Procedures for approval and monitoring of collaborative provision

Birkbeck College 2019
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PART A PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

1. Introduction

Birkbeck has a number of successful academic collaborations with other higher education (HE) and further education (FE) institutions, as well as professional institutions. These collaborations are productive for staff and students alike; allowing specialist practice in our partner institutions to be drawn on; academic and research links to be made and recruitment opportunities to be improved.

This guidance aims to assist Birkbeck staff in developing and seeking approval for collaborative proposals, as well as managing collaborative partnerships, in a coherent manner which safeguards the College’s reputation and has due regard for its responsibility towards the quality of its research and the academic standards of its awards.

2. Development of Collaborations

Delivering programmes in collaborations with other higher education institutions provides numerous benefits. These can include; providing distinctive educational opportunities student mobility, and opportunities for research collaborations. Establishment and management of collaborations also offer significant challenges and must be managed appropriately. Challenges can include; financial sustainability, maintenance of academic standards, legal status and clarity for students.

Collaborative arrangements are only entered into after consideration has been given to the appropriateness of the arrangement. Any formal collaboration will only be considered once full deliberation has been given to both the academic standing of the potential partner and the appropriateness of the arrangement in light of the College’s mission, corporate plan, financial impact and relevant strategies. Key criteria for the consideration when establishing collaborative arrangements are included in Appendix A.

All formal collaborations must adhere to a signed agreement between the College and the collaborative partner, and meet the College’s quality assurance requirements in all aspects of the student learning experience. In addition, when partnerships with overseas institutions are formed, or EU/UK based partnerships which will result in overseas students attending Birkbeck programmes, the College is responsible for reporting details to the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) section of the Home Office.

Collaborations are developed and managed at the department or school level. Support in terms of the creation of appropriate mechanisms, templates and wording is provided by the Academic Standards and Quality team (ASQ) in Registry. In the development of academic collaborations, Schools are advised to seek advice from relevant parties in central services throughout the development process. Details regarding roles and responsibilities involved in the development of collaborations are outlined in Table 1 below.

Collaborations are developed in line with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education and associated Advice and Guidance for Partnerships.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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| Department Proposer                       | • Completion of the Collaborative Proposal Form and any due diligence / risk assessment requirements  
• Consultation with the PVM International (for international partnerships)  
• Drafting of MoU/MoA  
• Liaison with partner institution and reviewing the arrangement on an annual basis.                                                                 |
| School Executive:  
• Executive Dean  
• Director of Operations  
• Assistant Dean Education / Research | • Consideration of the collaboration and approval to proceed at School-level based on the academic and financial merits of the collaboration.  
• Signing of MoUs (via the Executive Dean)  
• Maintaining register of collaborations involving MoUs and storing physical copies of all MoUs signed by the School  
• Renewal of collaboration before expiration  
• Arranging any fee payments/invoicing between collaborative partners                                                                                     |
| Academic Standards and Quality (ASQ)      | • Provision of advice and guidance in relation to: policy and regulations; risk and due diligence; and quality assurance and academic standards  
• Development and maintenance of collaborative procedures framework, including forms and associated templates  
• Oversight of CPC / CAP  
• Maintaining register of collaborations involving MoAs and storing electronic copies of all MoAs  
• Provision of advice on MoAs  
• Reporting to Education Committee and International Committee termly on collaborations approved or in development |
| International Student Administration (ISA) | • Registering the recruitment of Tier 4 students to UKVI  
• Provision advice on staff and student visa requirements                                                                                                                                                        |
| Birkbeck Graduate Research School (BGRS)  | • Provision of advice and guidance in relation to: research degree regulations and on policy and procedure for joint registration research degree programmes                                                                 |
| Collaboration Approval Panel (CAP)        | • Responsibility for endorsing the School’s approval of the collaboration at a College level                                                                                                                                 |
| College Programmes Committee (CPC)        | • If the collaboration is proposed as part of a new programme, CPC is responsible for endorsing the School’s approval of the collaborative programme at College level                                                                 |
| Research Students Sub-Committee (RSSC)    | • If the collaboration relates to doctoral collaborations, RSSC is responsible for endorsing the School’s approval of the collaborative programme at College level                                                                 |
| International Committee (IC)              | • Development and oversight of College’s international strategy                                                                                                                                                     |
| Recruitment, Access and Outreach Committee | • Oversight of fee setting and student recruitment                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Project Support Coordinator (Strategic Projects) | • Supporting staff proposing a new international collaboration with obtaining any information required as part of the approval process and in completion of the proposal form, risk assessment and due diligence checklist  
• Supporting proposers with any additional due diligence enquiries                                                                                                                                   |

[Note: support is for]
3. Types of collaborations

“Collaborative provision” at Birkbeck is defined as all arrangements that involve students. This includes educational provision with another organisation or institution in the UK or overseas through articulation/progression, student exchange, joint, and dual award arrangements. It also includes arrangements that involve fee discounts for applicants/students enrolling on Birkbeck programmes and fee discounts to international students sponsored by Chevening and similar government funding agencies.

