ARDEN UNIVERSITY QUALITY ASSURANCE DOCUMENT QA 45 – AGENT APPROVAL, MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide a set of procedures for the approval, monitoring and management of UK and international agents at Arden University. These procedures are designed to ensure that responsibilities are clearly documented and that standards are maintained and enhanced in accordance with Arden University's Regulatory Framework; UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access; and British Council - Good Practice Guide for Education Agents; and UKVI.

Definition

Agent

- An organisation who is contracted to recruit students on behalf of Arden University for their undergraduate and/or postgraduate distance learning (DL) and/or blended learning (BL) provision. An agent is not an academic partner.

Agent arrangements can be either:

- marketing - a partner organisation which delivers marketing communications and/or acts in an advisory capacity to support student recruitment and/or the progression of students to Arden University programmes.

and/or

- referral – a partner organisation which acts to refer applications or groups of applications to Arden University for admission to a programme of study. Referral agents have no ongoing role in supporting progression and do not publish marketing materials relating to Arden University programmes, unless by prior agreement.

Referrer

In exceptional circumstances, the University may grant approval of a referrer (third-party) recommended by an approved University agent to support recruitment or lead generation of students to/on Arden University programmes.

The Approval and Management Process

There are nine key stages (appendix 1) involved in the approval and management process for agents, namely:

1. Director – Proposal and Initial Appraisal
2. Due Diligence

3. Review and approval by the Senior Quality Manager. If a cause for concern is identified, then the proposal would be forwarded to the Registrar or the Head of International Student Compliance for review and approval.

4. Report to Partnership Committee (acting on behalf of Academic Board)

5. Written Agreement

6. Update of the Collaborative and Partnership Register

7. Submit updated list of international recruitment agents to UKVI each quarter

8. Agent Training

9. Ongoing Monitoring and Review

These processes apply to all enquiries from prospective agents irrespective of whether those enquiries are unsolicited or have been elicited either directly or via promotional/marketing activity.

Stage 1. Director – Proposal and Initial Appraisal

It is the responsibility of Arden University proposing Director to undertake an initial appraisal of the recruitment opportunity and to put forward a business case for the agent appointment (using QA 45 Form 1 – Agent Proposal Overview Form, please see appendix 2).

The appraisal of agents will include an assessment of:

- scale and nature of business expected to be undertaken; markets, programmes and profile of potential students
- current operations, including location of office(s), number of staff, marketing initiatives and the application advisory service and support
- track record and experience of working with UK HE institutions
- projected numbers

Stage 2. Due Diligence

All agent arrangements are subject to a due diligence process (using QA 45 Form 2 – Agent Due Diligence Form, please see appendix 3) to ascertain legal and reputational risk. The due diligence of agents will include a review of:

- organisation and professional profile
- legal standing
- understanding of student recruitment in the UK
- business references

- for UK agents only, a basic evaluation of premises if potential students will be entering agent offices (with Arden University branding)

Any organisation entering into agreement with Arden University must be a legal entity operating in accordance with the legal obligations pertaining to the country in which they operate. In the case of an individual operating as a sole trader, that individual must satisfy the necessary laws for sole trader operation within the country in which their business operates. This means that the organisation or person should be registered with the appropriate authorities within their country and operating in accordance with the laws relating to a company or a sole trader.

The organisation must also have permission from the relevant authorities to deliver the services that it is contracted to undertake with Arden University. Appropriate documentation will be sought to evidence the legal standing and stability of the organisation as part of the due diligence. The agent must also declare any conflicts of interest in relation to other partners or individuals working with their organisation.

For UK agents only, additional consideration will be carried out if agent premises are planned to receive potential students or other parties on Arden University's behalf (i.e. where there will be Arden branding on site). The Senior Quality Manager can decide to conduct a site visit of agent premises (prior to approval) by an appropriate member of staff from Arden University, or a third-party representative acting on behalf of Arden University. In the case of a third-party representative the Registrar will be consulted to assure that the individual undertaking a site visit, is appropriately qualified and experienced to make a judgment against what could be reasonable expected to maintain Arden University standards.

Stage 3. Review and Approval by the Senior Quality Manager

The Senior Quality Manager will make an appraisal of the proposal and due diligence and decide whether to approve (using the Agent Approval Criteria Checklist, please see appendix 4). Approval will be granted where the Senior Quality Manager is assured an agent can deliver a recruitment service at a similar high standard to the University. In the event a cause for concern is identified then the proposal would be forwarded to the Registrar or Head of International Student Compliance for a decision.

