

Hibernia College Quality Framework

Template for a Due Diligence Report



HIBERNIA
COLLEGE

1 Introduction

When proposing a programme which will be offered on a collaborative and/or transnational basis appropriate due diligence must be undertaken. A Due Diligence Team should investigate the proposed partnerships and its associated partners and collect the following information. It should take the proposed partner's self-assessment as a guiding document. Some assumptions may be possible in respect of institutions making national awards – but such assumptions should be made with care, noted explicitly and on a case by case basis.

Information collected is also utilised in conducting a risk and opportunities assessment. A final report is written to using the four headings in paragraph 6 of this template, and also presenting the conclusions of the risk and opportunities assessment.

2 Purpose

This template provides a framework for collecting important information by which the College can subsequently make both academic and commercial decisions about whether to progress with the development of a collaborative and/or transnational programme. It is designed to ensure that

- i. the College's decisions are made in full knowledge of all potential risks and benefits
- ii. the College can demonstrate to QQI or any other external validating body that any potential collaborative and/or transnational programme can be provided in a secure manner which provides learners with an equivalent experience to that of students on other programmes.

3 Scope

All faculty and staff who are proposing the development of a collaborative and/or transnational programmes.

4 Definitions

a. Collaborative Provision

This is where two or more providers being involved by formal agreement in the provision of a programme of higher education and training.

b. Transnational Education (TNE)

This is where a higher education provider, primarily based in one jurisdiction (Ireland), wholly or partly provides a programme of higher education and training in another jurisdiction, with some element of a

physical presence. Where a provider partly provides a programme of higher education and training, it is implicit that this provision is also collaborative provision.

c. Articulation Arrangement

An articulation arrangement is a process that enables students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme to be admitted with advanced standing to a subsequent stage of a programme of a different degree awarding body. These arrangements are subject to a formal agreement between the parties.

d. Due Diligence

This is the undertaking of enquiries about a prospective collaborative and/or transnational arrangement to inform a decision on whether to proceed with a proposed partnership or inform the terms of a memorandum of agreement.

5 Context

5.1 Legal or Regulatory Context

The following are all binding documents.

- a. QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards Revised 2012 applies.*
- b. IHEQN 2013 Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision are adopted.*
- c. Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area (ESG) (2015)*
- d. Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher education in the European region, Lisbon (1997)*
- e. Committee of the Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, Recommendation the Recognition of Joint Degrees, Strasbourg (2004)*
- f. OECD/UNESCO Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education (2005)*
- g. UNESCO/COUNCIL OF EUROPE Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (2007)*
- h. BFUG, European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes¹*

6 Report Template Headings

In completing the report evidence must be presented and triangulation of third party data must be undertaken.

6.1 General and Academic due diligence

- Is it legally possible to engage the type of collaboration proposed?
 - Are there jurisdictional issues?
 - Does Hibernia College have the authority to engage as proposed
 - Can the partners legally engage in the collaboration proposed?
- Is the proposed environment one in which human rights can be respected and the ethical values of the college upheld?
- Will the proposed student environment promote learning – what criteria are you using to make this adjudication?

¹ http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/European_Approach_QA_of_Joint_Programmes_endorsedByBFUG.pdf

- Are the proposed education and training facilities appropriate?
- Do the partners have the competence and capacity to fulfil the roles to be assigned to them in a sustainable way (what criteria are you using)
- Do the partners have an open intellectual community that values critical reflection and fosters personal and professional development for learners and staff? (how do you know)
- Are the partner staff appropriately qualified and experienced to undertake the activities envisaged for the partnership²?
- Does the pedagogic style of the partners incorporate good practice? How has this been considered?
- Do the partners have peer relationships with the broader community of higher education and training?
- Do the partners demonstrate an understanding that higher education and training is a collegial, international endeavour? How?
- In its promotional tools (web, literature, etc.) has the partner described and listed all formal collaborations with other higher education institutions or organisations? (Hibernia College needs to be clear who it will be associated with by proxy.)
- Can it be assured that the proposal has the human resource capacity to allocate staff on an appropriate basis for the management of the provision of the proposed programme?³
- In respect of transnational provision will there be receiver-country recognition of awards made?
- Are support services for learners capable of being provided on a comparable basis to those available to learners at the HEI's main location or in Ireland generally?
- Can the proposed provision be assured to meet the IHEQN document; *Provision of Education to International Code of Practice and Guidelines for Irish Higher Education Institutions Students*?
- Awards made under Ireland's National Framework of Qualifications are intended to promote mutual recognition and confidence in the learning outcomes attained. Are any other awards or accreditation offered through the partners offered by or recognised by reputable bodies?
- Is the partner's local administrative infrastructure able to provide a regular flow of information to regulatory bodies and other stakeholders including other awarding bodies as relevant?
- Is the partner's local administrative infrastructure able to provide timely decision making to learners?
- Can the physical and electronic infrastructure required for the programme be provided on a stable basis?

