



University of  
St Andrews

## Collaborative provision of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes

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<b>Purpose</b>	This policy sets out the framework within which collaborative provision is developed and managed at St Andrews. This includes the principles of collaborative provision, the University's responsibilities and types of collaborative provision.

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1.6	New sections (11 & 13) on Joint Programme Boards and Withdrawal of a programme. Changes to section 12 re. scope and timing of agreement renewal reviews.	Updated	Education and Student Experience, Academic Policy Officer (Quality)	August 2024

**UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS  
COLLABORATIVE PROVISION OF UNDERGRADUATE  
AND POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES**

## **1. Introduction**

The University is committed to the development and enhancement of strategic alliances that enrich the academic life of the institution and further cultivate the University's 'internationally Scottish' dimension. Strategic partnerships are driven by strong synergies in teaching and research expertise, and operate successfully on multiple levels, reflecting academic priorities in research and curriculum development and providing the foundation for strong, multi-faceted and long-term collaborations.

This document sets out the framework within which collaborative provision is developed and managed at St Andrews.

Further information about managing collaborative provision can be found in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education – Advice and Guidance: Partnerships](#).

## **2. Principles**

- Collaborative projects are underpinned by a strategic partnership and a genuinely joint enterprise.
- Collaborative projects offer students innovative and enhanced learning experiences.
- Collaborative arrangements must be negotiated, approved and managed in accordance with University policy and associated procedures.
- Proposals for new collaborations will be considered within the context of University strategy, existing links and commitments.
- In establishing and operating institutional collaborations, the University is committed to the principles of good practice defined by the UK Quality Code.

## **3. University responsibilities**

The University is responsible for:

- Ensuring a strategic approach and the commitment of appropriate resources to support collaborative provision.
- Assuring the quality and standards of all provision leading to a St Andrews award, irrespective of where these opportunities are delivered and who provides them. This responsibility is never delegated.
- Ensuring that the experience offered to students at the partner complements the high quality experience at St Andrews.
- Undertaking appropriate risk assessment and due diligence procedures at the outset and throughout the collaborative project.
- Maintaining policies and procedures which mitigate against the risks of collaboration and facilitate the successful management of the provision.
- Establishing and reviewing an institutional Agreement to govern the collaborative arrangement.
- Ensuring that there are appropriate contingency plans for students to complete a programme in the event of an Agreement termination.
- Maintaining a register of active partnerships.

- Fulfilling the requirements of any professional, statutory and regulatory body that has approved or recognised the programme or award.
- Ensuring that admissions to collaborative programmes are consistent with St Andrews policies.
- Agreeing with partners the division of assessment responsibilities and the assessment regulations which apply.
- Appointing and briefing of External Examiners.
- Ensuring effective control over the accuracy of all public information, publicity and promotional activity relating to collaborative provision.
- Awarding certificates and issuing detailed records of study in relation to student achievement.

#### 4. Types of Collaborative Provision

##### a. Collaborative Degrees

Each collaborative programme is unique and reflects the specific arrangements agreed between St Andrews and the partner(s) involved. The following definitions, based on information provided by the QAA, are a guide to the spectrum of arrangements which may be developed.

Most of the current collaborative degrees at St Andrews are Joint Degrees, which is the University's preferred model, ensuring a fully integrated collaborative programme which offers students a unique learning experience and a single award which reflects the joint nature of the programme.

- Joint Degree:** An arrangement in which St Andrews and one or more partners are involved in all aspects of programme design, development, delivery, assessment, management and decision-making on student achievement. In order to successfully complete the Joint Degree programme, students must fulfil the joint programme requirements. Upon successful completion, students gain a single certificate bearing the signatures and crests of all degree-awarding bodies involved.
- Double Degree:** Where a programme is jointly designed and delivered as described above, but it is not possible to award a joint certificate, usually due to legal or regulatory requirements on the partner institution(s). In such cases, students are awarded two (or more) certificates, one from each degree-awarding body involved. The certificate and/or transcript of St Andrews refers to the existence of the other(s) and makes clear that they refer to the completion of a single, jointly conceived, programme. The awards are fundamentally linked, and students must therefore fulfil the joint programme requirements.
- Co-tutelle:** A collaborative PhD arrangement which is specifically for a named individual student. Most often, students receive a single Joint certificate, though in cases where legal requirements prevent this award, students may receive two certificates, each of which refers to the joint nature of the programme.
- Dual Degree:** This involves institutions working together to offer a jointly conceived programme, but unlike Joint and Double awards, there is not a single set of joint programme requirements which students must complete. Rather, the programmes are designed to enable students to achieve more than one distinct set of criteria, although these may overlap.

