

REGULATIONS GOVERNING ACADEMIC COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

1. Scope

These Regulations apply only to the following types of academic collaborative provision:

Title	Description
Academic Partner	An organisation approved by the University to deliver validated programmes leading to a University of Chester award.
Academic Delivery Partner	An organisation subcontracted to deliver all or part of a programme leading to a University of Chester award. OR An organisation (without its own degree awarding powers) which pools its expertise to deliver jointly, with a University department, all or part of a programme leading to a University of Chester award.
Agency Partner	An organisation providing premises for the delivery of a University of Chester programme by University staff. The partner may provide some, limited, additional marking/promotional, administrative etc. services.
Credit Recognition Partner	Students who complete an approved course at another provider are unconditionally admitted to a named University of Chester programme at the same or higher FHEQ level.
Exchange Partner	An organisation that the University approves to host staff and/or students for up to one academic year.

Refer to the *Regulations for Other Forms of Collaborative Arrangements* for those areas of collaborative activity which are not included in the table above.

2. Related Strategies and/or Frameworks

The provision listed above is subject to the Collaborative Provision Strategy and Operational Framework.

3. Approval of Collaborative Provision

All provision falling under these Regulations is subject to corresponding approval processes.

Where relevant, the University's approval processes distinguish between the approval of a partner organisation, and the approval of academic provision within an approved partnership.

4. Agreements

Partnerships may be instigated by a department or Faculty, but the overarching commitment is between the University of Chester itself and the collaborating organisation. This commitment is formalised through an agreement appropriate to the nature of the arrangements.

The agreement sets out the rights, responsibilities and liabilities of all parties, and may be supplemented by additional agreements covering, for example, programme delivery and financial arrangements.

Agreements and any supplementary agreements are authorised by the Senate of University of Chester and signed by appropriate senior officers of both organisations.

5. Organisational Monitoring: Academic and Academic Delivery Partners

Academic and Academic Delivery Partners will be subject to annual organisational monitoring overseen by the University's Collaborative Provision sub-Committee.

Annual Organisational Monitoring identifies those partnerships which present a risk to the University's reputation, finances, and/or quality and standards. Those organisations which present a high risk will be subject to a review which may lead to the termination of the partnership earlier than the contracted date.

6. Organisational Review: Academic and Academic Delivery Partners

In advance of the Organisational Agreement ending, the University will instigate a Partnership Review to revisit the:

- the appropriateness of partnership against the University's Collaborative Provision Strategy and Operational Framework;
- the appropriateness of the partnership against the University's ethos, mission and values;
- the suitability of the partner organisation through the completion of Due Diligence;
- organisational structures, facilities, resources etc. that underpin student experience and programme delivery;
- the risks presented to the University by the partnership.

The review also considers the performance of academic programmes within the partnership, and their currency.

Outcomes of the review process will be considered and approved by appropriate University committees.

7. Monitoring and Review: Agency Partner, Credit Recognition Partner and Exchange Partner

Arrangements falling within these categories are subject to the relevant monitoring and review policies in force.

8. Concerns Review: Academic and Academic Delivery Partners

The Concerns Review process is used to manage risks presented by Academic and Academic Delivery Partners identified through:

- Organisational Monitoring;
- circumstances identified outside of the Organisational Monitoring cycle which present a risk to quality, standards and/or reputation.

A Concerns Review can result in the termination of the partnership earlier than the contracted date.

9. Termination of a Partnership

Both the University and/or the partner organisation have the right to withdraw from a partnership by not entering into a new agreement after the expiry of the Organisational Agreement, or by terminating the arrangement in line with the terms of the agreement in place.

When a partnership ceases, the University has an obligation to ensure that all enrolled students have the opportunity to complete their studies towards the award for which they are registered. The University and the partner will work together to ensure students have this opportunity, and that the quality and standards of the provision and the student experience are maintained through the teach out phase.

Partnerships in teach out will be monitored by AQS and reported into appropriate University committees.

10. Programme Approval, Monitoring, Review and Withdrawal: Academic and Academic Delivery Partners and Agency Partners

Formal approval of new Academic and Academic Delivery Partners must be concluded prior to the approval of any associated academic provision.

Programmes delivered by partners will be subject to an appropriate approval process prior to commencement of delivery.

Outcomes of the programme approval process will be considered and approved by appropriate University committees.

A Programme Agreement (or equivalent for Agency Partners) will be drawn up to establish the overarching responsibilities and liabilities of the University and the partner organisation; this will be an annex to the Organisational Agreement.

The approved programme(s) will be subject to the normal programme-level monitoring and review procedures of University of Chester.

Partnership programmes fall under all University of Chester assessment and quality assurance regulations and policies, including those for External Examiners, Academic Integrity, Mitigating Circumstances and Academic Appeals.