6.2 Quality Assurance due diligence

a. Internal focus

- Does the partner have robust quality assurance and quality enhancement policies, procedures and practices? Specifically, where the partner is a HEI does the partner's strategy, policy and procedures for quality assurance meet European standards for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions as set out in Part 1 of *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*.
 - (ESG)⁴. i.e. do the quality assurance policies and procedures of the applicant address:
 - i. Policy for quality assurance
 - ii. Design and Approval of Programmes
 - iii. Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment
 - iv. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

² A number of questions in this due diligence prompt will require revisiting in greater detail during any subsequent programme validation. It will be useful to indicate this in the ensuing report.

³ See previous footnote.

⁴ [http://www.engq.eu/files/ESG_3edition%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.engq.eu/files/ESG_3edition%20(2).pdf)

- v. Teaching Staff
 - vi. Learning Resources and Student Support
 - vii. Information Management
 - viii. Public Information
 - ix. On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
 - x. Cyclical External Quality Assurance
- As relevant to the nature of the potential collaborator does the institution have a culture and associated practices underpinning access to, progression from and transfer within higher education and training?
 - As relevant to the nature of the potential collaborator does the institution assign credit in a transparent way?
 - Is the potential collaborator committed to embedding the role and contributions of external examiners into the work of the consortium and the programme team for the collaborative programme envisaged?

b. External focus

- Have the requirements of the national quality agency or other licensing authorities in any receiver country (and the countries of other collaborator-institutions, where relevant) been considered? Are they clear and what are their implications for the relationship?
- Does any agency/body externally review the collaborator? What do they say about the potential collaborator?
- Is the proposed collaborator in good standing with any relevant national agencies or does it requires national 'permission' to engage in the provision envisaged?
- Is the collaborator open to harmonising procedures through which the requirements of external parties and the requirements of awarding bodies and other collaborating institutions can be addressed?
- What professional regulation, statutory or otherwise, is relevant and are there any issues for its attainment in respect of a collaborative programme?
- Will the proposed programme and the associated award be recognised in any jurisdiction in which it is proposed to offer it?
- Are the collaborators happy to develop a consortium agreement which is consistent with the [OECD/UNESCO Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Education](#) (2005)?
- Are there any requirements for professional registration in the receiver or host countries? Are special permissions required?

6.3 Legal Standing

- What are the legal requirements in the intended jurisdiction(s)?
 - Has evidence been obtained in respect of compliance with national legislation on education or otherwise,
 - e.g. tax compliance
 - appropriate human resources policies and procedures
 - company registration
 - health and safety
 - buildings legislation
 - equality legislation, etc.
 - appropriate policies on child protection and vulnerable adults
 - Is the potential collaborator compliant? What evidence is used to support this?
- Who has the authority to sign legal documents on behalf of the collaborator?
- Where relevant, has the potential joint awarding institutions the authority to make awards?

- What implications are there for Data Protection and the sharing of student data; how are GDPR responsibilities addressed?
- Is there clarity on the application of the Freedom of Information Act⁵?
- What are the implications for Intellectual Property rights?

6.4 Financial Standing

- Are the potential collaborators in good financial standing?
- How can it be evidenced that the proposed programme can be financed in a secure way and that the consortium or partner or collaborator organisations are adequately resourced to undertake and complete the programme proposed?
- Are the collaborators generally clear that in the establishment of a legal agreement that there is a need for clarity on financial matters such as
 - sharing of costs and income;
 - payment of taxation, including the currency/currencies in which fees and payments are to be made and
 - arrangements for handling currency fluctuations?

What proposals are made in this context?

- What is the nature of the proposed transfer arrangement in place to protect learners in the event that it is not possible to complete provision of a programme after it has commenced? As a less preferred alternative, what bonding arrangement is proposed for inclusion in the legal agreement?
- Are there financial plans and are they based on realistic projections of student numbers and other variables?

7 Document Control

Document Title	Template for a Due Diligence Report in respect of a particular collaborative relationship and/or transnational provision		
Author	QA Officer/Registrar		
Version	2.01	Adoption Date	June 2018
Expected Review Date			
Responsible for Review	Registrar		
Related Policy	Policy for the Design of Programmes and Curricula for a Blended or Online Environment Policy for the Development and Approval of Programmes for a Blended or Online Environment		
Related Guidelines			
Related Procedures	Procedure to Obtain Initial Approval to Develop a New Programme		

⁵ Whilst this does not apply to Hibernia College, it may apply to a potential collaborator, and therefore indirectly to Hibernia College.

	Procedure for the Full Development and Final Approval of a New Programme
Other related documents	