



London's
International
Drama School

**Rose
Bruford
College**

of Theatre
& Performance

Collaborative Provision

HANDBOOK

Angela Taylor

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Collaborative Provision Handbook

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INTRODUCTION TO COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

1. Collaborative provision involves the delivery of Rose Bruford College's (RBC) programmes or modules in partnership with an approved external organisation which formally assumes a level of responsibility for the delivery, assessment or resource provision.
2. Any external body with which RBC wishes to enter into an arrangement to deliver collaborative provision, must be formally recognised by RBC. Institutional recognition is not required for off-site delivery of RBC programmes by RBC staff.
3. RBC may offer collaborative provision in conjunction with other bodies in the UK or overseas. RBC benefits from collaborating with others through enhancing our standing, profile and reach in national and international contexts. Collaboration will facilitate access and progression routes to RBC awards and to higher education in general. It will enhance student learning by sharing good practice and will enhance staff development across institutions. In addition, collaboration makes a contribution to RBC's financial stability.
4. RBC takes a proportionate approach to approving collaborative provision; depending on the partner, size, location and amount of credit involved. Partner approval and programme validation are two separate processes. In all cases separate decisions should be made about the academic credibility of a proposed collaboration and the strategic and business aspects of a proposed collaboration.
5. This Handbook aims to provide an accessible and comprehensive guide to procedural requirements for the approval, monitoring and review of collaborative provision for staff at RBC and at partner institutions.

Scope of the Handbook

6. This Handbook applies to the arrangements overseen by the Quality Office as follows:
 - validated provision
 - joint awards
 - franchised programmes (delivered in whole or in part)
 - articulation arrangements

It does **not** cover

- off campus delivery by RBC (provided that another partner is not involved)
- study abroad arrangements for RBC students for up to a period of one year (including Erasmus). This is dealt with by a separate procedure.
- Placement learning. This is dealt with by a separate procedure.

The Handbook

- provides information about RBC's approval and management framework for a range of collaborative provision arrangements

- provides advice and guidance for staff and organisations which wish to develop collaborative provision arrangements
 - provides guidance for staff and organisations about RBC's requirements for the ongoing management of collaborative provision.
7. The principal aim of the Handbook is to make explicit the responsibilities of RBC and its partner institutions for the management and assurance of the academic quality and standards of academic awards conferred by RBC. Many of the quality assurance processes, especially concerning approval, validation and monitoring of programmes, are essentially the same whether the programmes are delivered at RBC, Partner Institution, or both - but are nevertheless described here for the sake of clarity, with some additional guidance relating specifically to partner institutions.
 8. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is an independent body entrusted with monitoring and advising on standards and quality in UK higher education. This is undertaken through the review of academic standards and quality and providing nationally agreed reference points that help to define clear and explicit standards.
 9. Publically funded HEIs such as RBC are subject to scrutiny by the QAA, through a peer-review process called Higher Education Review (HER) which takes place on a periodic basis. Rose Bruford College was last reviewed in November 2014. The QAA judged RBC's academic standards, the quality and enhancement of student learning opportunities, and the quality of information about these learning opportunities to all meet UK expectations.
 10. This successful review means that RBC can display the QAA Quality Mark, indicating to UK and international students that it meets national requirements for standards and quality. [A copy of the report is available on the QAA website.](#)

QAA Quality Code

11. The QAA UK Quality Code is the definitive reference point for all UK Higher Education providers. The Code is divided into three parts, and each part has a number of chapters. The main chapter which relates to collaborative provision is Chapter B10, *Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*. The Chapter specifies the following expectation regarding the management of the delivery of learning opportunities with others as follows:

Degree-awarding bodies take ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them. Arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the degree-awarding body are implemented securely and managed effectively.
12. RBC's Collaborative Provision Handbook is consistent with this expectation, Chapter B10 and the full Quality Code.

Definitions of Collaborative Provision

13. Chapter B10 of the QAA Quality Code, defines collaborative provision as the management of all learning opportunities leading or contributing to the award of academic credit or a qualification that are delivered, assessed or supported through an arrangement with one or more organisations other than the degree-awarding body.
14. Collaborative provision may fall into one of several categories, and depending on the type of collaboration different levels of quality assurance (depending on the risk to RBC) and administrative support will be required. If the type of collaboration proposed in a new venture does not fall into one of the categories described above, or if you aren't clear which category might apply, please discuss your proposals with the Quality Office.

COLLABORATIVE PROVISION AT ROSE BRUFORD COLLEGE

Strategic Aims and Key Principles of Collaborative Provision

15. The strategic aims of Collaborative Provision at RBC are as follows:
 - enhance RBC's standing and profile in national and international contexts
 - enrich the diversity of RBC's partnerships, nationally and internationally
 - facilitate access and progression routes to RBC awards and to higher education in general
 - enhance the student learning experience by sharing good practice and enriching the curriculum
 - to offer provision which RBC or the Partner Institution could not provide on its own
 - Make a viable contribution to RBC's strategy of financial stability.
16. All collaborative provision must:
 - support the aims set out in RBC's strategic plan
 - in alignment with RBC's academic provision
 - bring clear benefits to RBC and the Partner Institution
 - ensure that the academic standards of awards offered through the Partner are equivalent to those of comparable awards delivered by RBC
 - comply with the Qualifications Framework, any relevant QAA subject benchmark statements
 - ensure that the quality of student learning opportunities and experiences are comparable to those of RBC and will enable students to achieve the appropriate academic standards
 - not be in direct competition with RBC awards or those offered by existing partnerships

- be financially robust and have a clear financial rationale for both parties
 - be appropriately resourced and supported by the Partner Institution
 - be compliant with internal and national (UK and EU) legislative requirements
 - not be franchised to a third party or organisation
 - demonstrate independence of institutional ownership from the exercise of academic authority through a governance structure that protects and assures the integrity of academic decision making
 - have English as the primary language of instruction and assessment
 - for validated or franchised provision, be confirmed in a written Memorandum of Understanding, signed by the Head of each institution.
17. All students registered for an award of RBC which is delivered elsewhere are considered students of RBC for quality assurance purposes. Some responsibility for some aspects of provision may be devolved to the partner, under the oversight of RBC. In the event of the premature termination of the partnership in line with the RBC policy [on programme suspension or closure](#). RBC is responsible for ensuring that students admitted to a programme who wish to complete it can do so to the appropriate level.

Types of collaborative provision

18. Collaborative provision can take a range of forms. The Quality Office at RBC manages the partnership arrangements listed below, and which are covered by this Handbook. The Quality Office will be able to advise on who to contact regarding other collaborative activities such as Erasmus mobility schemes or work-based or placement learning.
19. **Validated provision**
This is a collaborative arrangement under which a programme has been designed by an approved Partner Institution and delivered at that institution. It could also be delivering a programme already approved and delivered by RBC. The programme has been judged through a peer-review approval process to be of an appropriate standard and quality to lead to an RBC award. RBC will only validate programmes in alignment or complementary to its own academic areas of interest. When considering proposals to validate external programmes, RBC will take particular account of whether or not a similar programme is offered within RBC, and if so the implications of the proposed validation for existing internal provision. RBC will charge for undertaking the validation of external provision which will reflect RBC's full costs.
20. **Joint Award**
This is a collaborative arrangement through which RBC and one or more degree awarding bodies (approved as partner institutions) together design and deliver a programme leading to a single award made jointly by both, or all institutions.
21. **Franchise**
This is an arrangement whereby RBC agrees to authorise a delivery organisation to deliver and assess one of RBC's own approved programmes, leading to an RBC award. RBC maintains responsibility for the programme content and quality and standards.
22. **Off-campus delivery**
This involves a full RBC programme delivered by RBC staff at an approved organisation. It might also include work-based learning for a specific employer.

