International Partnerships Ethical Policy

Introduction

1. This policy sets out the core principles that must be adhered to in the development of international partnerships. It is designed to support the achievement of Queen Mary’s Strategic Aims and International Strategy.

2. The policy’s purpose is to ensure that Queen Mary, University of London has a clear point of reference when considering ethical issues with respect to international partnerships.

Scope

3. This policy applies to all activities of Queen Mary conducted with non-UK partners and supported by an agreement. Day-to-day associations between individual members of staff are not covered by this policy however its principles may inform the actions of individual members of staff.

Contextual Principles

4. When engaging in international partnerships, Queen Mary expects that no action should be taken that might damage its reputation or bring into question its academic standards.

5. All partnership activity that involves an award of Queen Mary, the University of London or the award of academic credit must adhere to the expectations of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) UK Quality Code. The expectations of the Code are reflected in Queen Mary policies and procedures for collaborative provision.

6. All partnership activity risk assessments must be informed by information from government sources, including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The partnership activity should always be reviewed where the situation in a country changes, particularly where the advice of the FCO changes.

7. Each partnership will be reviewed routinely following an agreed period of time and before each renewal of the contract.

Authority

8. Council is responsible for the approval of the QM Strategy and for the approval of any Agreements that lock QM into significant contractual commitments of over 5 years and over a value of £5m per year other than contracts of employment. Council superintends the work of Senate.
9. The Principal has overall responsibility for ensuring compliance with this policy.

10. Senate has a specific responsibility for frameworks relating to the academic activity of Queen Mary. Detailed requirements relating to collaborative provision are governed by Senate and detailed in the relevant quality assurance procedures.

11. The Educational Partnerships Board will undertake the detailed consideration of, and approve, proposed new partners involved in the delivery of provision leading to credit or awards of Queen Mary and the University of London, making recommendations to Senate on policies and procedures as applicable. The Partnerships Board will make recommendations to QMSE as appropriate.

12. QMSE will approve partners for activities other than those covered by the Educational Partnerships Board.

13. For research matters, the Ethics of Research Committee takes an overview of policies and activities, on behalf of Senate.

14. All staff are responsible for acting in accordance with the core principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and where their role requires, leadership. Where a member of staff has a concern about the ethical issues relating to an international partnership, these should be raised with their line manager and if need be escalated to QMSE.

15. All staff are responsible for declaring any conflicts of interest that might arise in any partnership arrangement.

**Partnership Principles (all partnerships)**

16. The following key principles will underpin all partnership activity:

   [a] **Academic reputation**: Collaboration involving QM should be with institutions of good academic standing. Any new partnership should contribute to and enhance the reputation of QM as well as of the school/institute sponsoring it. Where there is a difference of view between a school/institute and QMSE about the perceived reputational advantage of any proposed partnership, QMSE’s view will take precedence.

   [b] **Academic standards and awards**: QMUL retains responsibility for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name, and is responsible for ensuring that the academic standards of its awards meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. The academic standards of awards developed and delivered through partnership arrangements will be equivalent to those delivered by QM and will be compatible with any relevant UK benchmarking information.

   [c] **Academic Freedom**: There shall be academic freedom within the context of the programme being delivered through the partnership for the staff and students engaged with it.
[d] **Quality assurance**: QM quality assurance procedures for collaborative activities follow the procedures set out in the QMUL QA Handbook. Specific quality procedures required to support a collaborative arrangement should be set out in the agreement and should be approved at the relevant stage in the procedure.

[e] **Assessment of risk**: Prior to submitting any new collaborative proposal, an assessment of possible risks should be undertaken in respect of both the partner and the proposed activity.

[f] **Financial sustainability**: Normally, all partnership activities should be financially sustainable, and should be fully costed to give an indication of likely direct or indirect costs to the school/institute. The financial arrangements and responsibilities will be detailed in a written agreement between QM and the partner. Exceptionally, a partnership may be approved where it is not financially advantageous, provided there is a clear academic case to support the decision.

[g] **Consistency with the QM Strategic Plan and International Strategy**: Schools/ institutes are encouraged to develop international links and to undertake international collaborative work. Any agreement with an overseas partner institution should be consistent with, and support the aims set out in, the QMUL International Strategy. It should also be consistent with the strategic plans of the academic units concerned.

[h] **Legal framework**: The responsibilities and obligations of QM and of the partner institutions will be set out in the Memoranda of Agreement which are legally binding documents.

[i] **Programme management**: For any partnership leading to an award, QM’s management of the programme or module will operate in the same way as internal provision with formal approval and review through QM’s programme and module approval and review processes.

[i] **Admissions**: The arrangements for admission to the collaborative programme are managed in accordance with QM’s normal recruitment and should be consistent with the principles of QM’s Admissions Policy. Any specific admissions requirements are set out in the collaborative agreement and are articulated to students as part of the admissions process. Entry standards for students being admitted to collaborative programmes of study will only ever be based on academic criteria and never be subject to political, financial or other pressure.

[j] **Assessment**: Assessment processes and procedures of partner institutions should be consistent with QM’s Academic Regulations for the conduct of invigilated examinations and other assessment, and with the Queen Mary Academic Credit Framework. Special assessment arrangements will be specified in the Memorandum of Agreement. The assessment of students
and conferment of awards will always be based on academic criteria and never be subject to political, financial or other pressure.

17. In addition:

[a] No partnership should exist which is not in line with Queen Mary’s charitable aims.

[b] No partnership will be with a company or other body whose major business activity is tobacco products or where over 25% of its business activity is armaments. (These principles reflect the Ethical Investment Policy.)

[c] Proposed partnership developments require completion of the due diligence process and a risk assessment. These processes focus on the academic standing and legal form of the partner as established indicators of risk in higher education.

[d] Queen Mary will not enter into any serial relationship i.e. where the partner institution delegates responsibilities agreed with QM to another party through a separate arrangement.

[e] Queen Mary will always be responsible for the standards of awards made in its name or that of the University of London. This responsibility cannot be delegated.

Contracts with foreign governments and bodies

18. QM will only enter into contracts to provide academic services (e.g. teaching and research) for foreign governments and other bodies where there is no interference with the management of academic standards or the results of any research. All such contracts and those for consultancy should also take account of UK foreign policy advice and any trade restrictions in relation to any specific country or body.

Students sponsored by foreign governments and bodies

19. QM may admit students who are sponsored by foreign governments and other bodies where the student meets the entry criteria and selection process for the programme and the sponsorship confers no obligation on QM other than the delivery of the relevant programme of study. In such cases, QM’s contract is with the student and not the sponsoring government.

20. In all cases, students will be subject to the same expectations of academic integrity and the QM Academic Regulations; there will be no variation in academic standards for particular students for any reason.

21. Donations to QM will not be accepted from current students, their families, associates or organisations related to the student, except for restricted charitable activities.
Research partnerships

22. Research partnerships should be congruent with QM policies for ensuring the ethics of its research activity, relating both to the process of research and its outputs. Research proposals that may give rise to ethical dilemmas or require research ethics approval should be referred to the Ethics of Research Committee for review.

Further relevant advice and guidance

23. The Donations Acceptance Policy, Ethical Investment Policy and various policies, procedures and guidance for collaborative provision amplify this policy statement.

24. Country plans provided by the International Office are comprehensive guides and provide information about potential ethical issues.

25. The Quality Handbook, Collaborative Provision Framework and other academic governance policies and procedures detail policies and procedures that apply to programmes, modules, awards and students.

26. This policy will be kept under review and updated as required.

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