The withdrawal of a partnership programme may be triggered by, as examples:

- an Academic Partner's change in curriculum offer;
- a strategic shift in programmes/subject specialisms within the University/University academic department meaning programmes will no longer be supported;
- poor performance of a programme as evidenced through monitoring and/or review processes;
- the non-continuation/termination of a partnership.

In all circumstances, the University's process for withdrawing academic programmes will be followed with communication to include relevant staff on both side of the partnership.



Quality and Standards Manual

Handbook C: Collaborative Provision – Operational Framework

Version:	3.0
Approved by:	Quality and Standards sub-Committee
Owner:	Academic Services
Contact:	aq@chester.ac.uk
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Next review:	July 2027

1. Introduction

This operational framework implements the broader principles of the Academic Collaborative Provision Strategy, and also relates to the University's Regulations governing collaborative provision and associated policies and guidance.

It is the starting point for those looking to develop a new academic collaborative partnership. Advice on the framework can be sought from the Collaborative Provision team in AQS collaborativeprovision@chester.ac.uk

2. Scope

As recorded in the University's Regulations governing collaborative provision, this framework covers the following types of academic collaborative provision with associated contractual and oversight responsibilities:

Title	Description	Student primarily contractual relationship	Management of the student experience (resources/facilities)	Programme management, quality and standards
Academic Partner	An organisation approved by the University to deliver validated programmes leading to a University of Chester award.	Partner. For OfS purposes these would normally be 'validation' partnerships.	The partner is responsible for providing all pastoral and academic resources and facilities.	The partner is primarily responsible for programme management and operation of the regulations in relation to quality and standards. Each programme delivered by the partner is linked with a UoC department for academic advice and collaboration.
Academic Delivery Partner	An organisation subcontracted to deliver all or part of a programme leading to a University of Chester award. OR An organisation (without its own degree awarding powers) which pools its expertise to deliver jointly, with a University department, all or part of a programme leading to a University of Chester award.	University of Chester For OfS purposes, ADPs under the first definition would be 'registration only' partnerships. Under the second definition, the OfS would not recognise the arrangement as a partnership (i.e., the University would be solely accountable to the regulator).	The responsibilities of the partner to provide resources and facilities will be bespoke to the agreement. However, students registered via an ADP are primarily students of the University and would have access all resources and facilities.	Each programme delivered by the partner is linked with a UoC department which directs how the programme is to be delivered. The agreement will detail the level of academic input from the partner covering both programme development and delivery.

Title	Description	Student primarily contractual relationship	Management of the student experience (resources/facilities)	Programme management, quality and standards
Agency Partner	An organisation providing premises for the delivery of a University of Chester programme by University staff. The partner may provide some, limited, additional marking/promotional, administrative etc. services.	University of Chester	The responsibilities of the partner to provide resources and facilities will be bespoke to the agreement. However, students studying at an agency partner location would be students of the University and would have access all resources and facilities.	The programme would be managed exclusively by the relevant UoC department.
Credit Recognition Partner	Students who complete an approved course at another provider are unconditionally admitted to a named University of Chester programme at the same or higher FHEQ level.	University of Chester	N/A	N/A
Exchange Partner	An organisation that the University approves to host staff and/or students for up to one academic year.	University of Chester	Exchange students would retain access to the University's resources and facilities. Each exchange agreement would outline which of the partners facilities and resources are available.	Where completion of courses or other academic activities are an integral part of the exchange (and are credit bearing), the relevant module descriptor will outline the requirements of students.

Additional types of collaborative arrangements that are not included in the framework either because of their complexity (in the case of 'joint' and 'dual' awards) or because they do not directly influence the delivery of a University programme are listed in Section 1 (*Scope*) of the Regulations Governing Other Collaborative Provision Arrangements.

3. Economic Sustainability and Financial Arrangements

The regulatory scrutiny of partnership arrangements means that more monitoring and scrutiny is required to ensure that student outcomes secured through partnerships are at least comparable with those of the University. However, it is vital that this work does not divert resources from the core business of learning, teaching and research at the University's sites. In order to achieve this, the following operational principles apply:

- 2.1. Academic Partnerships and Academic Delivery Partnerships are subject to a minimum income guarantee of £80,000 per year.
- 2.2. If, at the point that a new partnership is proposed, the minimum income is unlikely to be realised from student per capita charges, a strategic business case can be presented to the Portfolio Development and Management Committee which will determine whether to proceed.
- 2.3. The financial arrangements for each partnership are agreed at the start of a new partnership and at each periodic review point to cover the same duration as the legal agreement. Appropriate review clauses will be written into the agreements to allow for an uplift during the agreement period in the event of a material change in the operating environment.
- 2.4. A 'new programme supplement' charge will be applied to programmes being delivered by a new partner, or at an existing partner delivering in a new discipline area. This charge will cover the additional costs of monitoring by University staff to ensure appropriate academic standards. The supplemental charge is normally applied only in the first year of delivery but can be extended or re-imposed if concerns about quality require further support and intervention.
- 2.5. Separate charges will apply for programme development, validation and review and also for the periodic review of partnerships. These charges will be waived for Academic Partners with Associate College status (see section 5).