These arrangements are likely to vary in the nature and level of support required, and therefore each proposal should be discussed with the Head of Quality at an early stage.

23. Articulation arrangement

This is a collaborative arrangement through which a qualification or credit awarded by an approved Partner Institution is formally recognised as granting direct entry to an advanced point of an RBC programme. *Articulation arrangements should not be confused with individual applications for RP(E)L or with advanced standing of individuals to programmes.*

24. Other collaborative provision arrangements

Any potential collaborative provision arrangement, which does not fall into one of the above categories should be discussed with the Head of Quality who will determine approval processes which are proportionate to the scale of provision proposed. This includes the mechanism for credit rating of training or continuous professional development.

Approved organisations

25. RBC can only enter into a collaborative provision arrangement with an institution which has been formally approved. Those institutions which collaborate with RBC for validation, study abroad, off campus delivery and articulation arrangements are formally approved as partner institutions.

26. A register of approved partnerships, including the name and location of the partner, is maintained by the Head of Quality and available through RBC's website.

Responsibility for collaborative provision at Rose Bruford College

27. Strategic responsibility for all collaborative provision lies with RBC's Academic Board, including the initial approval of all proposals, prior to any major resource investment in the partnership. Senior Management Committee will also be involved at an early stage in the proposal process.

28. The Vice Principal provides academic leadership for RBC's collaborative provision portfolio, and is the first point of contact in relation to any new proposals.

29. The Quality Office is responsible for ensuring that the processes to secure quality and standards of all collaborative provision arrangements are rigorous and transparent, whilst remaining proportionate and appropriate to the level of risk involved. The Quality Office also provides central operational management of the approval, monitoring and review processes of all proposals, and maintains the Collaborative Provision Register. The day-to-day partnership management aspects of validation are operated through the Quality Office.

30. It is the responsibility of the relevant School and programme to liaise with collaborative provision partners on day-to-day academic matters, adhering to guidance provided by the Quality Office. For all validated and franchised provision, an Academic Link Tutor or Academic Co-ordinator will be identified to offer support and advice to the Partner Institution. The role of the Academic Link Tutor is intended to strengthen the validation partnership. Academic Link Tutors will be invited to

undertake activities with Partner Institutions which enhance the student learning experience and staff development at both institutions. Academic Link Tutors will supply an annual report on their interactions with the Partner Institution which will inform their annual monitoring and be considered at the relevant School Board. An outline of the Academic Link Tutor role is set out in **Annex 2**.

Committee approval arrangements

31. The approval, monitoring and review of collaborative provision is progressed through RBC's committee structure as follows:
 - Academic Development Committee
 - Senior Management Committee
 - Academic Board

THE INSTITUTIONAL APPROVAL PROCESS

Introduction

32. All collaborations are subject to a Partner Approval process. If programme validation is also involved, institutional approval will normally happen in parallel with the programme validation process, although sometimes validation will take place once the partner has been approved.
33. The Partner Approval process has 4 stages:
 - Stage 1 – initial consideration of the proposal
 - Stage 2 – due diligence (academic, financial and legal)
 - Stage 3 – partner and programme approval
 - Stage 4 – written agreement
34. RBC takes a rigorous approach to managing collaborative provision and will assess any proposed partnership for the benefits and risks associated with each proposed new partnership. As the degree-awarding body, RBC has ultimate responsibility for students admitted to all programmes, including those delivered collaboratively. The most important consideration is always to safeguard the standard and quality of the awards and ensure that the interests of students are protected through collaborative arrangements.
35. RBC's choice of collaborative partners will be guided by the strategic aims and key principles set out in section 15 and an understanding of the mutual benefit and development potential of the collaboration
36. Collaborative provision proposals originate from various sources: senior management, Schools, individuals or prospective partner institutions. In all cases, RBC's approval process must be followed.
37. The process consists of the strategic consideration of the new proposal followed by separate approval at institutional and programme level. Each collaborative arrangement is subject to a written agreement which must be signed prior to the start of the programme. The level of inquiry at each approval stage will be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the collaborative arrangement and perceived risk to RBC's ability to secure the quality and standards of the award and the interests of students
38. Opportunities created through validation and joint award arrangements are likely to offer innovative collaborative working. However, the arrangements also present an increased level of risk to RBC in terms of securing the quality of the award and the safeguarding of the interests of students. The due diligence and approval processes applied to the development of validation and joint award partnerships are therefore proportionate to the increased level of risk.
39. In considering validation partnerships for approval RBC will need to make informed judgements regarding the capacity of the prospective Partner Institution to deliver

the programme(s) in line with UK Higher Education reference points and RBC's requirements.

40. When it is proposed that validation partnerships operate within an international context, RBC will consider the projected advantages associated with such initiatives, alongside the additional challenges and risks.
41. The establishment of joint award partnerships will require careful consideration of the best way to align the regulations, academic policies, quality assurance requirements and approval processes of both institutions. It is often the case that a lead institution will be appointed. In entering into joint award partnerships, RBC will ensure that its own academic standards are maintained.
42. A proportionate approach will be applied to the approval of other collaborative arrangements where RBC retains a greater level of control of the standards and quality of the awards.
43. In all cases, the Quality Office will lead on and guide colleagues through the approval process.

Stage 1 - INITIAL CONSIDERATION OF THE PROPOSAL

44. The first stage of the approval process for new collaborative provision arrangements is as follows;

Discussion with the Vice Principal and Head of Quality

45. All proposals for new collaborative provision arrangements should in the first instance be directed to the Vice Principal and copied to the Head of Quality. SMC should be notified of the proposal at this stage. Staff who have an idea for a new arrangement or who have been approached by a potential partner, must obtain the support of their Head of School prior to this referral.
46. In each case, the Vice Principal, in discussion with the Head of Quality, will consider:
 - the type of collaborative provision proposed
 - the alignment of the proposal with the aims and principles of collaborative provision
47. If the Vice Principal considers that the proposed collaborative provision arrangement should be explored further, initial discussions will take place with the relevant School and programme, the prospective partner, and the Quality Office. This might be conducted virtually or through an informal site visit to the prospective partner. The Vice Principal and Head of Quality will determine whether a site visit will be necessary; this will depend on the nature of the partnership and any associated risks. If a site visit is conducted, then a report on the visit should be completed using the site visit report form and included with the initial proposal documentation. The purpose of the site visit would be to ensure that the physical resources and accommodation at the proposed Partner Institution are satisfactory.

The standard items for discussion for all types of provision at this stage include:

- the type of collaborative provision proposed
- the rationale for the proposal
- the prospective partner's capacity to support the proposed arrangement (including any history of operating similar arrangements with other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs))
- the relationship of the students to RBC, and consideration of any existing cohorts which would be affected by a change to the degree-awarding body
- responsibility for HESA and other statutory returns
- any PSRB requirements for the proposed provision which could impact on RBC
- RBC's approach to collaborative provision, and an outline of the approval processes and requirements of RBC and the prospective partner
- for validation partnerships, the need for the Partner Institution to adopt RBC's academic regulations or seek variance if applicable
- existing validation arrangements in place at the prospective partner
- the responsibilities for international student recruitment, reporting and UK visa requirements (UK institutions)
- identification of any national education authority requirements in the jurisdiction where the provision is to be delivered (e.g. for international institutions).

