

QUALITY ASSURANCE DOCUMENT QA 46 – STUDY CENTRE VIA SUPPORT SERVICE PROVIDER: APPROVAL, MONITORING AND REVIEW PROCEDURE

Introduction and Definitions

The purpose of this document is to outline the approval, monitoring and review of UK and overseas Study Centres where Arden University contracts premises and support facilities for their campus-based provision through a *Support Service Provider*. These procedures are aligned to the University's Regulatory Framework and the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Chapter B10 Managing Higher Education Provision with Others, and ensures responsibilities are clearly documented and standards are maintained and enhanced.

Support Service Provider

A partner institution which acts as a support provider in terms of premises, learning resources, pastoral support or facilities, with full responsibility for academic delivery and assessment of the programme being retained by the University. Partnerships with *Support Service Providers* will also seek to include provision for Arden staff to teach students on the partner organisation's premises.

Arden may also operate Study Centres on premises which are owned directly by the University or by its parent company. Such centres do not constitute a partnership and will be approved by Exec. and Academic Board, following a site inspection by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Registrar or their nominees.

Approval Process

There are six key stages involved in the approval process for a Study Centre via *Support Service Provider*, namely (please see appendix 1):

1. Study Centre Business Plan
2. Approval to proceed by Exec.
3. Due Diligence and Site Visit by Partnership Committee
4. Approval by Academic Board
5. *Support Service Provider* Agreement
6. Collaborative and Partnership Register

Stage 1. Study Centre Business Plan

The Business Plan will outline the case for the Study Centre, including strategic, financial and market analysis. The proposal will be initially considered by Exec. for an approval to proceed. The Study Centre Business Plan will be developed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) all UK Study Centres and the International Director for all overseas Study Centres. If the Study Centre proposal involves a partnership with a *Support Service Provider*, then details will be clearly highlighted within the Study Centre Business Plan.

Stage 2. Approval to proceed by Exec.

Exec. will be required to assess the rationale for a Study Centre against the University's strategic aims and mission. The appropriateness of the proposal will also need to be verified against associated costs and perceived market opportunities of the Study Centre. On approval to proceed from Exec., the proposal will transfer to the Partnership Committee for due diligence of the *Support Service Provider*.

Stage 3. Due Diligence and Site Visit by Partnership Committee

The Partnership Committee is responsible for checking the suitability of the *Support Service Provider* to provide the services they will be contracted for and identifying any possible risk prior to an agreement.

In conjunction with the Study Centre Business Plan, the due diligence will aim to demonstrate the following points:

- appropriate professional standing of *the Support Service Provider* and legal capacity to enter into an agreement with the University
- financial stability of the *Support Service Provider* and assurance of registered status, ownership, internal management arrangements. The *Support Service Provider* must be a legal entity operating in accordance with the legal obligations pertaining to the country in which it operates. The organisation must also have permission from the relevant authorities to deliver the services that it contracts to undertake with the University.
- identification of any business and/or ethical links that might pose a reputational risk to the University
- a review of the *Support Service Provider's* current and past partnership arrangements that may conflict with the University
- for international Study Centres, identification of in-country approval that may be required for delivery of University awards at the *Support Service Provider* location

The completion of the Study Centre Due Diligence Form and collation of supporting evidence will be coordinated by the Quality Manager for Partnerships and Study Centres.

The Partnership Committee will scrutinise all due diligence documentations, together with the Business Plan and decide whether or not to convene a Site Visit Panel.

The Site Visit Panel will comprise of the Registrar (or nominee), the Operations Director and if required, a Head of School. In addition, the Partnership Committee will consider whether an external subject specialist should be appointed to the Site Visit Panel. An external subject specialist will normally only be required if there are any subject specialist resources or facilities to be considered.

The Site Visit Panel will consider:

- The suitability and capacity of the learning resources and premises to be used by Arden's students, including the provision of an appropriate and safe working environment for students;
- The suitability of any student support services which will be utilised by students;
- The partner's arrangements for managing and developing its learning resources and relevant support services;
- The adequacy of any subject specialist learning resources, such as laboratories or specialist library provision, where appropriate.

Stage 4. Approval by Academic Board

Academic Board will consider the rationale for the Study Centre via a *Support Service Provider*, as well as the written report of the Site Visit Panel and may approve the provision or highlight any further investigation required. Academic Board will verify that arrangements for delivery are appropriate and that students will be provided with learning opportunities of suitable quality and academic standards.

