

## **Strategic framework for partnerships**

### **January 2015**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The strategic framework is intended to guide decisions and subsequent actions relating to partnerships, ensuring that all partnership activities are aligned with, and contribute to, the 2014-19 University Strategic Plan, the Education Strategy and the Research Strategy.
- 1.2 The strategic framework adopts a systematic approach to consider proposed new partnerships, and will also provide a frame of reference for the management of existing partnerships. The operating principles must be taken into account at the earliest opportunity when considering new partnerships or new programmes of study.
- 1.3 The framework will complement other mechanisms already in place for the approval, monitoring, review and development of partnerships such as the due diligence process, validation and review, and partnership management boards.
- 1.4 The framework will ensure that the University is able to capitalise upon the opportunities afforded by working in partnership with others by developing and maintaining a sustainable portfolio of partnerships.

#### **2. Objectives**

- 2.1 To ensure that decisions relating to partnerships are aligned with the 2013-19 University Strategic Plan as well as the Education Strategy and Research Strategy.
- 2.2 To ensure that partnership agreements are not entered into, or continued with, that would constitute disproportionate reputational, financial or other risks to the University.
- 2.3 To ensure that University decisions and subsequent actions relating to educational partnerships are in line with the expectations of the UK Quality Code, particularly chapter B10 and, where relevant, other statutory body requirements.
- 2.4 To ensure that University decisions relating to other non-educational partnerships are, if relevant, aligned with the requirements of other statutory bodies such as funding councils or charities.
- 2.5 To ensure that, wherever possible, early decisions about existing partnerships or new partnership proposals are made without unnecessarily impacting on time, funds or resources.
- 2.6 To ensure confidence in the decision-making process with respect to its integrity, openness, consistency and reliability.

#### **3. Scope**

- 3.1 The strategic framework will apply to educational partnerships which includes progression agreements (with or without recognition of credits), articulation agreements, partnerships leading to dual or multiple awards, partnerships leading to joint awards, validation arrangements and franchise arrangements. Generally, such partnerships relate to programmes of study that lead to a University of Essex award or credit.
- 3.2 The strategic framework will also apply to formal academic research partnerships, which includes partnerships such as Research Consortia (eg. the 'Eastern ARC'), Doctoral

Training Centres and Doctoral Training Partnerships. This would not extend to individual academic engagement in a consortium grant.

- 3.3 It is recognised that the principles set out within the framework will also be helpful in informing decisions regarding other forms of activity such as friendship agreements, student exchange, study abroad, work placements, and co-supervision of postgraduate research degrees by another institution.

#### **4. Operating principles**

- 4.1 The operating principles listed below will ensure that the strategic framework properly translates the core values of the Strategic Plan, as well as the themes of the Education Strategy and Research Strategy through the decisions that are made, and actions that are carried out in relation to partnerships.
- 4.2 In deciding whether to embark upon a new partnership or to continue with an existing partnership, it will not be necessary to satisfy all of the principles if it appears that there are strengths relating to some principles that compensate for weaknesses in others. However, the identified strength(s) of any proposed or existing partnership must be the dominating characteristic, not the weaknesses.
- 4.3 No partnership or partnership activity will be approved that does not discernibly contribute to the Universities vision of excellence in education or excellence in research. The attached table sets out the six principles of operation mapped against the *core values* of the 2013-2019 Strategic Plan, and the *key themes* of the Education and Research Strategies.
- 4.4 The operating principles are intended as a guide rather than as an exhaustive list and they are not presented in any order of weighting or priority.
- 4.5 The operating principles are:

**Institutional Reputation:** The reputation and standing of the proposed partner organisation is such that, through association, it will strengthen the University's identity as a premium higher education institution and/or as a world-leader in research.

**Visibility & Impact:** The proposed partnership will create opportunities for the University to be more visible and have greater positive impact in education and research at a local, national or international level. The proposed partnership will also help the University have a positive impact on the local or national economy through the creation of jobs or in producing skilled graduates for the workforce.

**Growth & Sustainability:** The proposed partnership activities will bring or will have the potential to bring notable growth in educational and/or research activities, the proposed partnership will generate a surplus and will be operationally and financially sustainable for the proposed period of the partnership. In the case of education partnerships this will usually be for a period of no less than 5 years. No new partnerships will be approved that would significantly threaten the sustainability of existing partner activities, the University's overall portfolio of partnership provision, or activities carried out elsewhere within the University.

**Enhancement:** The proposed partnership will create an opportunity to enhance its own education or research activities. In particular, it will further the Universities commitment to research-led education.

**Diversification and Innovation:** The proposed partnership will provide the University with an opportunity to offer programmes of study or carry out research activity that are different to its own or are very innovative, particularly where the capability to do so alone does not exist. This could include delivering at a different site, delivering the subject in a different way or by appealing to a different student demographic.

**Student Experience and Outcomes:** The proposed partnership will create a high-quality student experience, underpinned by the living and learning ethos. The proposed partnership will help produce capable graduates, as defined by the *Essex Graduate*, with excellent subject-specific knowledge as well as employability skills. The proposed partnership will help improve the employment prospects of all of its graduates through fostering links with local, national or multi-national employers.

	2013-19 Strategic Plan Core Values							Education Strategy Key Themes		Research Strategy Key Themes						
	Excellence	Academic Freedom	Integrity	Community	Inclusivity	Innovation	Global Outlook	Partnership	Accountability	Research in Curriculum	Community	Engagement	Learning Environment	Research Quality	Research Intensity	Research Impact
Principles of Operation																
<b>Institutional Reputation:</b> The reputation and standing of the proposed partner organisation is such that, through association, it will strengthen the University's identity as a premium higher education institution and/or as a World-leader in research.	✓						✓	✓						✓		
<b>Visibility &amp; Impact:</b> The proposed partnership will create opportunities for the University to be more visible and have greater positive impact in education and research at a local, national or international level. The proposed partnership will also help the University have a positive impact on the local or national economy through the creation of jobs or in producing skilled graduates for the workforce.			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
<b>Growth &amp; Sustainability:</b> The proposed partnership activities will bring or will have the potential to bring notable growth in educational and/or research activities. The proposed partnership will generate a surplus and will be operationally and financially sustainable for the proposed period of the partnership. In the case of education partnerships this will usually be for a period of no less than 5 years. No new partnerships will be approved that would significantly threaten the sustainability of existing partner activities, the University's overall portfolio of partnership provision, or activities carried out elsewhere within the University.	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

	2013-19 Strategic Plan Core Values							Education Strategy Key Themes		Research Strategy Key Themes							
Principles of Operation	Excellence	Academic Freedom	Integrity	Community	Inclusivity	Innovation	Global Outlook	Partnership	Accountability	Research in Curriculum	Community	Engagement	Learning Environment	Research Quality	Research Intensity	Research Impact	Research Sustainability
<b>Enhancement:</b> The proposed partnership will create an opportunity to enhance its own education or research activities. In particular, it will further the Universities commitment to research-led education.	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Diversification and Innovation:</b> The proposed partnership will provide the University with an opportunity to offer programmes of study or carry out research activity that are different to its own or are very innovative, particularly where the capability to do so alone does not exist. This could include delivering at a different site, delivering the subject in a different way or by appealing to a different student demographic.		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Student Experience and Outcomes:</b> The proposed partnership will create a high-quality student experience, underpinned by the living and learning ethos. The proposed partnership will help produce capable graduates, as defined by the <i>Essex Graduate</i> , with excellent subject-specific knowledge as well as employability skills. The proposed partnership will help improve the employment prospects of all of its graduates through fostering links with local, national or multi-national employers.			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓				

**Document review information**

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