Partnership Review and Development Policy

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Version no. & date:	Version 2.0 – March 2026
Author:	Director of Governance, Quality and Student Success
Last review date:	March 2026
Next review due:	March 2028
Responsible Committee:	Board of Governors
Approved by & date:	QoE March 2026
External reference points:	• Office for Students Conditions of Registration (A–G) • UK Quality Code for Higher Education • Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) • Public Interest Governance Principles • Ongoing regulatory guidance relevant to partnerships, student outcomes and academic quality
Linked policies:	ASQ 1.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy; GA 3.2 Risk Management Framework; GA 3.3 CAGF; DIG 2.1 Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy; SWS 7.4 Safeguarding and Prevent Policy
Audience:	Staff

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how UK College of Business and Computing (UKCBC) develops, reviews and approves new academic programmes and external academic partnerships. It provides a consistent and transparent framework that ensures every proposal is academically robust, strategically aligned and financially viable.

The policy supports good governance, protects academic standards and ensures compliance with regulatory expectations including the Office for Students Conditions of Registration and the Internal Management Framework. Its purpose is to create a clear, auditable process through which the College can expand or refine its academic offer responsibly and in the interests of students.

In developing and approving programmes and partnerships, the College is mindful that its obligations under OfS Conditions B1, B2 and B4 apply to all higher education provided by or on behalf of UKCBC, including provision delivered through partnership arrangements and provision where UKCBC is responsible only for granting awards. This policy reflects those obligations and establishes the processes through which compliance is evaluated at the point of approval and monitored through the life of approved provision.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all programme and partnership activity that involves academic design, delivery or approval. It covers:

- proposals for new academic programmes
- changes to existing programmes that affect academic structure, delivery or resourcing
- new external academic partnerships of any type
- changes to existing partnerships that alter responsibilities, delivery arrangements or academic oversight
- programme withdrawals, closures or substantial restructuring

The scope extends to all UKCBC sites, and all staff involved in generating, reviewing or approving academic proposals. The policy applies regardless of the delivery model, including where delivery is shared with or subcontracted to an external partner, and including where UKCBC acts as the awarding body for provision delivered by another organisation. The policy must be applied alongside the Internal Management Framework and the Policy Preparation and Version Control Guidance (GA3.1).

3. Definitions

The following terms are used throughout the policy:

3.1 Academic due diligence

The academic evaluation of a proposed programme or partnership, including the curriculum, learning outcomes, assessment, qualification level and alignment with sector reference points.

3.2 Strategic due diligence

The analysis of strategic fit, financial sustainability, staffing and resource requirements, market demand and overall feasibility.

3.3 Programme

A structured set of modules that leads to an academic award or credit, delivered by the College or through an approved partner.

3.4 Partnership

Any formal academic relationship with an external organisation involving delivery, recognition, validation or joint development of academic provision.

3.5 Quality of Education Meeting (QoE)

The academic scrutiny body responsible for evaluating the academic suitability and risks of any proposed programme or partnership.

3.6 Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

The senior leadership group responsible for confirming strategic alignment, financial viability and operational readiness.

3.7 Board of Governors

The final approving authority for all new programmes and external academic partnerships.

3.8 Audit and Risk Committee

A Board subcommittee that may be asked to undertake additional scrutiny where concerns arise about risk, compliance or evidence.

3.9 OfS Conditions B1, B2 and B4

The general ongoing conditions of registration set by the Office for Students relating respectively to the academic experience of students, the resources and support provided to students, and the assessment and award of qualifications. These conditions apply to all higher education provided by or on behalf of UKCBC, including through partnership arrangements.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility for programme and partnership approval is shared across the governance structure. Each group contributes distinct forms of assurance and evaluation.

4.1 Policy Sponsor: Chief Executive Officer

Provides overall strategic direction and ensures that programme and partnership development aligns with the College's mission and priorities.

4.2 Policy Owner: Director of Governance, Quality and Student Success

Leads the drafting and maintenance of the policy, manages consultation and ensures correct application of the process.

