

Chapter 5

Academic Partnerships

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INTRODUCTION

Edge Hill University develops academic partnerships with a wide range of third-party organisations, from UK-based employers, colleges and awarding bodies to overseas higher education providers, for the delivery of modules or programmes leading to the award of university credit or qualifications, or the provision of learning opportunities including student work placements, international exchanges and arrangements for entry with advanced standing (articulation).

The University's procedures for managing the academic standards and quality of its academic partnerships are fully aligned with the Quality and Standards [Conditions B1 to B5](#) of the Office for Students' (OfS) [Regulatory Framework for Higher Education in England](#), which includes the mandatory [Sector Recognised Standards](#)¹ and is informed by the Advice and Guidance on [Partnerships](#) contained within the [UK Quality Code](#) (2018).

Faculties develop academic partnerships in line with University's [Curriculum Strategy](#) and the [International Strategy](#) and ensure that planning proposals receive the required Faculty scrutiny, supported by due diligence and a business case as appropriate to the type (category) of partnership being considered. This chapter describes the principles associated with the approval, review and closure of different types of academic partnership. More detailed information on the operational processes and paperwork requirements can be found in the [Guide to Academic Partnership Approvals](#).

Whilst the guidance within this chapter is most applicable to taught degrees, research collaborations where a partner organisation has any responsibility for the teaching, learning, assessment or supervision of an EHU research award, shall be categorised according to the partnership taxonomy. Processes for the approval, monitoring and management of such partnerships resides with the Graduate School and is governed by the research degree regulations.

THE TAXONOMY OF ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

Academic partnership entails the delegation of certain activities normally conducted by the University to another organisation, most notably teaching, assessment and student support, although in all cases Edge Hill as the awarding body is ultimately responsible for academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities. The following categories of academic partnership have been established for which different approval, monitoring and review processes have been developed to mitigate the associated levels of academic and business risk:

¹ The 'Framework for Higher Education Qualifications' (QAA 2014) as adopted by the OfS.

Table 1: Taxonomy of partnership arrangements according to risk profile

Category		Sub-Category		Risk Level (Low, Medium, High, Variable)
A	Placements and Study Abroad ²	A1	School-based training and other placements (ex. clinical) (UK)	L
		A3	Study Abroad and work placements (Overseas)	M
		A4	Clinical placements (UK)	V
		A5	Higher / Degree Apprenticeships	L
		A6	PGCE with Lead Partners	L
B	Outreach Learning Venues	B1	Outreach Learning Venues (UK)	L
		B2	School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) venues	L
		B3	Outreach Learning Venues (Overseas)	L
C	Outreach Supported Learning Centres	C1	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Education providers (UK)	M
		C2	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Non-education providers (UK)	M
		C3	Outreach Supported Learning Centres (Overseas)	H
D	Credit-rating			M
E	Articulations	E1	Qualification recognition	M
		E2	Qualification recognition with a progression agreement	M
F	Delivery with a third party (including overseas delivery)	F1	Franchise (single modules)	H
		F2	Co-delivery	H
		F3	Franchise (whole programmes)	H
		F4	Validation	H
		F5	Joint awards	H

Modules or programmes delivered under a **franchise** arrangement (categories F1 or F3) are developed by the University for delivery wholly by a partner organisation. Modules or programmes within a **co-delivery** arrangement (F2) are developed by the University for joint delivery by the University and a partner organisation. Modules or programmes within a **validation** arrangement (F4) are developed and delivered wholly by a partner organisation but validated by the University, leading to the award of EHU credit and/ or qualifications

² Category A2 was formerly used for the management of ERASMUS partnerships and therefore is no longer in use.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities related to the development and support of Academic Partnerships. **Primary responsibility for partnerships resides with the relevant Faculties**, with expert input from other areas of the University as detailed below.

Table 2: Roles and responsibilities by partnership category

Category		Sub-category		Responsible Area(s)
A	Placements and Study Abroad	A1	School-based training and other placements (ex. clinical) (UK)	Faculties
		A3	Study Abroad and work placements (Overseas)	International Office / Faculties
		A4	Clinical placements (UK)	Faculties
		A5	Higher and Degree Apprenticeships	Faculties / Compliance Team
		A6	PGCE with Lead Partners	Faculties
B	Outreach Learning Venues	B1	Outreach Learning Venues (UK)	Faculties
		B2	School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) venues	Faculties
		B3	Outreach Learning Venues (Overseas)	Faculties / International Office
C	Outreach Supported Learning Centres	C1	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Education providers (UK)	Faculties / GQASC ³
		C2	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Non-education providers (UK)	Faculties / GQASC
		C3	Outreach Supported Learning Centres (Overseas)	Faculties / International Office / GQASC
D	Credit-rating			Faculties / GQASC
E	Articulations	E1	Qualification recognition	Faculties / GQASC
		E2	Qualification recognition with a progression agreement	Faculties / GQASC
F	Delivery with a third party (including overseas delivery)	F1	Franchise (single modules)	GQASC / Faculties / International Office
		F2	Co-delivery	GQASC / Faculties / International Office
		F3	Franchise (whole programmes)	GQASC / Faculties / International Office
		F4	Validation	GQASC / Faculties / International Office
		F5	Joint awards	GQASC / Faculties / International Office

³ Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Case work team.

It is the responsibility of the proposing Faculty to identify an appropriate resource to support its academic partnerships, i.e. an Academic Partnership Lead based centrally within each Faculty, and individual Academic Partnership Liaison Tutors, based in the appropriate Department where each partnership is monitored and administered).

Faculty Partnership Lead

The role of the Faculty Partnership Lead, identified by the PVC Dean, includes the following:

- Determining processes for the approval, review and closure of category A and B partnerships and documenting them in the [Faculty Academic Quality Statement](#)⁴.
- Providing expert advice on partnership processes to academics developing partner provision and other colleagues as appropriate.
- Overseeing the operation of partnership provision in the Faculty, supporting Academic Partnership Liaison Tutors to fulfil their duties and arranging any training or advice as needed.
- Co-ordinating the required documentation for academic and business approval including arranging for the completion and signing of the Memorandum of Understanding.
- Co-ordinating the documentation required for delivery approval / validation events.
- Maintaining comprehensive records of all partnerships⁵, including any correspondence with partners or students and a record of current Academic Partnership Liaison Tutors.
- Negotiating with proposed partners in relation to their contract, with input from the Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Faculty, or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC).
- Arranging the completion of relevant contractual documentation, including authorising signatures.
- Leading on the monitoring of partnerships, particularly through the Annual Review processes, identifying areas of risk and escalating or resolving these as appropriate.
- Supporting and organising Site Assessment and Site Visits
- Monitoring closure plans and associated actions, ensuring updates to the Faculty Quality Committee are submitted until all students complete.
- Supporting the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor to fulfil their role.
- Attending partner or delivery approval validation events where appropriate.

Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor

A role usually fulfilled by the relevant Programme Leader⁶, Academic Partnership Liaison Tutors (APLTs) are required for partnerships at category C and above and undertake the following responsibilities:

⁴ See Chapter 1.

⁵ Requirements to maintain a central record of partnerships are stipulated at the end of this chapter.

⁶ Except for category F4, where there is no equivalent EHU programme and therefore a separate Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor is required.

- Being the primary contact for liaison with the partner, fielding queries, resolving issues, ensuring that any course changes are communicated appropriately with the partner and ensuring that partner staff are informed of expectations for all aspects of delivery and assessment.
- Completing Site Visits and Site Assessment as required.
- Ensure delivery of the partnership provision remains appropriately aligned to the approved programme specification and Delivery Plan.
- Completing relevant documentation for initial approval and validation of a partner and any reapprovals and attending the relevant validation event.
- Completing the Annual Review form, in conjunction with other stakeholders and providing it to the partner for their comments.
- Completing the Closure Plan, negotiating a smooth and appropriate exit with the partner.
- Working closely with the Faculty Partnership Lead, seeking advice and support where necessary in the fulfilment of the role.
- Liaising with other relevant Programme Leaders where the partner's portfolio includes multiple programmes⁷.
- Where required, serving as a 'critical friend' to teaching staff, providing advice and support on University processes, teaching and assessment operations, student consultation and feedback, academic/ pastoral student support etc.

In the case of more complex or high-risk provision, an Internal Verifier may be appointed by the Faculty to support the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor and provide additional assurance. Where a subject is being delivered for which there is no direct equivalent within the University's portfolio, an External Verifier with appropriate discipline expertise may be appointed and remunerated by the Faculty (**Note:** this does not replace the requirement for an independent external examiner).

Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework (GQASC)

Oversight responsibility for the range of academic partnerships at the University resides with the Academic Quality and Standards Manager (Partnerships and Regulation) who is responsible for:

- Providing oversight of delegated partnership process responsibilities and operations in Faculties, particularly for those partnerships identified as presenting a higher risk.
- Advising on partnership quality assurance processes (category C+).
- Maintaining the [Register of Academic Partnerships](#).
- Supporting Site Assessment and Partner Visits as required.
- Organising a central repository for Academic Partnership documentation including contracts.
- Providing advice related to processes to support proposals brought forward for institutional approval, ensuring they align with institutional strategy.

⁷ Only one Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor is normally required per partner, with the expectation that they will liaise accordingly with other colleagues in the completion of the Annual Review paperwork.

- Co-ordinating the business and academic approval⁸ of category C+ partnerships.
- Reporting to Academic Board Committees and the Board of Governors with appropriate updates on the academic partnership portfolio.
- Producing the Institutional Annual Review Overview Report for Academic Partnerships⁹ to provide assurance regarding the ongoing quality and standards of partner provision, and to highlight any risks or institutional action required.
- Leading on the Annual Process Review¹⁰ for this chapter to determine any changes required to processes.