4. Reputation and Values

It is crucial that the University takes a rigorous approach to those organisations it chooses to collaborate with. In order to satisfy itself that the reputation and values of a proposed partner meet the University's expectations and obligations, the following operational principles apply:

- 3.1 An organisation wishing to become an Academic Partner of the University must (if in England) be registered with the Office for Students or (if outside of England) be registered or recognised by the appropriate national body.
- 3.2 Organisations unable to meet this requirement will not normally be accepted as an Academic Partner, but may still be considered for application as an Academic Delivery Partner (subcontracting or joint delivery).
- 3.3 All proposed Organisations will be subject to a Due Diligence exercise covering, as appropriate, legal, financial and operational review.
- 3.4 Portfolio and Management Development Committee will, on behalf of the University, be responsible for the strategic approval of a new/renewing partner. Subsequently, Collaborative Provision sub-Committee will, on behalf of the University, be responsible for the operational approval of a new/renewing partner.

5. Management and Governance

In order to have meaningful engagement with partner organisations and enhance academic collaboration between the University and its partners, the following operational principles apply:

- 4.1 The operational management of each partnership is the responsibility of AQS with support, as necessary, from Registry, Finance and Legal Services.
- 4.2 Academic management of each programme delivered through partnership arrangements is the responsibility of the relevant academic department through the appointment of a Link Tutor, and oversight of quality and standards is provided by the relevant Faculty Board of Study.
- 4.3 The duration of an Academic Collaborative Provision Agreement has a standard term of 4 years. New partners will undergo a detailed review after 2 years. For proven partners, the standard term may be increased to 6 years with Senior Executive Team (SET) approval.
- 4.4 The Academic Collaborative Provision Board provides a forum for regular two-way dialogue, at an operational level, between the University and its Academic Partners and Academic Delivery Partners. Chaired by the Head of Academic Quality and Standards, partners are represented by the Head of Higher Education (or equivalent). It meets five times per year.

6. Associate College Status

Associate College status is available as an option for the University's most trusted Academic Partners. The conferring of this status is subject to a detailed legal agreement between the University and the partner, and additionally the following operational principles apply:

- 5.1 The Senate is empowered to confer Associate College status upon on a trusted Academic Partner which will be entitled to the following benefits:
 - 5.1.1 The use of the University's name and logo, confirming Associate College Status on any promotional material for the Partner's higher education activity.
 - 5.1.2 Strategic planning meetings, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) to take place twice yearly for the purposes of considering the strategic plans of the University and the partner with a view to identifying mutual areas of interest for cooperation.
 - 5.1.3 A discount of 15% from the published charges for any University programme of study taken by a member of staff of the Partner (reduced from the current 50%).
 - 5.1.4 No separate fees charged for programme development, validation or review activity nor for periodic review of the partnership.
 - 5.1.5 The annual fee for Associate College status will increase from £10,000 to £12,500 and be in addition to the minimum income guarantee (see 2.1).

6. Academic Provision

In order to ensure provision within an academic collaborative partnership is of high quality; provides an excellent student experience; raises aspirations; and presents opportunities for advancement, the following operational principles apply:

- 6.1 All academic provision, with the exception of regulated programmes in Health and Social Care and Education, must be bespoke, validated provision in a cognate discipline area, and

tailored to local resource availability.

- 6.2 The development of new programmes to be delivered in partnership continues to take place in collaboration with the relevant University of Chester department and (in the case of undergraduate programmes) explicitly considers the possibilities for progression to further study at the University.



Academic Collaborative Provision Strategy

May 2022 – July 2027

The three key principles underpinning the collaborative provision strategy are:

1. **Economic sustainability.** In order to be assured that academic collaboration does not take resource away from the University's core business, a minimum annual income of £80,000 is required, unless there is a strong strategic reason to deviate from this.
2. **Future recruitment.** The best and most productive academic partnerships will raise the aspirations of students, whether that is through providing high quality higher education nearer to where they live, or opening up opportunities that they may not have thought where possible. Therefore, academic collaboration should support future recruitment to the University.
3. **Reputation and values:** The University's awards must be comparable and hold their value over time. A key aspect of ensuring that this is always the case, regardless of where provision is delivered, is to enter into partnership arrangements only where the University has confidence in the quality of teaching and learning in organisations who share our core values.

The Strategy is supported by the Academic Collaborative Provision Operational Framework which details the implementation of the strategic principles.

ACADEMIC DELIVERY PARTNER: PROGRAMME APPROVAL PROCESS

Initial Development and PDMC Approval

Programme proposer contacts Kath Dickinson in AQS (k.dickinson@chester.ac.uk) for initial conversation about planned development and initial scoping of delivery model. Guidance given on what will be required for approval and costs involved.