Stage 5. Support Service Provider Agreement

Following approval from Academic Board a formal agreement will be drawn up by the Finance Director with the *Support Service Provider*. Roles and responsibilities will be clearly set out and agreed via a signed agreement before any *Support Service Provider* partnership commences. The agreement will be approved by Exec. and signed by the Vice-Chancellor and the *Support Service Provider*. A copy of the agreement will be maintained by the Quality Manager for Partnerships and Study Centres. The agreement will include:

- Financial details
- Minimum student numbers
- A schedule of roles and responsibilities of both parties
- Quality assurance requirements
- Legal aspects
- Termination arrangements to protect interest of students should the agreement need to end by either party

Stage 6. Collaborative and Partnership Register

All signed *Support Service Provider* agreements will be added to the University's Collaborative and Partnership Register. The Register will detail the start, end and review date of the *Support Service Provider* agreement.

Monitoring Process

All Study Centres via *Support Service Providers* will be monitored at two distinct levels; programme and partner. The programme level monitoring will be in accordance with the University academic standards and quality management processes, regardless of the provision; Study Centre or on-line distance learning. The partner level review will be additional monitoring to ensure that the conduct of University programmes can continue with a *Support Service Provider*.

Programme Level Monitoring:

The programme monitoring process has been adapted to ensure student performance and feedback can be succinctly captured for all University provision on the following mechanisms:

- Module Evaluation – on completion of each module, all students will be asked to complete a Module Evaluation Survey. This will measure student views on academic material and resources; academic and other support; teaching and learning; assessments and general management of the module.
- Module Leader Report – module leaders will complete an evaluation of their module, taking into account student data and feedback for all University provision
- Exam Boards - consider student progression across all University provision and if needed request further investigation on a particular provision
- External Examiners – provide a report on modules taking into account all University provision
- Programme Team Leader Report – programme team leaders will complete an evaluation of their programme across all University provision and reflect on student progression, failure, withdrawal and award statistics
- Student Feedback – the Staff Student Liaison Committees organised at Study Centres will ensure feedback is captured on all aspects of a programme and forwarded to Programme Team Leaders, as well as presentation at Course Committee
- Tutor Performance Monitoring – the programme team leader report at Course Committee incorporates tutor performance and development on marking and moderation and lesson observations for all University provision
- Course Committee – oversight of programme management and enhancement to ensure programmes have been delivered in accordance with student, University and national expectations
- Annual Monitoring Report – a detailed summary presented to Academic Board of the previous year operations, good practice, opportunities for enhancement and feedback on all University provision

Partner Level Review

The Partnership Committee will undertake a review of the continuous suitability of *Support Service Providers* to ensure the student experience at Study Centres remains comparable with standards and quality throughout the University.

The purpose of partner review will be to:

- Provide assurance that a *Support Service Providers* continues to be a suitable partnership for Study Centre provision.
- Update and manage *Support Service Provider* agreements and address any needs identified via the programme monitoring process.
- Ensure student handbooks are updated with any changes to premises, learning resources, pastoral support or facilities with the *Support Service Provider* approved by the Partnership Committee.
- Assess strategic, financial and operational management of *Support Service Providers* and manage identified risks or if required, recommend termination of agreements to Exec..

The partner review will be undertaken on an annual basis and co-ordinated by the Quality Manager for Partnerships and Study Centres.

Termination by University

In the event the University decides to end a partnership with a *Support Service Provider*, then the termination will be carried out in line with terms of the contract. In such cases termination can be actioned due to a variety of reasons (e.g. ongoing poor quality, lack of sufficient recruitment, change in strategic direction). The termination process will be initiated by the Partnership Committee and subject to approval by Exec. and Academic Board.

The termination process will ensure that the student experience is maintained and protected throughout the exit period.

On approval of termination from Exec., a meeting to confirm the termination decision will be held with the *Support Service Provider*. A formal letter will set out details of termination and the *Support Service Provider* will be removed from the Collaborative and Partnership Register.

Termination by *Support Service Provider*

A partnership can be terminated by the *Support Service Provider* but must comply with the terms of the contract and ensure current students are able to complete their studies up to the maximum registration period. The *Support Service Provider* will be advised to send a formal letter of termination with rationale for closure fully communicated. The University will advise the *Support Service Provider* to continue working with the University to ensure students are protected and successfully complete their studies throughout the exit period.

Appendix 1. Study Centre via Support Service Provider Procedure, Monitoring and Review Procedures:

