Annex B: Approval and Withdrawal of Research Programmes

APPENDIX A: Guidance on Procedures for Faculty Panels Convened to Consider New Validated Programmes of Study (Research Programmes)

1. Definition of Validated Provision

Validated provision denotes programmes of study devised and delivered by a partner institution/organisation to its own students and which lead to University awards. Partners offering such provision are commonly referred to as ‘validated institutions’.

2. Proposals for New Validated Programmes of Study

2.1 Where an approved partner institution (i.e. a partner institution that has satisfied the requirements of Collaborative Provision: Policies and Procedures: Part 1; see https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/collaborative/procedures/collabprocedures.html) has received outline approval from the Executive Group to proceed with a specific new postgraduate research programme of study, the programme proposal is considered in the first instance by the appropriate Graduate Studies Committee. Where, following its consideration of the programme the Graduate Studies Committee is satisfied that it is appropriate to do so, it may recommend that the Faculty establishes a panel to visit the partner institution and meet with staff in order to consider the programme proposal in detail. The documentation required to be provided to such panels by the partner institution is set out at section 5 below.

2.2 Such Faculty panels will normally include at least two members from the University, one of whom shall be appointed as Chair, and at least one member external to the University. The Faculty panel is responsible for making a detailed assessment of the design, level, coherence and currency of the curriculum under review and of the capacity of the partner institution to assure the standards of the provision under review and to provide learning opportunities sufficient for students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Based on its assessment, the Faculty panel is empowered to make one of a number of recommendations to the Faculty Board1:

A. That the proposal be given permission to proceed for consideration by the Programme Approval Sub-Committee of the University (PASC), along with the panel’s report of the approval event;

B. That the proposal be given permission to proceed for consideration by PASC subject to the prior satisfaction of specified conditions along with the panel's report of the approval event. These conditions might include revisions to the proposal or provision of additional resources. The submission to PASC should include a statement from the partner institution as to the steps it has taken to meet the Faculty panel’s conditions;

C. That the proposal be resubmitted in a revised form for further consideration by the Faculty panel;

1 Or the relevant Faculty Committee, as per note 1 above, delegated to act on behalf of the Faculty Board.
D. That the proposal is rejected.

At the end of the approval event the Chair will inform the partner of the recommendation that it proposes to make to the Faculty Board:

3. **Appointment of the Faculty Panel**

3.1 The appointment of members of Faculty panels will be approved by the relevant Faculty Dean.

Each panel will comprise:

a) A chairperson who will normally be an academic member of staff from within the Faculty, but not the School cognate to the proposed programme;

b) Another academic member of staff, normally from within the Faculty, who has suitable subject area knowledge;

c) At least one member who is external to the University and of sufficient status and academic expertise to command authority in the educational provision under consideration. External Examiners currently employed by the University may not be appointed as external members of the Panel;

d) A secretary (nominated by the Quality Assurance Office) who will be an administrator with a working knowledge of the expectations of the University’s Code of Practice and Collaborative Provision Policies and Procedures (normally a QA or Faculty administrator);

3.2 Members a) to c) above are all full voting panel members. Faculties should ensure that between the panel members, there is appropriate training and/or expertise to judge the quality and standards of the proposed partner to deliver and assess the programme. The Faculty may appoint additional members where it feels this to be appropriate. Examples of those with appropriate training and expertise would include an Associate Dean or School Director of Graduate Studies. All panel members must be sufficiently independent from the educational provision under review to be able to provide an impartial view on it. The Secretary will attend in an advisory capacity to the panel and will lend expertise on matters of procedure, regulation and quality assurance.

*Note: Where a member of teaching staff from the cognate school has assisted with the development of the programme, s/he may be required to attend the panel in an advisory capacity, but will not be considered a voting member of the Faculty panel.*

*Note: Where a conjoint Approval Panel is formed (see point 11.9 of Annex B of the Code of Practice for Research Programmes [https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/research/annexb.html]) the Faculty retains responsibility for appointing the members a) to c). The partner organisation may provide the secretary and some additional panel members.*

4. **Detailed Terms of Reference of a Faculty Panel**

The terms of reference of a Faculty Panel are:
a) to evaluate whether the proposed programme is set at the required academic level, and where appropriate, consistent with the relevant subject benchmarks;
b) to ensure that the admission criteria meet the requirements of the University;
c) to identify whether the programme specification(s) can be delivered, learning outcomes achieved and quality and standards maintained;
d) to ascertain whether the assessment strategy allows learning outcomes to be appropriately tested;
e) to evaluate whether teaching staff at the proposed partner are adequately skilled and receive sufficient training and development to support the delivery of the programme;
f) to investigate whether the proposed partner is appropriately resourced to undertake its responsibilities as set out in the Code of Practice for Research Programmes of Study and Credit Framework;
g) to report its findings on a - f above to the partner institution and to Faculty Board.
i) to make recommendations on the proposal as per 2 A-D above, specifying any conditions required for the proposal to proceed.