Birkbeck is currently involved in a number of existing collaborative arrangements which are summarised here in the Collaborative Provision Register on the Registry website: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/quality/collaborations

The types of collaborative activities which Birkbeck currently recognises are shown in Table 2 below with more detail available in Appendix B. All of these operate at Level 4 or above and require a legally binding Memorandum of Agreement signed by the Executive Dean and Deputy College Secretary (Operations), unless otherwise stated.

Note that often collaborations might involve one or more of the following specific collaborative activities, e.g. a MoA detailing a Dual award may also involve student exchange.

Validation and Franchising

As a College of the University of London, Birkbeck’s degrees are awarded by the University; therefore the College must adhere to University of London regulations and cannot act as a validating power for other institutions/external organisations wishing to undertake the running of a degree programme.

Under UoL regulations and degree awarding powers the following types of collaboration are not currently undertaken by Birkbeck College due to the rationale detailed below:

- **Franchised provision**: an arrangement in which a partner is licensed to provide the whole or part of a programme of study designed by the college and leading to an award (or credit) by the college. University of London regulation 1 DO NOT allow franchising agreements beyond a foundation year (year nought): https://london.ac.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Regulation-1-UoL-Awards.pdf

- **Validated provision**: an arrangement in which the college states that a programme of study developed and delivered by another institution or organisation is of an appropriate quality and standard to lead to a Birkbeck award. University of London regulation 1 DO NOT allow validation agreements beyond a foundation year (year nought): https://london.ac.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Regulation-1-UoL-Awards.pdf
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Type of collaboration &amp; definition</th>
<th>Key characteristics and CAP Approval Requirements</th>
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| **Fee discount agreement**¹: an arrangement whereby a university or government organisation (typically outside of the UK) is given a preferential discount on tuition fees on students they sponsor. | • Relates solely to discount of tuition fees for selected students coming to study at Birkbeck.  
• **CAP approval required.** |
| **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**: a non-binding arrangement between two universities that sets out potential opportunities for collaboration and positive academic engagement to mutual benefit in broad terms, without establishing a formal legal relationship between the two institutions. An MoU often precedes the more formalised partnership arrangements detailed below | • Focuses on activities viewed to be potentially beneficial.  
• Broad in scope as collaboration may involve a commitment to explore a range of areas, including:  
  o Co-operation on new or existing academic programmes.  
  o Development of joint research activities.  
  o Staff exchange or mutual visits to both institutions.  
  o Doctoral student training and development.  
  o Student exchange.  
  o Exchange of information in the form of publications and journals, reference materials and other results of teaching and research.  
• **CAP approval not required.** |
| **Progression agreement**: a partnership arrangement in which the college and the partner(s) agree a set of Birkbeck academic criteria relating to a specific programme(s) of the partner(s) institution that enables students who successfully satisfy this criteria to be considered for a place on a named degree programme(s) at Birkbeck. | • Students who meet the entry criteria stipulated in a progression agreement are eligible to apply to be considered for a place on a related honours, masters or doctorate degree at Birkbeck.  
• **CAP approval required.** |
| **Joint award**: partnership arrangement in which the college and the partner(s) provide a programme leading to a single award made jointly with at least one other partner institution. | • Any potential partner must have the legal ability to award a joint degree.  
• Can be UG or PG.  
• The agreement may include shared ownership of the curriculum or IPR.  
• Students may register with either or both institutions but one normally provides the lead for administrative processes.  
• It is normally expected that each institution delivers half of the credits of the programme of study. At least 33.3% of credits of the programme must be studied at Birkbeck and no more than 66.6%  
• Students should have the rights of access to learning resources at both/all institutions.  
• The degree programme is subject to both/all institutions quality assurance processes, through a joint committee and a joint examination board/process (details specified in MoA). |