This model often involves two institutions jointly designing a programme of study comprising two separate blocks taken consecutively at each partner in turn, leading to two separate qualifications awarded individually by the institutions. Each institution is responsible for its own award but the two components form a single package, and the overall arrangement is a joint enterprise that requires a shared understanding of credits and pathways, and elements of joint management and oversight. A distinguishing feature of this type of arrangement is that the overall study period and volume of learning is often longer than for either of the individual awards separately, but usually shorter than if each of the programmes of study had been taken consecutively.

These arrangements have aspects in common with articulation Agreements, in that the two learning experiences are aligned and one partner recognises learning undertaken at the other as contributing to its own qualification. However, they are distinguished by the way in which they are conceived as a joint enterprise involving more than one degree-awarding body, and where the award made by each is dependent on the other.

**b. Validation**

The award of an academic qualification by St Andrews, which is delivered by one or more other institutions. In such arrangements, students are matriculated at St Andrews and have access to appropriate University facilities. The University takes responsibility for the quality and standard of the programmes validated as leading towards a St Andrews award. Quality assurance arrangements and academic standards are as equally rigorous as those applied to University programmes.

**c. Articulation**

An Agreement with other Higher Education institutions, Further Education institutions, or appropriate non-educational bodies associated with professions, business or industry to establish effective progression into or out of a programme of study offered by St Andrews. Credit achieved at one provider is transferred to contribute to the award completed at another, but the programme is not a joint enterprise, and each organisation retains responsibility for its respective component.

**d. Exchange and Study Abroad**

An arrangement whereby St Andrews students spend time, usually a semester or full academic year, at an approved partner institution as an integral part of their St Andrews degree programme. Approved credits and grades are converted upon return to St Andrews and are used in degree classification as appropriate.

**e. Work Placement**

Work Placements are credit-bearing placements which are undertaken as an integral part of a St Andrews degree programme and which are hosted by a third party outside the University learning environment in an industrial, business, healthcare or other professional working structure.

Work Placements may extend over an entire academic year, or a shorter period within the academic year or summer vacation. Work Placements may be compulsory or optional, paid or unpaid, in the UK or abroad.

**5. Establishing Collaborative Provision**

- a. **Business Case and Proposal:** The nature of the proposal depends on the type of collaborative provision proposed. Collaborative Degrees (with the exception of Co-tutelles), Articulation and Validation arrangements all require completion of a Collaborative Business Case and supporting documentation, which includes a Letter of Support from the partner institution, a Financial Plan, and a Risk Assessment.

In addition, a Programme Proposal and, if relevant, Module Proposals are required to provide comprehensive details of the curriculum arrangements for any Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught programme.

All collaborative provision proposals require an appropriate risk assessment and due diligence checks.

- b. **Approval:** The approval route varies as appropriate to the nature of the proposal. Details are provided in proposal and approval flowcharts available at: [www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/studentadmin/study-abroad/typesofcollaborativeprovision/](http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/studentadmin/study-abroad/typesofcollaborativeprovision/)

Collaborative Taught Degree	Business case, followed by Programme and Module Proposals	Principal's Office, Curriculum Approvals Group (CAG) (via Cohort, Admissions and Resources Steering Group (CARSG) for PGT programmes)
Collaborative PhD (Global PhD)	Global PhD Proposal form	Associate Provost Education
Validation	Business case, followed by Programme Details	Principal's Office, CAG (via CARSG for PGT programmes)
Articulation	Business case, followed by Programme Details	Principal's Office (via the Admissions Committee and for PGT programmes, via CARSG), CAG
Exchange and Study Abroad	Exchange Proposal form	CAG and the Global Office
Work Placement	Work Placement Agreement	School and the Global Office. CAG if programmatic

In cases where a Collaborative Business Case (CBC) is required, the CBC and any supporting documentation, such as a Letter of Support from the partner institution and the Financial Plan, are reviewed and approved by the Principal's Office, or via CARSG for PGT programmes.

Once approved in principle, detailed programme proposals are considered by CAG (or CARSG for PGT programmes) and approved by the Assistant Vice-Principal (Dean of Learning & Teaching).

Institutional Agreements are then negotiated and signed by the Deputy Principal and Vice-Principal (International Strategy and External Relations).