4.3 Quality of Education Meeting (QoE)

Provides academic scrutiny by:

- evaluating curriculum suitability and academic standards
- confirming alignment with qualification frameworks
- identifying academic risks and delivery implications
- assessing compliance with OfS Conditions B1 and B4 in respect of each proposal
- making academic recommendations to ELT

4.4 Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

Provides strategic and operational assurance by:

- assessing the financial and resource implications
- evaluating strategic fit, feasibility and compliance
- confirming operational readiness across staffing, estates and systems
- assessing resource and support sufficiency in line with OfS Condition B2, with particular weight placed on the academic needs of the student cohort
- submitting a formal recommendation to the Board of Governors

4.5 Board of Governors

Makes the final institutional decision by:

- reviewing academic assurance from QoE
- reviewing strategic assurance from ELT
- approving or declining the proposal
- confirming that both QoE and ELT have addressed the requirements of OfS Conditions B1, B2 and B4 and that the evidence submitted is sufficient
- referring matters to the Audit and Risk Committee where further assurance is required

4.6 Audit and Risk Committee

Supports additional scrutiny by examining risk, compliance, evidence sufficiency and assurance gaps when requested by the Board.

5. New Partnership Development Flow

Any new academic partnership must be evaluated for academic suitability, financial viability and strategic relevance before the College enters into any agreement. The process is supported through the governance structures of the Internal Management Framework and provides clear evidence to support institutional assurance.

The development flow has three core evaluation stages before final approval, with an optional additional scrutiny stage where required by the Board.

The stages are:

5.1 Stage 1: Academic Suitability – Quality of Education (QoE)

The Quality of Education Meeting is the first formal evaluation point for all new partnership proposals.

QoE considers:

- the academic standing and credibility of the proposed partner
- the alignment of the partnership with qualification frameworks and sector expectations
- the capacity of the partner to maintain academic standards
- the compatibility of teaching, learning, assessment and student support arrangements
- any academic risks or conditions that must be managed
- whether the proposed provision will deliver a high-quality academic experience in the terms set out in OfS Condition B1, including whether it will be up to date, provide appropriate educational challenge, be coherent in structure and sequencing, be effectively delivered through an appropriate balance of methods, and require students to develop relevant skills
- whether assessments as proposed will be valid and reliable in the terms set out in OfS Condition B4, and whether academic regulations are designed to produce credible awards
- whether arrangements are in place for the effective assessment of English language proficiency, consistent with OfS Condition B4.2(d)
- whether mechanisms for monitoring award credibility over time, including classification trends and moderation outcomes, will be established as a condition of approval

QoE provides a clear academic assurance statement, confirming whether the proposal:

- is academically suitable to progress
- requires further development before reconsideration
- should not progress due to significant concerns

Only proposals endorsed by QoE move forward to ELT for strategic and financial evaluation.

5.2 Stage 2: Strategic, Financial and Resource Suitability – Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

The Executive Leadership Team carries out the strategic and operational evaluation. This stage confirms whether the partnership is viable, sustainable and aligned with the College's operational and regulatory responsibilities.

ELT reviews:

- strategic alignment with UKCBC's mission and priorities
- financial viability, including income modelling and cost implications
- requirements for staffing, estates, digital systems and student services
- market demand and enrolment forecasts
- operational readiness and regulatory considerations
- identified risks and proposed mitigation actions
- whether the proposed staffing arrangements are sufficient in number and whether staff are appropriately qualified in the terms required by OfS Condition B2, including that they hold expert subject knowledge, appropriate teaching qualifications or training and experience, and the skills required for effective delivery at the level and in the mode proposed
- whether physical and digital learning resources are adequate for the needs of the student cohort, including hardware access, software access, technical infrastructure, internet reliability and the capability of instructors to deliver digital learning effectively
- whether careers support provision is in place and adequate for the cohort of students who will be enrolled on the proposed provision
- whether the academic needs of the student cohort, assessed by reference to prior attainment and capability, have been identified and whether the resource and support provision proposed is sufficient to meet those needs; financial constraints shall be afforded less weight than the principle of sufficiency for student need

ELT then issues one of the following outcomes:

- recommends the partnership to the Board of Governors
- requests further revision or analysis from the proposal lead
- declines the proposal where concerns cannot be resolved