¹ This type of arrangement is relationship building-focused and not an academic collaboration that impacts academic standards or quality.
| **Dual award:** a partnership arrangement in which the college and one or more awarding institutions provide programmes leading to separate awards being granted by both/all partners. | • Each partner is responsible for the content, delivery, quality and standards of its own award.
• Can be UG or PG.
• Students may be registered concurrently at each partner institution or sequentially.
• It is normally expected that for a student to be awarded a Birkbeck degree as part of a dual award degree they must study a minimum of 50% credits of the Birkbeck degree.
• Two or more separate diplomas/transcripts are produced, one from each individual institution.
• Can be with national or international institutions.
• A detailed legal template MoA is required.
• CAP approval required. |
|---|---|
| **Partnership provision (PP) leading to a single Birkbeck award:** a partnership agreement which details the involvement of one or more additional partner(s) in the delivery of a Birkbeck programme. | • Staff from a partner institution delivering part of one, or one or more Birkbeck module(s) which constitute a programme awarded solely by Birkbeck.
• The partner can be another HEI or a public or a private sector body.
• As Birkbeck is the awarding institution, it owns both the modules and the programme and has overall responsibility for its delivery, quality assurance and standards.
• Students are registered with the college but may attend the partner institution for the delivery of particular elements of the module/programme.
• Can be with national or international institutions.
• Can be UG, PGT and PGR.
• A detailed legal template MoA is required.
• CAP approval required. |
| **Partnership provision not leading to a Birkbeck award:** a partnership agreement which details the involvement of Birkbeck staff in the delivery of a non-Birkbeck programme. | • Birkbeck staff delivering part of one, or one or more modules which constitute a programme owned and awarded by another institution.
• The partner is the awarding institution; it owns the programme and has overall responsibility for its delivery, quality assurance and standards.
• Students do not register with the college but may attend Birkbeck for the delivery of particular elements of the programme.
• Students *may* have access to *some* of the same facilities as registered students.
• Can be with national or international institutions.
• Can be UG, PGT and PGR.
• A simplified template agreement can be used. |
| **Partnership provision leading to the award of Birkbeck credit:** a specific type of partnership | • Birkbeck staff delivering one or more Birkbeck modules totalling a specific amount of Birkbeck credit.
• Credit achieved does not amount to a Birkbeck award. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreement which details the delivery of a specified amount of Birkbeck credit recognised by another institution.</td>
<td>The home institution has the opportunity to recognise Birkbeck credit according to its own processes. E.g. this applies to international students on the London Semester Programme. A detailed legal template MoA is required. <strong>CAP approval required.</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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**Student movement/exchange:** covers students incoming to Birkbeck or outgoing Birkbeck students and forms a separate section of an overarching collaborative activity.

Typically, this arrangement focuses on international mobility partnerships.

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<tr>
<td>Mainly for the purposes of international student recruitment and academic/cultural exchange. Can be UG, PGT or PGR. UKVI and other visa requirements may apply. If exchange is arranged under Erasmus+ scheme, it falls outside the scope of this document. May involve tuition in which case a schedule for the payment of student fees will need to be devised. May involve the enrolment of International students onto a UG full-time degree from Yr 1 or with direct entry into Yr 2 +. May involve providing desk space and some access to facilities/supervision only of international students from specific institutions. A simplified template may be used. <strong>CAP approval required.</strong></td>
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**Joint registration research degree (co-tutelle):** an arrangement where a research degree student is jointly registered at Birkbeck and another institution (normally outside of the UK).

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<tr>
<td>Mainly for the purposes of facilitating research collaboration and academic/cultural exchange. Students are registered concurrently at each partner institution or sequentially. It is normally expected that for a student to be awarded a Birkbeck research degree as part of a co-tutelle that Birkbeck’s research degree regulations are satisfied. Students receive joint supervision from both institutions and an award of a degree from each institution. Typically associated with international institutions. A detailed legal template MoA is required. <strong>CAP approval required.</strong></td>
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4. Formal Agreements

Academic collaborations are defined using a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and/or a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA).

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), is a non-binding arrangement and may often precede the development of a Memorandum of Agreement. Memoranda of Understanding can be college wide or school focussed and describe an intention to collaborate and set out potential opportunities for collaboration and positive academic engagement between universities to mutual benefit in broad terms, without establishing a formal legal relationship between the two institutions.

