

## **Collaborative Partner Approval Process**

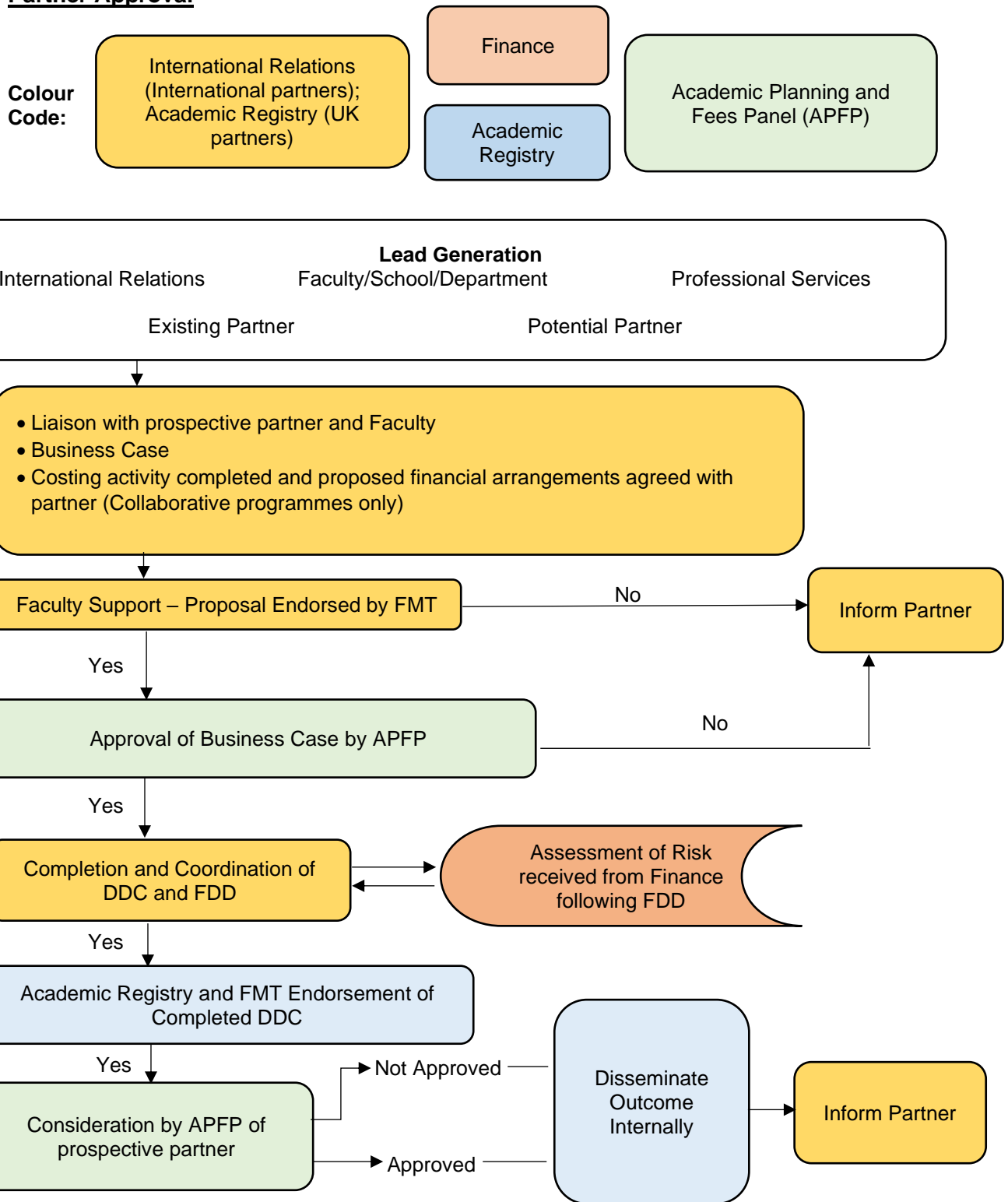
1. Discussions between a partner and Liverpool John Moores University may be initiated in a variety of different ways and take place between the partner and staff from a number of different Liverpool John Moores University Faculties or Service Areas. At a point where the partnership is ready to progress from very initial discussions, contact should be made with either International Relations (for international partnerships) or Academic Registry (for UK partnerships), in order to begin the formal Partner Approval and Programme Approval stages. Contact details for a range of staff at University who might help in the discussions and development of a partnership are available on the [Collaborative Provision webpage](#).
2. The Collaborative Partner Approval Process should be used for consideration of any new partners where the proposed partnership activity involves the delivery of University credit. The University works with various partner organisations, through a range of different [Types of Academic Collaborative Partnerships](#).
3. A summary of the partner approval process is outlined in Table 1.

