



UNIVERSITY AND PARTNER LINK OFFICER HANDBOOK

Title: University and Partner Link Officer Handbook					
Version	Issue Date	Revision Description	Author	Approved By & Date	Next Review Date
1.0	November. 2018	Update	Chris Laity		Aug 2019

Introduction

This guidance lists the duties and responsibilities of members of the university who are appointed as University Link Officers (ULOs), staff in partners who act as Partner Link Officers (PLOs) and other members of staff who support partnerships.

The provision of effective support by designated university and partner staff is critical to ensuring the effective delivery of University of South Wales courses at partner institutions. Teaching staff at some institutions may spend the majority of their time delivering non-HE courses and will be less familiar with university regulations, policies and procedures and the external quality environment within which the university operates.

Role of the Link Officer

Each course or cognate group of courses delivered at a partner must have at least one University Link Officer and at least one Partner Link Officer. These should be identified at the point of approval of the delivery of the course(s) at the partner institution.

Good communication between the University and its partner institutions is critical for the effective operation and management of collaborative provision. The University Link Officer and Partner Link Officer play a key role in establishing effective communication channels between USW and its partners.

ULOs are selected and appointed by their Faculty and PLOs by their own institution. Although the role is standard, the organisational structure for undertaking it will reflect the nature and complexity of the partnership arrangement. For instance, where only one course is being delivered and there is only one partner, the ULO role could be undertaken by the Course Director but if a course is being offered by a number of partners, the Faculty is likely to appoint one ULO to oversee all the sites of delivery.

USW keeps its regulations and procedures under constant review to ensure that they are fit for purpose. Link Officers should ensure that they are aware of where all relevant regulations and procedures are published so that they can keep themselves up-to-date with changes.

Link Officer Activity

The following table sets out the functions that the University deems necessary for the successful operation and management of curriculum delivered through partnership

arrangements. As stated, although there can be some variation in the way in which Faculties appoint ULOs to reflect the size and complexity of the partnership arrangement, the expectation is that Link Officers will play a central role in ensuring that the functions set out below are carried out effectively. It is expected that the University Link Officer will take the lead in initiating each of these and that the Partner Link Officer will support them in this and facilitate communication between USW and their own institution.

A. Liaison and Communication		
Action	Additional Guidance	Responsibility
A1. Arrange a planning meeting with Partner Link Officer (PLO) prior to the start of term to discuss the delivery and management of the course(s) running at the partner institution.	<p>As a minimum, this meeting should confirm that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the teaching team are up-to-date; • The partner is aware of any changes to the curriculum; • The assessment procedures have been set up appropriately and there is clear mutual understanding of how they will operate; • Student enrolment and induction arrangements are in place; • The partner has received the current course documents; • How any actions arising through quality monitoring processes, (course reports, external examiner reports) are being addressed. 	University Link Officer (ULO) Partner Link Officer and course team.
A2. Visit the partner, a minimum of 1 visit during the academic year.	Visiting the partner and talking to staff and students is the most effective way of ascertaining how the partnership is operating and identifying any issues or areas of good practice.	University Link Officer Partner Link Officer
A3. Maintain regular contact with other staff involved in the delivery/ management of the course(s), (Course Leaders, Module Leaders etc).	Communication is two way. Informing partner staff of what they have to do and receiving information back. Link Officers provide a key channel for this communication. ULO informs relevant people in USW of partner issues and PLO disseminates to partner staff.	University Link Officer Partner Link Officer

B. Course Delivery		
Action	Additional Guidance	Responsibility
B1. Ensure that the course is operating in line with the definitive document.	The content, delivery methods and assessment of courses delivered at partner institutions must adhere to what was approved through validation. Being close to the operation of the partnership, Link Officers are ideally placed to ensure that this is happening.	University Link Officer Partner Link Officer
B2. Ensure that any course changes are communicated to the partner in a timely manner.	Partner institutions should be consulted when planning changes and should be involved in any validation events. Staff teaching on the course at the partner institution should also be provided with the revised course and module documents as early as possible. In doing this it is important to be mindful of the fact that the partner's course start date may not match USW's.	University Link Officer Partner Link Officer
B3. Ensure that partner staff are informed of what is required with regards to all aspects of assessment.	This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment criteria • Submission of draft assessments • Marking schemes • Protocols for moderation • Sampling of assessments for external examiners • Assessment Board dates • External examiners comments on assessment briefs and student performance 	University Link Officer
B4. Assist where possible and practical in the preparation of the student induction and enrolment processes.	Students studying for USW awards at partner institutions have a dual identity, belonging both to the institution where they are studying and the University. It is important, therefore, to ensure that their USW enrolment is completed as early as possible to ensure that they can access the appropriate USW resources, (Blackboard etc). Link Officers can play a part in this by noticing and reporting back on any problems that students are	University Link Officer Student Administration Partner Link Officer Student recruitment team.

