominate an Officer for the review.

Further guidance on the review of academic partnerships may be obtained from the Academic Partnership Development Team in Student and Academic Services.

## Format of Review

The precise format of the review will be determined by the Officer for the Review in consultation with stakeholders and according to the activity encompassed within the Academic Partnership.

The Review will be held between the Agreement Review Panel, representatives from the Faculty involved in the partnership and the partner. As part of this, meetings will normally be held (usually at the partner or virtually) with academic and administrative staff who are involved in delivering and administering the programmes and students studying at the partner. If the meeting is conducted at the institution it can involve a tour of the physical resources in place.

For certain low risk and long standing partners it may be possible that the review can be tailored to be undertaken as a desk-based exercise. Again, the format of the review will be determined by the Officer in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

## Step 1: Partner's Submission Document

Once the format and scheduling of review activity has been confirmed, the Partner will be asked to complete a **Partner's Submission Document**. The Partner's Submission Document template has been designed to provide a structured way in which the partner can complete its reflections on the operation of the partnership over the course of the review period. The document does not intend to provide a closed and definitive list and other matters relevant to a particular section may be addressed in the submission as the partner feels appropriate.

The document will allow the partner to provide a critical appraisal of the partnership in which key members of the partner's programme team(s) and senior management engage and is of central importance in the Agreement Review process as it gathers together written evidence for the Agreement Review Panel's consideration.

The most effective critical appraisals present a balance between statistical information and objective evaluative comment, incorporating feedback from students and other sources, and providing a clear indication of the action taken to solve problems that have been identified. For the review to be an effective tool, and worthwhile exercise, for both parties it must seek to capture both what is working well and what could be improved.

## **Step 2: Gathering Internal Feedback on the Partnership**

Once the partner's Submission Document has been completed and returned to the Academic Partnership Development Team, it is circulated to various individuals from professional and academic services involved with the partnership, to provide feedback on the merits of and any potential issues relating to the partnership.

While not always the driver behind the partnership, financial arrangements may be both substantial and complex – as a result the finance schedule, and the operation of financial transactions may be examined alongside the agreement; however it may be desirable to keep consideration of finance distinct from other parts of the review.

Concurrently, the Academic Partnership Development Team will also provide documentation to the Panel covering the University's annual monitoring processes for the review period to include Programme Reports, Partnership Lead Reports and External Examiner Reports. A statistical report will also be provided covering student numbers and output for the review period.

Once feedback has been received from all Professional and Student and Academic Services representatives, the Academic Partnership Development Team will produce a summary of the responses for the Agreement Review Panel so that an indicative agenda can be agreed for the Agreement Review. Once agreed, this will be shared with the partner along with an appropriate briefing note.

The briefing paper should be concise and is intended to ensure there are no surprises and that both partners are able to effectively respond to issues raised.

## **Step 3: The Agreement Review Meeting**

The Agreement Review Meeting will be held between a UWE Panel, members of the UWE Faculty linked to the partnership and the partner.

The UWE Panel will differ in composition for each partner in line with the nature of the partnership, but will normally involve a Chair of at least Associate Dean level, an academic with previous experience of UWE collaborative provision and a member of the Academic Partnership Development Team (who shall also act as Officer). Panel members should not be drawn from the Faculty linked to the partnership and shall be approved by the Collaborative Provision Committee.

The Faculty involved in the partnership will normally be represented by the appointed Link Tutor(s) and the Partnership Lead.

It is expected that the partner will be represented by members of its senior management, academic and administrative staff who are involved in delivering and administering the programmes, and students studying at the partner. If the meeting is conducted at the institution it can involve a tour of the physical resources in place.

## **Step 4: Outcome of the Review**

The review should result in a report that summarises the discussion, paying particular attention to elements of the partnership that are functioning well, and those that require further development. Where necessary the report should recommend developmental activity for action by both partners.

For full term reviews the report will also make explicit recommendations as to whether it is desirable to renew the partnership and, if so, any changes necessary to ensure the agreement remains fit for purpose. A rationale drawing on information made available during the review process will support any recommendations for action, renewal or termination. In the event of the latter this will be in accordance with the terms of the agreement.

The report will be agreed by both partners; should agreement not be possible UWE's report will take primacy with the partner being given the opportunity to provide a summary of disagreements together with their rationale to be considered alongside the report.

Both partners should ensure the report and its recommendations are appropriately considered within their respective governance structures, this should also provide the opportunity for the monitoring of agreed actions. In the University's case, the review report will be considered by the Collaborative Provision Committee which will consider academic and operational aspects of the review and the Academic Partnerships Development Group if any strategic, legal and financial issues have come to light.