### *Business Case*

4. The first stage of the partner approval process is completion of the Business Case. This is led by International Relations for international partners and by Academic Registry for UK partners.
5. The Business Case Template should be completed by International Relations / Academic Registry based on discussions with the partner and with staff in the proposed link Liverpool John Moores University School / Faculty.
6. At this stage, financial arrangements for the programme(s) that are initially proposed will be agreed with the partner institution.
7. Once completed, the business case is considered and endorsed by any relevant Faculty Management Team (FMT). In addition, for Split-Site PhDs only, the business case will be considered and endorsed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise, to verify alignment with the Split-Site PhD Guidance.
8. Where the Business Case includes proposed financial arrangements for a collaborative programme, the financial proposals will be considered for approval by the Academic Planning and Fees Panel (APFP).
9. Once the Business Case is endorsed by FMT and approved by APFP (when required), the proposal can proceed to consideration of Due Diligence.
10. If the Business Case is not approved (either by FMT or by APFP), this will be communicated to the partner by International Relations (International partners) or Academic Registry (UK partners).

Table 1

**Partner Approval**



## *Memorandum of Understanding*

11. Once the Business Case is approved, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) can be signed, where required by the partner. A MoU has no legal status and is a statement of intent between Liverpool John Moores University and partner organisations. They set out the broad areas of collaboration which the two institutions may work towards but commit neither institution. They are generally time-limited.
12. For standard Liverpool John Moores University MoUs, where none of the terms have been changed or added to during discussions with the partner, no further legal approval is required at Liverpool John Moores University. In instances where a partner MoU is being used or additional terms have been added to the Liverpool John Moores University template, legal advice from Legal and Governance Services (LGS) should be sought.
13. International Relations will co-ordinate the completion and signing of MoUs with international partners, securing appropriate approval from members of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

## *Due Diligence*

14. Following approval of the Business Case of a new partnership arrangement, consideration of Due Diligence can formally commence. This process measures a potential partner's strategic fit, legal status and financial stability. All proposed partners are subject to due diligence (see Table 2).
15. [Due Diligence Guidance](#) is available outlining the different areas explored through the Liverpool John Moores University due diligence activities, and also providing links to some of the equivalent information and policies of the University, which may be required by a partner to complete their own due diligence activities.

*Table 2: Due Diligence*

### **Due Diligence**

Due diligence (DD) is the process of examining the financial, legal and reputational status of an organisation. The University's DD process is a comprehensive appraisal of a potential partner's assets and liabilities, to evaluate its commercial potential, as well as its experience and ability to deliver or support delivery of an Liverpool John Moores University award. The information and documentation requested to complete full due diligence will be used to establish and test the following:

#### ***Public and legal standing in its own country***

- A review of publicly available information such as prospectuses, website, British Council, Ministry of Education.

#### ***Public and legal standing in the UK (if overseas)***

- Establish whether there are any relevant professional or regulatory restrictions on the development of the partnership or delivery of the programme, and/or a requirement for government letters of approval.
- Consider how the policies and operation of the organisation will fit with the regulatory and ethical expectations of the University in the UK (eg. Modern Slavery Act 2015, Equality and Diversity)

#### ***Institutional profile***

- Details of the management structure and academic processes and policies of the organisation;
- The level and type of awards in delivery at the partner, and how these align with in-country qualification frameworks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications;
- Details of the context of the proposal;
- Information about links with the University or other HEI's;

**Financial stability**

- Interpretation of financial statements and/or the last set of audited accounts;
- Credit check;
- What or who supplies the bulk of the organisation's funding (e.g. Government, a larger multinational company, etc.).

**Quality and Standards**

- Review of accreditation arrangements;
- Office for Students, PSRB or equivalent reports;
- Information relating to the local national qualifications framework.