A MoU may include, for example, a commitment to explore potential for:

- co-operation on new or existing academic programmes
- the development of joint research activities
- staff exchange or mutual visits to both institutions
- doctoral student training and development
- student exchange
- the exchange of information in the form of publications and journals, reference materials and other results of teaching and research, and / or
- any other activities viewed to be potentially beneficial

MoUs do not make reference to the specifics of how the collaboration might work, contain no reference to the award or recognition of credit and do not include any financial details. MoUs can be signed by an Executive Dean or the Deputy College Secretary (Operations) or Pro Vice Master (International).

When seeking to engage in defined collaborative activity the specifics of the relationship must be outlined in a formal agreement known as a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA). A MoA will describe the agreed collaboration, outline the responsibilities of the parties and include a schedule of the financial arrangements.

The MoA will detail or signpost to all the necessary policies and procedures which apply to the collaborative provision, e.g. this may include: quality assurance processes, arrangements for sharing any students’ personal data of, student handbooks and further details on UKVI compliance. MoAs are normally signed by the Master of the College, the College Secretary or the Deputy College Secretary (Operations).

A MoA will typically outline the detail regarding the following areas: programme description, admissions, enrolment, teaching, learning resources, programme monitoring, assessment, marketing financial arrangements, awarding, intellectual property, confidentiality, data protection and, where appropriate, data sharing, duration and termination.

Templates should be used except in circumstances where the partner institution suggests their own template or a previous MoA agreed with ASQ. Templates are available from ASQ.
5. Process and timelines for the approval of new collaborations

Any staff member considering a collaborative agreement must notify Academic Standards and Quality in writing from the outset before any commitments are entered into verbally or in writing. In the case of international collaborations, the Pro-Vice Master (International) must be consulted at an early stage to ensure alignment with the College’s international strategy. Staff proposing an international collaborative agreement should also seek input from the respective Assistant Dean International and, where appropriate, Assistant School Manager International (or equivalent). In all cases the School Executive Dean and Director of Operations should give approval to proceed based on the academic and financial merits of the collaboration. Approval from the Assistant Dean Education/Research (as appropriate) should also be sought.

The Collaboration Proposal Form is available from the ASQ website.

In terms of timeliness, colleagues proposing a new collaboration should expect to allow around 3 months from initial inception of a new collaboration to gaining approval.

5.1. Collaborations involving a MoU

For collaborations involving a MoU a light touch approach is adopted and Collaborations Approval Panel approval is not required. The process for establishing a MoU with a partner organisation is outlined in flowchart 1 below.

**Flowchart 1: Approval Process for a Memorandum of Understanding**

- **Input sought from School AD International and, where appropriate, ASM International**
- **Collaboration Proposal Form and draft MoU completed by proposer**
- **Considered by Executive Dean, Director of Operations and AD Education/Research**
- **Approved to proceed**
- **MoU signed by Executive Dean, Deputy College Secretary (Operations), or PVM International**
- **MoUs signed at School level are retained by the School with a copy of the scanned signed MoU deposited with ASQ. MoUs signed at College level are retained in the College safe**
- **Director of Operations (or nominee) maintains record of all School MoUs through ASQ hosted SharePoint site**

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5.2. Collaborations involving a MoA

For collaborations involving a MoA Collaborations Approval Panel approval is required. The process for establishing a MoA with a partner organisation is outlined in flowchart 2 below. The Collaborations Approval Panel consists of senior members of Birkbeck staff who will meet termly to consider the institutional; legal, financial, reputational or other implications of potential arrangements with other parties. Approvals may also be granted by Chair’s action in cases where timeliness of response is deemed important.

CAP is chaired by the Pro-Vice Master Research and its membership is as follows:

- Deputy College Secretary (Operations)
- Director of Finance
- Academic Registrar
- Head of Academic Services
- Director of Marketing and External Relations
- Pro-Vice-Master Education
- Pro-Vice Master International

In order to make a decision as to endorsement or otherwise of the collaboration, the Collaborations Approval Panel (CAP) will consider the rationale and outcomes of the proposed collaboration. Questions to be considered may include the following:

- Does the agreement provide consistency with the College’s mission, and its corporate and international strategies?
- Does the proposed partner institution/organisation have appropriate levels of academic standing, teaching and research quality as evidenced in relevant national and international league tables?
- Does the proposed partner institution/organisation have the resources and infrastructure to sustain collaboration?
- How will the proposed partner institution(s) and organisation(s) impact on the College’s reputation?
- Does the proposed partner institution pose a compliance risk to the College’s Tier 4 Licence?
- Are there any substantive financial risks to be considered?
- Is the partnership financially viable?
- What are the financial benefits to the College in terms of income generation?
- Will tuition fees be collected? If so, will the fees be collected overseas?
Flowchart 2: Approval Process for a MoA and partnerships leading to progression, the award of credit at Birkbeck, Joint/Dual Awards and/or Student Exchange