Programme proposer completes Programme Development Proposal (*LOCATION*) and submits to relevant FMG.



Development ceases, or proposal is reworked according to FMG feedback

Proposal submitted to PDMC (meeting dates and deadlines from Anthony Parker, a.parker@chester.ac.uk)



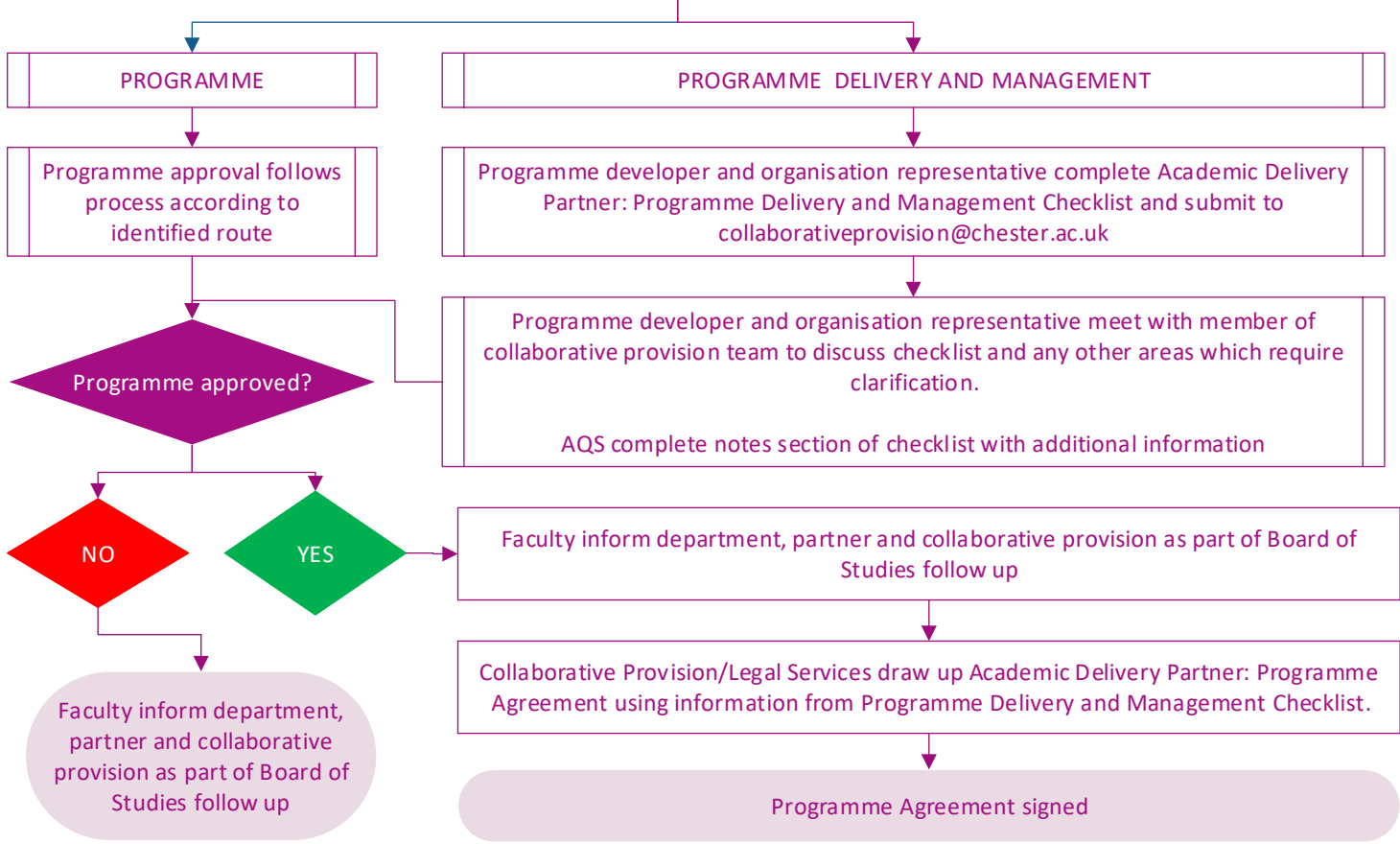
Development ceases, or proposal is reworked according to PDMC feedback

PDMC Secretary advises collaborativeprovision@chester.ac.uk that programme can proceed to approval and confirms route