In addition for joint award partnerships:

- the legal and regulatory basis on which the proposed Partner Institution could grant the relevant joint award
- consideration as to whether there will be a lead partner for the arrangement, and if so which institution might be best equipped to take on this responsibility.

48. In addition for validated provision:

the capacity of the Partner Institution to undertake responsibilities in relation to:

- marketing, recruitment, admissions, enrolment, tuition fee collection and record keeping
- RBC's expectations in terms of assessment, moderation and external examining
- the Partner Institution's responsibilities for student support provision and learning resources.

49. In addition for professionally accredited programmes

- discussions with PSRBs to ascertain whether they are willing to support the proposed development and to ascertain whether there will be any requirements of RBC as the degree-awarding body.

Initial approval of the proposal

50. The next stage of the process is for the Vice Principal, in conjunction with the Head of Quality to complete an Outline Approval Form for consideration at ADC and SMC. This includes a section setting out resource implications which provides an initial scoping of the scheme in terms of financial viability. To accompany the Outline Approval Form, and to enable initial due diligence to be completed, the partner institution should supply three years' worth of audited accounts. In addition, a Companies House report should be sought by the Head of Quality.
51. ADC and SMC may agree the proposal to enable it to move forward for outline approval, or they may request further information or impose conditions which have to be met before the proposal can proceed to the outline approval stage. If either ADC or SMC is not satisfied that the partnership is viable, or is not aligned to RBC's strategic plan, it will formally reject the proposal at this stage, giving reasons. If the proposal is rejected, it may not be re-presented until a full academic year has elapsed. Feedback outlining the reasons for the rejection will be provided to the proposed partner by the Vice Principal.

Business case development

52. If initial approval is given to the new proposal, a business case will be developed for presentation to SMC
53. RBC will consider the level of risk associated with the proposed partnership and the potential of the prospective Partner to meet the criteria for Institutional Approval. A sound business case, based upon a comprehensive costing of activities for a five year period and realistic revenue projection, will be produced by the Director of Finance. This will build on the initial scoping of the scheme in terms of financial viability within the initial approval phase.
54. The Vice Principal and Head of Quality will work with the relevant Head of School, Director of Finance and the prospective partner to prepare the following documentation:
 - risk assessment exercise
 - mapping to RBC's criteria for Institutional Approval
 - outline of proposed contingency plans should the partnership fail
 - costing model and revenue projection
55. RBC has to ensure the reliability of each prospective Partner Institution in terms of financial, legal, academic and reputational factors. The Quality Office will co-ordinate a risk assessment exercise as part of the business case submission to SMC and will complete a risk assessment form.

Risk assessment exercise

56. The risk assessment will look at a range of factors including:
 - partnership type
 - location of partner

- status
 - strengths
 - partner's expertise in a particular field
 - partner's existing collaboration with other UK higher education institutions
 - strategic fit
57. In addition, large scale collaborative provision partnerships may require scrutiny by the Finance and General Purposes Committee or the Board of Governors. The Registrar and Secretary will advise in all cases.
58. Once a validation or joint award partnership is in place, ongoing risk management procedures will include annual programme review, annual meetings and Institutional Review, prior to contract renewal (see 160). For validated and franchised provision, an Academic Link is appointed who will be able to provide academic oversight.

Mapping to RBC's criteria for Institutional Approval

59. For validation and joint award arrangements, prospective Partner Institutions must be able to demonstrate that they meet, or have the potential to meet, all of the criteria for institutional approval. This will be evidenced through the due diligence enquiries undertaken during the next stage of the approval process. The capacity to meet the criteria for Institutional Approval will be further measured during the formal approval visit.
60. For other collaborative provision arrangements the proposed partners will be required to demonstrate that they fulfil only the criteria that specifically relate to the partnership. The Quality Office will advise in all cases.
61. The full criteria are as follows:
- strategic fit between RBC and the Partner Institution
 - high academic standing and compatibility with RBC's mission, objectives and values
 - a commitment from both RBC and the Partner Institution to develop stable relationships which will be mutually beneficial
 - institutional governance structures which protect the independence of academic decision-making
 - an appropriate environment and ethos for the delivery of higher education
 - where applicable, a satisfactory record of a collaborative provision partnership with another HEI
 - experience of delivering programmes at the proposed level, or evidence that the institution will be capable of delivering programmes at the proposed level
 - appropriately qualified teaching staff and administrative staff to support the programme
 - appropriate academic infrastructure (or confirmation that RBC's infrastructure will apply to the partnership) which includes policies and processes for admissions, student records, examinations, student complaints and appeals
 - appropriate student services and support arrangements

- robust quality assurance and quality enhancement processes, which have defined accountability for academic quality and which demonstrate familiarity with the requirements of UK Higher Education. In particular the institution should demonstrate engagement with the QAA UK Quality Code
- adequate resources for the programme(s) to be offered through the collaboration which include teaching rooms or other specialised teaching spaces, library, IT and social spaces
- financial viability and stability
- ability to contract legally with RBC.

Contingency planning

62. RBC will need to consider how the interests of students might be protected should there be cause to prematurely terminate the partnership. In such cases, RBC must ensure that students who wish to complete their programme are able to do so. This is in accordance with indicator 9 of Chapter B10 of the QAA Quality Code.

Costing model and revenue projection

63. A detailed costing model and revenue projection for the set-up and operation of the proposed partnership for a full five years will be produced by the Director of Finance. This will also take into account any potential financial risks to RBC resulting from the contingency planning exercise.
64. In the case of international arrangements, a check will be undertaken to clarify if there are relevant statutory financial obligations which will need to be met.
65. The Director of Finance will provide details of fees for all elements of the approval process to the prospective partner at this stage. The fees will be based in part on projected student numbers and the number of programmes

SMC approval

66. Once the risk assessment, contingency planning and costing model has been completed, a business case will be drawn up by the Vice Principal, Registrar, Director of Finance and coordinated by the Head of Quality. SMC will review the business case and consider whether the proposal should be progressed. SMC will take into account whether the proposal is in accord with the RBC's strategic plan and does not expose RBC to unnecessary risk. If satisfied, SMC will confirm that the proposal should proceed to the Institutional Approval stage. If it is not satisfied, it could ask the proposed partner to provide more information, or it could reject the proposal outright. If it rejects the proposal, the Vice Principal will inform the proposed partner

STAGE 2 – ACADEMIC, FINANCIAL AND LEGAL DUE DILIGENCE

67. Following initial approval of the partnership, RBC will carry out due diligence to consider the reputation, standing and academic performance of the prospective partner. This is to ensure the quality of education delivered as part of the collaboration, and to protect RBC's reputation.
68. This also reflects the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B10 Managing Higher Education with Others, which states that:

'appropriate and proportionate due diligence procedures are determined for each proposed arrangement for delivering learning opportunities with an organisation other than the degree-awarding body. They are conducted periodically to check the capacity of the other organisation to continue to fulfil its designated role in the arrangement.'