5.3 Stage 3: Institutional Approval – Board of Governors

The Board of Governors provides the final decision on new partnerships. It considers all available evidence, including:

- academic assurance from the Quality of Education Meeting
- strategic and resource assurance from the Executive Leadership Team

The Board evaluates whether the proposed partnership:

- supports the College's academic purpose
- contributes to long-term sustainability
- is compatible with the College's regulatory obligations

- presents acceptable levels of risk
- is supported by sufficient evidence that QoE and ELT have each addressed the requirements of OfS Conditions B1, B2 and B4 in their respective evaluations

The Board may:

- approve the partnership
- defer the decision pending clarifications
- decline the partnership
- refer the proposal to the Audit and Risk Committee if it requires further scrutiny of risk or assurance

No partnership can progress to contractual negotiation until formal Board approval is obtained.

5.4 Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

If the Board identifies concerns about risk, evidence sufficiency or compliance, it may request an additional review by the Audit and Risk Committee.

ARC may examine:

- risk exposure
- governance and compliance considerations
- integrity of supporting evidence
- data quality and assurance documentation

ARC provides its findings back to the Board, which then makes the final decision.

5.5 Summary of the UKCBC Partnership Development Flow

Academic suitability → Strategic suitability → Institutional decision

with the following stages:

- Quality of Education (Academic Review)
- Executive Leadership Team (Strategic, Financial and Resource Review)
- Board of Governors (Final Approval)
- Audit and Risk Committee (only where Board requests further review)

This flow ensures independence between academic and strategic evaluation while maintaining a clear line of sight from operational review to institutional governance, as required by the Internal Management Framework.

6. Programme and Partnership Development

UKCBC uses a structured and transparent approach to developing new academic programmes and academic partnerships. This approach ensures that proposals are academically robust, strategically aligned, financially sustainable and compliant with regulatory requirements.

All proposals must follow the Internal Management Framework, use approved templates and be documented within the College's digital governance environment.

The programme and partnership development process includes four stages: pre-proposal scoping, academic review, strategic and resource review, and institutional approval.

6.1 Pre-Proposal Stage

The development of a new programme or partnership begins with early scoping work to understand the academic, strategic and financial rationale for the idea. At this stage, the proposal lead constructs an initial outline, drawing on evidence and insight relevant to the subject area or proposed partner.

This stage includes:

- identifying the academic and market need for the programme or partnership
- reviewing alignment with the College's mission, strategic objectives and growth priorities
- considering national and regional skills needs, developments in the HE sector and student demand
- identifying initial risks or constraints
- gathering early feedback from relevant academic or professional service staff

Where early indications suggest that the idea is viable, the proposal lead prepares a formal Programme or Partnership Proposal, supported by the required evidence and using the UKCBC Business Case Template at Appendix A.

6.2 Needs Analysis for New Programmes and Partnerships

Every proposal must include a structured needs analysis that draws upon relevant evidence to justify the development. This may include:

- market intelligence: evaluation of student demand, demographic trends, competitor analysis and marketing insights
- local and national priorities: alignment with regional economic needs, skills shortages and labour market intelligence
- strategic positioning: how the proposal complements or enhances the College's academic offer
- feedback and consultation: insight from students, staff, employers and sector stakeholders

- emerging trends: developments in digitalisation, industry practice and global skills requirements

This analysis ensures that new programmes and partnerships respond to genuine educational, industry and community needs.

6.3 Academic Review – Quality of Education (QoE)

The Quality of Education Meeting conducts the academic evaluation of all proposals. Its review ensures that academic standards, curriculum design and student experience considerations are rigorously assessed before any strategic decision is made.