The International Office

The International Office, working in conjunction with Faculties, support the development and delivery of academic partnership provision and is responsible for:

- Managing the Study Abroad portfolio and all associated processes.
- Providing expert advice on international contexts, visas, contracts etc. to support the development of new partnerships and monitoring of existing partnerships.
- Production of country intelligence reports for overseas approval events.
- Completing initial due diligence checks for international partners, followed by more in-depth and comprehensive due diligence reports at a later stage which explicitly identify and categorise risks.
- Supporting Site Assessments as required.

The Compliance Team

The Compliance Team, based in Academic Registry, are responsible for supporting degree and higher apprenticeship provision (category A5). Their specific responsibilities include:

- Ensuring university compliance with the relevant central bodies, including the ESFA, Ofsted and the OfS, in relation to validated apprenticeship provision.
- Maintaining a central Register of Apprenticeship-Approved Employers.
- In conjunction with GQASC, overseeing the approval process for new apprenticeship-approved employers.
- In conjunction with GQASC, overseeing processes for the monitoring of apprenticeship delivery arrangements.
- Completing the appropriate due diligence checks for potential domestic partners, including approved Apprenticeship Employers.
- Supporting the Institutional Apprenticeship Group in its operation and implementation of the University Apprenticeship Strategy.

⁸ Submission to the DVC. Business approval is normally granted prior to any submissions to APC which form part of the formal academic approval (validation) process.

⁹ This is jointly authored by the Faculty Partnership Leads and the Academic Quality and Standards Manager (Partnerships and Regulation), and is received by AQEC for approval.

¹⁰ See Chapter 1.

- Arranging the completion of relevant contractual and delivery documentation with Approved Apprenticeship Employers.

CATEGORY A PARTNERSHIPS

A	Placement and Study Abroad	A1	School-based training, clinical and other placements (ex-clinical) (UK)
		A3	Study Abroad and work placements (Overseas)
		A4	Clinical placements (UK)
		A5	Degree and Higher Apprenticeships
		A6	PGCE with Lead Partners

This category covers placements, Study Abroad arrangements, including sandwich years and student exchanges, the delivery of degree and higher apprenticeships (including foundation awards such as the FDS Nursing Associate programme), and the lead partner route to achieve a Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) with Qualified Teacher Status. Here the University delegates to a partner organisation limited responsibility for student learning, assessment and the student experience for which Faculties hold significant responsibilities. This generally takes place within a work-setting within designated parameters outlined in agreements with the employer. Responsibility for the determination of appropriate processes for the approval, review and closure of partnerships which fall under category A resides with the Faculties, International Team and Compliance Team.

Category A1-4 and A6 Processes

Placements

Placements form an important part of the University's curriculum and emphasis upon employability. Many awards provide curricular (credit-bearing) and/ or extra-curricular placements whereby students acquire knowledge and experience that help them to achieve the Programme Learning Outcomes and enhance their employability. Examples include:

- **Statutory placements** – trainee teachers and healthcare practitioners complete statutory placements as part of their professional training.
- **Placement Learning / Work-Based Learning (WBL)** – placements developed and delivered in association with employers, and one of the defining characteristics of some non-professional awards such as a Foundation Degrees¹¹.
- **Sandwich Years** – enable students to undertake at least 32 weeks of supervised work experience for which they receive academic credit that contributes to their final award. See [Academic Regulations](#) for further details. Sandwich years may be added to certain undergraduate degrees using the process described in Chapter 4 of this Handbook.

¹¹ See [Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement](#) (QAA, 2015). For Foundation Degrees, the University's Academic Regulations require at least a quarter of students' learning to be experienced in the workplace, either through discrete work-based learning modules or embedded across the curriculum.

Placement learning and work-based learning can be differentiated as follows¹²:

- **Placement learning** is where the learner might be considered as a student first, employee second; i.e. they came to the placement experience by virtue of their studies.
- **Work-based learning** is when the learner might be considered as employee first, student second; i.e. they came to the Higher Education experience by virtue of their employment or employer.

Despite the above distinction, for quality assurance purposes, placement learning and work-based learning are considered collectively as a category A placement, sharing the same approval, review and closure processes.

Study Abroad

Undergraduate students may undertake a period of study abroad, either through the university's exchange programme or as negotiated with an individual overseas provider. Study abroad is normally undertaken as an additional year located between levels 5 and 6 (i.e., third year of four) or exceptionally, a single semester replacing part of level 5. Where taken over one year, an additional 120 ungraded level 5 credits are awarded which appear on the student's transcript but do not contribute to their final degree classification. Where taken as a single semester, study abroad contributes 60 ungraded credits (to the required 120) and is excluded from the degree classification.

Faculties are responsible for developing appropriate processes for the consideration and approval of such partnerships. Processes are described in [Faculty Academic Quality Statements](#) and consider:

- Student support arrangements; and,
- Curriculum alignment between the two HE Providers.

The International Office, as part of its own due diligence¹³, reviews students' chosen institutions to ensure that their individual learning needs will be met.

For study abroad within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the EHEA's [First Cycle qualification descriptor](#) provides a reference point for judging an overseas programme's equivalence to a UK undergraduate degree as defined within the [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#) (FHEQ). When selecting the modules to be taken abroad the academic department determines the stage of the overseas provider's programme that equates most closely to the FHEQ level at which the student is to be assessed (typically level 5) and the alignment of module content and learning objectives with the relevant Edge Hill programme aims and learning outcomes. The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) enables direct transfer of credit from an EHEA awarding institution where 1 ECTS credit equals 2 UK

¹²'ASET Good Practice Guide for Work based and Placement Learning in Higher Education', ASET Work Based and Placement Learning Association, 2013), p.8 www.asetonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ASET-Good-Practice-Guide-eWBPL.pdf.

¹³ This complements the standard due diligence completed by the EU before granting an institution's Erasmus Charter.

HE credits. **ECTS credit imported from study exchanges does not contribute to degree award classification which negates any requirement for the scaling of marks.** While the default position is to import ungraded ECTS credit directly into students' profiles, for those who have failed assessment at the partner institution and have since returned to the UK a series of validated 'shell' modules of different credit values is available as a vehicle for re-assessment at Edge Hill University. Because the credit gained through such exchanges is ungraded and excluded from the calculation of students' degree classifications, these shell modules are similarly excluded and will be assessed as 'Pass/ Fail only'. It is considered good practice for academic department to consult with the external examiner regarding the modules to select, but this is not a requirement.

Study Abroad (other overseas territories) (A3)

For study outside the EHEA, the proposing department assesses the suitability of the placement, accompanied by a health and safety audit. UK ENIC provides a service which compares overseas and UK higher education qualifications, and when selecting the modules to be taken abroad the academic department determines the stage of the overseas provider's programme that equates most closely to the FHEQ level at which the student is to be assessed (typically level 5), and the alignment of module content and learning objectives with the relevant Edge Hill programme aims and learning outcomes. In addition to level, the department establishes broad equivalence between the volume of learning and assessment to be undertaken and the Notional Learning Hours for which Edge Hill credit is to be awarded (where 1 credit = 10 NLHs). **Credit imported from study abroad exchanges does not contribute to degree award classification which negates any requirement for the scaling of marks.** While the default position is to import ungraded credit directly into students' profiles, for those who have failed assessment at the partner institution and have since returned to the UK a series of validated 'shell' modules of different credit values is available as a vehicle for re-assessment at Edge Hill University. Because the credit gained through exchanges is ungraded and excluded from the calculation of students' degree classifications, these shell modules are similarly excluded and will be assessed as 'Pass/ Fail only'. It is considered good practice for academic department to consult with the external examiner regarding the modules to select, but this is not a requirement.

Study Abroad - Agreements

Study abroad arrangements are supported by **signed agreements** that describe the roles and responsibilities of the University, overseas provider and EHU student; how the student will be taught, supported and assessed; and how complaints or disciplinary issues, that may arise while the student is abroad, will be managed. A standard agreement is used which is signed by a member of Directorate, additionally for specific relationships between institutions relating to student mobility, a separate learning agreement is also signed prior to students embarking on any exchanges. Where they occur, study abroad opportunities are evaluated within programme monitoring and as part of departmental annual monitoring and curriculum review.

PGCE with Lead Partners

The University operates PGCE provision with Lead Partners. The Initial Teacher Education (ITE) curriculum is designed and accredited by Edge Hill University and the University is:

- accountable to professional bodies and external quality assurance
- will be the awarding body
- will make recommendations for Qualified Teacher Status

The ITE curriculum is delivered at the Edge Hill Ormskirk campus with a small number of context specific training events taking place with the Lead Partner.

Approval Processes

For partnerships within the sub-categories, partner and delivery approval are combined and responsibility for determining these processes resides mainly within Faculties¹⁴ with some responsibilities shared with the International Office. Approval of such arrangements may include:

- Due diligence checks; including legal and financial.
- Consideration of any relevant country or partner intelligence.
- Consideration of the business case and any appropriate costings.
- Completion of clear, signed agreements with the partner which confirm the responsibilities of each partner.
- Completion of an appropriate health and safety check or risk assessment of the setting.
- (Placements and apprenticeships only) Completion of 3-way learning agreements¹⁵ between the student, HE provider and employer, before placements commence.
- (Apprenticeships only) Consideration of the extent to which the proposed apprenticeship arrangement aligns with the University Apprenticeship Strategy.

Category A arrangements are approved for varying periods (between 1-3 years). See Table 3 below.

¹⁴ See [Faculty Academic Quality Statements](#).