69. Through the academic financial and legal due diligence exercise, the prospective Partner Institution will be invited to evidence how it meets the criteria for institutional approval.
70. The due diligence documentation normally required from the Partner for validation and joint award partnerships is outlined in Annex 3. Once this information is received, the Head of Quality will complete a due diligence checklist to ensure that all necessary information has been provided and will coordinate the completion of a due diligence form and report.
71. Where the proposed Partner Institution has a longstanding collaborative provision partnership with another UK HEI, the Head of Quality will consider whether a reduced submission of due diligence information might be appropriate depending on the level of scrutiny that the institution may have already undergone through other approval procedures. At this stage in the process, RBC will contact the current validator for a reference, having informed the Partner Institution of the intention to do so.
72. It is recognised that requiring prospective partner institutions to share such information is highly sensitive. RBC will not ask for information and documentation that it would not, in turn, be prepared to share with the prospective partner. Information provided will be treated in confidence. RBC is willing to sign a non-disclosure agreement if requested. RBC anticipates that the potential partner will scrutinise RBC's practice, operations and history.

Additional due diligence for international partnerships

73. For international provision, RBC needs to be able to ensure that it can operate within the legislative, political, ethical and cultural requirements of a particular country, and at the same time to fulfil the expectations of the QAA Quality Code. The Quality Office will also take the following steps:
- (i) Consult with government offices and agencies in the country concerned and UK bodies such as the British Council.
 - (ii) Request reports from the relevant country's own higher education quality assurance agency(ies).

- (iii) Seek advice on the country's legal framework governing higher education activities, on the financial and cultural environment, and other legislative matters.
- (iv) Take account of the economic and political stability of the areas concerned.

Due Diligence Report

74. The due diligence report will contain the following information:

Academic due diligence

75. A report from the Head of Quality on the academic aspects of the prospective partner, including a review of the partner's policies and procedures. This section of the report will normally include the outcome of meetings with the Partner Institution to discuss assessment regulations, quality assurance policies and partnership management. Through these meetings, the Head of Quality will review the Partner Institution's policy documents to consider if alignment with RBC's policies would be required. References will be obtained from other institutions with whom the proposed Partner has collaborative relationships and triangulation with accreditation and other information on the proposed Partner Institution's website. The Head of Quality will also ensure that the institution is in good standing with the QAA and if relevant, any international accrediting bodies. Some of this information may be obtained at a site visit, if conducted.

Legal due diligence

76. A report from the Registrar and Secretary to include confirmation of the full legal name of the proposed Partner Institution (using Companies House or a corresponding overseas agency). If the proposed partner is in the UK, confirmation that it holds a current license to sponsor international students under Tier 4 student visa arrangements. If it is outside the UK confirmation that it meets the regulatory requirements of the country in which it is located. The report will also include information about disputes, complaints and litigation.

Financial due diligence

77. A report from the Director of Finance following scrutiny of three years of audited accounts, information about organisational structures and estates and other resources.

78. Following consideration of the due diligence submission by RBC staff as outlined above, the Head of Quality will coordinate the completion of a due diligence report. This will be provided to the Institutional Approval panel and will be appended to the final version of the institutional approval report for review by SMC and Academic Board.

STAGE 3 - INSTITUTIONAL APPROVAL (for validated provision only)

Introduction

79. The purpose of Institutional Approval is to enable RBC to ensure, through due diligence processes, the standing of the prospective Partner Institution and its ability to fulfil its role in the collaborative partnership. Institutional approval will consider the compatibility of the educational objectives of the proposed partner to those of RBC
80. The process involves:
- Documentary submission from the prospective Partner Institution including a Self-Evaluation Document (SED)
- Consideration of due diligence information
- Institutional approval visit:
- Panel visit to the proposed Partner Institution to include scrutiny of assessment regulations and admissions policy
 - Outcome considered and approved by relevant RBC committees
81. The prospective Partner Institution will be invited to prepare a draft Self-Evaluation Document (SED) which should be submitted to RBC together with the due diligence information by the agreed deadline.
82. The template for the Institutional Approval SED can be found in Annex 1.
83. The Quality Office will consider the draft SED and provide feedback to the prospective Partner prior to submission of the final version to members of the institutional approval panel. The final version of the SED and any other additional document which has been identified during the due diligence process, is normally required at least 6 weeks prior to the institutional approval visit, but exact timings will be confirmed by the Quality Office.

Institutional Approval Visit

Planning and agreement of key dates

84. Following approval of the business case, the Quality Office will contact the prospective partner to discuss the next stages in the approval process, and to confirm mutually agreeable dates for the institutional approval visit, potential dates for programme approval visits (if appropriate) and the timeframe for the written agreement.
85. The documentary submission is normally required 6 weeks before the institutional approval visit, but the Quality Office will confirm the timescale.

86. The Quality Office will also request information regarding any approval processes in place at the prospective Partner which may require action from RBC. For international arrangements, this will include consideration of any relevant national education authority requirements in the country in which the provision will be delivered.

Institutional Approval Panel

87. RBC will establish a panel to conduct the visit which will be conducted over one or two days (depending on location). The visit will enable the panel to make an assessment of the suitability of the proposed collaboration, and to confirm details which have been provided through documentation.

88. The panel will comprise:

- Vice Principal (Chair) (or nominee)
- One member of academic staff from RBC
- Two external panel members from other UK HEIs (at least one of whom must be an academic and both of whom must have experience of quality assurance systems and processes)
- Student member
- Head of Quality (or representative) to act as secretary to the panel

89. At the discretion of the Chair, one further member of RBC staff may be added to the membership if specific expertise is required but is not available from within the standard panel membership.

The RBC librarian will be asked to advise on library facilities prior to, or during the approval visit.

90. The visit will typically include the following:

- A meeting with the Principal, or equivalent
- Meetings with senior management
- A series of meetings with a range of the institution's academic and administrative staff
- Meetings with a selection of teaching staff who would be involved in the proposed collaborative programmes
- A meeting with a selection of students at the institution to examine their experience of studying at the institution

91. The panel will also expect to view the facilities, including teaching rooms, library and/ or LRC, IT resources and student support resources. A tour agenda will be agreed in advance of the approval visit. A series of private meetings will also be scheduled during the visit in order for the Panel to plan/review meetings held, review documentation and to formulate conclusions.

Panel documentation

92. The Institutional Approval panel will be provided with the following documentation by the Quality Office:
- RBC's briefing paper, including the background to the application and information on the approval process
 - The Self-Evaluation Document (SED) prepared by the prospective partner
 - The report from RBC on due diligence enquiries
 - In cases where there is an existing cohort of students enrolled on the programme, evidence of the student consultation undertaken by the Partner Institution.
93. A copy of all the documentation will be provided to the prospective partner.
94. The panel will be guided by the institutional approval criteria detailed in section 61 of this Handbook.

Outcome of the visit

95. With reference to the criteria, the documentary submission, and the discussions held during the visit, the institutional approval panel will make a recommendation regarding the approval which will be reported to Academic Board through the Academic Development Committee.
96. The approval period is normally five years. The approved Partner Institution will be subject to institutional review before the end of the period of approval.
97. The outcome of the visit may include the following:
- Commendations** – highlighting areas of best practice;
- Conditions** – requirements that the institution must meet within a set timeframe, upon which the approval of the institution is conditional. The response to the conditions must be confirmed as having been met prior to final approval of the institution by RBC's Academic Board;
- Recommendations** – longer term advisory points for the Partner Institution to consider. These are not compulsory but should be reflected on through the first annual monitoring process after institutional approval;
- Interim review** – the panel may also recommend that an interim review should take place during the course of the approval period to focus on a specific issue and/or to review the progress made with the longer-term recommendations. The format of the review would depend on the nature of the issues raised and will be determined following consultation between RBC and the Partner Institution.
98. At the conclusion of the visit, the panel will meet with senior managers at the proposed Partner Institution and informally discuss the unconfirmed findings and recommendations. In the event of non-approval the Quality Office will provide detailed feedback to the proposed Partner Institution on the steps that need to be taken before the approval can be reconsidered, as well as details of what support might be provided by RBC.