Where a potential agent is deficient in a certain area of provision and it can be rectified, then advice and guidance will be given to address problem areas within a specified timescale.

Stage 4. Report to Partnership Committee (acting on behalf of Academic Board)

All agent approval decisions will be reported to Partnership Committee together with an overview of the proposal and rationale for decision.

Stage 5. Written Agreement

The Business Development Director will develop a written agreement (from a University template) with roles and responsibilities clearly set out and agreed before any agent arrangement commences. The

agreement will be approved by the General Legal Counsel and signed by the Chief Finance Officer. The agreement will include:

- financial details
- minimum student numbers
- legal aspects
- duration period
- expectations and behaviour norms
- approval of marketing collateral

The duration of agent agreements will be for 12-months and then extended yearly (with terms and conditions remaining unchanged), following successful monitoring reviews and on-going due diligence.

In the event any party decides to end an agreement, then the termination can be carried out in line with the terms and conditions of the agreement.

Stage 6. Update Collaborative and Partnership Register

Once the signed agreement is forwarded by the Business Development Director and saved as a formal record by the Senior Quality Manager, the Collaborative and Partnership Register will be updated. The register will detail the type of agreement, approval date, agreement duration, review date and completion of training.

Stage 7. Report to UKVI

In accordance with para 7.2 Tier 4 Sponsor Guidance (Document 2), details of agents assisting with the recruitment of international student will need to be provided to UKVI via EducatorsHelpdesk@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk. The updated list of relevant agents will be submitted to the UKVI each quarter by the Senior Quality Manager.

Stage 8. Agent Training

Agents will be provided with initial training via a Skype or face-to-face session to ensure accurate and effective promotion of the University and agreed programmes. University agent training will include:

- an overview of the University
- agreed programme information
- entry requirements and documentation
- application submission process
- UK HE regulatory understanding and legal requirements
- where relevant Tier 4 student visa training
- University standards and quality expectations
- approval, review and monitoring processes
- marketing approval process

Agents will also receive on-going training and support from the University via the Agent Guidelines and a dedicated University contact, to ensure the student experience at recruitment meets University standards.

Stage 9. Ongoing Monitoring and Review

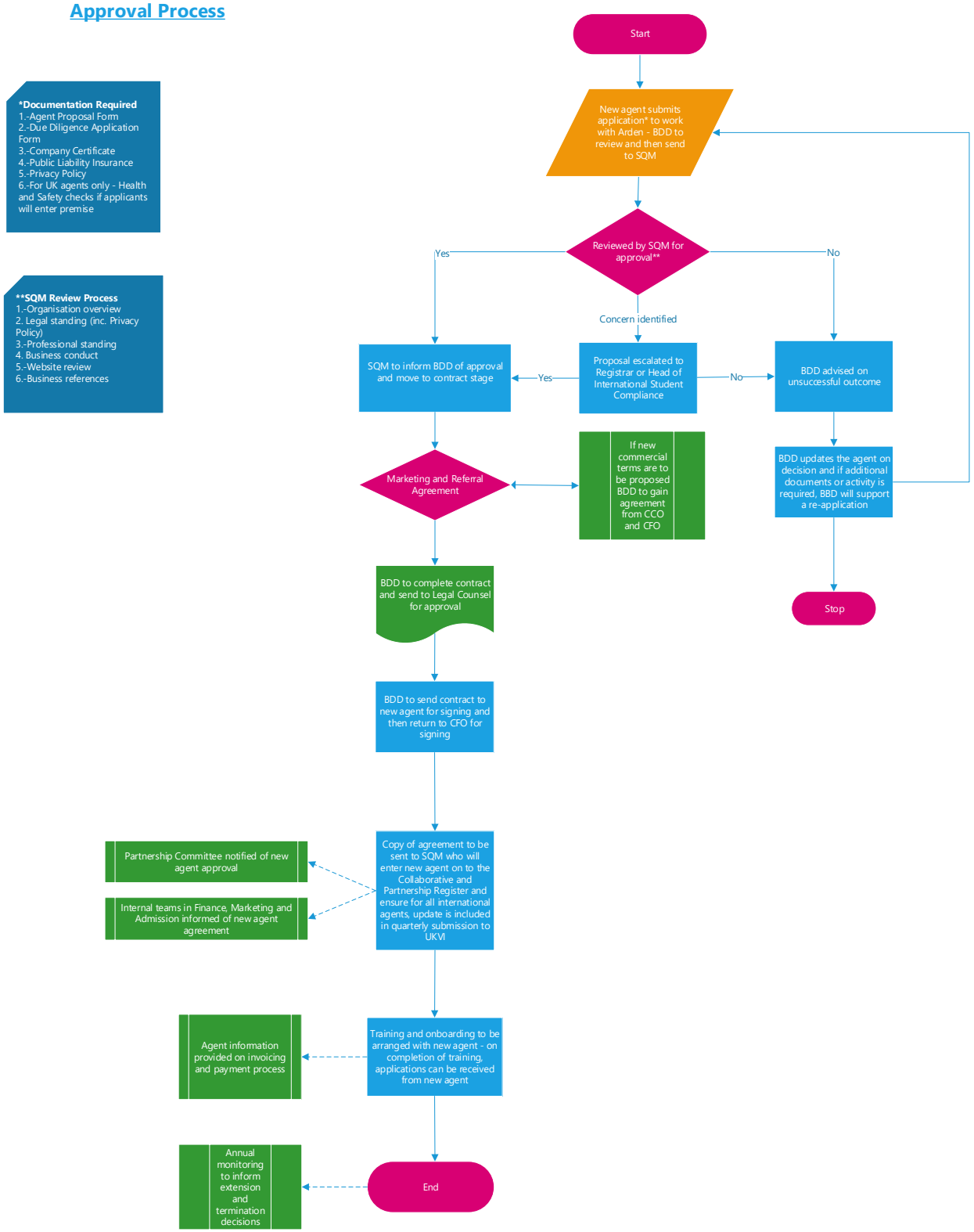
Agent agreements will be subject to an annual review of performance which will also inform extension and termination decisions by the Senior Quality Manager (using the Agent Contract Renewal Form, please see appendix 5). Regular monitoring of agent activity will be undertaken on the following aspects:

