

# Guidance for Joint and Dual Awards

*Date Created: September 2017*  
*Date Updated: September 2023*  
*Date for Review: August 2024*

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## **Glossary**

APFP	Academic Planning and Fees Panel
AQSC	Academic Quality and Standards Committee
AR	Academic Registry
ELT	Executive Leadership Team
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
LJMU	Liverpool John Moores University
OfS	Office for Students
PSRB	Professional Statutory Regulatory Body
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
RP(E)L	Recognition of Prior (Experiential) Learning
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
VROP	Validation and Review Oversight Panel

## Chapter 1: Introduction and Principles

1. This guidance is intended to provide information about the university requirements, and processes, for the approval of Joint Awards and Dual Awards, and the roles and responsibilities of participants. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the [Academic Partnerships Operational Guidance](#) and the [Guidance for Validation and Periodic Programme Review](#).
2. Development of the Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) Joint and Dual Award Guidance has taken account of the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) Qualifications Involving More Than One Degree-Awarding Body Characteristics Statement and the Office for Students' (OfS) Conditions of Registration.
3. Joint and Dual Awards are distinct from other collaborative arrangements, operated by the university, in that they involve working with at least one other degree-awarding body (in the UK or internationally) in a way that requires some pooling of those awarding powers. The QAA notes that:

*“This is different from arrangements for working with others where the UK degree-awarding body works with a delivery organisation that does not have degree awarding powers or is not exercising them to provide learning opportunities. Instead, two or more organisations are working together as equals, each with responsibility for the academic standards of the award being made in their name”.*
4. Once established, a Joint or Dual Award should offer a student experience that neither institution would be able to offer independently.
5. Joint and Dual Awards can only be entered into with established Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with Degree Awarding powers, and the legal authority to award Joint and/or Dual degrees, which if overseas, must be recognised in the partner's country.
6. Joint and Dual Awards offered by LJMU are only delivered and assessed in English.
7. LJMU retains responsibility for ensuring the academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience are maintained, irrespective of the requirements of any partner. This responsibility cannot be delegated.
8. LJMU engages an External Advisor, who is involved in the approval and oversight of the operation of its Joint and Dual awards, as outlined within this guidance. The External Advisor is appointed for a five-year term and is appointed based on their experience and expertise of developing and operating Joint/Dual arrangements, rather than expertise in a particular subject discipline.
9. No two arrangements will be the same, and each arrangement needs to be considered in the context of the requirements of both/all parties.

## Chapter 2: Defining Features of Joint and Dual Awards

10. A Joint or Dual award should be a genuinely joint enterprise from the earliest possible stages. Each party will be responsible for the development, design, delivery, and assessment of at least one third<sup>1</sup> of the academic credit it is awarding. By way of example, this will encompass the following activities:
- Curriculum design and development.
  - Development of teaching materials.
  - Module delivery.
  - Setting assessments.
  - Marking and moderation of assessments.

### *Joint Awards*

11. A joint award is defined by LJMU as an arrangement where LJMU, together with one or more awarding body, provides a programme leading to a single award made jointly by all the awarding bodies.
12. A single certificate is produced, rather than separate certificates from each awarding body.
13. In order to achieve the Joint award, a student must meet the learning outcomes jointly agreed for the award by all Institutions involved in the arrangement.
14. All partners involved in the arrangement will contribute substantially<sup>2</sup> to programme design, development, delivery, assessment, management and decision making on student achievement.
15. For Joint awards, a single agreed set of academic regulations is required. This can be either an agreement to follow the regulations of the lead partner, or bespoke regulations can be agreed.
16. For Joint awards, it is preferred that the lead institution is LJMU.

### *Dual Awards*

17. A Dual award is defined by LJMU as an arrangement where the university, together with one or more awarding body, provides a programme leading to separate awards and certificates being granted by all the awarding bodies.
18. A Dual award is a jointly conceived programme, however a student does not need to satisfy the requirements of all the partners in order to receive an award.
19. The awarding bodies involved in the partnership may set slight differences in the

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<sup>1</sup> As a minimum, this must be applied in the following ways:

- Each party must be responsible for one module per-level.
- Each party must be responsible for one third of the academic credit of the final level of the award.