99. The secretary to the panel will prepare a draft summary of the outcome (including details of any commendations, conditions and recommendations) which will be circulated to the institution within one week of the approval visit.
100. The full draft of the institutional approval report will be produced within ten working days of the visit. The institution will be invited to comment on the factual accuracy of the report, prior to submission through RBC's committee structure.

Committee approval of the partnership

101. The report from the institutional approval visit (including the appended due diligence report(s)) will be made a recommendation to Academic Board. The final decision regarding the partnership will be made by Academic Board.

Programme Approval

Introduction

102. RBC is ultimately responsible for the academic standards and quality of programmes which lead to an RBC award. A detailed consideration of each programme proposed for validation, franchised provision or a joint award is undertaken to ensure that RBC can meet this responsibility.
103. Approval of the programme(s) may be considered at the same time as approval of the institution, depending on the complexity of the partnership. The Vice Principal and Head of Quality will determine the process to be adopted following initial consideration of the partnership approval and will make a recommendation to SMC accordingly.

Aims

104. The aims of the programme approval process for collaborative provision align with those for programmes delivered at RBC, and are as follows:
 - To ensure that the programme is appropriate in terms of its level and content, and in the light of current practice and development in the discipline
 - To ensure that the programme and its assessment strategy delivers and tests programme outcomes at the appropriate level for the award
 - To ensure that this is compatible with other programmes and the institution's aims and mission
 - To ensure that there is a market for the programme
 - To ensure that the necessary learning resources are available

UK Reference points

105. As a UK degree-awarding body, RBC makes use of the following reference points for academic standards in considering whether the programme is appropriate in terms of level, content and development in the disciplines.

- The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Where relevant, Masters degree characteristics
- Any relevant subject benchmark statements at undergraduate level

Information regarding these reference points can be found in Chapter A1 of the Quality Code published at:

<http://www.gaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Quality-Code-Part-A.aspx>

106. In the case of joint programmes with an international partner, reference points relevant to the national higher education requirements of the partner will also be referred to in order to ensure that the standards of all jurisdictions can be met.

Internal approval at the Partner Institution

107. For validation partnerships, the proposed programme should be discussed with the Academic Link Tutor appointed to the programme. The proposed programme must also be formally approved through the internal approval processes in operation at the Partner Institution which will have been discussed and agreed during institutional approval.
108. The programme team is required to have responded fully to any action required by the internal approval panel/committee and the programme must be fully approved by the Partner Institution's Academic Board (or equivalent) prior to RBC's programme approval event.

Submission of documentation

109. The Partner Institution will need to submit the following documentation to RBC at least four weeks in advance of the programme approval visit:

Programme documentation (using RBC templates where appropriate)

- Programme overview document (including the conclusions of the Partner's Institution's internal validation/approval process)
- Programme specification and curriculum map
- Programme/student handbook, including module outlines

Supporting documentation

- Assessment regulations (if different from the institutional regulations)
- Admissions policy (if different from the institution's admissions policy)
- CVs of staff teaching on the programme
- Proposed publicity for the programme
- Report of internal validation/approval process
- Committee minutes confirming approval of the programme by the institution's Academic Board (or equivalent)
- Report of any Professional Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation for the programme

- Where there is a history of running the programme, the following documentation is also required:
 - Three years of External Examiner reports and Programme team responses
 - Three years of annual programme review reports
 - The report of the last external programme approval panel (if relevant)
 - An indicative sample of assessment student work, including written feedback to students
110. As noted above, for validation partnerships, the Academic Link will support the programme team in preparing the documentation.
111. For all partnerships, upon receipt of the draft documentary submission, the Quality Office will consider all quality assurance related information and ensure that all required information has been provided. The Quality Office at RBC will provide feedback to the Partner Institution so that any necessary final amendments can be made prior to the final submission of the documentation to the panel two weeks before the visit.
112. The Quality Office will prepare the following briefing material and forward this to the panel together with the documentation submission from the Partner Institution. This will include:
- RBC's briefing documentation (including guidance for meetings, and logistical information)
 - Agenda for the visit
 - Report of the institutional approval visit
 - An electronic copy of Part A of the QAA Quality Code, including the following reference points:
 - Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
 - Subject benchmark statement (where relevant)
 - Master's degree characteristics
113. A copy of the panel's briefing documentation will be provided to the Partner Institution.

Panel composition

114. The Panel will normally be made up of four members:

Chair – normally a senior academic from RBC from a separate area to that of the programme under consideration.

Three subject specialists – to include an RBC academic (who will become the Academic Link Tutor for the programme) and two external panel members. It is usual practice for RBC and the partner institution to each nominate an external member. The external members must be appointed in accordance with the RBC criteria for the appointment of academic advisers and panel members for new programme approval.

A member of staff from RBC's Quality Office will be the secretary to the panel and will advise on any procedural matters as well as write the report of the approval event.

115. The Partner institution may nominate observers, not connected to the programme, to attend the formal meetings of the Panel, excluding the student meetings and private meetings of the Panel.
116. In the case of joint programmes, the Panel would normally be appointed jointly by both institutions. The relevant Academic Departments and quality assurance staff (or equivalent) of both institutions will be represented on the panel. The panel should also include a senior academic from each institution external to the proposed subject area. One of these members would chair the event. At least one subject specialist external to both institutions must be appointed. The secretary could come from either RBC or the Partner Institution.

Programme approval visit agenda.

117. The programme will typically include:
 - Meeting with the Partner Institution's senior management team (although this will not be necessary if the validation is carried out at the same time as institutional approval)
 - Meeting with the programme team
 - Meeting with current students (if applicable)
 - Tour of facilities
 - Private meetings of the panel

Outcome of the visit

118. Following a review of the aims of the programme approval process, the documentary submission and the discussions held during the visit, the Panel will make a recommendation regarding the approval of the programme to RBC's Academic Board. The maximum period of approval is five years, and the programme will be subject to re-approval towards the end of the five year period. There is no requirement for the programme period of approval to correspond with the period of approval for Institutional Approval.
119. Programmes which do not receive the full period of approval of five years would normally be subject to re-approval at the end of the approval term. Programmes which have received approval for five years will be considered for re-approval through RBC's Periodic Programme Review process.
120. The outcome of the Panel may also include the following:

Commendations – highlighting areas of best practice

Conditions – requirements that the programme team must meet within a set timeframe. The response to the conditions must be confirmed prior to final approval of the programmes by RBC Academic Board and before the start of the programme.

Recommendations – longer-term advisory points for the institution to consider. Institutions will be invited to respond to the recommendations through the development of an action plan.

121. In the event of non-approval, the Quality Office will provide detailed feedback to the Partner Institution on the steps that need to be taken before the programme can be reconsidered, as well as information on the support that RBC can provide. Non-approval would depend on the magnitude of changes required to reach an acceptable threshold or confidence in the programme team to complete the changes.