16. Financial Due Diligence will be undertaken as part of the University's wider financial processes. To support completion of this activity, Financial Services will be informed as soon as the Business Case is confirmed and Due Diligence activity is initiated.
17. Completion of Due Diligence (the Due Diligence Checklist and financial Assessment of Risk) will be undertaken by International Relations (international partners) or Academic Registry (UK partners), in liaison with the Faculty and the proposed organisation. Please note – *The partner will be asked to provide written consent in order for the required Financial Checks to take place as part of Due Diligence.*
18. Partners will be asked to provide supporting evidence to supplement the Due Diligence Checklist, as appropriate, for example to verify legal identity and currency of institutional polices. Where the evidence required is available only in a language other than English, translation will be required of the key content of these documents.
19. The University adopts a risk-based approach to due diligence activity based on the type of institution that the proposed partnership is with (see [Types of Academic Collaborative Partnerships](#)). The level of due diligence activity will be agreed in line with the indicative summary below.

	Stage 1	Stage 2	
	Business Case	Due Diligence Checklist	Financial Assessment of Risk
<i>International Student Exchange Partnership</i>	Required – considered for approval by relevant FMT(s)	Not required	Not required
<i>Any other partnership type – partnership with no financial arrangement (e.g. articulation arrangement, Dual PhD).</i>	Required – considered for approval by relevant FMT(s)	Required	Required <i>Financial accounts are not required.</i>
<i>Any other partnership type – partnership includes a financial arrangement. (e.g. Franchise, Joint, Dual, Split Site PhD)</i>	Required – considered for approval by APFP	Required	Required <i>Three years financial accounts required</i>

20. Where a partnership exists, and a new type of activity is proposed, an assessment will need to be made to establish whether this requires any additional Due Diligence activity. To inform this approach, a record will be kept of the level of due diligence that has been undertaken for a partner.

#### *Endorsement of Due Diligence*

21. The Due Diligence Checklist is considered and endorsed by Academic Registry and the Faculty Management Team of any relevant Faculties. A risk matrix is used to ensure consistent and informed consideration of the completed Due Diligence.
22. The Financial Due Diligence is submitted for consideration by the Deputy Director, Finance (or nominee), who will provide an assessment of the risk of the proposed partnership.

#### *University Level Partner Approval*

23. University level partner approval is required to sign off the completed due diligence activity for all partners discussed within this Chapter. This decision is based on submission of:
  - Business Case
  - Due Diligence Checklist – endorsed by Academic Registry and any relevant Faculties
  - The Assessment of Risk form – reviewed by Finance (where required)
24. Partner approval decisions are made ultimately by APFP. Exceptionally, in cases where the rating arising from the Due Diligence risk matrix indicates that the partnership is potentially of higher risk, the proposal will be considered for approval by the ELT.
25. AR will circulate notification of the decision of APFP to ELT, the link Faculty, International Relations and the Doctoral Academy. The partner will be informed by International Relations (international partners) or Academic Registry (UK partners).
26. A formal University record will be kept of approved University partners and their categorisation.

#### *Conditions of Partner Approval*

27. Conditions of partner approval may be identified during the endorsement and approval stages. Where this is the case, completion of the conditions will usually be required before the University will sign any legally binding contract with the Partner.
28. The details of any conditions of partner approval are communicated by Academic Registry following partner approval, to the partner or to colleagues internally, as appropriate.
29. Oversight of partner approval conditions is maintained by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC).

#### *Next Steps*

30. The next steps will vary depending on the type of activity that is proposed.

31. For an International Study Exchange Partnership, the Partner Approval is the single level of approval required, and the partnership can proceed.
32. For PhD arrangements, confirmation of the partner approval will be forwarded to the Doctoral Academy for appropriate action. If the partner approval for a PhD arrangement has resulted in the identification of conditions of approval, Academic Registry will convene a meeting to agree responsibilities and timescales for the completion of these conditions. As a minimum, the lead supervisor from the School, a representative from the Doctoral Academy, a representative from International Relations (international partnerships, only) and Academic Registry will be invited to attend this meeting. The Doctoral Academy will liaise with Academic Registry, to ensure that all partner approval conditions have been met before a dual or split site PhD contract is forwarded to Legal and Governance for completion.
33. For Franchise and Validation collaborative programmes, the [Collaborative Programme Approval process](#) can start.
34. For Articulation Arrangements, the proposal can progress in line with the [Guidance for Articulation Arrangements](#).
35. For Joint and Dual awards, the the processes outlined in the [Guidance for Joint and Dual](#) awards will be instigated, including development of an Operational Framework.