- number and quality of applications
- agent professionalism
- written information displayed by agents inc. website and all marketing collateral
- verbal information given by agents on admissions advice via call recording (where possible) or the Student – Agent Experience Survey
- student performance and progression

All monitoring for agents and referrers will be managed by the Senior Quality Manager and reported at Partnership Committee.

Appendix 1.

UK and International Agent Approval Process



Appendix 2.

QA 45 Agent Proposal Form

Proposal Details:

Proposal nominated by:	*Please select:* Arden University Director ☐ Head of School ☐ Other ☐ Name: Click or tap here to enter text. Title: Click or tap here to enter text.
Name of proposed organisation:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Organisation address:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Type of recruitment to be undertaken:	*Please select:* DL (UK and International) ☐ BL (UK internal) ☐ UK-Tier 4, FT ☐
Has a site visit been conducted?	*Please select:* Yes ☐ No ☐ By whom, please state name and title: Click or tap here to enter text. Please provide a brief description of premise facilites and standards: Click or tap here to enter text.

Overview and Rationale for Proposal:

Please outline business aims, structure, size and current activity of proposed organisation
Click or tap here to enter text.

Please outline rationale for working with the proposed organisation (e.g. interest in Arden University, programme(s); progression pathways, experience; and knowledge of UK HE sector).
Click or tap here to enter text.
Please outline target market (e.g. country or local region; audience; numbers; planned marketing channels/initiatives, exclusivity, etc.).
Click or tap here to enter text.

Risk and Concerns

Risk Management (please outline any identified concerns, for example; lack of UK HE Sector experience; potential business or ethical conflict; knowledge of any additional services and fees charged by agent/referrer; likelihood of potential students entering organisation premise on behalf of Arden University).			
Click or tap here to enter text.			
Overall risk rating:	Low ☐	Medium ☐	High ☐

Approval Outcome

Official Use Only	
Please select: Approved ☐ Rejected ☐	
Information for inclusion in agreement	Proposed minimum numbers: Click or tap here to enter number.
	Proposed territory: Click or tap here to enter text.
	Proposed contract term: Click or tap here to enter text.

	Programmes to be offered: Click or tap here to enter text.
	Exclusivity: No ☐ Yes ☐
	Commission Rate: Click or tap here to enter number.
Recommendations: For example, whether specific Tier 4 training is required, a time limited contract should be undertaken, or an office visit should be scheduled within the next 6-months.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Approval Date	Click or tap here to enter text.
Reported to Partnership Committee	Click or tap here to enter text.

Appendix 3.