Feedback to the Partner Institution

122. The outcome will be communicated verbally to the senior management of the Partner Institution during the final meeting of the visit. The secretary will prepare a draft version of the outcomes of the approval (including commendations, conditions and recommendations) which will be circulated to the institution within one week of the visit.

Programme approval report

123. The draft of the full report will follow within 10 working days of the visit. The Partner Institution will be invited to comment on the factual accuracy of the report, prior to submission to RBC's Academic Board.

STAGE 4 – WRITTEN AGREEMENT

124. All collaborative provision arrangements will be subject to a formal written agreement setting out the duties and responsibilities of all parties. The agreement must be finalised and signed by the Head of each institution (or nominated representative) prior to the commencement of the partnership and the delivery of programmes.
125. The agreement should highlight matters relating to academic standards and quality that may be addressed when drafting an agreement, contract or other document for an arrangement for learning opportunities to be provided by an organisation other than the degree-awarding body.
126. RBC will take legal advice on the content of agreements. It is up to the partner institution as to whether they also wish to seek legal advice.

Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)

127. In the case of validation, joint awards and franchised partnerships, the written agreement must take the form of a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA). The MoA will be prepared by RBC at an early stage as this will need to be considered and approved by the partner organisation. Agreements must be signed by both parties before any arrangement comments.

Authorised signatory

128. The MoA must be signed by the Principal, Vice Principal or Registrar and Secretary. It must not be entered into or signed by other individuals or Academic Departments. The MoA must also be signed by the authorised signatory at the Partner Institution, normally the Head of the Institution.

Content of the agreement

129. For validation and joint award partnerships the MoA would normally include the items set out in Annex 4. For other types of collaborative provision, contents may vary depending on the nature of the partnership.

Administration Handbook

130. For complex validation and joint award partnership, an administration handbook will be created by the Quality Office. The document will serve as an operational manual for the management of the collaborative programme(s) and will be appended to the MoA. The document aims to ensure that collaborative provision partnerships are administered effectively and helps to avoid misunderstandings between the two institutions. The handbook will expand on duties and responsibilities included in the MoA.
131. The handbook will be modified according to the requirements of the individual partnership and will be finalised through discussions between RBC and the Partner Institution.
132. Not all partnerships will require an administration handbook.

OPERATING COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

133. RBC's responsibility for the operation of any collaborative provision arrangement, and those of the Partner Institution will be specified in the written agreement. In any collaborative arrangements where RBC is not the lead institution (such as joint awards), RBC's responsibilities will be stated in the Memorandum of Agreement. The remainder of the section below is written from the perspective of when RBC is the sole awarding body or lead institution.

Admissions

134. RBC must approve the admission requirements and acceptable entry qualifications for all students joining a programme provided under a collaborative partnership. Any criteria and procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning or English Language entrance requirements that may be in place at RBC will apply to the collaborative partner, unless there is good reason for these to be varied.
135. The written agreement must detail the responsibilities for the management of the admissions process and detail who has the authority to make admissions decisions based on RBC's approved admissions policies and criteria relevant for the validated programmes.
136. The Partner Institution is required to send a list of registered students to RBC following registration. RBC will report on collaborative provision data to Academic Board on an annual basis. The collaborative partner must also send information on an annual basis regarding withdrawal or non-progression.
137. Partner institutions will be responsible for issuing students with a Data Protection: fair processing notice. A template will be provided by RBC which will explain how students' personal data will be used by RBC.

Assessment and Examinations

138. The examination and assessment requirements for programmes provided under a collaborative arrangement must be devised so as to ensure that the academic standards of the awards are equivalent to those of awards delivered at RBC.
139. The Written Agreement should make clear the assessment procedure at RBC, and where relevant, RBC should ensure that the partner organisation understands and follows RBC's requirements for the conduct of assessment and examinations. Arrangements for Examination Boards will be discussed and agreed at the approval visit (Although see section xx below)

External Examining

140. External examiners provide RBC with an independent view of the quality of programmes, and the standards of awards for both home and collaborative provision. The external examining system is therefore a central feature of the quality assurance process.

141. The quality and standards of all programmes under RBC's awarding authority are benchmarked to UK Higher Education frameworks, including those delivered through validation or joint award partnerships in international contexts. External examiners are therefore required to have demonstrable knowledge of UK Higher Education reference points in order to fully undertake the role, particularly as external examiners will be asked to consider whether student achievement and standards for the programme to which they are appointed are comparable to those of other UK institutions with which they are familiar.
142. RBC is responsible for the appointment, briefing and functions of External Examiners for all programmes under its awarding authority. In collaborative provision arrangements, RBC will ensure that the appointment and functions of external examiners will meet the required standards as laid out in the UK Quality Code Chapter B7
143. For validated and franchised provision, RBC will manage all arrangements for external examining. RBC's External Examiner policy and procedure will apply to these appointments. The validated partner will be expected to nominate potential External Examiners for approval by RBC at least six months before the duties of the external examiner are expected to be taken up. The arrangements for the approval of external examiner nominations within the Partner Institution will be agreed as part of the Institutional Approval process.
144. For joint awards, RBC and the Partner Institution will determine which institution will take the lead on external examining arrangements. If the Partner Institution is to lead, the processes must be in line with the QAA Code of Practice, Chapter B7: external examining and any appointment will be made on the agreement of both institutions.

Board of Examiners

145. The composition of the Board of Examiners will be confirmed during institutional approval. For validated provision, the Board of Examiners' meetings may be conducted by the Partner Institution, provided that:
 - It follows RBC's guidelines for the conduct of Boards of Examiners
 - The External Examiner(s) is present
 - There is appropriate representation of senior academic staff from RBC
 - A member of staff from RBC who is trained in procedures for Boards of Examiners is in attendance
146. For joint awards, Board of Examiner arrangements must be compatible with those of RBC, and be designed to ensure that standards are equivalent across both RBC's programmes and the collaborative provision.
147. For franchised provision, the Board of Examiners will be held at RBC.

Certificates and Transcripts

148. The issuing of award certificates must remain under the control of RBC, this also applies to transcripts except where this is expressly declared otherwise within the agreement. Where it has been agreed that transcripts can be issued by the partner

organisation, they must make clear the collaborative nature of the programme and the name of the awarding body as Rose Bruford (University) College of Theatre and Performance. The Registrar is responsible for ensuring that any partner's transcript template for a collaborative programme meets the requirements of RBC's policy on transcripts and contains accurate and appropriate information.

149. The transcript must record the name of RBC and the partner organisation. The words and terms used on the certificate and transcript should be consistent both with those used by RBC on certificates and transcripts for the same or comparable programmes. This should be discussed and agreed at Institutional Approval.

Student academic appeals

150. Students enrolled on programmes delivered through validation and franchised partnerships will be subject to RBC's academic appeals process. Appeals must be submitted to RBC who will convene an Examinations Appeal Board to consider the appeal. The Partner institution will be asked to provide evidence to the appeal.

Student complaints

151. Students enrolled on programmes delivered through validation and franchised partnerships will be subject to RBC's complaints process. The informal part of the process is delegated to the Partner Institution. If it is not possible to resolve the complaint at the Partner Institution then the student should be referred to RBC who will investigate the complaint in accordance with the formal complaints procedure.

