

Last Updated: September 2017

## **The Development and Approval of new Collaborative Partnerships and Changes to Existing Partnerships**

### **Introduction**

Involvement in collaborative activity with other professional, academic and commercial organisations offers Schools/Departments the opportunity to extend and enhance their academic profile through work with external bodies. All collaborative ventures involving award-bearing taught programmes are regulated within the mainstream University quality assurance mechanisms. When selecting and approving new partners, the University must assure itself that there is a strategic fit with its goals and mission and that the level of risk associated with the collaboration has been assessed appropriately. In selecting partners, the University will consider how working with them will further key priorities in the University Strategic Plan 2014-19 which are:

- The Mission
- Recruiting high quality students
- Helping students to achieve their potential
- Enhancing students' employability
- Supporting staff
- Creating and disseminating world class knowledge and ideas
- Creating a world class campus
- Sustaining financial stability

The Quality Code for Higher Education sets out the following expectation for working with others:

**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.**

[Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others]

The process for approving new partners has been divided into six stages as illustrated in the flowchart in Annex A. The process for approving a new site of an existing partner is divided into four stages as illustrated in the flowchart in Annex B.

NB. Whilst informal discussion of proposals is encouraged at all stages, no proposals will be formally considered for approval unless received as per the details below. Partners should be made aware in discussions that all formal processes must be completed in order for the proposal to be approved.

### **1. Strategic Stage**

Potential partners may be identified by staff in Schools/Departments, or central departments, but it is important that collaborative activities are assigned to an academic School/Department at this early stage. Before any work may begin with a partner, the proposal must first be discussed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Provost (Research and External Engagement), Head of School/Department, and Director of Recruitment, International and Admissions.

If it is decided that a case may be made to take the proposal forward, the proposed partner will be sent the Partnership Review Proforma **[Form A]** for them to complete and provide supporting evidence. This supporting evidence forms part of the due diligence checking of the partner. Legal or financial evidence will be sent to the Deputy Director of Finance and the Head of Legal Services. On return of **Form A**, the School/Department should complete the Partnership Strategic Case **[Form B]**, drawing on the information supplied by the potential partner and other sources as appropriate. Where more than one department is involved, a lead department should be identified. Form B will be completed in consultation with all relevant departments, but particularly the Deputy Provost (Research and External Engagement), Director of Global Programmes, and the Director of the Recruitment, International and Admissions or their nominees.

Form B should be sent to the Academic Office for presenting to the Curriculum Strategy Committee (CSC) for consideration. CSC may approve, approve with conditions or refer the proposal back for further work.

## **2. Partnership Approval Stage**

Once strategic approval has been granted, a formal approval of the partnership and site will take place. This should be undertaken by approved reviewer(s), not involved in the development of the partnership. However a representative from the School/Departments involved in the partnership should be in attendance. The reviewer(s) will visit the partner and produce a Partnership Approval Report **[Form C]** indicating whether the partner institution is of good standing, has the capacity to fulfil its designated role in the arrangement and to deliver the proposed activities. Form C will subsequently be submitted as an annex to Forms B, D and E to Senate, CSC and Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (LTQC), respectively.

## **3. Senate Stage**

Following the Partnership Approval, Form B and C will be submitted to Senate for consideration. This will be done only when the due diligence checking has been signed off by the Deputy Director of Finance and the Head of Legal Services. Senate may approve, approve with conditions or refer the proposal back for further work.

## **4. Functional Stage**

The lead School/Department should complete the Partnership Business Case **[Form D]** and the Partnership Academic Case **[Form E]** and both should be sent to the Academic Office. Chapter B10 of the Quality Code for Higher Education stipulates that the business case and the academic case should be considered separately. Accordingly, Form D will be submitted to CSC with costings, and Form E to the LTQC without costings. Either committee may refer the proposal back for further information, but both Form D and Form E must be approved by the relevant committee for the proposal to proceed to the Operational Stage.

Where a new site for an existing partner is proposed, the Partnership New Site Approval form **[Form F]** should be completed and submitted to both CSC and LTQC (in place of Forms D and E) for approval. If either committee deems the new site as posing significant risk, Form F will be referred to Senate for approval in the first instance.

## **5. Operational Stage**

Following CSC and LTQC approval, the Partnerships Office will arrange an operations meeting of relevant members of the School/Department, central departments and from the partner in order to discuss and agree the responsibilities of each institution e.g. registration, enrolment, examination boards and complaints and appeals. Once the various operational functions have been clarified these will be detailed in the operations responsibilities form and will inform the Operations Manual.

A programme and/or delivery approval event will take place following the operations meeting. For a validation arrangement, both the programme and the partner's ability to deliver the programme will be considered for approval. For a franchise arrangement, only the partner's ability to deliver the programme will be considered for approval as the programme has already been approved through the University processes. For either arrangement, the panel will approve the staff who will be teaching on the programme at the partner institution.

Where a new site for an existing partner is proposed, there is no strategic stage or partnership approval stage and the new site approval visit will be undertaken at the operational stage, following the operations meeting. The approved reviewer(s) will complete the Partnership New Site Visit Report (Form H) following their visit to confirm the appropriateness of the new site. Form H will subsequently be submitted to CSC and LTQC for information.