<sup>2</sup> The university defines a substantial contribution as each party being responsible for at least **one third** of the overall total of academic credit it awards. As a minimum, this must be applied in the following ways:

- Each party must be responsible for one module per-level.
- Each party must be responsible for one third of the academic credit of the final level of the award.

programme learning outcomes and/or the requirements to meet their awards, and there will be overlap. If a student only completes or meets the requirements of one of the awarding bodies, they will only receive one award.

20. Each Partner will be responsible for its own award, however the two components jointly form a single educational experience. As such, an agreed approach to management and oversight is required.
21. For Dual awards, each partner will deliver a substantial<sup>3</sup> proportion of the programme at the level of the qualification they award.
22. A distinguishing feature of this type of arrangement is that the overall study period and volume of learning is longer than for either of the individual awards separately, but typically shorter than if each of the programmes of study had been taken consecutively.

#### *Other Considerations*

23. As all Joint and Dual awards are unique, there may be some variations from the characteristics outlined above. Where a proposal is being developed, and this is the case, advice should be sought from Academic Registry, at the earliest possible opportunity, to ensure that the proposal is in line with National and university expectations.
24. The university should be clear and confident of the types of collaborative arrangements it is entering into before significant progress is made with a proposal, ensuring alignment with applicable National Guidance. Specifically, the QAA's Characteristics Statement, relating to qualifications involving more than one degree awarding body notes that UK degree-awarding bodies are precluded from:

*'making arrangements for students to receive a UK degree alongside that of a non- UK degree-awarding body where the UK degree-awarding body has had negligible input to the design of the programme and little control over its delivery. The converse is also possible, where a non-UK degree-awarding body makes an award without the knowledge of the UK degree-awarding body, where a student has completed a programme of study designed to lead to a UK qualification offered through a franchise or validation arrangement. It is contingent on the UK degree-awarding body to maintain awareness of how their programmes and academic credit are used, and to take steps to address any misconceptions that may arise in situations such as this, including making clear the nature of the UK programme and qualification, and ensuring that any marketing materials are not misleading.'*

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<sup>3</sup> The university defines "substantial" as at least **one third** of the academic credit awarded at the final level of the award.

## Chapter 3: The Approval Process

25. Before the formal university processes are initiated, the following points should be considered:
- Does the Partnership arrangement meet the requirements of a Joint or Dual award, or would it more neatly fit within another partnership model? (see Chapter 2).
  - Has the lead institution been identified, if appropriate?
  - Is it clear what the basis for the award is, i.e. is it legal?
  - Is it clear what joint and individual responsibilities are, i.e. who does what?
  - Is there compatibility between partner and national/international systems?
  - Have the consequences of regulatory or administrative burden been considered? e.g. joint regulations.
26. During consideration of the above, any resultant queries/questions should be directed to Academic Registry as soon as possible.
27. The university approval process, for Joint and Dual awards, necessitates the following activities:
- a. [Partner Approval](#).
  - b. Development and agreement of the Operational Framework.
  - c. Strategic approval, encompassing approval of the financial arrangements and the programme proposal by the Academic Planning and Fees Panel (APFP).
  - d. [Validation/Programme approval](#).
  - e. [Agreement of contract](#).
28. A summary of the approval process is available in Appendix 1.

### *Partner approval*

29. This stage is always required, in line with the [Academic Partnerships Operational Guidance](#), irrespective of whether LJMU or the partner institution are named as the Lead Institution (please see the [Collaborative Partner Approval Process](#) for details). This will include an initial costing of the arrangement.
30. At this stage, the university will also ensure that the legal and regulatory frameworks of the country/region, that the programme will operate in, can be accommodated in parallel with the national expectations of the university.

### *Development and Agreement of the Operational Framework*

31. Each Joint and Dual award arrangement is unique, and will need to take account of the requirements and expectations of the partner institution. This differs from other collaborative arrangements<sup>4</sup> in that the following can be negotiated, on a case by case basis:
- Academic Regulations.
  - Academic Policies.

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<sup>4</sup> For a franchise or other collaborative arrangements, the LJMU guidance would be followed.

- Quality Processes.
32. Agreement on regulation, policies and processes, within which the award(s) will operate, will be recorded within an Operational Framework. As such this is a key document guiding the development and operation of the partnership.
  33. Development of an Operational Framework should be initiated immediately following the successful conclusion of the Partner Approval process (please see Chapter 4 for further details of the content and approval process for the Operational Framework).