Collaborative Provision advise Legal Services of programme development

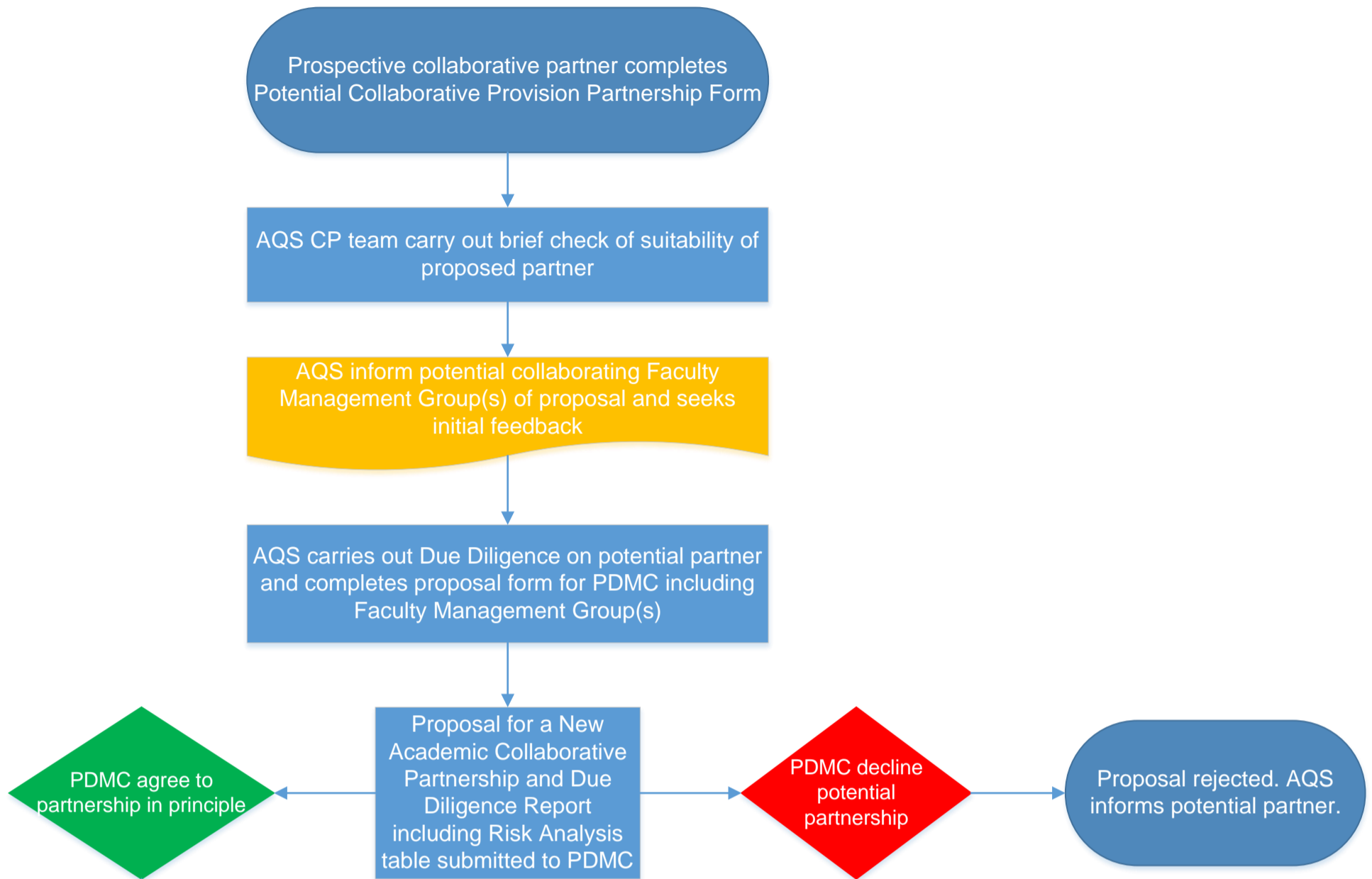
Programme Approval

NB: Process may vary depending on exact nature of programme development, e.g. use of existing programme in an Academic Delivery Partnership. Sequencing of sub-processes will be decided in line with process being used.