¹⁵ These typically cover:

- The roles, responsibilities and obligations of the University, the placement provider and the student.
- Employer's liability and compliance with statutory obligations e.g., concerning equality, data protection, freedom of information, health and safety, and environmental law.
- Ownership of copyright and intellectual property rights for work produced by the student while on placement.
- Provisions that enable the University or placement provider to suspend or withdraw from the agreement if any party fails to meet its obligations.

Table 3: Partner approval periods in category A arrangements

	Category	Sub-category		Period of Partner Approval
A	Placements and Study Abroad	A1	School-based training and other placements (ex. clinical) (UK)	Up to 3 years per provider
		A3	Study Abroad and work placements (Overseas)	1 year
		A4	Clinical placements (UK)	Ongoing but subject to 2-yearly review
		A5	Degree and Higher Apprenticeships	Ongoing - subject to annual review activity
		A6	PGCE with Lead Partner	Ongoing - subject to annual review activity

When approving programmes containing either work-based or placement learning, the following guidance may be utilised:

1. (Where the student is not already in relevant employment) The identification of placement opportunities which offer a learning experience that meets the needs and expectations of students and enables achievement of the relevant learning outcomes. Validation panels consider whether students will source their own placements (with support) or have placements provided for them and where such responsibility is located.

Possible questions:

- Who sources or organises the placements?
- What is the structure and duration of the placement?
- What is the purpose of the placement (e.g., to meet compulsory requirements of the programme; an employability opportunity; to develop certain skills/ to gain certain experience)?
- Is credit attached to the placement/ is the student assessed for competency?
- Details of potential placement partners, including any overseas arrangement.
- What funding is provided for the placement provider?

2. (Where the student is already in employment) How the appropriateness of the student's own work setting to the learning aims and outcomes is established.

Possible questions:

- Who has responsibility for identifying and organising placement opportunity?
- Who approves this?
- Who monitors and evaluates the placement?
- If overseas, is there clear process outlining the relationship between the International Team and Faculty?
- How do different role holders liaise and share information?
- Are there clear definitions of who has responsibility for different parts of the process?
- Is a risk assessment necessary? By whom is it conducted?

3. Quality assurance and risk assessment of placement settings and formal agreements with placement providers.

Possible questions:

- How are students prepared in advance of the placement commencing?
- What support is available to students during the placement, both from EHU and placement provider?

4. Preparation and support for students before, during and after their placements.
5. Assessment and evaluation of placements.
6. Recruitment, development and support of employer-mentors including their preparation for assessment (where this applies).
7. Arrangements for managing incomplete or unsatisfactory placement experiences¹⁶.

Possible questions

- How is assessment carried out? Who is responsible for this?
- How do the students evaluate their experience and articulate skills acquired?
- How is feedback gathered from the placement provider on the student?
- How is feedback gathered from the placement provider on Edge Hill's placement management?
- Does feedback go to a committee or panel?
- How is the feedback loop closed?
- How does this evaluation feed into planning for next year?

8. Managing student or employer complaints or disciplinary issues that arise whilst a student is on placement.

Review Processes for Category A1-4 and A6 Partnerships

Faculties are responsible for maintaining a database of approved placement providers and PGCE Lead Partners, whilst the International Team is responsible for maintaining a register of study abroad respectively. These records include their period of approval and expiry for review purposes. Faculties describe their processes for the review of these partnerships in their [Faculty Academic Quality Statements](#).

The outputs of the review activity undertaken is considered by the relevant Faculty committee, the purpose of which is to identify any risk for discussion, and to provide assurance of the ongoing quality of category A arrangements.

Closure Processes for Category A1-4 and A6 Partnerships

Appropriate arrangements for the termination of placement arrangements, study abroad agreements and agreements with PGCE Lead Partners are determined by the Faculty or International Team, depending on who is responsible for the arrangement (see Table 2 above). These processes however must include consideration of the University [Student](#)

¹⁶ Where a substitute placement cannot be provided and an alternative mode of assessment is required, course teams describe this in the Additional Assessment Information section of the relevant Module Specification. In all circumstances, alternative assessment must be capable of testing the validated Intended Learning Outcome(s).

[Protection Plan](#), adherence to the Office for Students' [Conditions of Registration C1-3](#) related to student protection and any implications for the student experience during teach out¹⁷.

Category A5 Processes

Degree and Higher Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships integrate work and learning and typically lead to a qualification; some may also lead to recognition by one or more professional bodies. Apprenticeships are a key vehicle by which the UK is seeking to ensure that public and private sector employers can recruit and develop the workforce they need. Requirements and specifications for Apprenticeships are set out in Apprenticeship Standards¹⁸, developed by the [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#) (IfATE).

Programmes for delivery as **Higher Apprenticeships** terminate in a FHEQ level 5 or 6 award, e.g., Foundation Degree or Graduate Certificate, whilst **Degree Apprenticeships** terminate at levels 6 & 7, i.e., Undergraduate and Masters Degrees. Under these arrangements, Approved Apprenticeship Employers work with the University to deliver an apprenticeship programme to their employees, who then become designated as apprentices. Delivery by the Approved Apprenticeship Employer is very limited to areas such as supervision within the workplace environment and limited involvement in some assessed elements. The University is responsible for all other aspects of the apprenticeship programme delivery.

The university utilises the QAA's [Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships](#) (June 2022) as part of its design of new apprenticeship programmes; for more information, please see Chapter 4 of this handbook.

Approval of Apprenticeships

Programmes intended for delivery as **Higher Apprenticeships** and **Degree Apprenticeships** are validated using the approval processes described in Chapter 4 of this Handbook. However, in addition to the standard validation questions, panels also consider whether there is:

- Demonstrable alignment with the relevant Apprenticeship Standards through mapping of Programme Learning Outcomes and content (modules) to the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) of the relevant Apprenticeship Standard.
- An appropriate balance of 'on-the-job' and 'off-the-job' learning¹⁹.
- An appropriate arrangement for programme monitoring and review that also considers the progress of individual learners.
- Evidence of employer involvement in programme design and development²⁰.

¹⁷ Including consideration of any potential implications of such a closure for compliance with Competition and Markets Authority guidance. See [UK higher education providers – advice on consumer protection law](#) (CMA, 2023).

¹⁸ Apprenticeship Standards, developed by Trailblazer groups made up of employers in a particular industry sector, specify the KSBs required to demonstrate full occupational competence in the relevant job role.

¹⁹ Most learning takes place 'on-the-job', however at least 20 percent of an apprenticeship must involve 'off-the-job' learning delivered through scheduled learning activities.

²⁰ Employers are situated as the main driver in the development process for apprenticeships that involve higher education qualifications. See ['Quality Assuring Higher Education in Apprenticeships: Current Approaches'](#), QAA 2nd edition, July 2018, section 3.1.

- Assurance that programme admission processes satisfy the entry requirements set within the relevant Apprenticeship Standard and the University's own minimum entry requirements, including any opportunity for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)²¹.
- Evidence of how programme delivery and assessment schedules will accommodate the circumstances of learners in the specific employment setting (in the 'Student Learning Journey' section of the programme specification), with a minimum of 20% 'off-the-job' learning.
- Compliance with the relevant **Apprenticeship Assessment Plan**²².
- A confirmed arrangement for an **End-Point Assessment (EPA)**, in accordance with the relevant Apprenticeship Assessment Plan, i.e., *integrated* within the programme or *non-integrated*. The latter being conducted by a third-party End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO), endorsed by the employer and supported by a separate agreement between the University and EPAO. Where EPA is non-integrated, proposers describe how students will be prepared and supported to undertake it. For programmes with integrated EPA, proposers evidence relevant practice-based expertise and experience among academic delivery staff and external examiners²³.

The approval of a new apprenticeship programme and its associated curriculum is subject to final approval by AQEC, as per standard validations. Following approval, the Compliance Team submits a completed **Higher Education Learning Aim Request Form** to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) accompanied by a letter, signed by the Chair of the Validation and Audit Standing Panel confirming that the qualification has completed internal validation and authorising it to be included within the **Learning Aims Reference Service (LARS)** for prescribed Higher Education qualifications.

Where an employer expresses an interest in having the University deliver its apprenticeships to their employees, this is detailed in an **Apprenticeship Proposal form**. This form provides details regarding the proposed employer, the apprenticeship programmes (and standards) for delivery, the timescales and rationale for the delivery with this new employer. Any risks or concerns identified from the Due Diligence Report shall also be included in this Proposal form. The Due Diligence Report and Apprenticeship Proposal form are submitted to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for business approval before submission to the Chair of the Institutional Apprenticeship Group. The decision regarding where apprenticeship programmes shall be delivered and which employers wish to engage with the university on our apprenticeship programmes, resides with the Institutional Apprenticeship Group (most commonly via Chair's Action taken by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for External Relations). Once approved by the Chair, contracts and compliance activity will take place to arrange delivery with the employers.

²¹ Unless specifically prohibited by the relevant Apprenticeship Assessment Plan.

²² Apprenticeship Assessment Plans, devised by Trailblazer groups, outline how the KSBs are to be assessed through End-Point Assessment which is conducted at the final stage of the apprenticeship and includes at least two assessment methods, e.g., a work or practice-based project. Assessment Plans indicate whether EPA may be *integrated* within the programme or must be conducted through a standalone process (*non-integrated*).

²³ As stipulated by the relevant Apprenticeship Assessment Plan.

Any existing Approved Apprenticeship Employers who wish to add additional programmes to those they already receive from us are agreed through the same process described above. However, where additional cohorts are to be added to an existing apprenticeship programme, no separate academic approval process is necessary, although the Chair of the Institutional Apprenticeship Group must be consulted in advance and any additional Apprenticeship Programme agreements must be executed.