QA 46 Agent Due Diligence Form

Organisation Profile:

1. Organisation name	Click or tap here to enter text.
2. Organisation address	Click or tap here to enter text.
3. Telephone number	Click or tap here to enter text.
4. Website address	Click or tap here to enter text.
5. Social Media Pages	Click or tap here to enter text.
6. Lead contact person; name, title and email address	Name: Click or tap here to enter text. Title: Click or tap here to enter text. Email address: Click or tap here to enter text.
7. Number of years established	Click or tap here to enter text.
8. Please outline your key business activities	Click or tap here to enter text.
9. Do you have knowledge of the UK Higher Education system?	Yes ☐ No ☐
10. Number of employees	Total number of employees: Click or tap here to enter text. Number of employees who will undertake recruitment/lead generation for Arden University: Click or tap here to enter text.
11. Please detail any agent accredited training or certification your organisation has (e.g. British Council Training)	Name of accreditation/training: Click or tap here to enter text. Copy of certificate provided: Yes ☐ No ☐

Legal Standing and Assessment:

12. Please provide a copy of your company registration certificate	Copy of certificate provided: Yes ☐ No ☐ Alternatively, for UK agents only please provide your company number with Companies House: Click or tap here to enter text.
13. VAT registration number (if applicable)	Number: Click or tap here to enter text.
14. Please specify legal status of your organisation (limited company, sole trader or other)	Click or tap here to enter text.
15. How many branches/offices do you have?	Number: Click or tap here to enter text. Location(s): Click or tap here to enter text.
16. Public Liability Insurance Certificate	Copy of certificate provided: Yes ☐ No ☐
17. Please state any known business or ethical conflict to an arrangement with Arden University	Click or tap here to enter text.

Business Operations:

18. Please provide list of current recruitment arrangements with other HE Providers	Please complete following details:	
	Name of HE Provider:	Number submitted

19. Please outline your target market – geographical area and typical applicant profile	Click or tap here to enter text.
20. Please state which specific Arden University programmes you would wish to recruit for (if all, then please state this)	Click or tap here to enter text.
21. Why do you want to add Arden University to the list of institutions you represent? (Please outline Arden University strengths in the market you have identified)	Click or tap here to enter text.
22. Please provide an estimate of annual recruitment to Arden University	
23. Please provide an outline of your marketing initiatives and campaigns	Click or tap here to enter text.
24. What local connections do you have (e.g. schools, colleges, employer networks, British Council, etc)?	Click or tap here to enter text.
25. Do you charge applicants?	For an advisory service: Yes ☐ No ☐ if so, please state amount: Click or tap here to enter text. For application support: Yes ☐ No ☐ if so, please state amount: Click or tap here to enter text. Please list any additional services you provide, and the fees charged: Click or tap here to enter text.

Standards - UK Regulation

To determine your training needs, please complete the following:

26. Please confirm level of knowledge and implementation of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation in the UK)	Good ☐ Sufficient ☐ Lacking ☐
	Do you have a Privacy Policy? Yes ☐ No ☐ If so, please provide a copy.
	Please outline the data security measures your organisation undertakes: Click or tap here to enter text.
27. If you are an international recruitment agent, please confirm your knowledge of UK visa regulations, this should include Tier 4 and other student visa options	Good ☐ Sufficient ☐ Lacking ☐ Please state who provides your counsellors with UK visa training and how often is it updated? Click or tap here to enter text.
28. Please confirm level of awareness of the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)	Good ☐ Sufficient ☐ Lacking ☐
29. Please confirm level of knowledge and awareness of Prevent Responsibility in the UK	Good ☐ Sufficient ☐ Lacking ☐
30. Please confirm level of knowledge and awareness of UK Bribery Act 2010	Good ☐ Sufficient ☐ Lacking ☐
31. Please confirm level of knowledge and awareness of	Good ☐ Sufficient ☐ Lacking ☐

Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)	

Please complete the following section, **only** if you are a UK agent and prospective students will enter your premise on behalf of Arden University.

32. Please provide a copy of the lease agreement for the premise you occupy	Copy of agreement provided: Yes ☐ No ☐ Any comments:
33. Fire Safety (please confirm legal obligation is met for fire and evacuation provision)	Yes ☐ No ☐ Any comments:
34. First Aid (please confirm minimum first aid provision and responsibility)	Yes ☐ No ☐ Any comments:
35. Disabled Access (please confirm that legal obligations are met in terms of disabled access; lifts, ramps, toilet facilities, parking, etc.)	Yes ☐ No ☐ Any comments:
36. Safeguarding (please confirm that legal obligations are met in providing a safe environment for people under the age of 18 or 'adults who may be at risk')	Yes ☐ No ☐ Any comments:

References

Please supply the name and contact details of two referees from institutions for whom you act as a representative in student recruitment

	Referee 1	Referee 2
Institution Name	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Contact Name	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Contact Title	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Address	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Telephone Number	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Contact Email Address	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Appendix 4.