New Programme - If a new programme needs to be developed as part of the collaboration, this will go through the usual process for new programme development in parallel. It is advised that programme development and approval is started at the earliest opportunity. However, it may be necessary to develop the MoA before the programme structure can be agreed.
Due Diligence - It is important that appropriate and proportionate due diligence is carried out for all collaborations. The College must be satisfied that any academic, financial, legal and reputational risks are identified and addressed. Due diligence and risk assessment are required in the development of new collaborations through completion of the Collaboration Proposal Form and Due Diligence Checklist and are activities undertaken by the proposer as part of the approval process.

Standard due diligence enquiries will include reviewing financial statements of potential partners and the latest QAA (or equivalent) review report.

6. Operation and monitoring and of collaborations

Collaborative activity will be managed and operated by the Department/School proposing the collaboration. This may include a joint steering committee with representation from the relevant collaborative partners.

Collaborative activity is normally subject to the standard College quality monitoring mechanisms, including external examining, annual monitoring and internal review. College oversight is provided by Education Committee (EC) and the Research Students Sub-Committee (RSSC) for Research Student collaborations.

ASQ maintains a register of all agreed collaborations and is available on the ASQ website.

7. Renewal of collaborations

Collaborations are agreed for a set period of time, typically 5 years, after which they are either terminated or renewed. The Department/School which manages the collaboration is expected to contact ASQ six months prior to the end of the collaborative agreement to indicate whether the collaboration will be terminated or renewed. If a collaboration is renewed, it is required that the renewal is formally considered by the Collaborations Approval Panel. As part of the renewal the Department/School which manages the collaboration should submit details explaining why the partnership should be renewed, including information about the number of students involved in the collaboration. A renewed due diligence assessment may also be required prior to renewal. ASQ will advise of appropriate due diligence required for renewal of a collaboration.

8. Contacts and further information

Academic Standards and Quality manage the College’s framework that governs the approval and review of collaborative provision. Please see the ASQ website for more information on Collaborations: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/quality/collaborations. More local level support should be sought from the relevant Assistant School Manager.

You should also seek advice as appropriate from Business Systems and Planning and International Student Administration.

- Academic Standards and Quality: asq@bbk.ac.uk
- Business Systems and Planning: bsishelp@bbk.ac.uk
- International Student Administration: isa@bbk.ac.uk
PART B GUIDANCE NOTES

• General

Academic staff may be approached, or may themselves approach, different parties interested in developing a formal collaborative agreement with the college. It is anticipated that a rationale for working together will be developed with the institution/organisation of interest, based on agreed realistic and explicit goals. The rationale should be discussed and agreed with the Head of Department.

(i) Fees

If the collaboration involves the recruitment or movement of students, the department will need to consider what tuition fees are to be charged. Finance and Planning should be consulted to determine financial modelling. Expected fees should be indicated in the MoA.

(ii) Financial agreement

The department proposing the collaboration should consider the financial aspects of the proposal. Approval of the financial agreement is made by the School in the first instance and then CAP. In the design of this agreement advice should be sought from Finance and the Planning and Business Systems team.

(iii) Programme Structure

Prior to finalising the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), it is important that the programme director liaises with ASQ and Business Systems and Planning to ensure that the specific programme is set up correctly. It will, for example, need to be checked that the programme start and end dates are recorded correctly, that the fee structure is correct, and that any routes to permit students to enter directly into advanced stages of a programme (e.g. Year 2 entry) have been set up.

(iv) Production of the Memorandum of Agreement

If fully approved and endorsed by the College, the Academic Standards and Quality team in Registry, will notify the department and work with the staff member involved to produce a bespoke memorandum for agreement (which will detail the required operational and administrative procedures related to the delivery of the collaborative activity). Should it be determined that external legal advice is required, costs will be borne by the department developing the collaboration.