#### *Strategic Approval*

34. Planning/strategic approval requires formal approval of the financial arrangements and programme proposal by APFP.
35. These activities should take place in line with the university's [Academic Partnerships Operational Guidance](#).
36. At this stage, as part of the APFP consideration, the university will check that the partner(s) has the legal authority to award qualifications jointly.
37. The university expects that the proposing LJMU School should ensure that the partner(s) is involved in the development of the programme proposal to ensure it reflects the expectations of all parties.
38. Academic Registry will commence development of the Operational Framework immediately following the successful conclusion of the Partner Approval process, and prior to cognate programme proposals being presented to APFP.

#### *Validation / Programme approval*

39. The programme approval for a Joint or Dual award can take place either through a jointly approved process, or through parallel activity at both/all institutions.
40. An Operational Framework **must** be approved in advance of the linked validation/periodic programme review event, and this is confirmed in the paperwork supplied to the validation/review panel. This ensures that a panel's consideration of a programme is informed by the final, approved, version of the Operational Framework.
41. Validation and periodic programme review events for Joint or Dual Awards should normally be Chaired by the Academic Registrar or a member of the LJMU's Executive Leadership Team (ELT).
42. The Joint/Dual Award External Advisor should normally be on all validation and periodic programme review panels considering Joint or Dual Awards. This is in addition to the external subject expert(s). If the Joint/Dual Award External Advisor is unable to attend an event, they must provide written comments on the proposal in advance of the event.

#### *Programme approval via a Jointly Agreed Process*

43. Where a jointly approved process will take place, the following points should be agreed in advance:



- The documentation/information requirements upon which a decision will be made.
  - The process to be followed for programme approval.
  - The group/panel and membership, via which a decision for programme approval will be made. This will include representation from all institutions involved with the award.
  - The mechanism via which resources will be approved, and the requirement (or not) for a site visit(s).
44. A joint process, for programme approval, will only take place in instances where the university is satisfied that it will meet, as a minimum, both the requirements of LJMU and external regulatory requirements of the OfS.

*Programme approval via Parallel Approval Activity*

45. Where it is agreed that each institution will undertake separate approval activity, the university approval will take place in line with the [Guidance for Validation and Periodic Programme Review](#).
46. Consideration will need to be given as to how the separate approval processes, and possibly different outcomes, will be brought together to form the final definitive programme, prior to signing the contractual agreement.
47. Once agreed, the proposed process requires approval by the university's Validation and Review Oversight Panel (VROP). This will then be recorded in the Operational Framework.

*Agreement of contract*

48. Development and completion of the contract for Joint and Dual Awards will take place in line with the university guidance, outlined within the Academic Partnerships Operational Guidance.
49. Where the in-country legal and regulatory frameworks indicate specific requirements, this will be reflected in the contract governing the arrangement if appropriate.

*In-Country approval*

50. Programmes, operating in certain countries, will require approval from an in-country agency/body, for example the Chinese Ministry of Education. Depending on the specified requirements, in each instance, preparation for this approval can involve collation of evidence, completion of additional documentation and/or signed verifications from the university.
51. International Relations and/or the School will lead on the collation of evidence or completion of the required documentation, with support provided from colleagues across the university, as required.
52. If the additional documentation prepared for in-country approval is required in another language, other than English, verification of the non-English documentation will be required before anything is signed by the university or is submitted to the in-country agency/body. In the first instance, the arrangements for this verification should be agreed with Academic Registry.

53. Where additional documentation is required, to supplement the existing evidence developed through validation, Academic Registry will review this documentation prior to finalisation and submission to the partner, to ensure consistency with university policies and validation paperwork. Academic Registry will also arrange for any signed verifications by the university, as required.

## Chapter 4: Operational Framework

54. The Operational Framework will be referred to within the contractual agreement and, once the programme(s) is in operation, will act as the agreed reference point for the programme(s) with a partner.
55. The Operational Framework will also agree, where required, how communication between Institutions for these processes will work.
56. More detailed guidance on the content of the Operational Framework is available in the [Operational Framework template](#).
57. Where a lead Institution has been identified, it may be agreed to adopt the regulations, policies and processes of that institution, with adaptations where necessary. This agreement should be formalised within the Operational Framework.