Agent Approval Criteria Checklist

Name of Agent:

Aspect:	Assessment Method	Requirement	Sufficient Evidence
Organisation overview and profile - to provide indication of an organisation's business image, competencies and approach	• Adequate completion of due diligence form (and proposal form) – basic sentence structure, spellings and content	Mandatory	☐ Yes ☐ No Any comments:
	• Google maps – surrounding location and office frontage	Preferred	☐ Yes ☐ No Any comments:
	• Website – professional presentation, accuracy of contents, language style and sentence structure and reference to other providers	Mandatory	☐ Yes ☐ No Any comment:

<u>Legal and professional standing</u> - to illustrate an organisation's adherence to minimum legal and professional standards	• Confirm company registration number	Mandatory	☐ Yes ☐ No Any comments:
	• Public Liability Insurance – demonstration of agent's duty of care and level of responsibility	Mandatory	☐ Yes ☐ No Any comments:
	• Privacy Policy – adequate coverage of requesting, transferring and securing applicant data	Mandatory	☐ Yes ☐ No Any comments:
<u>Ethics, Standards and Integrity</u>	• Current membership to British Council (if applicable)	Preferred	☐ Yes ☐ No

- to provide an insight into an organisation's business conduct			Any comments:
	• Two satisfactory business references	Mandatory	☐ Yes ☐ No Any comments:
	• Check relationship with any other providers listed on organisation's website (if applicable)	Preferred	☐ Yes ☐ No Any comments:
	• Check Tier-4 and visa regulation knowledge (for international recruitment agents)	Mandatory (for international recruitment agents for Tier-4)	☐ Yes ☐ No Any comments:
<u>Premise (for UK agents, if applicants will enter the building)</u>	• Will students enter premise for advisory or recruitment to Arden University	Mandatory	☐ Yes ☐ No

- to illustrate an organisation's duty of care, level of responsibility for health and safety and adherence of obligations and standards as expected by the University			
	• Premise available for duration of agreement	Mandatory	☐ Yes ☐ No Any comments:
	• Fire Safety	Mandatory	☐ Yes ☐ No Any comments:
	• Disabled access - if not met then a full statement of how the obligation would be fulfilled by the organisation	Preferred	☐ Yes ☐ No Any comments (alternative provision):
	• First Aid	Preferred	☐ Yes

			☐ No Any comments (alternative provision):
	• Safeguarding • Health and Safety Policy	Preferred	☐ Yes ☐ No Any comments:

Recommendation:

Decision by SQM:
☐ Approved ☐ Not approved ☐Refer to Registrar or Head of International Student Compliance

Decision by Registrar or Head of International Student Compliance:

Reported to Partnership Committee:
☐ Yes ☐ No Date:

Appendix 5.

Agent Contract Renewal Form

To be completed by the Business Development Director (or nominee)	
Name of Agent:	Click to enter details
Agent Address:	Click to enter details
Type of Agent:	Choose Type
Agent Contract Period:	Contract Start. to Contract Finish.
Agreed App. Target	Insert Number
Total Apps. (to date)	Insert Number
Enrolments (to date)	Insert Number
Quality of Apps.	Click to enter details
Working Relationship	Click to enter details
To be completed by Head of Marketing (or nominee)	

Marketing and Publicity	Does the agent reference Arden University on website or in marketing collateral? Choose an item. If 'yes', please give details: Is the Arden University logo correct? Choose an item. Is the relationship between Arden University and the agent accurately described? Choose an item. Does the agent present correctly present key information on programme structure, fees and dates? Choose an item. Does the agent make any claims to have authority to admit or offer places? Choose an item. Does the agent make any requests for payments from students? Choose an item.
	Please provide any further comments:
	Does the agent website include any programme information? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please forward to Quality for a detailed review
To be completed by Quality for programme review	
Programme Information	Is programme information on the agent website accurate and up-to-date?

	Yes ☐ No ☐ Please provide any further comments:
Recommendation	Choose an item.
Signed by:	Please insert name and title
Review Due Diligence for extensions	Checked on: Date By: Choose an item. Comments: Please provide findings and any action required.

Approved by the Senior Quality Manager	On: Date Period of extension - Choose an item. Finance and Admission updated on: Click or tap to enter a date.

Reported to Partnership Committee	On: Date