(v) Changes to programmes mid-collaboration and at the end of the collaboration

The memorandum of agreement will detail the actions which the programme director/department should take if the collaborations end and national or international students remain on a programme of study at Birkbeck or at another institution/organisation. The programme director/department must first contact Student Administration and/or International Student Administration, ASQ and BSIS, so they can make the necessary system changes at least one week prior to contacting the students directly to inform them directly of the changes.
It is the responsibility of the School to renew a collaborative agreement at least six months before the current agreement expires.

**(vi) Immigration considerations**

If the potential new collaboration/programme is likely to attract students from outside of the European Economic Area and Switzerland, programme directors/academic staff will need to consider any **potential immigration arrangements** in order to inform any prospective students of those requirements.

The requirements vary according to the length of stay of the students in the UK, e.g. students staying less than 6 months in the UK will require a Short-term study visa. If any longer, a Tier 4 (General) Student visa would be required\(^2\).

**Short-term Study Visas**

Collaborative agreements which are designed to attract overseas students to study for *less than 6 months* at Birkbeck will require the students to apply for a Short-term study visa to study in the UK.

A summary of the process is as follows:

a) Students apply for admission to Birkbeck using the direct application system.

b) Once the acceptance of a place has been confirmed, departments/programme directors should send International Student Administration (ISA) a full list of the international students expected on the programme as a result of the collaboration agreement including the agreed fee adjustment. This must be provided to ISA at least 3 months in advance in the format suggested below:

c) Birkbeck’s ISA team will send the students a “Short-term study visa letter”.

d) Students use this letter to apply for a visa to study in the UK.

e) Upon arrival at the college all students must be told to register their passport and visa with the ISA. A relevant member of departmental staff should liaise with ISA to arrange a suitable date for the students on the particular programme(s) to do this.

**Tier 4 (General) Student Visas**

Collaborative agreements which are designed to attract students to study for *6 months or more* at Birkbeck will require a Tier 4 (General) visa to study in the UK.

A summary of the process is as follows:

a) Students apply for admission to Birkbeck using the direct application system or UCAS.

b) Once the acceptance of a place has been confirmed, departments/programme directors should send ISA a full list of the international students expected on the programme as a result of the collaboration agreement, including the agreed fee adjustment.

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\(^2\) Further information can be found here: [https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/student-visas](https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/student-visas)
Note that if the proposed length of the international students study is more than 6 months, but less than 12, the Home Office will issue two additional months to the visa. If the length of study is more than 12 months, then four additional months will be provided. Should this period not cover the time students will need to be in the UK, you should contact ISA to discuss further.

c) Once all the conditions of the formal offer are met Birkbeck’s ISA team will send students a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) number. Students use this CAS to apply for a visa.

d) Upon arrival at the college all students must be told to register their passport and visa with the ISA. A relevant member of departmental staff should liaise with ISA to arrange a suitable date for the students on the particular programme(s) to do this.

(vii) English Language Requirements

Students from ‘majority English-speaking’ countries and those who have obtained a degree from these countries will not be required to take an English language test to obtain a Tier 4 visa.

All other students will be required to take a Secure English Language Test approved by the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) section of the Home Office (this will be detailed in the MoA).

(viii) Institutional Tier 4 Sponsor Licence holder

If the collaboration involves a UK HEI as a Tier 4 Sponsor Licence holder (i.e. a collaboration involving another UK HEI/organisation hosting international students) Birkbeck is required by the UKVI to formally add the institution as a ‘Partner’ to our Licence. Partners are thus linked together in such a way that should one be suspended or revoked, the other institution could potentially face sanctions. It is for this reason that the collaboration approval process includes an institutional agreement form with risk assessment process for potential partners.

If the collaboration involves an overseas institution who will send international students to study at Birkbeck, the institution will be formally added as an ‘agent’ to Birkbeck’s Licence. UKVI expect Birkbeck to monitor the performance of these agents.

Visiting Research Students

If the collaboration will enable overseas nationals to enrol as ‘visiting’ research students (i.e. those who do not wish to enrol on a full time programme of study), they are able to do so with a Short-term study visa.

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3 A list of these countries is available on the UKVI website https://www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa/knowledge-of-english

These students should apply using the affiliate application form and their visits cannot exceed 6 months in length. The details of the students must be sent to ISA. Please refer to the Visiting Research Students Registration and Enrolment Procedure.