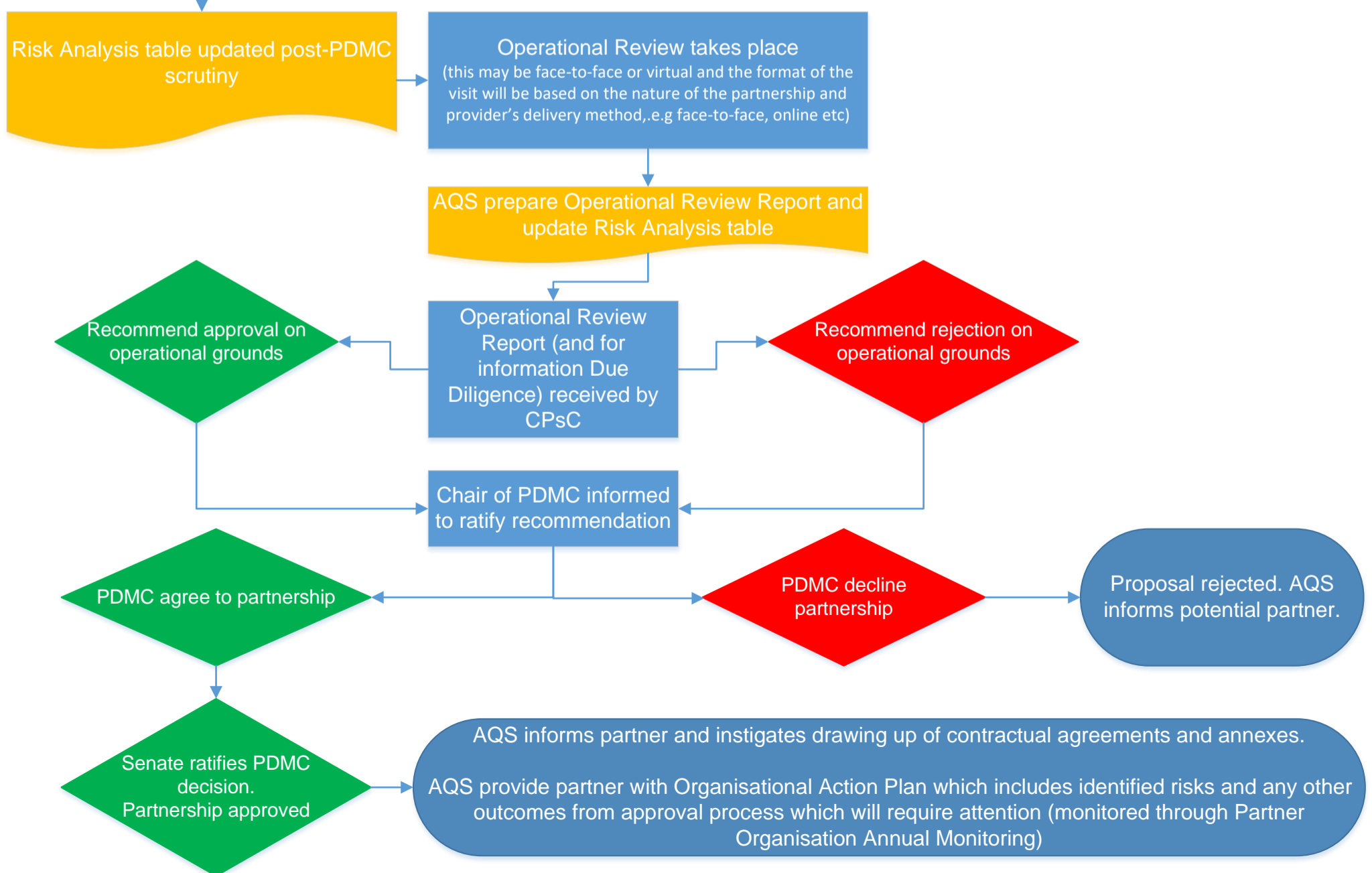


Collaborative Provision: New Academic Partner/Academic Delivery Partner Approval Process