QoE evaluates:

- the academic coherence and credibility of the proposed programme
- the suitability of the curriculum, learning outcomes and assessment strategy alignment with UKCBC's own strategy
- alignment with qualification frameworks and sector reference points
- academic governance implications, including moderation, academic integrity and standards
- capacity to provide appropriate learning resources, student support and teaching expertise
- potential academic risks and required mitigations
- whether the proposed programme or partnership will deliver a high quality academic experience in the terms set out in OfS Condition B1.3, evaluated explicitly against each of the five components: whether the provision will be up to date; provide educational challenge at the appropriate level; be coherent in breadth, depth and sequencing; be effectively delivered through an appropriate balance of delivery methods and assessment design; and require students to develop relevant skills as defined in Condition B1.5(f)
- whether proposed assessments are valid, in that they are designed to result in students demonstrating the knowledge and skills intended, and reliable, in that they will be applied consistently across the cohort and over time, in the terms required by OfS Condition B4
- whether English language proficiency is addressed appropriately in the assessment strategy, consistent with OfS Condition B4.2(d), with any applicable exception documented and supported by evidence
- whether mechanisms for monitoring award credibility over time, including classification trends and moderation outcomes, are established as a condition of approval

QoE may approve the proposal to proceed, request revisions or decline the proposal where academic concerns cannot be resolved. Only proposals with academic endorsement from QoE progress to ELT.

6.4 Strategic, Financial and Resource Review – Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

Once academic suitability is confirmed, the Executive Leadership Team undertakes strategic, operational and financial evaluation. This ensures that any programme or partnership is feasible, sustainable and aligned with the College's capability and responsibilities.

ELT examines:

- strategic alignment with institutional goals
- financial viability, including cost-income modelling and resource implications
- expected student recruitment patterns and market positioning
- staffing needs and implications for workload, recruitment or training
- estates, facilities and digital infrastructure requirements
- regulatory considerations including OfS conditions, Prevent duty and data assurance
- operational risks and required mitigation plans
- whether the proposed staffing arrangements satisfy the requirements of OfS Condition B2, including that the staff team is sufficient in number, appropriately qualified with expert subject knowledge and appropriate teaching qualifications or training, and effectively deployed to deliver the proposed provision
- whether physical and digital learning resources are adequate for the cohort, including hardware access, software access, reliable technical infrastructure, internet connectivity and appropriately trained instructors for digital delivery, as set out in OfS Condition B2 guidance
- whether careers support provision is adequate for the student cohort on the proposed provision, in accordance with OfS Condition B2.4(l)(iv)
- the academic needs of the student cohort by reference to prior attainment and capability, ensuring that resource and support sufficiency is assessed against student need; the principle that financial constraints carry less weight than the sufficiency of provision for student need must be documented in ELT's assessment in accordance with OfS Condition B2.3(b)

ELT may recommend the proposal to the Board of Governors, request further refinement or decline the proposal where the College cannot support it.

6.5 Institutional Approval – Board of Governors

The Board of Governors considers the full evidence from QoE and ELT and provides the final decision on any new programme or partnership.

The Board confirms:

- academic assurance (via QoE)
- strategic and financial assurance (via ELT)
- alignment with the College's mission and long-term sustainability
- compatibility with regulatory obligations and the Public Interest Governance Principles
- that QoE and ELT have each addressed the requirements of OfS Conditions B1, B2 and B4 in their respective evaluations, and that the evidence submitted is sufficient to satisfy the Board that the College can meet those obligations in respect of the proposed provision

The Board may approve, defer or decline the proposal.

If the Board is not satisfied with the assurance provided, it may request detailed scrutiny from the Audit and Risk Committee. Only after Board approval may contractual discussions or implementation planning begin.

6.6 Documentation, Record Keeping and Evidence Standards

All programme and partnership proposals must:

- use approved UKCBC templates
- be uploaded to the digital governance environment for version control
- have clear ownership and a documented audit trail
- include academic due diligence and strategic due diligence evidence
- comply with the College's data quality and assurance standards

This supports transparent decision making and regulatory readiness.

6.7 Post-Approval Implementation

Following approval, implementation planning must include:

- finalisation of agreements or memoranda with partners
- confirmation of academic governance arrangements
- establishment of operational readiness in registry, admissions, systems and student services
- staff briefing and training
- timetable and resource planning
- risk monitoring and reporting through QoE, CMT and ELT
- confirmation that arrangements are in place for the retention of records of assessed student work for a period of five years from the end date of each course, in compliance with OfS Condition B4 and associated regulatory guidance
- establishment and documentation of student engagement mechanisms that provide routine, structured opportunities for students to contribute to the development of their academic experience and their course, including membership of relevant academic governance committees and opportunities to provide feedback on course content and delivery, consistent with OfS Condition B2.4(e)

The programme or partnership may only launch once all operational elements have been confirmed.