As referenced in Table 3, approval periods for apprenticeship partners are ongoing and this is refreshed through the annual review activity. This provides regular opportunity to identify any issues with the partnership or delivery with a partner which can then be addressed.

All apprenticeship delivery is underpinned by formal written contracts (agreements) between:

- The University (Provider) and the Approved Apprenticeship Employer;
- The Approved Apprenticeship Employer and the learner;
- The University and any EPAO; and,
- A tripartite agreement between the University, the Approved Apprenticeship Employer and the Apprentice (referred to as a **Commitment Statement**). These contracts run for a period of five years and will be renewed or terminated after this date.

A central record of all apprenticeship arrangements is maintained by the Compliance Team.

Reviewing Apprenticeship Programmes and Delivery Arrangements

Category A5 (degree and higher apprenticeships) are subject to a full review of the apprenticeship programme's performance and this includes delivery with the various approved Apprenticeship Employers. The **Apprenticeship Programme Review** forms provide an opportunity to assess the health of the partnership arrangement as well as the ongoing student experience for the learners. They collect programme-level information and evaluate the effectiveness of the apprenticeship programme through scrutiny of a host of data and evidence (as per standard partner Annual Reviews).

The content of the reviews ultimately informs the **Self-Assessment Review** and **Quality Improvement Plan** for Ofsted and serve to ensure compliance with ESFA requirements for an annual review of apprenticeships. These review forms are submitted to the Institutional Apprenticeship Group for discussion and approval, prior to submission to AQEC. AQEC considers any areas of institutional risk or concern regarding academic standards or quality and, if applicable, commissions appropriate action.

The annual review of apprenticeship programmes and their delivery with partners provides ongoing approval of the partnership, whilst contracts require review and resubmission every five years.

Terminating Apprenticeship Delivery

The decision to cease delivery with an Approved Apprenticeship Employer is agreed at the Institutional Apprenticeship Group in accordance with the **Withdrawal Process** and **Partnership Exit Strategy** detailed at the point of validation. Due consideration is given at this stage to the impact on any existing learners on programme, and discussions are held regarding teach-out arrangements to protect the student experience as the partnership comes to an end.

CATEGORY B PARTNERSHIPS

B	Outreach Learning Venues	B1	Outreach Learning Venues (UK)
		B2	School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (UK)
		B3	Outreach Learning Venues (Overseas)

In this category all teaching, assessment and student support are provided by Edge Hill University staff and the responsibility of the external venue provider is limited to the supply of teaching accommodation, including basic IT and display equipment²⁴.

Approval processes

Responsibility for the approval of category B venues (and associated central record keeping) resides with Faculties and their approach is outlined in their [Faculty Academic Quality Statements](#). The following documents require completion for the proposal of a new venue:

- [Academic Partnership Venue Proposal](#) form; normally completed by the Faculty Partnership Lead.
- [Health and Safety Checklist](#); normally completed by an appropriate health and safety representative (member of EHU staff such as a local health and safety representative). Advice can be sought from the central Health and Safety team. A visit to the venue is normally required to enable completion of this assessment, however virtual completion with input from the venue and others who have knowledge of the site may be acceptable. Any actions required as part of the risk assessment should be addressed and detailed in the Academic Partnership Venue Proposal form.
- A copy of the **Public Liability Insurance**; retained in the central Y Drive files.

The payment of any **fees** is the responsibility of the Faculty to arrange and record in the appropriate budget line.

The process for approval of new venues is as follows:

1. Proposal and documentation completed and submitted to the appropriate Faculty Quality Committee, which is responsible to Faculty Board and Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC).

²⁴ Where more extensive use of learning resources is required an Outreach Supported Learning arrangement may be more appropriate - see 'Category C', below.

2. An appropriate **Venue/Room Hire Agreement** is completed and signed by the relevant parties.
3. Notification should be made to the GQASC and central category B Register updated.
4. An annual list of all category B venues in approval shall be received by Academic Planning Committee (APC)²⁵, which has the responsibility for oversight of academic partnership activity.

Venues are reviewed annually by the Faculty in a process described in [Faculty Academic Quality Statements](#). This normally includes reviewing the currency of the information in the Academic Partnership Venue Proposal form, along with the health and safety assessment. A revised copy of the public liability insurance should be received for the record. Faculties may determine an appropriate process to close or terminate their use of a venue, however most venues operate on a rolling annual approval.

All learning venues must have been approved prior to the start of a programme or module's delivery. As detailed in Table 4 below, venues are approved on a rolling annual basis and therefore do not require any formal closure process.

Table 4: Partner approval periods for category B arrangements

	Category	Sub-category		Period of Partner Approval
B	Outreach Learning Venue	B1	Outreach Learning Venues (UK)	1 year
		B2	School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) venues	1 year
		B3	Outreach Learning Venues (Overseas)	1 year

Review processes

A list of the venues used within an academic year is part of the evidence base considered at Departmental Annual Monitoring²⁶. Venues are also subject to review and re-approval as noted above and these processes are described in [Faculty Academic Quality Statements](#).

DEFINITIONS OF CATEGORY C+ PARTNERSHIPS

As the level of risk and business opportunity varies across the taxonomy of partnerships, different processes are in place for different categories and sub-categories of academic partnerships. This is to ensure they are proportionate to the potential opportunity for Edge Hill University whilst ensuring they are robust for partnerships which present a greater academic or business risk. The following sections provide additional information on the nuanced processes for the different partnership categories above the standard processes

²⁵ Normally at its first meeting of the academic year.

²⁶ See Chapter 3.

described in the earlier sections. More information on the approval processes and paperwork specifically can be found in the [Guide to Academic Partnership Approvals](#).

Category C partnerships

C	Outreach Supported Learning Centres	C1	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Education providers (UK)
		C2	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Non-education providers (UK)
		C3	Outreach Supported Learning Centres (Overseas)

In this category Edge Hill University staff conduct all teaching and assessment elements of a programme or module, while the partner organisation provides the venue, learning resources and some support services subject to individual negotiation (in respect of Category C3, this may include in-country support for Edge Hill programmes delivered via Blended or Distance Learning). Support services may include academic or pastoral support, exam invigilation, lab supervision and more.

For new category C partners (or re-approval events) a Site Assessment must be conducted to inspect the partner facilities, learning resources, and safety regulations. These facilities and resources are inspected to provide assurance to the approval panel they are of an equivalent standard and quality to those of the University. However, external panel members on the approval panel shall be responsible for confirming the subject specific resources provided for the course are appropriate and broadly consistent with those at Edge Hill University campuses. More information on Site Assessments, including who completes them, is available in the [Guide to Academic Partnership Approvals](#).

In the rare circumstance where a Site Assessment cannot be completed in advance of the approval event, virtual tours or similar may be considered however, normally delivery with a partner will not commence until a full, on-site visit has taken place to the satisfaction of the independent officer and/or the validation panel. Advice will be provided by the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework team relating to the approval visit requirement following approval of any partnership proposals by the APC. In exceptional circumstances the validation event for a partner may be held at the partner's site to enable further inspection of facilities by the approval panel.

For category C partnerships undergoing Annual Review or re-approval, particular attention should be paid in the review to the quality and availability of the learning and support resources provided by the partner in the agreement, to ensure there has been no significant change from the original approved agreement. This is normally verified, in part, by a Partner Visit undertaken by the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor.

Category D Partnerships

D	Credit rating
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This category typically covers short courses hosted by UK-based employers or non-educational training organisations and enables their recognition for the award of Edge Hill University academic credit through the approval of Intended Learning Outcomes appropriate to the required FHEQ level accompanied by a suitable assessment strategy. Assessment is subject to internal moderation by the host Edge Hill department and an external examiner is appointed to provision at level 5 and above.

Following business approval and initial approval by APC, validation is completed via the Faculty Module Approval process described in [Faculty Academic Quality Statements](#), supported by the following documentation:

- Partner’s course materials (in their original format) describing the course aims, learning objectives, indicative content and teaching strategy.
- [Partner Overview Document](#), with relevant sections completed.
- Draft Delivery Plan.
- A [Credit Rating Coversheet](#) completed jointly by the host department and partner, detailing:
 - The FHEQ level and credit volume to be assigned
 - Intended Learning Outcomes and assessment strategy (mapped by ILOs)
 - Supporting external examiner comments (level 5 and above)

The Module Approval process should give particular attention to the partner’s preparedness to conduct assessment at HE level and the support to be provided by the host Edge Hill department over and above the standard provision of internal moderation. Final approval of Category D provision is via a recommendation (report or minutes) to Faculty Board or the appropriate delegated Faculty Committee.

Partnerships in this category are subject to the standard Annual Review led by the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor. The purpose of these reviews is to assess the continued health of the partnership and to confirm that there has been no change to the partner’s course content, assessment, learning outcomes or teaching strategy.

Category E partnerships

E	Articulations	E1	Qualification recognition
		E2	Qualification recognition with a progression agreement

Articulation arrangements are non-binding, non-exclusive agreements with other educational institutions or awarding bodies, including overseas, whose programmes or qualifications are recognised for entry to an Edge Hill programme after the normal start-point (‘entry with advanced standing’), typically at level 5 or above. Articulation arrangements are based on credit exemption²⁷ as distinct from the importation of another organisation’s credit or the award of Edge Hill credit.

²⁷ See Academic Regulations s. C7.4.

Category E1 provides recognition of an awarding body's qualification where no individual delivery instance, centre or cohort is specified, and anyone holding the recognised qualification may be considered for advanced entry to the Edge Hill programme to which articulation has been approved. Category E1 usually applies to (professional) qualifications of awarding organisations rather than the programmes/ qualifications of individual HE providers or institutions (see E2, below). Articulating students apply to Edge Hill individually and meet normal programme entry requirements including English language proficiency for international students.

