

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/18/37

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

30 November 2018

Agenda Item 6

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO PROCEDURE FOR APPROVAL OF NEW
OUTCENTRES

COVER SHEET

Action is required of the Committee as indicated below.

To consider and approve the revised process for approval of new outcentres.

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PROPOSED REVISIONS TO PROCEDURE FOR APPROVAL OF NEW OUTCENTRES

Background

The University operates four models for provision offered in partnership with other organisations. These models all involve a proportionate approach in terms both of the initial due diligence exercised, institutional approval and on-going monitoring of the partner institution. The approach takes account of the nature of the provision, the extent to which responsibility for delivery and assessment is retained by the University or devolved to the partner and the relationship between students enrolled on the provision and the University or partner institution.

One model of provision is based on the use of off-campus locations defined as outcentres to deliver Ulster courses. Students studying in a designated outcentre are full students of the University, not Associate Students, with the same rights and entitlements as on-campus and distance learning students.

This paper reviews current arrangements and proposes some changes to the procedure for the approval and introduction of a new outcentre. It also considers the question of the use of staff of outcentres in teaching and assessment.

Current Arrangements

At present there are two models of outcentre provision:

- A model where the University uses accommodation provided by a partner organisation but all course delivery and assessment is by staff of the University (often referred to as 'flying faculty' if overseas). In such arrangements it is not uncommon for the partner to offer some administrative support and / or support for marketing and course promotion. In some cases, the University may enter into a contractual relationship with an organisation such as a hotel for the simple provision of a meeting room off-campus. This outcentre provider would not be considered a 'partner'.
- A model where the University uses accommodation provided by a partner and also makes use of partner organisation staff in course delivery and assessment. Such staff must become recognised teachers of the University.

There are a number of reasons why the outcentre model of collaboration as opposed to a validated / recognised institution or franchised / affiliate college model may be appropriate:

- Access to a specific market in a particular location where:
 - the selected partner organisation is not primarily an educational institution and so is not capable of recognition under Ordinance XXVIII;
 - the partner is not permitted to offer provision at the level in question (for example local FE colleges cannot offer level 6) but it is deemed desirable to have provision at that level in that location;

- lack of maturity of selected partner organisation or lack of HE delivery experience.
- the Partner wants the flexibility of on-site provision but does not wish to deliver provision themselves and the Faculty is prepared to offer such off campus teaching or prefers to retain the responsibility for teaching and assessment.

Currently approved outcentres include the following (see Collaborative Register for full listing of courses provided in outcentres):

- three local FE Colleges (facilities – specified campuses - and staff) for Level 5 and 6 modules of BSc Hons Business Studies; SW College for BSc Hons Computing Systems, Level 5 and 6 of BSc Hons Construction Engineering and Management, modules from BEng Hons Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering, and Level 6 of BSc Hons Health and Wellbeing; SRC for level 6 of BA Hons English and History;
- five H&SC Trusts (facilities and staff) for BSc Hons and PgDip/MSc Developing Practice in Healthcare and MSc Professional Development in Social Work; Probation Board for NI (facilities and staff) for MSc Professional Development in Social Work; Springvale Community Learning Centre, Belfast (facilities) for MSc Professional Development in Social Work; HSC Leadership Centre, Belfast (facilities) for MSc Business Improvement;
- other ‘public sector’ centres: Burnavon Arts Centre and Public Library, Cookstown (facilities) for Diploma in Irish; Youth Action NI in two outcentres in Belfast (facilities and staff) for Certificate in Community Youth Studies; NI Police College and Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust (facilities) for BSc Hons Criminology and Criminal Justice; Mountcollyer Technology Resource Centre (facilities and staff) for PGCE (Technology and Design); Athlone and Monaghan Education Centres (facilities) for PgDip/MEd;
- Irish Times Training, Dublin (facilities) for Cert, AdvCert, AdvDip, FdSc and BSc Hons Management Practice, and PgCert and MSc Executive Leadership; Marino Institute of Education, Dublin (facilities) for PgDip/MSc Management and Corporate Governance;
- specific company locations for in-company delivery of AdvCert Management Practice (CME Group, Moy Park); Lidl (with ITT) for FdSc Management Practice; ATOST IT Services for AdvDip Managing the Customer Contact; Microsoft Dublin (with ITT) for GradDip Computing; National Football Stadium, Belfast (facilities) for BSc Hons Football Coaching and Business Management;
- overseas educational institutions: China Resources University (facilities) for MSc Business Development and Innovation; HKU SPACE (facilities) for MSc Global Investment Management and MSc Management and Corporate Governance; Augsburg University of Applied Sciences, Germany (facilities and staff) for MEng Hons Electronic Engineering, MEng Hons Mechanical Engineering and MEng Hons Mechatronic Systems; Kempten University of Applied Sciences, Germany (facilities and staff) for MEng Hons Electronic Engineering; School of Medicine, Indiana University, USA (facilities and staff) for MBiomedSc Hons Biomedical Science and MSci Hons Biological Sciences (level 7).

In addition, the faculties and ADDL may offer individual short-course modules in various off-campus locations (not recorded in Collaborative Register, but identified in module

descriptions). Examples are the IM HAPPY modules taught at various project centres and a social work module taught in a hotel.

The current procedure for adding a new outcentre involves the preparation of a formal due diligence report for SLT consideration including commentary on financial, legal and risk issues. If the proposed outcentre is accepted, the Faculty may then proceed to request APAG consideration of approval of provision to be offered at this new location (CA3 process). In general the outcentre model carries little risk to the University as standards and quality remain within the University's control and it can be a very effective method of extending the market for specific areas of provision.