7. Monitoring and Review

The implementation of this policy will be monitored through the College's Internal Management Framework. The Policy Owner is responsible for ensuring that the policy is applied consistently and that programme and partnership developments follow the required governance process.

Monitoring is carried out through:

- oversight by the Quality of Education Meeting
- reporting through the College Management Team

- strategic review by the Executive Leadership Team
- assurance reporting to the Board of Governors
- periodic review of ongoing compliance with OfS Conditions B1, B2 and B4 for all approved programmes and partnerships, including review of delivery quality, award credibility, classification trends, resource and support sufficiency, and student engagement outcomes, with findings reported through QoE to the Board of Governors

The policy will be reviewed at least every two years, or earlier where prompted by:

- regulatory changes
- modifications required by internal audit or assurance activity
- feedback from staff, students or external partners
- changes to academic governance or operational arrangements

Any revisions must follow the version control and approval requirements set out in GA3.1.

8. Linked Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following documents:

- Internal Management Framework (IMF)
- GA3.1 Policy Preparation and Version Control Guidance
- QSA 1.1 Quality Assurance Framework
- Data and Information Governance policies
- GA 3.2 Risk Management framework

Additional linked documents may be referenced in programme or partnership specific procedures.

9. External References

This policy is informed by relevant external requirements, including:

- Office for Students Conditions of Registration (A–G), with particular reference to Conditions B1 (Academic Experience), B2 (Resources, Support and Student Engagement) and B4 (Assessment and Awards)
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- Public Interest Governance Principles
- Ongoing regulatory guidance relevant to partnerships, student outcomes and academic quality

Where external expectations change, the policy will be updated in line with GA3.1 requirements.

10. Version Control Table

This version control table is formatted to comply with GA3.1 and must appear at the end of the policy.

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes	Reviewers	Approval Committee
1.0	03/12/2025	Director of Governance, Quality and Student Success	Initial policy creation for UKCBC, aligned with IMF and GA3.1	QoE and ELT	Board of Governors
2.0	March 2026	Director of Governance, Quality and Student Success	Amendments to align explicitly with OfS Conditions B1, B2 and B4 across Sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, and Appendices 2 and 3	QoE and ELT	Board of Governors

Additional rows may be added for future revisions.

Minor administrative changes that do not affect substance will follow the GA3.1 conventions for decimal updates.

Appendix 1. Programme or Partnership Business Case

Section	Required Information
1. Overview Information	Proposal Title Proposal Type (Programme or Partnership) Proposed External Partner (if applicable) Proposal Lead (Name and Role) Contact Details Delivery Location(s) If replacing existing provision, state which programme/partnership and rationale
2. Delivery Information	Programme Title(s) or Partnership Category Mode(s) of Delivery (e.g. full time, part time, blended, online) Proposed Start Date Intake Pattern and Expected Cohort Size Programme Duration and Structure
3. Market and Strategic Rationale	Purpose of the proposal and its alignment with UKCBC strategy Market intelligence and student demand indicators Target learner groups Regional, national or international recruitment potential Competitor analysis (internal and external) Graduate employability prospects and labour market alignment Entry requirement considerations and comparison with sector norms
4. Financial and Resource Requirements	Tuition fee level(s) and funding model Cost and income forecast summary Staffing implications (academic and professional services) Teaching, learning and assessment resource needs Library and learning resource requirements

Section	Required Information
	Digital infrastructure or system requirements Estates or specialist facilities implications
5. Risk and Compliance Considerations	Key risks and mitigation strategies Regulatory implications (OfS Conditions, data returns, Prevent duty) Safeguarding, welfare and equality considerations Arrangements for five-year retention of assessed student work records (OfS Condition B4)
6. Recommendation from Proposal Lead	Summary of case for approval

Appendix 2. Strategic Due Diligence Checklist (ELT)