In approving new collaborative provision, the following factors are considered:

- Alignment with University strategy
- The strength and desirability of the partnership
- Financial viability and sustainability
- Quality of the learning experience and associated student support
- Market demand
- Legal and statutory framework, especially if the partner is overseas
- Safety and security if the partner is overseas

## **6. Agreements**

An institutional Agreement must be approved and signed at the outset of a collaborative project, and before any students commence the programme. Once signed by all parties, Agreements which involve collaborative provision are stored by the Global Office, which is responsible for maintaining the institutional partnership record.

Agreements will usually be approved for a fixed period of three to five years initially, and it is expected that a thorough review of the Agreement and the collaborative programme will take place before any Agreement is renewed.

There are two main types of Agreement:

### Memorandum of Understanding

An MoU is a broad commitment to work with another institution. It is a statement of intent, rather than a substantive agreement, though it is often an important first step towards a collaborative project. An MoU may be proposed by colleagues and will require approval from the relevant Head of School, Head of Unit, Director of a Centre or Institute and the Global Officer. The Global Office will conduct due diligence and make a recommendation on the development of an MoU, which will be signed by the Principal's Office.

### Memorandum of Agreement

An MoA is a more comprehensive institutional Agreement which details the specific arrangements governing a particular collaborative project. It includes arrangements for admissions, curriculum, assessment and award, as appropriate, as well as any legal or regulatory requirements. An MoA will only be signed by the Principal's Office upon successful conclusion of the relevant approval process.

## **7. Joint Programme Boards**

A Joint Programme Board will be established for each collaborative degree once the degree is approved. The Joint Programme Board brings together academic and professional representatives from the participating institutions and is tasked with ensuring the effective delivery of the degree. Major responsibilities include making academic and policy decisions, ensuring alignment between the programme and the wider relationship between the institutions, monitoring of the academic quality and success of the programme, periodic review of programme finances, and delivery of annual reports to relevant bodies at each institution (e.g. at St Andrews, the AMG Collaborations and Partnerships Group).

## **8. Monitoring Collaborative Provision**

The University is responsible for the academic standards of awards irrespective of whether delivered entirely in St Andrews or in collaboration with another institution. The quality assurance arrangements for collaborative degrees should be at least as rigorous as those for internal provision and should be in accordance with all other University quality assurance policies and guidelines. In principle, all collaborative programmes should be reviewed annually and periodically. The Academic Monitoring Group (Collaborations and Partnerships) will oversee academic standards and quality assurance processes for all collaborative provision and will meet once per semester.

The University has a Five-stage review process that comprises: Approval; implementation; first review; annual review and monitoring; and agreement renewal review.

#### Scope and proportionality

Review should be flexible and proportionate to the scale and type of collaboration. In principle, the review process below applies to the following types of collaborations: Collaborative degrees (UG, PGT, PGR); Validation; and Articulation. However, the review would be flexible and proportionate to the type of collaboration. It is not envisaged that all review stages be applied to all of the above. Arrangements for Exchange, Study Abroad and Work Placement reviews are managed separately through the Outbound Mobility annual review process.

#### Self-evaluation

As in regular review processes, this should form a key component of reviewing collaborations. This should reflect on, for example: continued alignment to strategic objectives, relationship with partner, Agreement issues, analysis of student feedback and performance, details of any issues with credit and grade transfer, developments since establishment/ last review, details of any site visits, examples of good practice that may be applied to other collaborative programmes.

#### Partner institutions

Partner institutions should be involved in all stages of the review process, as appropriate for the particular type and level of collaboration. A summary of any review and outcomes should be sent to the partner institution as a matter of routine.

#### External Examiners

The External Examiner system is not common outwith the UK, which may make this aspect of international partnerships a little more challenging. The system should be clarified to the partner at the outset. The University retains responsibility for the appointment and functions of External Examiners for all collaborative programmes. Where possible, each institution would share the reports received from each respective External Examiner as well as the institution's response to the report and a summary of any actions taken.

#### Five-stage review process

1. Approval: The approval process ensures thorough review of collaborative proposals and due diligence at the outset. This covers, for example, existing links with the partner, status of partner, arrangements for partnership operation including lead institution (rules and regulations), partner's procedures for module approval and review, partner's strategies for enhancement.