Category E2 provides recognition of a programme or qualification for articulation by a specific cohort, eg students of University (X)'s diploma programme articulate into the final year of a specified Edge Hill degree. Category E2 arrangements may be accompanied by formal Progression Agreements, nevertheless students must meet all Edge Hill entry requirements including English language proficiency for international students.

In so far as an articulation arrangement recognises another awarding body or education provider's qualification for advanced entry, and no Edge Hill programme is being delivered or credit awarded, due diligence is likely to focus upon:

- any relevant regulation governing the external programme or qualification, typically Ofqual or the Scottish Qualifications Authority for UK-based awarding bodies, or national regulators of overseas providers.
- how the awarding body meets its regulator's requirements, particularly in relation to processes for marking and moderation including independent (external) verification²⁸ of assessment.
- (For category E2) The financial, legal and reputational standing of the organisation with which the University seeks to enter into an articulation agreement.

Following business approval and initial approval by APC, the proposed Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor completes the relevant paperwork submitted to the institutional Articulation Approval Panel. This panel is assembled from experienced members of the Validation and Audit Standing Panel who consider the paperwork, including detailed mapping, and make a recommendation to AQEC which is responsible for final approval of all validation and partner approvals.

For articulation partners, the Annual Review also serves as the verification process for the ongoing validity of the curriculum mapping. In these bespoke templates, particular emphasis is given to reflection on the continued appropriateness of the articulation route in the context of progressing students' attainment, and any curriculum drift which may impact on the mapping. Due to the nature of articulations and the timing of annual reviews, Academic Partnership Liaison Tutors will need to maintain close contact with the partner organisation in advance of recruitment windows and should confirm on an ongoing basis that there has been no curriculum change at the partner. Similarly, where minor module or programme modifications are progressed at Edge Hill and impact on the programme which has a live

²⁸ UK awarding organisations appoint external verifiers (moderators) to review marking and internal moderation undertaken in delivery centres, typically further education or private colleges.

articulation route, this should be a key consideration at the relevant Curriculum Approval Panel (Module Approval Panel).

An Annual Review is required even where no students have articulated, to provide confirmation of the route's continued appropriateness and viability. Routes which have not recruited for two academic years require review by the appropriate Faculty Quality Committee to verify that they remain viable from a business perspective and a decision should be taken for their continuation or closure. The review may identify actions to stimulate articulation and should the review confirm the continuation of the partnership, the partner expiry period is unaffected.

Where there have been changes to the curriculum at Edge Hill University or at the partner, the following action is required:

- When the **Edge Hill curriculum** changes, re-mapping is confirmed in the Annual Review form for the following academic year (please refer to the [Annual Review](#) section). Where these timings do not align, the Validation and Audit Standing Panel Chair (or representative²⁹) may receive a direct request to review the new mapping as a desk-based exercise. Where a desk-based review is judged to be unsuitable, the new mapping will be reviewed by the Articulation Approval Panel³⁰.
- When the **partner's curriculum** changes, an Academic Partnership Proposal form³¹ and curriculum mapping document may be submitted directly to the Articulation Approval Panel to consider³², bypassing the initial approval stage.

Category F partnerships

F	Delivery with a third party (including overseas delivery)	F1	Franchise (single modules)
		F2	Co-delivery
		F3	Franchise (whole programmes)
		F4	Validation
		F5	Joint awards

In this category, another educational organisation is approved to deliver Edge Hill modules or programmes under a franchise or co-delivery arrangement or brings forward its own provision for validation leading to the award of an Edge Hill qualification or credit. While significant responsibilities for managing academic standards and the quality of teaching, assessment and student support are delegated to the delivery organisation, ultimate responsibility for both remains with the University as awarding body.

²⁹ Typically, the Head of Quality Assurance.

³⁰ There is no requirement to complete an Academic Partnership Proposal form for APC.

³¹ This form does not need to be submitted to APC for initial approval and proceeds directly to the VASP articulation approval (via GQASC).

³² The Panel will still report a recommendation to AQEC which has ultimate authority for these partnership arrangements.

Each sub-category represents a nuanced approach to joint delivery of Edge Hill University credits with an academic partner either in the UK or overseas. Within all these sub-categories, Edge Hill University is the sole awarding body of credit, with the exception of F5 joint awards which may include dual or double degrees where the partner may also award credit.

The sub-categories can be defined as follows:

- F1 Franchise (single modules)

The delegation through formal agreement with a partner, to deliver entire Edge Hill University modules (taught or research) by staff within the partner or a third party. Responsibility for all elements of delivery, assessment, teaching and learning resources are designated to this partner, along with responsibility (with supervision) for the student experience.

- F2 Co-delivery

An agreement between Edge Hill University and a partner to jointly deliver teaching, assessment etc. of an EHU programme or module through a shared arrangement of responsibility.

- F3 Franchise (whole programme)

The delegation through formal agreement with a partner, to deliver entire Edge Hill University programmes (taught or research) by staff within the partner or a third party. Responsibility for all elements of delivery, assessment, teaching and learning resources are designated to this partner, along with responsibility (with supervision) for the student experience.

- F4 Validation

The recognition and formal validation (approval) of a partner or a third party's programme, which shall then receive Edge Hill University credits and ultimately, an Edge Hill University award, and the delivery of this programme by the partner. These programmes are generally established programmes delivered by the partner already and Edge Hill University shall have no input in its design.

- F5 Joint awards

Provision whereby Edge Hill University and one or more UK HE awarding bodies together design and/or deliver a programme leading to either single or multiple award made jointly or individually by all parties.

There are various models for joint awards and the term **joint degree** describes a collaborative arrangement in which two (or more) awarding institutions together validate³³ and deliver a programme of study which results in a single joint award of both (all) institutions. The development of such an arrangement requires detailed negotiation between the partner(s) and the development of a bespoke set of common regulations.

³³ To facilitate this, a Lead Partner may be nominated to host Institutional validation with other partners in attendance to include representatives of academic quality and registry functions.

Key characteristics of a joint degree are:

- The programme has one Programme Specification including a single set of Programme Learning Outcomes.
- Modules are delivered by different partners, and students may study at one or more of the institutions working together in relation to the joint programme.
- Completing students receive one degree certificate authorised by both (all) partners involved in its delivery.
- One external examiner is appointed for the degree.

Whereas the term **double degree** (or 'multiple degree' where there are more than two partners) applies to a programme otherwise conceived, designed and delivered as a joint degree but where local legal or regulatory conditions prohibit the award of a single certificate. In these circumstances, students receive separate certificates/ transcripts/ diploma supplements from each awarding body which reference the others' existence and that students have completed a single, jointly conceived course.

Finally, the term **dual degree** describes a collaborative arrangement in which two awarding organisations design, validate³⁴ and deliver a course of study, however students receive separate degrees from both partners. Each is responsible for making its own award under its own regulations, however the programme's components form a single package requiring elements of joint management and oversight.

Key characteristics of a dual degree are:

- The overall study period and volume of learning is typically greater than for a single degree but smaller than if the two degrees were studied separately.
- Each partner develops its own Programme Specification, including Programme Learning Outcomes.
- Modules are delivered by both partners, often at different stages (years) of the programme, however each will generally deliver a substantial proportion at the level of the qualification it awards.
- Completing students receive separate certificates from each partner under its own regulations.
- Each partner makes its own arrangements for external examination (or other independent verification).

Joint/ double and dual degrees should be developed with cognizance of the QAA's [Characteristics Statement for qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body](#).

For new category F partners (or re-approval events) a Site Assessment must be conducted to inspect the partner facilities, learning resources, safety regulations, and to meet with relevant staff to discuss the partnership expectations and arrangements. Meetings with delivery staff for the programme provide a useful opportunity to discuss how delivery will work and provide

³⁴ In this arrangement, each partner is responsible for taking the programme through its own Institutional approval (validation) process.

assurance of these details to the approval panel. Facilities and resources are inspected to provide assurance to the approval panel they are of an equivalent standard and quality to those of the University. However, external panel members on the approval panel shall be responsible for confirming the subject specific resources provided for the course are appropriate and broadly consistent with those at Edge Hill University campuses. More information on Site Assessments, including who completes them, is available in the [Guide to Academic Partnership Approvals](#).

In the rare circumstance where a Site Assessment cannot be completed in advance of the approval event, virtual tours or similar may be considered however, normally delivery with a partner will not commence until a full, on-site visit has taken place to the satisfaction of the independent officer and/or the validation panel. Advice will be provided by the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework team relating to the approval visit requirement following approval of any partnership proposals by APC. In exceptional circumstances the validation event for a partner may be held at the partner's site to enable further inspection of facilities by the approval panel.