### *Development of the Operational Framework*

58. The development of the Operational Framework is the responsibility of Academic Registry, and it is normally co-authored by the Head of Academic Quality and Standards and a designated Assistant Academic Registrar. Identified academic colleagues, within the applicable LJMU School, will also be engaged during the development of the Operational Framework
59. Discussions about the content of the Operational Framework will start once Partner Approval is in place, to inform development of the curriculum and the agreed approach to validation. At the start of the process, Academic Registry will convene a meeting to discuss the development of the Operational Framework and to agree timescales for its completion. A representative from the partner organisation is invited to attend this meeting, and the agreed timescales will be cognisant of the intended start date of cognate programmes.
60. Development of the Operational Framework requires communication with the partner(s) and sharing of institutional guidance on a range of issues and areas.
61. The Operational Framework will be agreed by all parties, normally prior to the commencement of any validation activity.

### *Approval of the Operational Framework*

62. Approval of the Operational Framework is required by both the university and by the partner institution, using the appropriate local approval mechanisms.
63. Final approval of the Operational Framework, by LJMU, will take place via an approval event. This will normally take place via a meeting.

64. The Approval Panel for these events is normally Chaired by the Academic Registrar (or nominee). The panel normally comprises:
  - a. Academic Registrar (or nominee) – Panel Chair
  - b. Chair of the linked validation/periodic programme review panel<sup>5</sup>/an internal academic colleague.
  - c. External Advisor for Joint/Dual Awards
  - d. Academic Quality and Standards Team Leader (Collaborative Provision).
65. Meetings of the approval panel are arranged by the Academic Quality and Standards Team, who also co-ordinate the panel's consideration of the Operational Framework.
66. Operational Frameworks are presented to the Approval Panel by the Head of Academic Quality and Standards, the designated Assistant Academic Registrar, and a representative from the applicable partner organisation.
67. In advance of an approval event, the panel are provided with advanced sight of the Operational Framework and asked to record their initial thoughts and observations. These thoughts and observations form the basis of the discussions with the Head of Academic Quality and Standards, Assistant Academic Registrar, and the representative from the partner organisation.
68. The Panel Chair is required to provide written confirmation of final approval. Operational Frameworks relating to new arrangements will be approved for up to three years, in the first instance. Following review, and subsequent approval, they would be subject to five- year approval periods thereafter.
69. Approval of an Operational Framework should be noted at the next scheduled meeting of the Institutional Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC).
70. Formal notification of the approval by both parties is normally required before the programme level approvals can progress.

#### *Periodic Review of the Operational Framework*

71. Prior to the end of its approval period, the Operational Framework will be reviewed and, as applicable, revised by the Head of Academic Quality and Standards and the designated Assistant Academic Registrar. In-line with the approach during the initial development of the Operational Framework, identified academic colleagues, within the applicable LJMU School, will be engaged during its review.
72. The revised Operational Framework will then be presented to the Operational Framework Approval Panel for consideration and approval.
73. If the review of the Operational Framework, and the periodic programme review of the cognate programme, fall in the same academic year, normally the review and approval of the Operational Framework should take place in Semester 1, with the periodic programme review taking place in Semester 2. This ensures that the periodic programme review panel's

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<sup>5</sup> The Chair of the linked validation/periodic programme review panel would only be engaged on the approval panel in instances where approval of the Operational Framework was taking place in the same academic year as the cognate validation/periodic programme review.

consideration of a programme is informed by the final, approved, version of the Operational Framework.

74. Whilst Operational Frameworks are subject to specific periods of approval, should the university's quality management systems identify a concern or issue, during its approval period, this would immediately trigger the review of the Operational Framework.

## Chapter 5: Institutional Oversight

75. Records of the Joint and Dual Awards delivered by the university are held by Academic Registry. The university's Dual Award Oversight Panel is provided with a register of the university's Joint/Dual Awards, which also details the approval period/review points of the linked Operational Frameworks. The Dual Award Oversight Panel is a reporting panel of AQSC.
76. The Dual Award Oversight Panel maintains oversight of compliance with the approved Operational Frameworks for all Joint and Dual Awards in operation, and all programmes operating under an Operational Framework.

# Appendix 1