2. **Implementation:** This stage involves a light-touch and relatively informal review at the commencement of the programme. It primarily involves the School, Global Office and Registry, and is intended to iron out any issues with the initial programme establishment. A summary report of Implementation reviews is collated annually by the Global Office for consideration by the Academic Monitoring Group (Collaborations and Partnerships).
3. **First review:** The first review provides an early opportunity to monitor progress, and ensure any problems are identified and resolved at an early stage in the life cycle of the programme. This comprehensive initial review normally takes place in the academic year after the first cohort of students has been admitted (irrespective of location of study in the first year). There is an emphasis on self-evaluation, but the review should include external examiner feedback and student feedback as well. First review reports are submitted to the Academic Monitoring Group (Collaborations and Partnerships) for consideration.
4. **Annual monitoring and review:** The Joint Board, via the Academic Co-ordinator at St Andrews, is expected to provide an annual report to the Academic Monitoring Group (Collaborations and Partnerships) on programme matters, issues, trends and student feedback. This report should include an overview of applications and entrants to the programme, a summary of student progression and outcomes, a summary of the key issues discussed at the joint committee over the last year and a note of any other concerns or issues which the Co-ordinator wishes to highlight.

Where appropriate, collaborative programmes will also form part of University-led Reviews of Learning and Teaching. This should include monitoring of student progression; completion data; External Examiners' reports; PSRB reports; and staff and student feedback.

5. **Agreement renewal review:** This stage is a full review of the programme (including academic standards, the student learning experience, the strategic direction of the programme, and recruitment and financial aspects of the programme). The review takes place around 15-18 months prior to the end of the Agreement period to ensure sufficient time to review the programme and secure approval to renew the arrangement prior to the Agreement lapsing. The review provides an opportunity for the University, School/Department, collaborative partner, and review team to reflect on the operation, management, development, and future of the programme.

Again, there is a strong emphasis on self-evaluation, but the review should also include feedback from students and external examiners. Review reports are submitted to the Academic Monitoring Group (Collaborations and Partnerships) for consideration. Thereafter, the Director of the Global Office will write to the Principal's Office for approval of the recommended action. An institutional decision will then be made as to whether the collaborative programme should be continued.

## **9. Withdrawal of a programme**

If a recommendation to withdraw the collaborative programme is made by a review team as a result of an agreement renewal review, the Global Office will liaise with the School/Department and partner institution to agree arrangements for teaching-out any existing cohorts of students. Consideration should be given to whether the arrangements for teaching-out involve the partner institution, or alternative arrangements for existing students to complete their programme and be assessed for the award to which they are registered without the partner institution's involvement.

The following points should be considered as part of the process for withdrawing from a collaborative programme:



- a. Exit arrangements between the University and the partner institution.
- b. Management of administrative and academic aspects of the programme until the remaining students complete their studies.
- c. If the programme is accredited by any Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).
- d. Change to the learning experience or qualification for students remaining on the programme.
- e. Communication plan to students on the programme or applicants.
- f. Internal communications to Professional Services units within the University.
- g. The wider implications for the partnership, if relevant, and impact on any other programmes delivered with that partner.

Intention to withdraw a programme will be provided to CAG and a report outlining any withdrawals will be submitted to Academic Monitoring Group (Collaborations and Partnerships) each cycle as relevant. The formal arrangements to end Agreements with partner institutions and liaison on implementation internally is the responsibility of the Global Office.

Amendment or termination to a collaborative Agreement may be made for reasons other than those arising from the Agreement renewal review. Whilst internal decisions will normally be made through the established five-stage review process, other factors can impact. For example, operational reasons may require programme content changes, or external factors, including partner decision no longer to continue may affect arrangements. In these cases, internal process and policy at St Andrews will be followed and relevant parties will be informed to ensure appropriate arrangements are put in place. For example, if a programme requires to continue unilaterally to ensure students already registered may complete the programme, then teach out arrangements will be ensured. Equally proposed amendments to programme content shall be managed through relevant approvals groups. In all such cases, AMG (C&P) shall also be updated as to amendment or termination.

<b>Version number</b>	<b>Purpose / changes</b>	<b>Document status</b>	<b>Author of changes, role and school / unit</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.0	Updated titles/contact details to reflect decanal restructuring	Updated	-	February 2021
1.1	Changes to Associate Provost title	Updated	Emily Feamster	August 2021
1.2	Updates to annual monitoring and review process.	Updated	Ros Campbell	June 2022
1.3	Changes made to section 9, including references to CARSG to reflect new process for PGT programmes	Updated	Education and Student Experience, Academic Policy Officer (Taught Degrees)	Dec 2022
1.4	Changes made to section 9, including references to CARSG to reflect new process for PGT programmes	Updated	Education and Student Experience, Academic Policy	Dec 2022

			Officer (Taught Degrees)	
1.5	Changes to section 11 (Agreement renewal review and the withdrawal of programmes)	Updated	Education and Student Experience, Academic Policy Officer (Quality)	June 2024