Marketing and information for students

152. It is important that key stakeholders (including students and employers) are clear about the nature of any collaborative arrangement and the nature and standing of the programme provided under such arrangements. RBC must therefore retain oversight of the accuracy of all public information, publicity and promotional activity relating to the programmes and awards for which it has responsibility, particularly where information is published on its behalf. Details of the branding arrangements and the process for monitoring publicity and marketing will be included in the Memorandum of Agreement.
153. The Head of Marketing at RBC – in consultation with the Head of Quality - must approve any publicity or marketing about collaborative provision arrangements, and also check these on a regular basis, including spot checks of any websites. The Head of Quality is responsible for ensuring that the information is comparable with that given by RBC to its own potential and registered internal students.
154. The Partner Institution will be asked to provide students on their programmes with access to a copy of the leaflet produced by RBC for students in collaborative provision. The leaflet contains information about the nature of the partnership, student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement, and information on how and when students should contact RBC, for example in reference to complaints and appeals.

Periodic and Annual review

Annual review

155. As with RBC programmes, all programmes at partner institutions will need to complete annual monitoring for each programme which is offered through the partnership. RBC will supply the template for this monitoring.
156. The deadline for partner annual monitoring will be the same as RBC programmes, and they will be considered by the appropriate School Board and a sub-group of Learning Quality and Standards Committee (LQSC). Partner institutions will need to develop action plans and comment on progress with delivering the actions. Support with developing action plans will, if required, be provided by the Link Tutor. Any issues arising from programme annual monitoring within collaborative provision will be raised to LQSC for discussion.

Periodic Review

157. As with on-campus programmes, the Partner Institution's programmes are to be reviewed and revalidated in the year before the validation expires. The periodic review will take the same form as the review of RBC programmes, with the event taking place at the Partner Institution.
158. The panel will have the responsibility of ensuring that the resources and learning environment at the Partner Institution continues to meet the required standards and to confirm that the programmes at the partner continue to accord with RBC's mission and regulations.
159. Depending on the size and nature of the partnership, the periodic review will form part of the Institutional Review outlined below.

Institutional Review

160. Institutional Review will take place every five years. RBC's Academic Board may, in exceptional circumstances, request that an Institutional Review takes place earlier, if cause for concern has been raised. A cause for concern could be prompted by individual or group student complaints, a decline in student satisfaction, poor external examiner reports or significant staffing changes. It would also be triggered if investigation and intervention was necessary through the revised operating model for quality assessment introduced by HEFCE in March 2016.
161. The purpose of the Institutional Review would be to:
 - ensure that the institution continued to meet the key principles and criteria for collaborative partnership
 - undertake a review of the portfolio of provision at the partner
 - provide an opportunity to review the nature of the relationship and resolve any difficulties which may exist
 - review the academic and administrative infrastructure to ensure that there continues to be a suitable learning environment
 - review student achievement and retention rates to ensure that the quality of student achievement meets RBC standards and expectations

- review quality assurance processes to ensure that these are being followed
 - encourage further development and collaboration between institutions.
162. The scope of the review will be determined by the nature of the partnership. If a partner only has one programme, then the Institutional Review can be incorporated into the periodic review of the programme.
163. During the year preceding the review, informal preparatory meetings will take place to support the Partner Institution in preparing for the review.
164. The partner will be required to provide documentation for the institutional review including a self-evaluation document. This will cover the following aspects of the partnership:
- An explanation of the collaborative link and developments that have taken place since the initial approval, or the last review
 - Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the partnership
 - Evidence of continued quality and standards
165. RBC will advise on the content of the SED and the required documentation which should be submitted at least 4 weeks in advance of the event. A panel will be convened with the same composition as a validation panel, although for Institutional Review one of the external panel members from other UK HEIs must be an academic who has experience of quality assurance systems and processes.
166. The documentation should be submitted to RBC at least 4 weeks in advance of the event which will include a tour of resources, meetings with students and meetings with staff.
167. Following the review visit, a report will be produced which will be submitted to RBC's Academic Board. Any conditions or recommendations should be added to an action plan and met by a required deadline. If major issues are raised and the review is unsuccessful, Academic Board will be asked to review the partnership and decide whether it should continue.

Termination Processes

Programme withdrawal

168. A variety of factors may lead to the decision to terminate a programme, including poor recruitment or strategic changes. If a partner wishes to withdraw a programme, it must discuss this with the Vice Principal at RBC in the first instance. The strategic decision to close a programme of study must be considered by relevant committees of the Partner Institution ahead of submission to RBC using the programme withdrawal form.
169. At RBC, the responsibility for the approval of a decision to withdraw a programme delivered through a collaborative provision arrangement will be taken by Academic Board, following consideration of the programme withdrawal form.
170. The Partner Institution must ensure that it follows the RBC procedure for [programme closure](#) in terms of consulting with and notifying students.

Termination of Partnerships

171. The decision to terminate a collaborative partnership may be taken by RBC or by the collaborative partner. The procedure to be followed to terminate an arrangement should be specified in the Memorandum of Agreement. This request may be made to coincide with the end of the period stated in the written agreement or by giving the appropriate notice period stipulated in the agreement. An agreement which has expired and no longer has any students is automatically terminated and no further work is required.
172. Representatives from the SMC of each institution will enter into discussions regarding the proposed termination. Both institutions will consider the position of applicants and enrolled students, although the ultimate responsibility will lie with RBC in accordance with Indicator 9 of Chapter B10 of the Quality Code: 'Degree-awarding bodies retain responsibility for ensuring that students admitted to a programme who wish to complete it under their awarding authority can do so.'
173. Termination arrangements must be reported to RBC's Academic Board.

Annex 1: Self Evaluation Document

Institutional approval for validated and franchised provision

The self-evaluation document (SED) will normally include the following information. It should refer to the supporting information submitted to RBC as part of the due diligence exercise. Where possible the document should draw on existing strategic and managerial processes in place at the proposed Partner Institution in which the proposed collaborative arrangement would operate.

For UK partnerships, the SED and all due diligence documentation is required six weeks in advance of the institutional visit. For international partnerships this may be extended to eight weeks. The Quality Office will advise the proposed Partner Institution in all cases.

1. Introduction and background

This should set out a brief history of the institution, and some contextual information including the following:

- History of the institution
- Ownership
- Legal status
- Type of institution
- Sources of income
- Student body – numbers and profile (current and projected)
- Strategic plan of the institution
- Any existing validation arrangements
- Details of any planned significant changes to the institution

2. Management and academic structures

This section should include an evaluative commentary on the institution's organisational and management structure, including committee structure, and arrangements for management and academic development.

3. Rationale for the proposed collaborative partnership

This should set out a statement confirming why the institution would like to enter into a collaborative provision arrangement with RBC. The section should also provide a brief overview of how the collaboration will fit into the HE priorities for the institution.

4. Programmes and programme management

This section should provide details of the following:

Title and level of all programmes offered at the institution – supported by statistical data for the three most recent academic years to include:

- HE application rates – overall and by programme
- HE enrolment data – overall and by programme
- HE retention rates – overall and by programme
- HE achievement rates – overall and by programme

- A programme overview document for each programme for which validation or a joint award arrangement is sought
- Details of programme development, approval and review processes

5. Resources to support learning

This section should provide information under the following sub-headings:

- Library and learning resources
- Physical resources – including any recent or proposed developments to ensure a high quality learning environment for students
- Support services for students including academic guidance and tutoring, counselling, advice services, support for students with disabilities etc.