Key documents to be presented to the programme and/or delivery approval panel will be:

The programme specification and /or partner supplement: this document will, as a minimum, define the structure of the programme to be delivered, the recruitment criteria that will apply to applicants to the programme, and any variations to standard University regulations and procedures that will exist in relation to the marks awarded to students and their subsequent calculation in determining the award. This document fundamentally describes what will be delivered and under what rules.

Module Descriptions: this document will, as a minimum define the structure of the module to be delivered and include reference to the: module rationale, learning outcomes, syllabus, teaching and learning methods, assessment, and reading and resource list. The module description will inform programme teams in producing a more detailed and student-facing module handbook.

Staff CVs: the CVs of all staff teaching on the programme(s) at the partner institution.

The Operations Manual: whilst the Programme Specification and Module Descriptions describe 'what' will be delivered, the Operations Manual describes 'how' the programme will be delivered.

The Operations Manual follows the student journey, identifying actions that must be taken in order to allow the University to be assured of the integrity of the programme delivery and its awards, and the resultant student experience.

## 6. Monitoring Stage

Once the partner has begun to deliver the programme(s), the standard University quality assurance procedures will apply and will involve annual monitoring, periodic review, moderation of assessments by University tutors, External Examiners and student feedback. For franchise programmes, it will be important to retain the distinction between the programme delivered at the University and the programme delivered at the partner institution to enable comparisons to be made.

## 7. Process summary

Where the following arrangements are proposed, the corresponding forms should be completed.

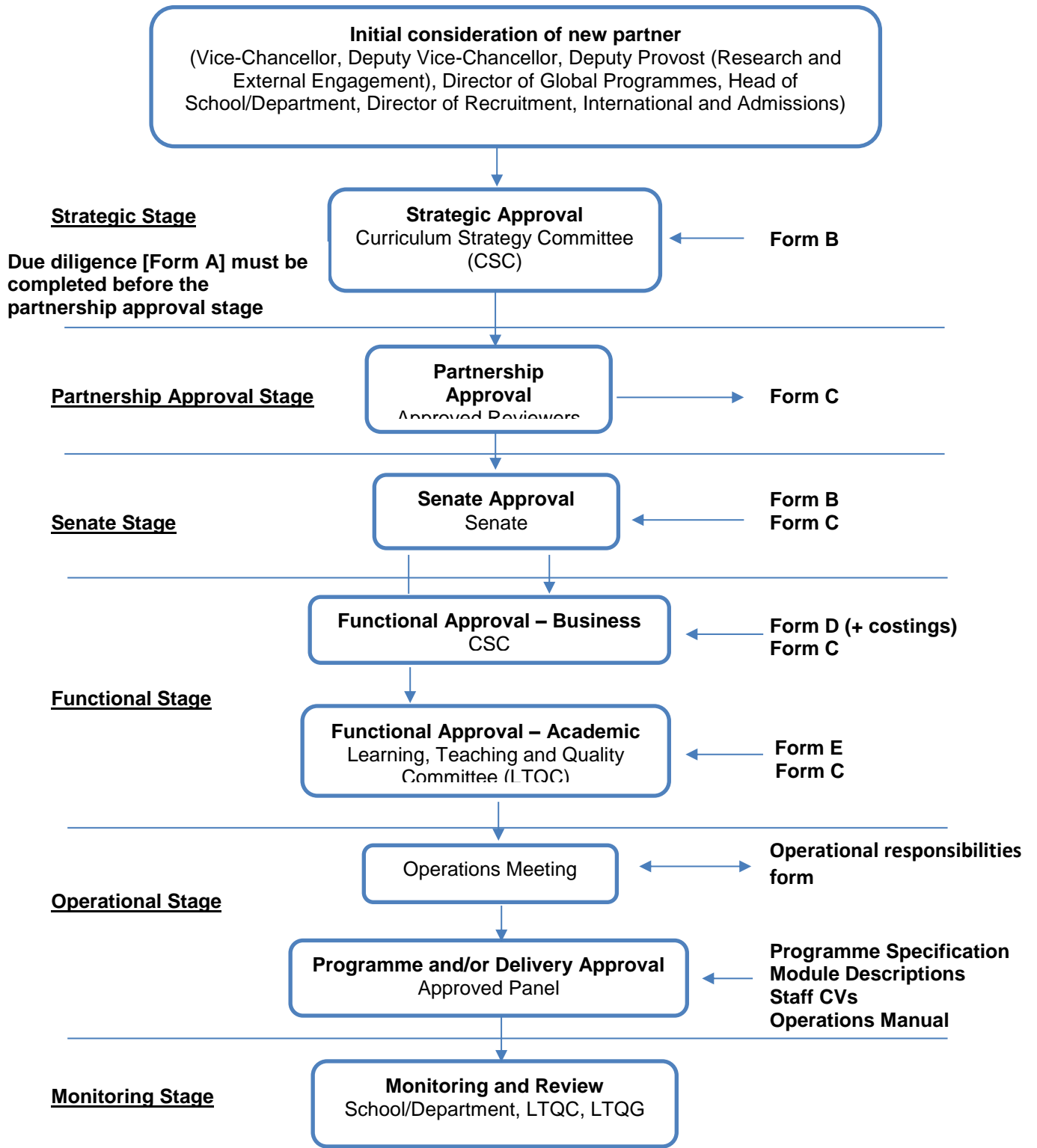
<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Forms to be completed</b>
New partner	A, B, C, D (+ costings), E
Existing partner, new site, new programme	B, C, D (+ costings), E
Existing partner, same site, new programme	D (+ costings), E
Existing partner, new site, existing programme	F (+ costings), H

Where changes are proposed to a collaborative programme, the internal modifications process should be followed.