	<p>experiencing with their USW enrolment.</p> <p>It is also important, where possible and practical, that induction programmes involve USW staff so that students can start to feel that they belong to the University and relate to their University identity.</p>	
<p>B5. Work with the PLO, relevant Faculty staff and Quality Assurance and Enhancement staff (QAE) to ensure that all staff teaching on the course(s) are processed through the Recognised Teacher Status procedures.</p>	<p>RTS approval is normally approved and completed as part of the course validation/partner approval processes. Staff applying outside of these, are considered for approval through the RTS approval process. The role of the Link Officer in this is to flag up any staff who are to teach on USW modules who do not have RTS approval and direct them to the application form.</p> <p><i>The RTS approval process can be found here¹.</i></p>	<p>University Link Officer Partner Link Officer Academic Subject Manager (relevant subject area) Quality Assurance and Enhancement staff (QAE).</p>
<p>B6. Identify any relevant development needs and work with the PLO to develop an appropriate response.</p>	<p>Relevant development needs would be most likely to relate to ensuring that staff teaching on USW modules, particularly those recently given RTS approval, understand the University's processes for marking and moderation; are aware of USW's regulations and procedures and are briefed on any specific course and module requirements.</p>	<p>University Link Officer Partner Link Officer Collaborative Partner HE/FE Manager.</p>

C. Quality Assurance		
Action	Additional Guidance	Responsibility
<p>C1. Contribute to/assist with the completion of documentation required for the continuous monitoring exercise, periodic review and partner approval/re-approval.</p>	<p>The continuous monitoring procedure, including monitoring for collaborative provision is set out in the Quality Assurance Manual.</p> <p>Continuous monitoring operates at 5 levels: module; course; School; Faculty/College and University. Monitoring for collaborative provision feeds into</p>	<p>University Link Officer Partner Link Officer</p>

¹ <http://asaqs.southwales.ac.uk/RTS/>

	<p>the continuous monitoring processes at course and module level.</p> <p>The relevant Quality Assurance documentation required for continuous monitoring are available from the Academic Registry website.</p> <p>The monitoring reports are discussed at a Continuous Monitoring Event, (previously known as a Course Board). These are organised at Faculty level and Faculties are also responsible for defining the scope of the Event in terms of which courses are considered at which Event.</p> <p>Faculties also determine who is responsible for producing each report. The role that Link Officers play in this will vary between partnerships and will reflect the size and complexity of the collaborative provision and will reflect the way in which Link Officer activities fit into the course management structure in that Faculty.</p> <p>Link Officers are required by the Faculty to produce a separate <i>Link Officer Report</i>, highlighting issues specific to the operation of the partnership, to supplement the course monitoring report following Link Officer visits.</p>	
<p>C2. Provide feedback to partners from activities such as continuous monitoring, critical review and partner approval/re-approval.</p>	<p>Communication between USW and its partners is two-way. Link Officers, as the main point of liaison between USW and the partner, provide the key to this being delivered effectively.</p>	<p>University Link Officer</p>
<p>C3. Report any concerns regarding academic standards or quality of the course to the Head of School and Academic Manager for partnership.</p>	<p>Link Officers, being close to the actual delivery of courses, are in an ideal position to identify problems as they arise and to have them addressed as early as possible. If there are issues arising affecting standards of</p>	<p>University Link Officer</p>

	awards or the quality of the student learning experience, these should be reported to the appropriate managers at USW and at the partner.	
C4. Ensure that partner staff and students are aware of any changes to USW's regulations and procedures.	<p>The key USW regulations and procedures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic regulations for taught courses • Fit to Sit Policy • Extenuating Circumstances • Academic Appeals • Student Complaints • Academic Misconduct <p>It is not expected that Link Officers will have in depth knowledge of all of USW's regulations and procedures but they should know how to access them and keep themselves informed of any key changes or any new regulatory requirements that may be introduced.</p>	University Link Officer

D. Course Documentation		
Action	Additional Guidance	Responsibility
D1. Review and approve the academic content of promotional material to ensure compliance with CMA requirements.	Faculties, partner institutions and USW's Marketing Department share the responsibility for checking the accuracy of promotional material. Link Officers play their part in this by ensuring that courses are delivered in accordance with what has been validated and in identifying any discrepancies or variations between the approved version of the course and what is actually being taught and assessed.	University Link Officer Partner Link Officer Marketing teams and Student recruitment at both Partner institutions and University of South Wales.
D2. Ensure that those teaching at the partner institution are provided with all the information, (course guides etc.), that they require to deliver the course(s).	In order to ensure that the course is being delivered at the partner institution as approved, it is essential that those teaching at the partner institution receive up-to-date course and module guides in a	University Link Officer Partner Link Officer Module Leader

