International collaboration
Policy and procedure for the development and approval of agreements

Introduction

The work of the University of York takes place on an international scale, a quality recognised by international rankings and the success of international student recruitment. A substantial proportion of York’s staff, students and alumni are from outside the UK, many members of staff are engaged in international research, teaching and knowledge exchange collaborations, and an increasing number of students and staff take part in international exchanges. Our collaborations operate at many different levels – from research co-operation between individuals to major institutional memoranda of understanding covering a range of activity.

Such partnerships benefit students and staff through the connections, intellectual advances and opportunities they yield. They can also raise the profile of departments and the University, lead to new funding opportunities, and enhance a department’s position in official measures of quality. The University encourages partnerships with cognate organisations in other countries and aims to provide a supportive environment for their development.

Until 2014, the University Plan identified internationalisation as one of its four major themes for the University’s development. Since 2014, internationalisation is referenced in all aspects of the new University Strategy. In 2010, the University established a specialised International Relations office to promote internationalisation throughout the University and its activities, and to oversee progress on the objectives in the University’s internationalisation strategy. In 2017 International Relations changed its name to Global Engagement and launched an international strategy 2017-2020. More details on the international strategy and the work of Global Engagement can be found here: https://www.york.ac.uk/global/

This paper outlines the types of formal agreements that support international collaboration at York and the policy and procedures to be followed in establishing and maintaining such agreements.

Types of agreement

We have a range of international agreements which fall into the following categories:

1. Institutional partnerships
2. Departmental, multi-departmental and Faculty research collaborations
3. Teaching collaborations, including research degrees
4. Placement learning and Study Abroad (student exchange)
5. ERASMUS exchanges
6. Other staff exchanges
Criteria for formal agreements

Suitability of institutions

In general, formal agreements are signed with institutions or departments that are of a similar standing to York in their own country. In addition, the teaching, research or knowledge exchange activity covered by the agreement should operate at a similar level or be complementary to that at York, and it is helpful if there is evidence of alignment in departmental and/or institutional strategic objectives. Evidence of quality measures and/or reputational standing should be provided when proposing a partnership. It is important that the University of York is not exposed to undue financial or reputational risk through the partnership.

Nature of activity

The nature of the activity proposed under the agreement should be made clear and be based on expertise and experience in all locations, and the potential of the agreement for new, mutually-beneficial, activity should be explained.

As per regulation 3.4 of The University of York’s Code of practice and principles of good ethical governance, the responsibility for identifying ethical considerations and referring them for review lies with the individual initiating and/or leading the activity. The individual(s) should consider whether their activity falls within the scope of the University’s ethical framework, and refer it for ethical review if so, prior to commencement.

Should any research activity specifically outlined in an MoU, or subsequently developed as a result of an MoU, require review for ethical consideration, it is the responsibility of the individual leading this activity to ensure this is carried out.

Management of the agreement

There should be clear identification of the responsible office for holding, monitoring and managing the agreement in all institutions which are party to the agreement. There should be a statement of any financial commitment required. The duration of the agreement should be stated (normally three years in the first instance for departmental agreements, and five years in the first instance for institutional agreements). There should be a statement of the arrangement by which the agreement can be terminated.

Due diligence

Institutional due diligence research into potential MoU partners by Global Engagement or Academic Support Office will include questions of governance, risk, finance and expertise. If there is a financial requirement this must be carried out by the IP and Legal team and it is the responsibility of the individual leading the activity to ensure that this is done.
Approvals procedure

Institutional agreements

New institutional agreements will be recommended to the Vice-Chancellor by the Director of Global Engagement, based on significant opportunities, a history of collaboration and/or exchange, strategic objectives in particular countries/regions or evidence of university-wide collaboration with an institution. Consultation and advice will be sought from colleagues in Departments on such recommendations.

The formal signatory to all such agreements will be the Vice-Chancellor or his nominee and the equivalent chief executive officer of the partner institution. Institutional agreements will be reported to the International Committee and forward to Senate for approval.

Departmental, multi-departmental or Faculty agreements

Departments should discuss a possible agreement at the earliest opportunity with one of the following people:

- **Research collaborations** – the Global Partnerships Manager
- **Teaching collaborations** - the Academic Support Office
- **Study Abroad, placements or ERASMUS exchanges** - the Head of Study Abroad

Departmental or multi-departmental agreements will be:

- Advised by the Global Partnerships Manager, Head of Study Abroad or Academic Support Office, depending on the nature of the agreement
- Approved and signed off by the relevant Head of Department (or by Deans in the case of multi-departmental agreements) and by the Director of Internationalisation
- Reported to the International Steering Group or its successor committee
- Approved by Senate - usually under the delegated powers of Deputy or Pro-Vice-Chancellors, and depending on the nature of the agreement (all exchange/teaching agreements)

The formal signatory of the agreement will be the PVC Teaching and Learning for student exchange or study abroad agreements, and teaching collaborations, the PVC Research for research collaborations, Head of Department in the case of Departmental MoUs; and the relevant Dean for multi-departmental/faculty agreements.

The following information will be required during the approvals process:

a. A draft agreement document (sample documents will be made available by Global Engagement office)
b. details of the partner institution, including information on its standing in its own country, for example from a local British Council office or UK mission, or published league tables

c. details of the activities to be covered by the agreement (eg collaborative research, staff/student exchange, joint teaching activity, development of joint programmes)

d. a statement of the expected benefits to be derived by the department through the agreement

e. the responsible office for the management of the agreement within the York department concerned and the names of the individual staff member or members who will initially take the collaboration forward

f. a statement from the Head of the Department confirming departmental support for the development.

g. in the case of agreements involving collaborative delivery of programmes and/or student exchange, evidence of any prior approvals from Teaching Committee

h. in the case of agreements with Intellectual Property Rights implications, evidence of guidance from the Research and Enterprise Office

i. in the case of agreements involving financial commitment, evidence of the approval of the Head of Department and the Finance Department

Register and monitoring of agreements
Copies of concluded agreements should be sent to the Global Engagement office, which will keep a register and archive of all agreements. MOUs will be reviewed annually by the International Committee. Periodic reviews will be undertaken by the responsible administrator in the Global Engagement office or Academic Support Office.

Hilary Layton, February 2011

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