6. Staffing

This section should provide details of the numbers and percentages of permanent full time and part time staff, and also visiting tutors engaged in higher education activity at the institution.

It should also include information about the following:

- the institution's Staff Development Policy and staff policies and procedures specifically in relation to the delivery of academic quality
- the institution's staff appraisal policies and procedures and their effectiveness
- any teaching observation scheme or equivalent

7. Research

This section should set out details of the institutional strategy for research and the research environment. It would also provide details of research activities of staff who would be teaching on the collaborative programmes.

8. Quality assurance and enhancement

This section should provide an evaluative commentary on the institution's processes for assuring quality and standards. This should include collection of feedback from stakeholders, including students, graduates and employers. It should detail engagement with external examiners, and how any matters raised by external examiners or through surveys and feedback are dealt with at programme and institutional level. The section should also provide information about the institution's approach to enhancement.

9. Engagement with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education

This section should provide details of the institution's engagement with the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education, with explicit reference to each section.

10. Additional information for proposed international validated provision partnership

This section should set out the details of any requirements for collaborative programmes to be recognised by the appropriate education authorities in the jurisdiction where the institution is located. It should also detail approval processes required by the education authorities.

Annex 2: Academic Link Tutor role

An outline of the Academic Link Tutor role is set out below:

Subject level liaison

Enhancing the student learning experience at the Partner Institution and at RBC by sharing good practice

Programme approval and development

Serving as a member on the initial approval panels of those programmes for which they will be the Academic Link

Advising on the development of additional new programmes of study at the Partner Institution to be brought forward for programme approval

Contributing to the consultation process for proposed major amendments to validated programmes at the Partner Institution

Supporting Programme Teams in programme re-approval and periodic review activity

Assessment processes

Where appropriate attending performances or shows by students at the Partner Institution
Serving as a member of the relevant assessment committee at the Partner Institution

Quality Assurance

Advising the Partner Institution on the nomination of External Examiners

Considering the report of the External Examiner together with the Partner Institution's response with a view to identifying areas in which the Academic Link might be able to support and share practice during the forthcoming academic year

Considering the relevant Annual Monitoring Report(s) and providing feedback to the Partner Institution

Preparing an annual report on programme related activities at the Partner Institution, including information about EE reports and annual monitoring, to feed into the Partner Institution and RBC's Learning, Quality and Standards Committee.

Annex 3: Due diligence documentation

This list is indicative only, and not all of these documents will be required for each proposed partnership.

General

- Institutional mission statement and operational plan
- HE strategy (if applicable)
- Confirmation of the public and legal standing of the partner
- Details of the portfolio on offer
- Prospectus and marketing material
- Organisation chart and committee structure
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Disability and widening participation statement
- Human resources employment policies
- Staff development policy
- Information on previous collaborations

For international:

- Information on the financial, legal and cultural environment from relevant government offices and UK bodies such as British Council and UK NARIC
- Details of any regulatory or government bodies or agencies that would need to approve the programme
- Any details that RBC should be aware of that may affect the ability of RBC to exercise its responsibilities in relation to academic standards and quality

Finance:

- Audited management accounts from previous 3 years
- Budget statements for previous 3 years
- Audited Financial Statements including income and expenditure from previous 3 years

Quality assurance, regulations and procedures

- Reports from external bodies such as QAA, HEFCE and PSRBs
- Learning and Teaching Strategy
- Academic appeal policy and procedure
- Complaints policy and procedure
- Information on quality assurance processes and procedures in place
- Reports from any reviews under a previous partnership
- Details of feedback mechanisms for students
- Policies, procedures and reports relating to External Examiners
- Policies and procedures relating to assessment
- RP(E)L Policy
- Details of internal review and approval procedures
- Mapping to UK Quality Code expectations
- Examples of student and programme handbooks
- Details of any PSRB requirements

Staffing and resources – all partners

- CVs for all permanent HE staff including full and part-time
- Staff development and review scheme
- Details of staff development and scholarly activity during the previous year
- Details of teaching accommodation
- Details of library resources available
- Details of IT facilities
- Details of any specialist resources
- Details of social and catering spaces

Recruitment, selection, retention and performance

- Recruitment and selection policies and procedures
- HE admissions statistics from previous 5 years including: applicant numbers, enrolment rates, ratio of applicants to enrolments, percentage intake to target
- Student entry profile (including gender, age, ethnicity, disability, qualifications on entry)
- Student retention, progression and achievement data for 5 years previous
- Destination for graduate leavers
- Information on the student records system
- Example of a transcript and certificate
- Data from student surveys i.e. internal and NSS
- Student support and guidance
- Tutorial policy and system in place
- Information on student support and guidance service
- Details on the careers service
- Employer engagement
- Information on links with employers
- Work placement and Work Based Learning Policies and Procedures

Additional Information – Private Providers only

- Legal status of institution i.e. Articles of Association, Trust Deed
- Corporate Business Plan and Financial Forecasts
- A list of names under which the partner trades
- Details of any current litigation or disputes which could impact on the delivery of Higher Education
- Independent evidence of reputation or standing
- Documentation on any legal or regulatory requirements

Annex 4: Content of Memorandum of Agreements (for validated, joint partnerships and franchised arrangements)

The following is a suggested list, not exhaustive, of the content of Memorandum of Agreements:

- Definition of the roles, responsibilities and obligations of each of the parties to the students, and a clarification as to how these might be delegated (or in the case of joint degrees, shared). This includes management of admissions, arrangements for student engagement and the conduct of annual monitoring
- Clarification as to which regulations and quality assurance processes apply
- The services to be provided by each organisation taking account of the obligations to ensure that learning opportunities are delivered to RBC's requirement
- Arrangements for marketing, recruitment and admissions
- Student enrolment, withdrawals and confirmation of student status
- Responsibility for programme/student handbook production
- Student induction
- Arrangements for student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement
- Notification of results
- Production of certificates and transcripts and graduation ceremonies
- Clarification as to which regulations and quality assurance processes apply
- Specification of the role of External Examiners in ensuring that RBC can fulfil its responsibility for the academic standards of the awards
- Arrangements for complaints and appeals
- Financial arrangements
- Insurance and indemnity
- Arrangements for ownership of copyright and intellectual property rights
- Statement of the arrangements through which the parties will ensure compliance with statutory obligations including equality, data protection, freedom of information, health and safety
- The source or location of any quality-related or statistical data to be produced, for example for a funding council or PSRB, and responsibility for the submission of this information.
- Arrangements governing the use of RBC's name and logo, and provision for oversight, by RBC, of information relating to the arrangement
- An obligation on the delivery organisation, support provider or partner to notify RBC of any change to its status or ownership
- Provisions to enable either organisation to suspend or withdraw from the agreement if the other party fails to fulfil its obligations
- Termination and mediation provisions and financial arrangements to be followed if the arrangement ceases
- Specification of the residual obligations of both parties to students on termination of the collaborative arrangement, including the obligation of RBC to ensure that students are able to complete their studies
- Procedures for amending the agreement and/or agreeing additional appendices
- Date and mechanism for review of the agreement
- Specification of the law applicable to the agreement and the legal jurisdiction under which any disputes are to be resolved.

Supporting documentation

- Collaborative proposal – outline approval form
- Due diligence checklist
- Due diligence report
- Site visit guidance and checklist
- Risk assessment form

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Further information: This Handbook was drawn up to allow the College to operate collaborative arrangements after the award of TDAP.		