(ix) **Staff Visas**

A collaborative agreement which involves visits or formal exchanges between staff at Birkbeck and international institutions require the academic to apply for an Academic Visitor visa. These enable visiting academics/researchers to enter the UK and study at Birkbeck for up to 12 months, in order to carry out private research or exchange research techniques with colleagues in the UK. A template letter of invitation which Birkbeck will be required to complete in order to facilitate the entry of the visiting academics is available from Human Resources. Below is a full summary for the qualifying requirements for the Academic Visitor visa:

The Academic Visitor visa is a sub-category of the Business visitor category that permits academics to enter the UK. It should be noted that some consulates seem reluctant to grant Academic visitor visas, regardless of whether or not the person meets the criteria below. It is therefore recommended that the applicant obtain confirmation of what documents are required by the consulate well in advance of travelling to the UK.

**Those who qualify:**
A person on leave from an overseas academic institution who wishes to make use of their leave to carry out their own private research or exchange information on research techniques with colleagues in the UK.

OR an academic taking part in formal exchange arrangements with UK counterparts, for example where a university here is collaborating with an overseas university on research and may exchange personnel for the project.

**Those unlikely to qualify:**
Recent graduates; people on sabbatical leave from private research companies; sponsored researchers; and those in the UK to undertake a series of lectures for which they will receive a fee.

**Application process:**
Non visa nationals\(^5\) who are coming to the UK for less than six months are not required to apply for this in advance. They must however announce the purpose of their visit (i.e. as an Academic Visitor) to immigration officers at port of entry and satisfy the relevant conditions.

All other applicants – Must apply for this visa in advance of arriving to the UK, via the relevant consulate. If granted the visa could be valid for up to 12 months, with no possibility to extend.

**Evidence that must be presented by applicant to the consulate\(^6\):**

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\(^6\) For further information visit: [https://www.gov.uk/business-visitor-visa/overview](https://www.gov.uk/business-visitor-visa/overview)
1. A letter of invitation from Birkbeck;
2. Evidence that they have been working in a Higher Education Intuition overseas, or in the field of their academic expertise immediately before seeking entry to the UK;
3. That they require leave for only 12 months, will leave at the end of this period and will not return for extended/frequent visits;
4. There are no specific requirements around funding but the academic must illustrate they can maintain and accommodate themselves without using public funding, including the cost of return journey;
5. Proof that the academic will not undertake a course of study or take any form of employment or payment from a UK source;

(x) **Work Placements**

If part of the collaboration requires students to take a work placement within the UK as part of the proposed programme, the details should be discussed with ISA, as there are restrictions related to the ability of overseas nationals to take complete work placements, depending on the type of visa they hold.
Appendix A – Key criteria to consider when establishing collaborative arrangements

1. Strategic Benefits
   - Potential to enhance College’s impact and profile
   - Location in an area or country in which the College would like a greater presence
   - Built on the foundation of collaborations already established with the partner institution
   - Comparable academic mission and standing of the partner institution/department

2. Academic Benefits
   - Opportunities to broaden the academic portfolio of the College in line with the corporate plan
   - Opportunities for students which are not available within the College e.g. particular research expertise, opportunities to use specific equipment, broadening professional experience
   - Potential for attracting high calibre students
   - Potential to attract or work with high quality staff from the partner institution
   - Opportunity for students and staff to experience novel approaches to learning and teaching

3. Academic Governance
   - Confirmation that the College can ensure that the partner institution and proposed programme will conform with the governance, regulation, academic standards, quality assurance and student welfare requirements of the College
   - Consideration of any ethical issues which may arise as a result of practices carried out by the partner institution or country. It is likely these would need to be considered on a case by case basis.
   - Consideration of any data sharing arrangements, particularly regarding students’ personal data, that may form part of the collaboration and how these will be securely managed in line with relevant legislation.

4. Resource Issues
   - Numbers of students expected as part of the collaboration
   - Teaching, research, welfare/pastoral and social facilities – are these broadly equivalent to Birkbeck’s?
• Impact on support services resources at Birkbeck, e.g. Registry, Library, and ICT – can they absorb the extra work involved or will more resource be required?

• Can the College meet the space requirements for any additional students?

• What is the relationship of intended programme or award with existing College programmes and awards?

• What implications would there be for Birkbeck and the students enrolled on the programme if the partner withdrew from the collaboration prior to the end of the agreement?

5. Financial Issues

5.1. Decisions about the academic probity of programmes/modules are taken separately from the negotiations about the financial implications/arrangements with other parties (though these may be conducted concurrently).