5. Documentation Required for the Faculty Panel

At least three weeks prior to the panel event, the Head of the partner institution or his/her nominee should send copies of the following documentation (sufficient for all members of the Faculty panel, including the Secretary) to the designated member of the Quality Assurance Office, who will circulate the materials to the panel.

- The proposed programme for the visit (see guidance in section 7 below).
- Rationale for the proposal.
- Programme specification.
- Staff management structure and CVs of all supervisory staff
- Statement of available physical resources
- Self-assessment of the infrastructure of support for student learning and student welfare
- Requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (where applicable)
- Reports from any previous stages of the approval process, where available
- Draft Programme/Student handbooks

6. Areas of Panel Focus

The Faculty panel will fulfill its terms of reference as stated in Section 3 by exploring the following five key areas:

Section A: Programme Design

In exploring the design of the programme the panel will consider:
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- whether the programme is current and valid in the light of (i) developing knowledge in the discipline and developments in teaching, learning and research, and (ii) changes in student demand, employer expectations and employment opportunities (as appropriate);
- the appropriateness of the award title and relevance of the programme to the title;
- the proposed level and credits (where relevant) specified for the programme and whether or not they are consistent with Kent’s Credit Framework [https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/credit-framework/index.html](https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/credit-framework/index.html) and the national FHEQ [http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Framework-Higher-Education-Qualifications-08.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Framework-Higher-Education-Qualifications-08.pdf);
- the content of the programme specification and whether or not the learning outcomes fulfill the programme aims;
- whether the aims and learning outcomes meet relevant subject benchmark statements and professional body and industry requirements.

Section B: Admissions Criteria

The panel will seek evidence that the collaborative partner’s admission criteria are consistent with the University’s minimum entry requirements. The panel will explore:
- whether the entry requirements are clear, appropriate and fair;
- whether APECL² arrangements are made clear;
- whether there is an appropriate induction programme in place;
- mechanisms employed for addressing widening participation;
- the expected intake number for the first cohort and subsequent years.

Section C: Learning and Assessment Strategy

In exploring the learning and assessment strategy the panel will consider:
- whether students are encouraged to develop as independent learners;
- whether the assessment methods enable the programme aims and learning outcomes to be effectively tested;
- the appropriateness of the assessment methods employed;
- whether assessment load is appropriate for the programme level and credit volume;
- whether the criteria for assessment is readily available to students and examiners, including re-examination assessment
- whether the weighting and timing of assessment clear to students;
- whether the assessment is moderated either internally or by the University;
- whether the University will second mark any of the assessment.

² Accreditation of Prior Experiential/Certificated Learning
Section D: Student Support and Resources

The Panel will explore the student learning and research environments and resources which the proposed partner provides, including:

- The student support available that is appropriate to the student profile and programme(s) of study;
- The system of academic support and advice the partner operates which should be in consistent with Annex G of the Code of Practice for Research Programmes [https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/research/annexg.html](https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/research/annexg.html);
- Whether or not the proposed partner has adequate resources to students with disabilities and special learning needs;
- The information for students which is made available to students to assist them complete the programme;
- The suitability of the staff responsible for student support and guidance;
- Whether or not there is appropriate technical and administrative support available if required;
- Whether there is adequate specialist accommodation and equipment available;
- Whether the proposed partner makes available course materials, appropriate books/journals, IT support and other specialist equipment which students require to complete the programme.
- how the proposed partner will communicate University’s appeals and complaints procedures to its students;

Section E: Maintenance and Enhancement of Quality and Standards:

The Panel will explore and assess the capacity of the proposed partners to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards of the programme, considering such matters as whether or not the partner institution has methods of receiving and responding to student feedback which are consistent with Annex M of the Code of Practice [https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/research/annexm.html](https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/research/annexm.html);

- how feedback from staff, students, external examiners and PSRBs is used to enhance the programme and the student experience;
- the availability of staff induction, staff development and peer observation;
- to investigate whether the partner has adequate experience and resources to properly undertake its responsibilities as set out in the Code of Practice for Research Programmes;
- whether or not the partner has adequate support and review methods for students on placements or studying through distance learning.