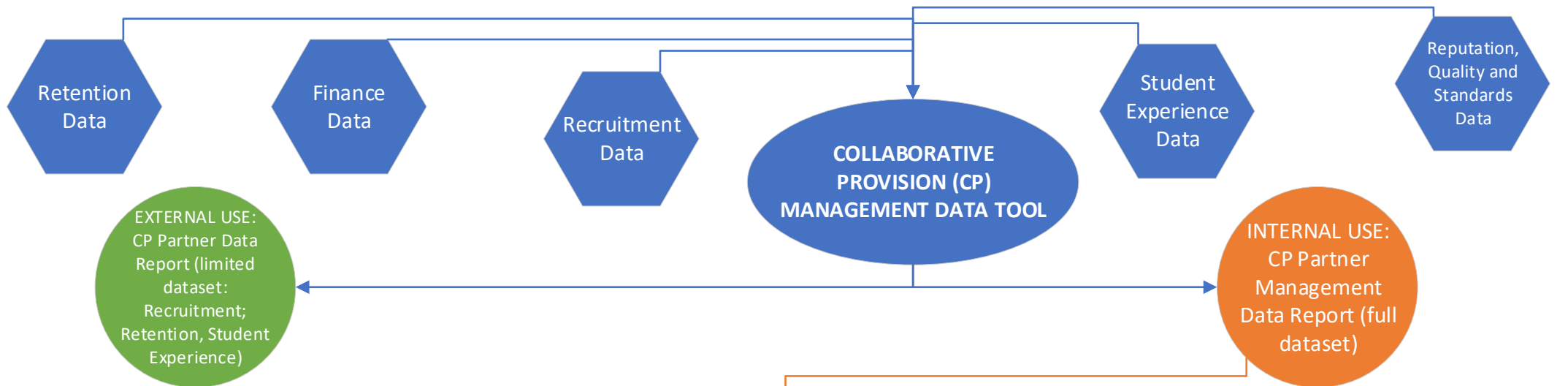
STAGE 1: INITIAL APPROACH AND STRATEGIC APPROVAL



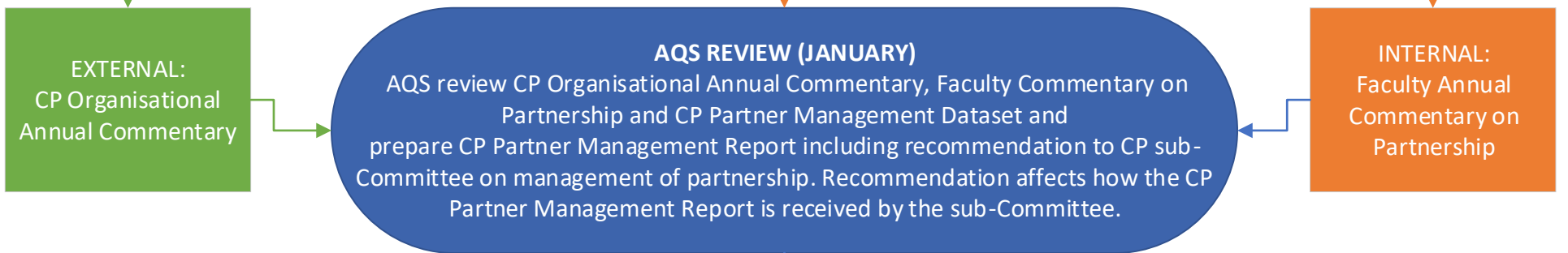
STAGE 2: OPERATIONAL APPROVAL



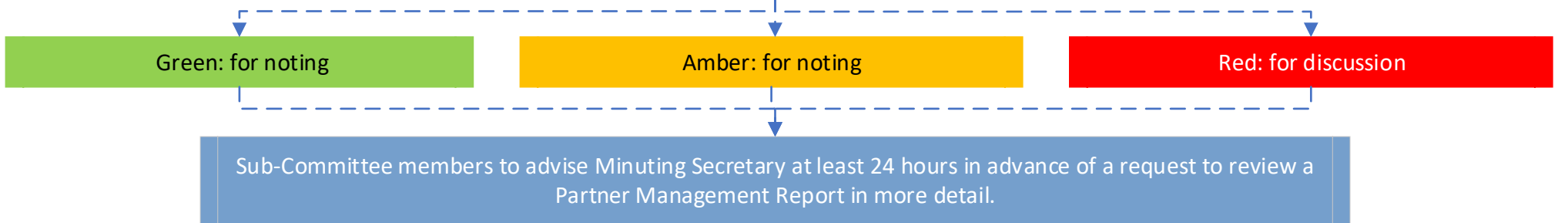
ORGANISATIONAL DATA (UPDATED THROUGHOUT YEAR, MAIN REPORTS DRAWN NOVEMBER)



COMMENTARIES (NOVEMBER – DECEMBER)

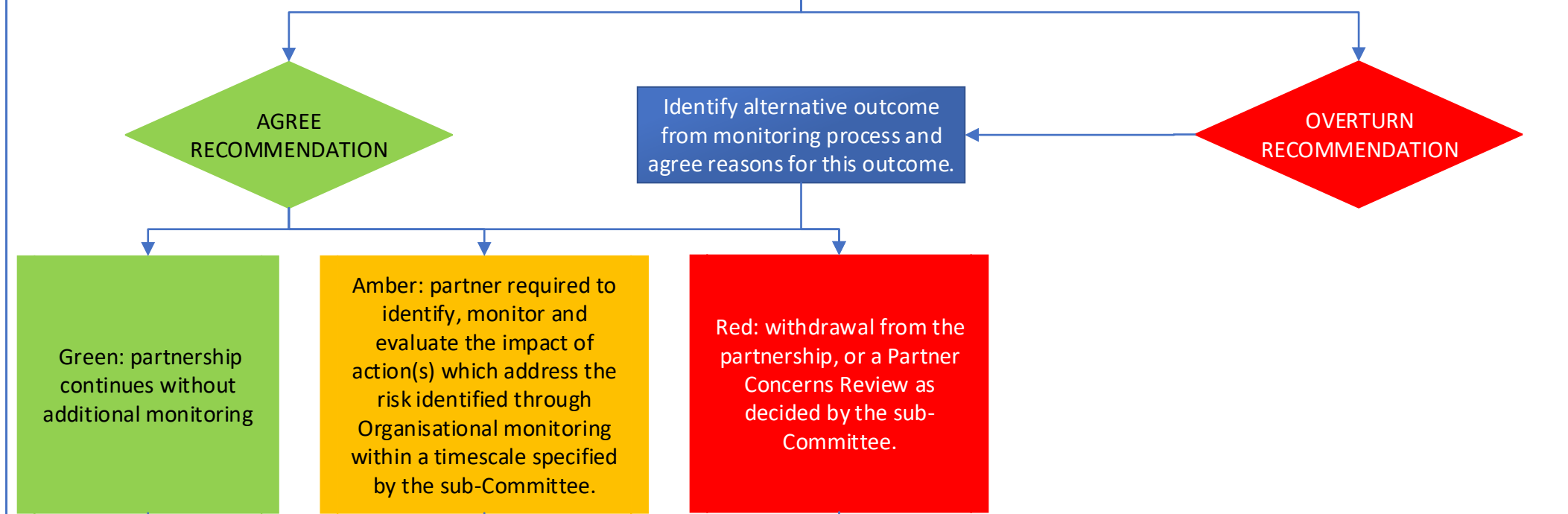


SCRUTINY (FEBRUARY)