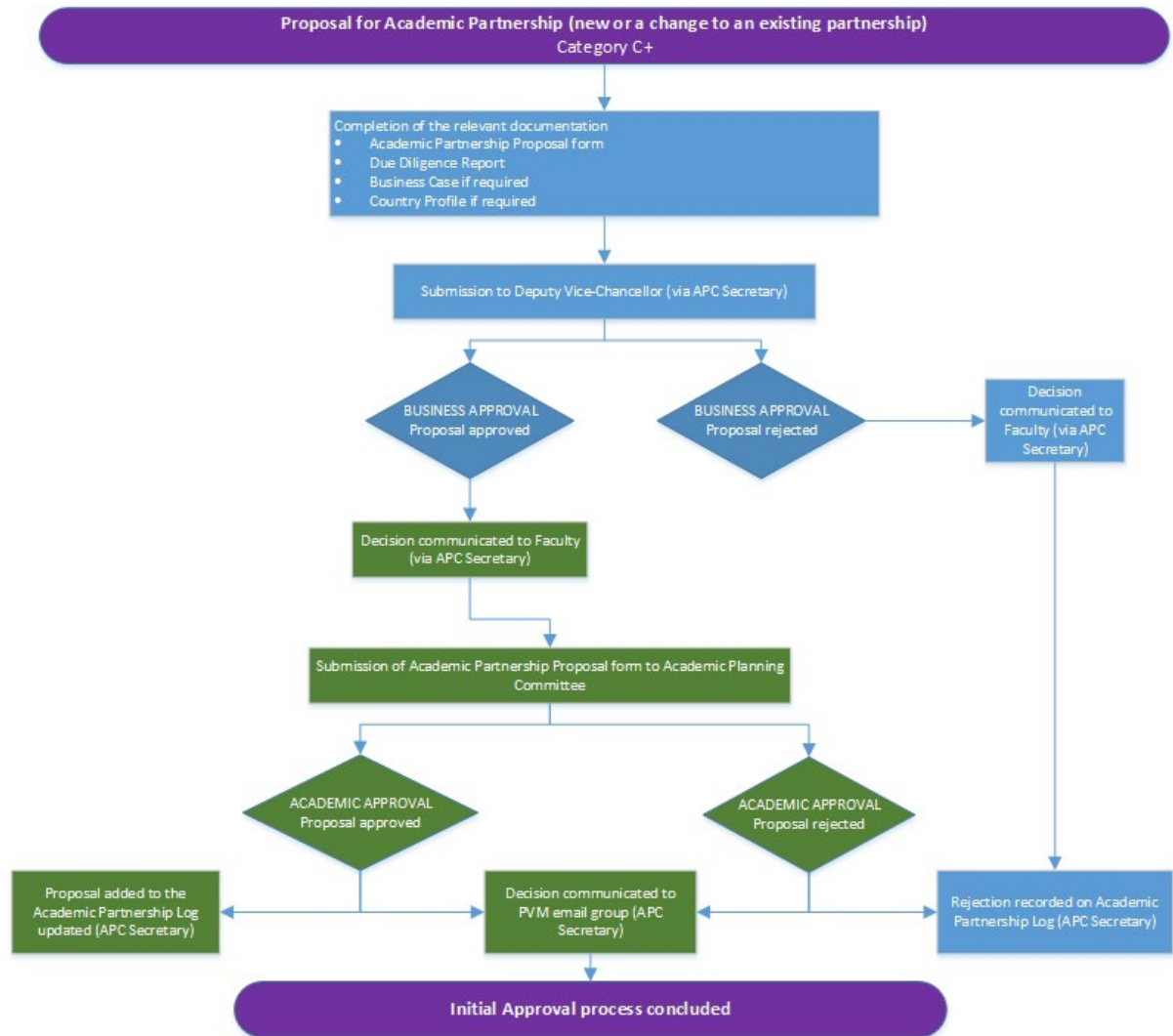
For category F partnerships the standard Annual Review process applies with the additional requirement to confirm staffing arrangements prior to delivery each year, with any new staff proposed for delivery of Edge Hill University credits being subject to approval by the relevant Faculty Quality Committee (through submission of their CV which details their experience and ability to deliver curriculum at the appropriate FHEQ level). Attention should be paid in the review to the quality and availability of the learning and support resources provided by the partner in the agreement, to ensure there has been no significant change from the original approved agreement. This is normally verified, in part, by a Partner Visit undertaken by the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor.

Additionally, the external examiner appointed for category F programmes at FHEQ level 5 and above (level 4 for Foundation Degrees) may be asked to visit the partner to provide input into the Annual Review. As far as possible, external examiners allocated to partnership provision (category F) shall have experience of partnership delivery or transnational education in Higher Education. For category F partnerships, external examiners clearly differentiate between delivery centres and student cohorts in their annual reports and this is one piece of evidence used in the Annual Review. More information on external examining at Edge Hill University can be found in Chapter 2.

Category C+ Processes

Approval

For Category C and above partnerships which represent a higher level of risk for the university, the following approval process will normally apply.



Further details on the different categories and nuanced processes can be found later in this chapter.

Business Approval

Recognising the financial commitment and potential risk of entering into academic partnerships, some categories of partnership require business approval at the start of planning for a new partnership. This process applies to the following categories of partnership:

- A5- Degree and Higher Apprenticeships
- C1- Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Education providers (UK)
- C2- Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Non-education providers (UK)
- C3- Outreach Supported Learning Centres (Overseas)
- D- Credit-rating
- E1- Qualification recognition (articulation)
- E2- Qualification recognition with a progression agreement (articulation)
- F1- Franchise (single modules)
- F2- Co-delivery
- F3- Franchise (whole programmes)
- F4- Validation
- F5- Joint awards

Business approval is granted on request to the DVC or his delegate. The purpose of this stage is to provide early opportunity to identify risks (financial, reputational, legal or academic) and to consider the appropriateness of partnership and its business case. The following paperwork requires submission via the APC Secretary:

- Academic Partnership Proposal form.
- Initial due diligence report³⁵.
- Full business case³⁶ for any private sector providers (UK or overseas), any international partnership in category C or F, or as requested by the DVC.
- Country profile (for any international partnerships).

More information on paperwork, its purpose and who completes it, see the [Guide to Academic Partnership Approvals](#).

Where granted, business approval does not have an expiry date however proposals are normally expected to proceed to validation (delivery approval) within 12 months of business approval being granted.

Initial Academic Approval

APC is responsible for considering proposals for new category C+ delivery arrangements or re-approvals. It considers the fit with the University's International and Curriculum Strategies.

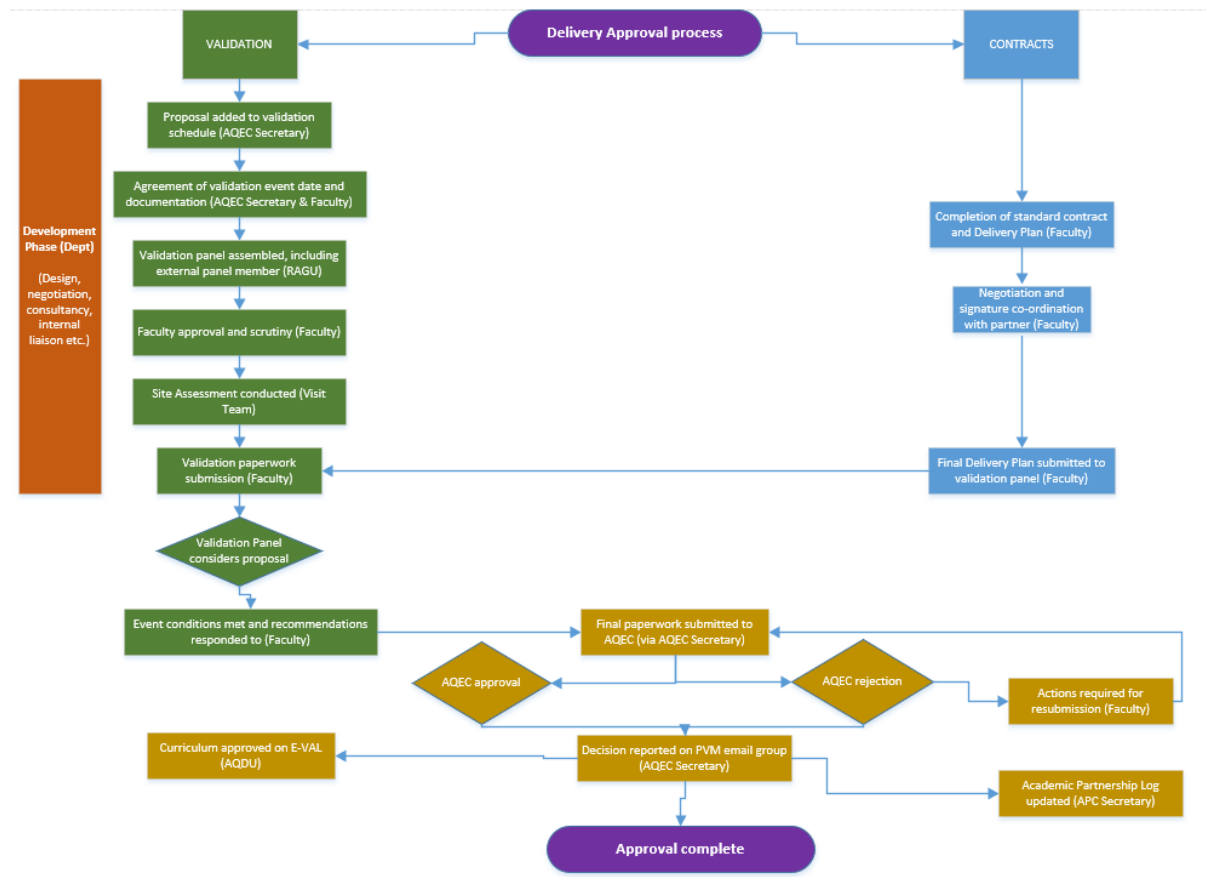
³⁵ A full due diligence report is completed during development of the partnership paperwork and any identified risks shall be escalated appropriately to Directorate to consider.

³⁶ The Academic Partnership Proposal form includes a section for the description of the business case for partnerships, however a more detailed business case with anticipated income and expenditure is provided on a separate template.

It may also outline areas for exploration by the Site Assessment Team or validation approval panel.

Delivery Approval

Delivery approval takes place after the initial approval process and the paperwork, timescales and process varies according to the category of partnership. The standard process for category C and F partnerships is shown in the flowchart below (different processes apply for articulations):



During the development phase the proposing team should ensure they consult closely with the different internal Departments and Services such as Library and Learning Services, Academic Registry etc. to ensure the design and delivery proposed is robust and achievable.