5.2. The following should be considered before making a formal proposal for a strategic partnership:

• Cost of establishing the partnership

• Cost of maintaining the partnership

• Potential funding from other sources

• Financial input from the partner institution

• Whether the partnership financially (and operationally) viable in the long-term

• What would the financial/resource implications be for the College be if the partner withdrew from the collaboration prior to the end of the agreement

• Proposed fees for individual programmes and awards (including any suggested fee discounts and their impact on financial viability)
## Appendix B – Types of Collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Government organisation / funding agency</th>
<th>Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)</th>
<th>Institutional Partnership Agreement (IPA)</th>
<th>Progression agreement</th>
<th>Joint award</th>
<th>Dual award</th>
<th>Partnership provision (PP) leading to a single Birkbeck award</th>
<th>Partnership provision not leading to a Birkbeck award</th>
<th>Partnership provision leading to the award of Birkbeck credit</th>
<th>Partnership provision not leading to the award of Birkbeck credit</th>
<th>Student movement / exchange</th>
<th>Joint registration research degree (co-tutelle)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrangement whereby a university or government organisation (typically outside of the UK) is given a preferential discount on tuition fees on students they sponsor.</td>
<td>Arrangement arrangement between two universities that sets out opportunities for collaboration and positive academic engagement to mutual benefit, without establishing a formal legal relationship between the two institutions. An MoU often precedes the more formalised partnership arrangements.</td>
<td>Partnership arrangement in which Birkbeck and partner(s) agree a set of Birkbeck academic criteria relating to a specific programme(s) of partner(s) institution that enables students who successfully satisfy this criteria to be admitted with advanced standing to a subsequent year of a Birkbeck programme.</td>
<td>Partnership arrangement in which Birkbeck and partner(s) choose a set of Birkbeck academic criteria relating to a specific programme(s) of partner(s) institution that enables students who successfully satisfy these criteria to be considered for a place on a named degree programme(s) at Birkbeck.</td>
<td>Partnership arrangement in which Birkbeck and one or more awarding institutions provide programmes leading to separate awards being granted by both/all partners.</td>
<td>Partnership agreement which details the involvement of one or more additional partner(s) in the delivery of a Birkbeck programme.</td>
<td>Partnership agreement which details the delivery of a specified amount of Birkbeck credit recognised by another institution.</td>
<td>Arrangement where a research degree student is jointly registered at Birkbeck and another institution (normally outside of the UK).</td>
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</table>

7 This type of arrangement is transactional and not an academic collaboration that impacts academic standards or quality.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Risks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhances student recruitment; can widen participation.</td>
<td>Low-medium: impact on income if not fully costed and considered; lack of awareness of fee discount if all relevant staff are not informed, which may impact application of any discount.</td>
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<td>• Non-binding</td>
<td>Low: no quantifiable outcomes from collaboration defined; lack of focus if too broad; lack of financial incentives.</td>
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<td>• Broad in scope</td>
<td>Low-medium: quality of students; quality of partner; monitoring of partner provision and student achievement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Less complex in nature and less resource intensive than other</td>
<td>High: complex working relationship between the partners; reputation of partner; consistency between Birkbeck and partner institution; maintenance of academic standards; compatibility of regulations and/or policies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>arrangements</td>
<td>Medium-high: quality and quality assurance of partner staff involved on programme; If relevant, quality and quality assurance of partner; reputation of partner</td>
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<td>• Reinforces commitment of both institutions to work together</td>
<td>Low: Birkbeck not responsible for academic standards of award.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhances student recruitment. Can widen participation.</td>
<td>Low-medium: quality of partner staff involved on programme; If relevant, quality and quality assurance of partner; reputation of partner</td>
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<td>• High-status relationship with appropriate partner.</td>
<td>Low-medium: country and venue where programme is being delivered; teaching facilities and learning resources; accessibility issues for disabled students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enhancement of student experience.</td>
<td>Low-medium: normally done for individual students; close links between the two supervisors; appropriateness of facilities at partner; arrangements can be resource intensive and time consuming for what is essentially one student (cost-benefit).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enhances student recruitment and experience</td>
<td>Can help build a relationship with a partner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Enables students to undertake two qualifications in a shorter time</td>
<td>Can help build a relationship with a partner.</td>
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<td>than it would take to complete the same qualifications separately</td>
<td>Can help build a relationship with a partner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Enhances student experience (e.g. bringing industry expertise onto a programme)</td>
<td>Can help build a relationship with a partner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• High-status relationship with a partner.</td>
<td>Can help build a relationship with a partner.</td>
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