Criteria	Evidence Required	Reviewer Comments (ELT)
Alignment with College mission, values and strategic priorities	Summary of strategic benefit	
Market demand and recruitment feasibility	Market analysis and forecast data	
Financial viability and sustainability	Cost-income modelling and financial plan	
Partner organisation financial health (for partnerships)	Public accounts, credit checks or equivalent	
Capacity of partner to support agreed responsibilities	Evidence of staffing, estates, systems	
Infrastructure readiness (UKCBC internal)	Estates, digital systems, timetable capacity	
Staffing sufficiency and qualifications (OfS Condition B2): staff are sufficient in number, hold expert subject knowledge and appropriate teaching qualifications or training, and are effectively deployed	Staffing plan, CVs or equivalent, teaching qualification evidence	
Digital learning resource adequacy (OfS Condition B2): hardware, software, technical infrastructure, internet access and digital teaching capability	Digital infrastructure assessment, VLE and technology plan	

Criteria	Evidence Required	Reviewer Comments (ELT)
Careers support provision adequate for the student cohort (OfS Condition B2)	Careers support plan or equivalent	
Student cohort need assessment: academic needs of the cohort identified by reference to prior attainment; resource sufficiency assessed against student need with financial constraints given less weight (OfS Condition B2.3(b))	Cohort profile, needs assessment documentation	
Legal or regulatory considerations	Contractual, compliance and data implications	
Reputational considerations	Any known risks or sensitivities	
Risk assessment and mitigation planning	Completed risk register entry	
Stakeholder consultation	Internal or external stakeholder feedback	
Implementation planning	Proposed timelines and responsibilities	
ELT Recommendation	Approve / Approve with conditions / Decline	

Appendix 3. Academic Due Diligence Checklist (QoE)

Criteria	Evidence Required	Reviewer Comments (QoE)
Alignment with qualification frameworks (e.g. FHEQ)	Programme specification or partner documentation	
Academic coherence and curriculum design	Learning outcomes, module structure, mapping	
OfS Condition B1.3 – Up to date: provision is representative of current thinking, research and professional practice in the subject area	Curriculum review evidence, reading list currency, professional standards alignment	
OfS Condition B1.3 – Educational challenge: provision provides no less than the minimum level of rigour and difficulty expected at the relevant level	Module level descriptors, assessment design, mapping to FHEQ level	
OfS Condition B1.3 – Coherent: appropriate balance of breadth and depth; subjects taught in appropriate order; key concepts introduced at the right point	Programme structure map, module sequencing rationale	
OfS Condition B1.3 – Effectively delivered: appropriate balance of delivery methods; appropriate balance of directed and independent study	Delivery plan, contact hours schedule, supervision arrangements	

Criteria	Evidence Required	Reviewer Comments (QoE)
OfS Condition B1.3 – Relevant skills: students required to develop knowledge, understanding and other skills relevant to the subject and level, including cognitive, practical, transferable and professional competences	Learning outcomes map, skills framework	
Assessment strategy and academic integrity	Assessment plan, moderation processes	
OfS Condition B4 – Validity: assessments are designed to result in students demonstrating the knowledge and skills intended	Assessment design documentation	
OfS Condition B4 – Reliability: assessments are applied consistently across the cohort and over time	Moderation and standardisation procedures	
OfS Condition B4 – Award credibility: academic regulations are designed to produce credible awards; mechanisms are in place to monitor classification trends over time	Academic regulations, classification algorithm, monitoring plan	
OfS Condition B4.2(d) – English language proficiency: arrangements in place for	English language requirements, any equality exemption evidence	

Criteria	Evidence Required	Reviewer Comments (QoE)
effective assessment of English language proficiency appropriate to the level and content of the course; any applicable exception documented		
Synergy with UKCBC's academic strengths	Fit with existing portfolio or specialisms	
Teaching, learning and student support arrangements	Staffing plan, learning resources, support services	
Partner academic governance (for partnerships)	Validation, quality reports, academic governance structure	
Recent quality indicators (e.g. QAA, TEF, QSR)	Public reports, external examiner evidence	
Student success indicators (retention, progression, attainment)	Data from partner or benchmarking	
Commitment to innovation and continuous improvement	Pedagogic approach and digital practice	
Equality, diversity and inclusion considerations	Inclusive design and accessibility checks	
Stakeholder feedback (staff, students, employers where relevant)	Consultation summary	
QoE Recommendation	Approve / Approve with conditions / Decline	