Processes are broadly based upon scrutiny of evidence of the partner's staffing and resources by an expert panel to ensure delivery can commence with partner to a high standard. An approval panel is assembled from the VASP membership which considers relevant paperwork from the proposing team. Site Assessments must be conducted for all category C+ partners and form a key part of the evidence base for the panel. No delivery with a partner may commence without the completion of a satisfactory Site Assessment. Paperwork requirements for the different categories of partner are detailed in the [Guide to Academic Partnership Approvals](#).

Where a proposal is submitted to add additional provision at an approved partner where the category of approved provision is different, the highest category of partnership will have primacy in determining the required process. However, a proportionate approach to documentation and processes will be applied and should be discussed as early as possible with the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework team.

Existing, approved partnerships may have additional modules added to their delivery portfolio and this can be done by Faculties in accordance with their module approval processes (see Chapter 4 of the Quality Management Handbook). In considering adding any provision to the partnership the appropriateness and availability of resources (including staffing) must be confirmed and the current Delivery Plan must also be reviewed to ensure it remains valid for the delivery of any new modules. However, minor programme modifications to franchise or co-delivery programmes should be considered carefully before progression and may require an institutional approval event (depending on the nature and scale of the change). Early advice should be sought from the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework to discuss changes to franchise or co-delivery programmes.

Re-approvals

The Annual Review process serves to renew individual delivery approval arrangements each year and includes the ongoing verification of resources as well as contract contents. All partners with Edge Hill University are approved for a defined period of time which, upon expiry, may be renewed. Standard periods of approval are detailed below, any changes to them requiring consideration via the Annual Process Review:

Table 5: Partner approval periods for category C + arrangements

	Category	Sub-category		Period of Partner Approval
C	Outreach Supported Learning Centres	C1	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Education providers (UK)	5 years
		C2	Outreach Supported Learning Centres: Non-education providers (UK)	5 years
		C3	Outreach Supported Learning Centres (Overseas)	5 years
D	Credit-rating			5 years
E	Articulations	E1	Qualification recognition	5 years
		E2	Qualification recognition with a progression agreement	5 years
F	Delivery with a third party (including overseas delivery)	F1	Franchise (single modules)	5 years
		F2	Co-delivery	5 years
		F3	Franchise (whole programmes)	5 years
		F4	Validation	5 years
		F5	Joint awards	5 years
	PGCE with Lead Delivery partnerships			5 years

Category C+ partners are approved for a standard five years and, at the point of renewal, may be extended and new contracts issued. Additional delivery approvals may take place at any point however (to add new provision to the partnership) and this extends the partner's

approval period by five years. Contracts should be reviewed at their original expiry and re-issued as appropriate but this should not change any agreed delivery arrangements as this would trigger a formal re-approval of the partnership.

Where changes occur to programmes or modules delivered with a partner, a delivery re-approval for individual partnership arrangements is required. A proportionate approach to documentation and processes will be applied and should be discussed as early as possible with the Governance, Quality Assurance and Student Casework team. Where no new delivery approvals have been granted, for category C and F only, these partnerships shall be subject to a standalone partner re-approval which looks at all provision delivered with that partner. Reapproval events include all standard documentation, with the addition of student feedback to inform the review.

Where a partnership programme does not recruit its first cohort within 2 years of the intended start date, or recruitment has been suspended for two consecutive cycles, re-commencement of delivery is subject to a formal review by the host Faculty of the Programme Specification and Delivery Plan to identify any changes that may affect delivery, particularly in relation to staffing and resources.

Contractual Arrangements

Final approval of category C+ provision is via panel recommendation to AQEC (validation report) and is contingent on the signing of a formal Contract between the University and partner organisation. For partnerships in category D and E, a straightforward agreement is produced following the approval panel's recommendation and AQEC sign off, to confirm the arrangements agreed for the partnership. A Memorandum of Articulation template is available for Faculties to use to issue to approved category E partners as standard.

For category C and F Partners and PGCE with Lead Delivery partnerships however, a full contract requires completion by Faculties and submission to the partner with relevant schedules. The contractual paperwork should be developed alongside the validation paperwork to ensure continual alignment and the appropriate Departments must be consulted in its development. This includes but is not limited to, Learning Services, Student Recruitment, Academic Registry, Admissions, GQASC and SPPU. Prior to sign-off by AQEC, the final contract and schedules which reflects the final version of documents from the approval event must be signed by all parties.

A standard **Contract** template and guidance for its completion is available on [GQASC Wiki](#). All partnerships must be accompanied by the relevant schedules to the contract. These schedules may be reissued annually or as required by changes without impact on the core contract terms. The Delivery Plan schedule provides the detailed division of responsibilities for each programme or module delivered in partnership and may be updated and reissued where required. Responsibility for co-ordinating the completion of an appropriate contract for academic partnerships resides with the Faculty Partnership Lead, with ultimate responsibility residing with the Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Faculty.

Advice for Faculties to support the completion or negotiation of contracts can be sought from colleagues across Edge Hill University, including but not limited to:

Fees and financial terms or clauses	Director of Finance
Staff terms or support	Head of Human Resources
GDPR and data handling	Director of the Strategic Policy and Planning Unit
Curriculum, quality and standards	Director of Governance and Assurance
Learning resources or facilities	Director of Learning Services
Student record or award administration	Head of Academic Registry
Health and safety	Director of Facilities Management

Where internal expertise is exhausted in relation to a contractual query, bespoke legal advice may be authorised by the DVC on request.

Delivery operations

Primary responsibility for oversight of the ongoing success of the partnership and its delivery lies with the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor, in conjunction with the Faculty Partnership Lead. This includes troubleshooting any delivery issues and liaising closely with the partner. Where multiple programmes are delivered, multiple APLTs may be identified however they must work together and collaborate to complete Annual Reviews and Partner Visits.

Prior to the start of each academic year or term where appropriate, the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor should liaise with the partner and confirm delivery arrangements and details for the coming term. Any emergent issues from the Annual Review, student feedback, site visit reports or external examiner reports should be addressed as soon as possible and reported to the Faculty Partnership Lead. For category F provision the following must be confirmed with the partner prior to delivery each year:

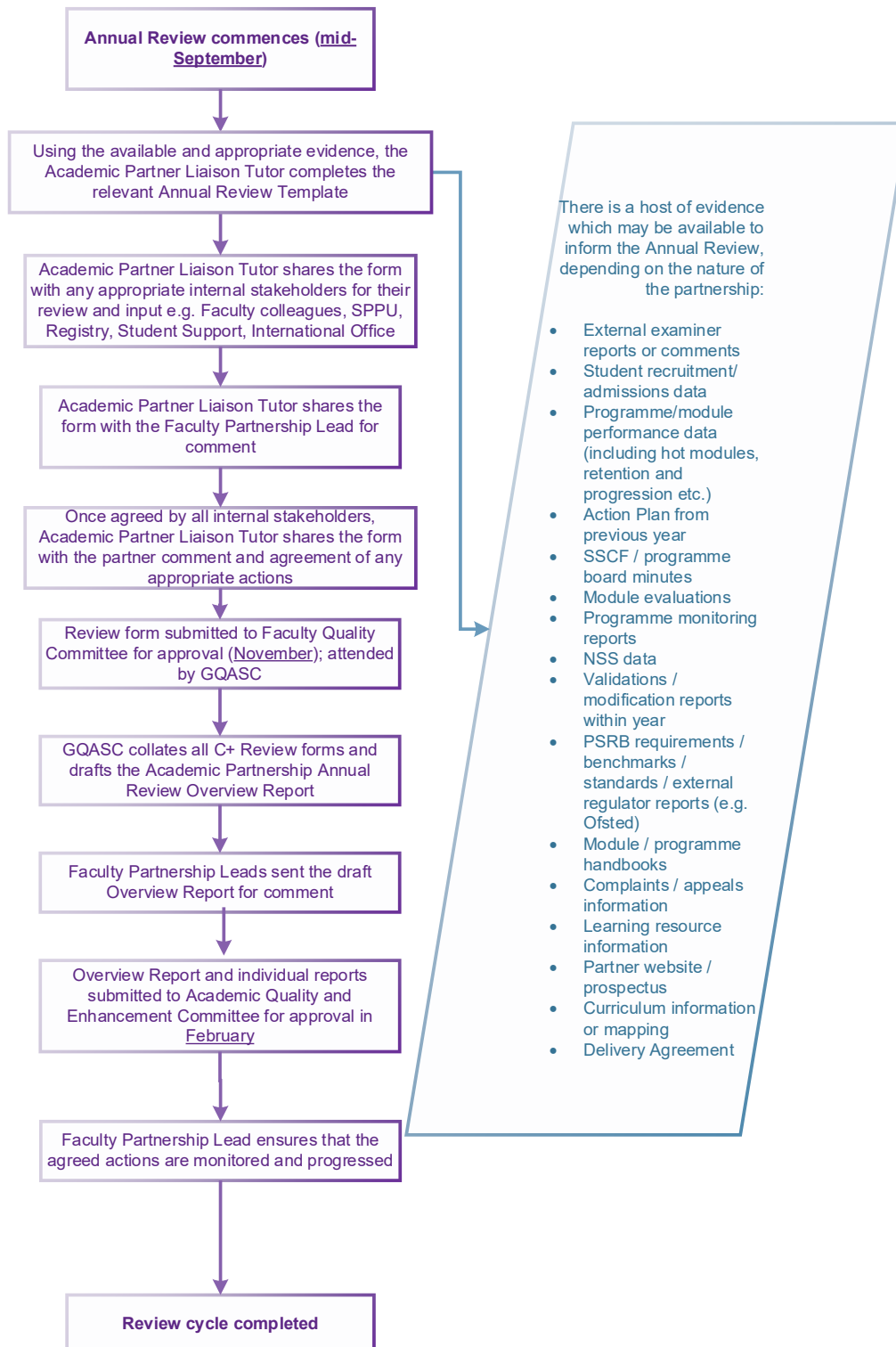
- Details of the teaching team e.g. names and CVs if these have changed (these will require approval by the Faculty Quality Committee)
- Any changes to the curriculum or assessments (the partner should be provided with all of the relevant course materials and specifications)
- Assessment procedures have been set up appropriately and there is clear mutual understanding of how they will operate
- Appropriate student enrolment and induction arrangements are in place

It is the responsibility of the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor to ensure the partner has all of the information they require, as discussed at validation, to deliver any agreed aspects of the Edge Hill curriculum or student experience. Determining processes to support them in this role are the responsibility of the Faculty Partnership Lead.