7. Faculty Panel Preliminary Assessment: Consultation and Actions
7.1 Members of the panel will consider the documentation (which normally will be sent to them at least three weeks prior to the review visit).

7.2 Each panel member should provide the Chair of the panel with some brief feedback on the documentation including a list of key points they believe need to be focused on during the review visit, two weeks prior to the Faculty panel meeting.

7.3 The Chair of the panel will use any feedback from the panel members when planning the panel’s approach to the visit. The Chair of Panel may identify further documentation that the panel wishes the partner organisation to provide prior or during the Faculty panel.

7.4 The Chair may also, following its advance discussion, propose changes to the programme for the series of meeting. In particular, members of the panel may feel that some meetings might be shortened or cancelled in view of the documentary evidence that it has received. Members of the panel may also, if it considers it to be necessary, ask for further meetings to be scheduled.

7.5 The Secretary of the Review Panel should communicate any action points arising from the advance consultation to the partner organisation at least one week prior to the panel event.

8. Programme for Panel Event

8.1 The Faculty panel will normally convene over one day, although, the length of the visit may be determined by the size and complexity of the proposed partner and programme(s). The programme for the visit will be proposed by the Chair of the Panel in consultation with the partner organisation (or his/her nominee). Unless a variation to the standard programme has been negotiated and agreed between the Chair of the Panel and the partner organisation, the panel event schedule should incorporate the following sections:

- Welcome by the Head of the Validated Institution
- Private meeting of Panel
- Tour of the facilities (where applicable)
- Meetings with the Management Team
- Meeting with the Supervisory Team
- Meeting with current students (where available)
- Private meeting of Panel
- Feedback to staff at the Validated Institutions

8.2 The programme must be finalised one week prior to the Validation Panel taking place and confirmed to all parties by the Secretary.

9. Panel Outcomes
9.1 Following consideration of the documentation and the information yielded by meetings with staff and students, the Faculty panel is empowered to make one of a number of recommendations to the Faculty Board:

A. That the proposal be given permission to proceed for consideration by the Programme Approval Sub-Committee of the University (PASC), along with the panel’s report of the approval event;

B. That the proposal be given permission to proceed for consideration by PASC subject to the prior satisfaction of specified conditions along with the panel’s report of the approval event. These conditions might include revisions to the proposal or provision of additional resources. The submission to PASC should include a statement from the partner institution as to the steps it has taken to meet the Faculty panel’s conditions;

C. That the proposal be resubmitted in a revised form for further consideration by the Faculty panel;

D. That the proposal be rejected.

9.2 At the end of the approval event the Chair will inform the partner of the recommendations that it proposes to make to the Faculty Board:

Note: Conditions set by the Faculty panel are mandatory requirements which must be addressed satisfactorily before the proposal may be permitted to proceed for consideration by PASC.

The Panel may also make advisory recommendations to the partner organisation for its consideration.

10. Action to be taken following the Faculty Panel

10.1 The Secretary will be required to write a draft report from the Faculty Panel event not more than two weeks after it taking place.

10.2 The Secretary should send a copy of the report as approved by the Chair to all members of the panel, Head of the partner organisation and to the relevant Faculties Support Officer. The Faculties Support Officer will forward the report and the proposal for consideration by the relevant Faculty Committee. Where applicable, the Head of the partner organisation may submit a follow-up report to the Faculty, commenting on the implementation and progress of actions taken to satisfy any conditions set to allow for the approval of the proposal.

10.3 The Faculty Committee may approve the report or refer points back to the Chair for further consideration and/or clarification. The Faculty Committee may request that the partner organisation is subject further conditions and/or recommendations prior to the commencement of the programme(s).

10.4 Where it is satisfied that it is appropriate for it to do so, the Faculty Committee should include the programme proposal, the panel event report and any follow-up report submitted by the partner institution, in its report to the Programme Approval Sub-Committee, together with its recommendation on the approval of the proposal.
10.5 PASC may recommend approval\(^3\) or approval subject to the satisfaction of identified conditions, on behalf of the Graduate School Board or refer any suggested amendments back to the responsible Faculty Committee.

\(^3\) Note that PASC will request confirmation that a Memorandum of Agreement has been signed between Kent and the partner institution or is in the negotiation stage prior to approval.