	timely manner before the start of the course. Teaching staff should also receive early notification of any approved changes to curriculum or to assessments.	
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E. Student Voice		
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Action	Additional Guidance	Responsibility
E1. Meet with students at least once during the academic year.	Meetings with students should be used to identify areas of good practice as well as any issues that need to be resolved. Students at partner institutions studying for USW awards are also USW students and regular meetings with staff from the University are critical to helping them to develop a sense of belonging to USW.	University Link Officer
E2. Ensure that systems are in place for gathering student feedback and the feedback is acted upon.	There are a range of mechanisms by which students provide formal feedback to the University, including Staff Student Course Liaison Groups, course and module evaluations (LOOP) and surveys. Partner institutions will have their own mechanisms for gathering feedback, however LOOP is considered the main vehicle for this process. Feedback is used to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and resolve student concerns as they arise; • Provide information to the University/partner institution on students' views of their learning experience, (e.g. through continuous monitoring). 	University Link Officer Partner Link Officer
E3. Support and encourage the completion of University surveys, (including National Student Survey, if applicable).	The Link Officer's role in relation to student feedback is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that students are aware of the different means by which they can 	University Link Officer Partner Link Officer

	<p>raise concerns/express views;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that USW's requirements for formal meetings with students, (SSCLGs) have been set up in a timely manner and that students are engaging with these. • Remind students about the timescales for surveys, (NSS, course and module evaluations etc.). 	
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F. Induction & Enrolment		
Action	Additional Guidance	Responsibility
F1. Assist and/or advise where possible and practical in the preparation and delivery of induction for new students from the partner institution.	This should encourage students to feel part of the University and its student body. Ideally , it will include a visit to the partner and where possible students visiting the University. Students should also be given information about progression routes to USW courses.	University Link Officer Student recruitment team.
F2. Ensure that students have successfully completed the enrolment processes.	If students have not enrolled successfully with USW, they will not have access to Blackboard and will not be able to engage appropriately with their course. Any problems that a student is experiencing with enrolment or IT access should be referred to Student Administration.	University Link Officer Partner Link Officer Student Administration Student recruitment team.

Appendix One – Visit Report Template



University and Partner Link Officer Visit Report

University Link Officer	Partner Link Officer
Name:	Name:
Faculty:	Email:
Partner Institution	
Course(s):	Date of visit:
REPORT OF THE VISIT	
Attendance at meetings (include staff and students)	
Names	Designation
Record of the topics discussed. E.g. staff development; external examiner reports; staff changes; resource issues	Actions required and by whom
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
Issues to carry forward to the next meeting	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Please submit your report to the course leader at the University and at the Partner, and to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team (collaborative@southwales.ac.uk).

Appendix Two – Annual Report Template



University and Partner Link Officer Annual Report

University Link Officer	Partner Link Officer
Name:	Name:
Faculty:	Email:
Partner Institution:	
Course(s):	Date(s) of visit(s)*:
<p>Please submit your report to the course leader at the University and the Partner and the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team.</p> <p>Any queries concerning the completion of this report should be made by email to collaborative@southwales.ac.uk or by telephone on (01443) 654815 / (01443) 4 83656. The Faculty reserves the right to request additional information on any areas it believes have not been fully addressed.</p>	

ULO signature (electronic):	PLO signature (electronic):
Date:	Date:

* please append the reports of the visits which have taken place.

1.	Summary of activities over the previous year (if applicable) This section should record the activities which have taken place and how any issues have been addressed. <i>Add additional rows as required</i>	
Action required and indicators of success	Commentary on the action(s) taken to date	Complete (C) or Carry Forward (CF)

2.	Are you content that the course is operating in line with the definitive document?	Yes / No <i>Please delete as applicable</i>
If No, where are the issues?		
3.	Can you confirm that course boards took place at least twice during the year?	Yes / No <i>Please delete as applicable</i>
If No, please provide further details.		
4.	Can you confirm that external examiners' reports have been received by the partner and that any matters noted appropriately addressed?	Yes / No <i>Please delete as applicable</i>
If No, please provide further details.		
5.	Can you confirm that accuracy of promotional materials?	Yes / No <i>Please delete as applicable</i>
6.	Please comment on the following areas, as appropriate, noting any elements of good practice and areas for enhancement:	
6.1	The operation, management and development of the collaborative courses(s).	
6.2	Issues contained within external examiner reports.	
6.3	Developments relating to learning resources as they impact on the student experience.	
6.4	The student learning experience – as demonstrated through discussions with the students.	
6.5	Student enrolment, progression and achievement on courses delivered by the partner. (Commentary on trends and/or issues at the partner)	
6.6	Staff development undertaken by partner staff and opportunities for further development. (<i>additional staff development activities to be carried forward</i>)	

6.7	Associated development(s) at the partner institution or the University that affect the provision.				
7.	Please list staff members joining and leaving the partner since the last summary report. <i>Add additional rows as required</i>				
	Name	Left/ Joined	RTS approved	Module(s) and Code	Date approved by Faculty
8.	Activities for the forthcoming year Please list any specific activities which will be undertaken in the forthcoming year. <i>Add additional rows as required</i>				