Annual Review

An Annual Review process operates for all approved partners at category C+ and is required regardless of whether any students have been recruited. The Annual Review of academic partnerships is an opportunity to review and monitor the currency and effectiveness of academic partners and their associated delivery of Edge Hill provision. It serves as a delivery re-approval for individual arrangements with each partner and is separate from the partner's overall approval period (normally five years), although new delivery approvals granted

extends the partner approval period in most cases. This process operates in conjunction with Departmental Annual Monitoring and programme monitoring but is a separate process. The Annual Review provides an opportunity to focus on the performance of both the academic partnership, and the provision delivered within it from the University's perspective and from a student experience and outcomes viewpoint. The process for reviewing category C+ partners is as follows:



The [Annual Review form](#) completed at the start of each new academic year considers any provision delivered in the previous academic year. This is usually completed by the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor, with support and input from the Faculty Partnership Lead and any other related Programme Leaders who can provide peer support and review where required. The Annual Review requires the consideration of a host of available evidence as shown above, including external examiner reports³⁷, retention, recruitment and other performance data, student feedback (formal and informal) and evidence.

A Partner Visit by the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor shall normally form part of the evidence for annual reviews and is an opportunity to confirm the ongoing currency of facilities as well as discuss performance of the partnership or potential developments.

The Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor should also use the Annual Review exercise to review the programme Delivery Plan to ensure its ongoing appropriateness. Any required changes can be made in agreement with the partner but must not affect the division of approved responsibilities; any major changes would require formal delivery re-approval.

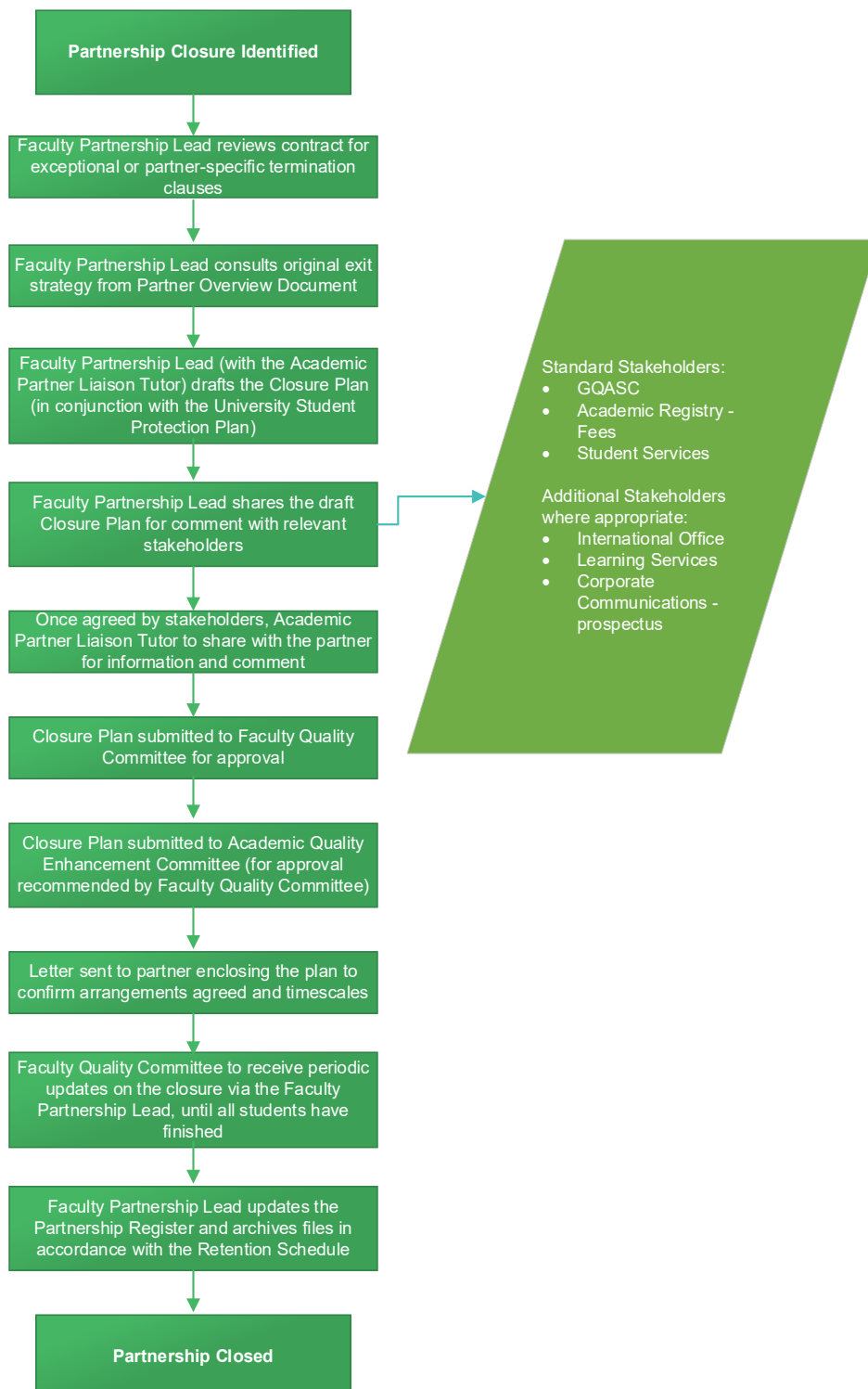
For category E arrangements, Annual Review serves as the verification process for the ongoing validity of curriculum mapping. The section on Category E partnerships outlines the action required when there have been changes to the EHU and/or partner's curriculum. For category F arrangements, the Annual Review also provides a trigger point to consider any partner staffing changes and confirm plans for the upcoming year. The CVs of any new partner staff must be submitted for approval to the relevant Faculty Quality Committee in advance of any delivery in this category.

Annual Reviews of more complex and involved arrangements for category F partners, for example those with overseas partners, should be completed collaboratively with key internal stakeholders. This might for example include Academic Registry for reflection on operational matters with the partner over the previous year, GQASC regarding curriculum matters or international strategy, and Learning Services for learning resources and engagement with the partner.

³⁷ External examiners are appointed to provision at FHEQ level 5 and above (level 4 for Foundation Degrees) and where a programme is being delivered on multiple sites external examiners differentiate clearly between delivery centres and student cohorts.

Closure

The standard process for a closure of a category C or F partner is described in the flowchart below:



Upon identification of a required closure of either a partnership (and all its associated provision) or specific provision delivered with a partner (where the partnership is to

continue), a **Closure Plan** requires completion for category C+ partnerships³⁸. This is normally undertaken by the Academic Partnership Liaison Tutor, with input from other stakeholders from across the University such as Learning Services. This plan is based upon the exit strategy information from the latest available version of the Partner Overview Document, updated with additional details where appropriate. The Closure Plans are developed with consideration of the University [Student Protection Plan](#), adherence to Office for Students' [Conditions of Registration](#) C1-3 related to student protection and due consideration of the impact on students.

Faculty Quality Committees are responsible for approval of the plan and the ongoing monitoring of any actions identified through closure and teach out (this should remain on the committee's agenda until the final student cohort has completed). The AQEC also receives the Closure Plans for approval, recommended from the Faculty Quality Committee.

Academic Partnerships which are in closure (i.e. teach-out is ongoing) still require completion of the Annual Review process until the final student cohort has completed.

Document Management and Retention

The **Faculty Partnership Lead** will maintain comprehensive records of all partnerships, including any correspondence with partners or students and a record of current Academic Partnership Liaison Tutors.

For category C+ partnerships, the Faculty Partnership Lead will ensure that the key documents are stored centrally on the University Y Drive (Academic Partnerships folder). These records include, but are not limited to:

- Business Case (financial) submissions, including the supporting spreadsheet (where applicable).
- Due diligence reports.
- Country profile (where applicable).
- Memoranda of Understanding.
- Contracts (aka Modular Agreements and Memoranda of Articulation).
- Delivery Plans (completed and signed).
- Partner Visit Reports.
- Closure Plan (as approved by AQEC and letter to the partner).

The GQASC team will ensure that the following documents are stored centrally on the University Y Drive for each category C+ partnership,:

- Business Approval decision.
- Annual Review Reports (as submitted to GQASC by the Faculty).
- Academic Partnership Proposal (as submitted to the APC)

³⁸ This Closure Plan is distinct from the standard closure proposal paperwork completed for non-partnership provision.

- All paperwork submitted to support articulation, validation and delivery approval events, including (where relevant):
 - Site Visit Reports
 - Partner Overview Document
 - Faculty Approval Panel report
 - Inventory of course specific facilities, resources and software
- Institutional level Partner Approval PVM.
- Institutional level Partner Closure PVM.

The University's central records documenting the formation and management of academic partnerships will be retained until six years following the end of partnership. The records will then review for archiving value.