In order to further streamline the approval process for new outcentres it is now proposed that, rather than a due diligence report being sent to SLT, a short questionnaire is completed by the sponsoring Faculty and provided to APAG along with the CA3 request to introduce provision at a new location and course costing (see Annex 1 for draft questionnaire). If either the Faculty or APAG is uncertain about any aspect of working at the proposed location a more extensive due diligence exercise should be requested and will be conducted by Quality Enhancement, which will provide a full report to SLT for decision (see Annex 2 for flow chart). Such concerns for referral to the University's risk committee are likely to be around staff safety and/or institutional reputation. APAG would consider resource matters and the teaching environment through its usual consideration of the Faculty's assessment as under the current process. If a proposal is referred to SLT, APAG must have evidence of SLT approval before making a recommendation for approval of a new outcentre to ASQEC.

If the proposed outcentre is in a country where the University has no previous partnerships a commentary will be provided to SLT as part of the PVC (Education) report and SLT will be invited to consider whether the University should proceed to establish an outcentre in that region.

Recognised Teacher status

At its meeting in June 2018 ASQE posed the question of what level of outcentre staff / recognised teacher involvement in the delivery of Ulster courses in outcentres should be regarded as acceptable (min18.49 refers).

It should be noted that the University would be unlikely to confer recognised teacher status on a member of outcentre staff who fails to meet the requirements set out in the University's Code of Practice for the Designation of Recognised Teachers which states:

'Recognised Teacher status shall be accorded only to persons whose qualifications and experience of their discipline and practice are comparable to those of members of Academic Staff of the University.'

Proposals for new recognised teachers are brought forward by Faculties, are scrutinised by the Academic Office and the Director of CHERP and a summary is provided to ASQEC which makes recommendations for approval of recognised teacher status to the PVC (Education) acting on behalf of Council.

It is not possible to give a definitive percentage figure which would be acceptable in terms of the involvement of recognised teachers. The involvement of partner institution staff of an outcentre may range from none to the majority of the course being delivered at the outcentre by such staff. It might be suggested that in the latter case a franchised or

validated model might be more appropriate but, as has already been stated, not all outcentre partner organisations may be capable of recognition under Ordinance XXVIII and it seems undesirable to introduce a restrictive rule which could impede Faculties from expanding non-regulated business.

However, Faculties should take account of the following general guidance in determining outcentre arrangements:

As students taught through outcentre arrangements are full students of the University the University therefore retains responsibility for the quality and standard of all aspects of their learning experience and for identifying and resolving any issues which arise:

- although there may be a designated member of outcentre staff who looks after the day-to-day operation of the course, the course director should be a member of University staff;
- in considering the use of recognised teachers in course delivery consideration should always be given to the security of overall course organisation, management, delivery and assessment and the role of the recognised teachers in these areas;
- if a large proportion of the course is to be delivered and assessed by recognised teachers a greater level of oversight will be necessary by the home course team to ensure maintenance and comparability of standards. This should include both a review of student performance and involvement in moderation of assessments;
- external examiner moderation should include sampling of work from students at the outcentre for comparability.
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Faculties should also ensure that:

- students studying through outcentre arrangements are made fully aware of their rights as Ulster University students and encouraged to participate in the normal forms of students feedback (SSCCs, module surveys). This should provide an additional check on the quality of off-campus provision;
- If students are dissatisfied with any aspect of their course and unable to resolve their concerns, as Ulster students they should be made aware that they have access to the Student Complaints procedure.

Action Required

ASQEC is asked to approve the revised arrangements for the approval of new outcentres.



NEW OUTCENTRE QUESTIONNAIRE

APAG APPROVAL: include completed questionnaire with CA3 and course costings

Name and Address of Proposed Outcentre	
Is this the first Ulster University partnership in this country? If so SLT approval will be required.	
Type of Outcentre Arrangement Proposed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of rooms only • Use of rooms plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Library / IT resources / VLE ○ Support for course promotion / recruitment ○ Support for course delivery. 	
Confirm that any physical resources to be utilised in course delivery have been inspected and are suitable for the number of users and anticipated mode of delivery.	
Has the proposed outcentre appropriate insurance cover in place in the event of personal injury to University staff or students?	
For UK based outcentres, does the premises meet the expectations of SENDO in terms of accessibility?	
Are you satisfied that the proposed outcentre is established on a sufficiently permanent and financially secure basis to maintain access to resources there for the duration of the proposed provision?	
If the outcentre can no longer be accessed for the purposes of course delivery are acceptable alternatives available in the same location to enable students to complete their studies there? Would any of the alternative premises available represent a better option at this stage?	
If staff employed by the proposed outcentre are to be used to support course delivery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify in what capacity they are to be used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ academic or pastoral support; ○ teaching / assessment of modules. • Identify the extent of use (how many staff required); • Confirm that all staff to be involved in teaching and assessment are suitably qualified and will have recognised teacher status confirmed before course commencement. 	
Are there any anticipated issues with travel to the outcentre location or working at it? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are visas required? • Is the safety of staff assured? • Has the Foreign and Commonwealth Office webpage on travel advice (https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) been checked? 	
Are there any reputational risks for the University in conducting the course in this location (ethical or human rights concerns, treatment of minorities / women/ other nationalities; concerns regarding freedom of speech, academic freedom)? Are there any reputational risks from association with the proposed partner?	
Will the standard outcentre agreement be signed with the partner? If not, specify the form of legal contract.	

I confirm that the Faculty supports this proposed outcentre development:

Signed Executive Dean

Date:



APPROVAL OF NEW OUTCENTRE