All proposed changes to existing partner arrangements should be discussed with the Academic Office who will advise the correct procedures to be followed.

**Annex A**

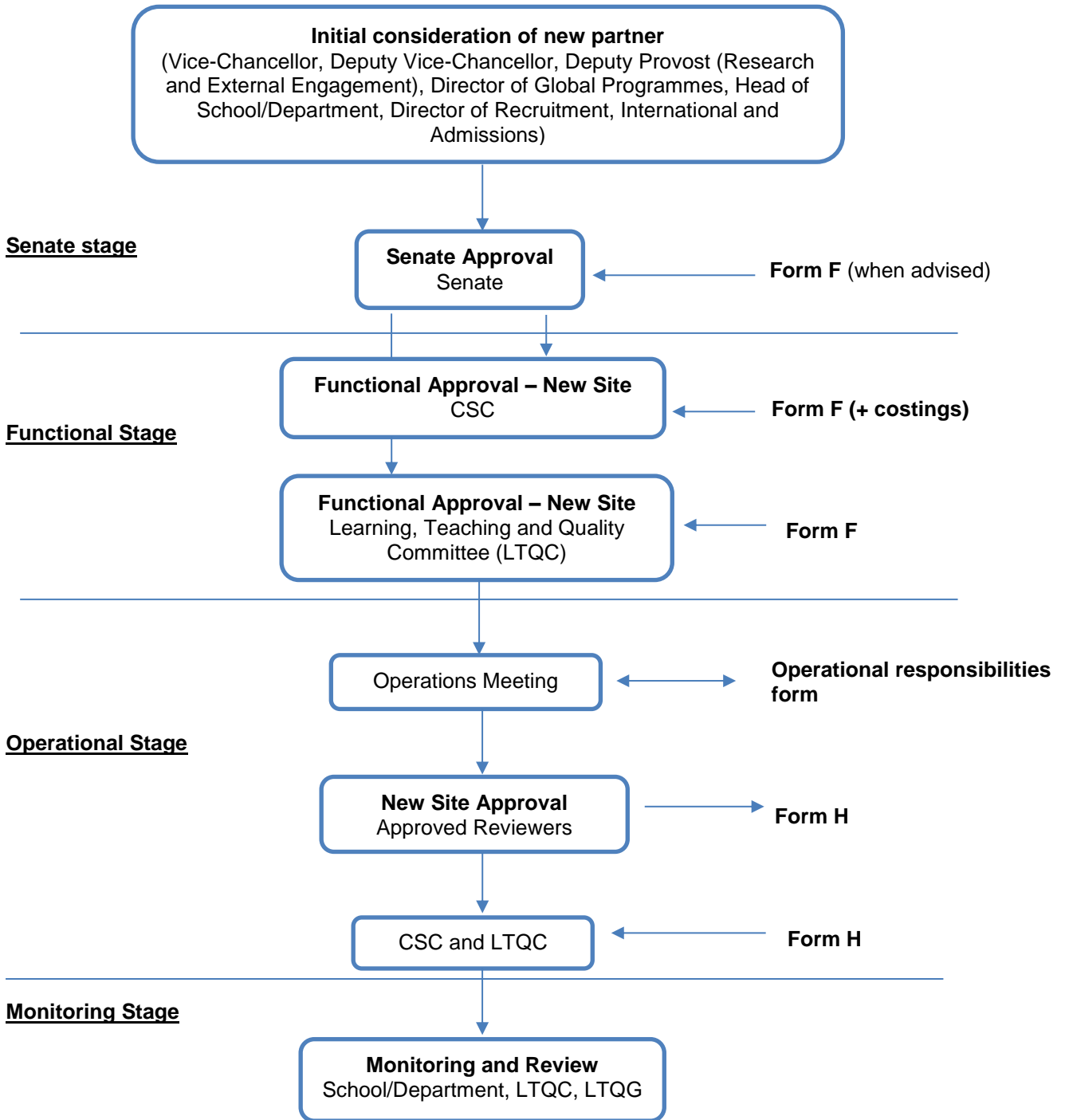
**New partnership approval process flow chart**



- Form A** – Partnership Review Proforma
- Form B** – Partnership Strategic Case
- Form C** – Partnership Approval Report
- Form D** – Partnership Business Case
- Form E** – Partnership Academic Case

**Annex B**

**New site approval process flow chart**



**Form F** – Partnership New Site Approval  
**Form H** – Partnership New Site Visit Report