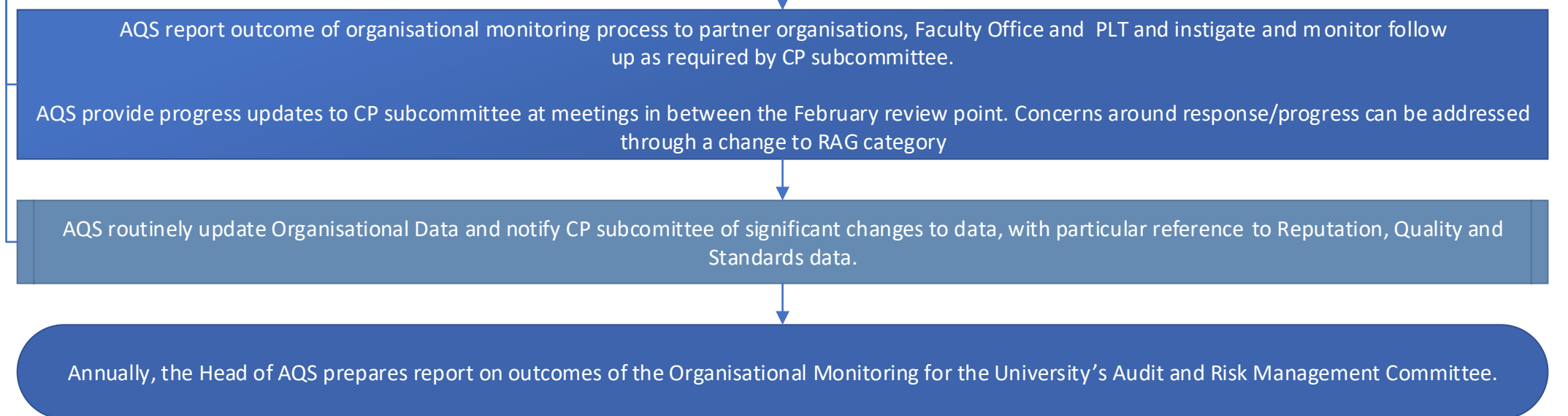


COLLABORATIVE PROVISION SUBCOMMITTEE (FEBRUARY: MAIN REVIEW / ALTERNATIVE MEETINGS IF CONCERNS RAISED)

CP subcommittee receive CP Partner Management Reports consider in accordance with recommendation from AQS.



FOLLOW UP



ACADEMIC (DELIVERY) PARTNER CONCERNS PROCESS

1. Ownership of the Process

The Academic (Delivery) Partner Concerns process is owned and operated by Academic Services on behalf of the University of Chester.

2. Related Regulations, Strategies and/or Frameworks

The Academic (Delivery) Partner Concerns process sits within the quality management framework for academic collaborative provision.

This is framed by the Regulations Governing Academic Collaborative Provision, the Academic Collaborative Provision Strategy, and the Academic Collaborative Provision Operational Framework.

3. Scope

The Academic (Delivery) Partner Concerns process applies to partnerships within which the partner delivers, in part or in whole, a programme of study leading to an award of the University.

4. Purpose of the Process

The Academic (Delivery) Partner Concerns process is used to manage operational risks presented by Academic and Academic Delivery Partners identified through:

- Organisational Monitoring;
- circumstances identified outside of the Organisational Monitoring cycle by colleagues involved in the management and delivery of the academic partnership and provision therein (for example, Programme Link Tutors, members of Academic Services etc.) which present a risk to quality, standards and/or reputation;
- Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies' (PSRBs) routine monitoring and review, and exceptional reporting mechanisms.

NB: Education Planning addresses academic programme performance issues identified through that process, but theme or trends emerging from Education Planning may give rise to an operational concern which would be considered through the Academic Partner Concerns process.

5. Implementation of the Process

Based on evidence gathered through either the Organisational Monitoring cycle, or colleagues involved in the management and delivery of the academic partnership and provision therein, the External and Professional Programmes Manager in Academic Services makes a recommendation to the Head of Academic Services on when to implement the Academic (Delivery) Partner Concerns process.

6. The Process

Following approval to implement the Academic (Delivery) Partner Concerns process, the External and Professional Programmes Manager in Academic Services will determine the scope and scale of the process according to the risk/issue highlighted in the evidence gathered through either the Organisational Monitoring cycle, or colleagues involved in the management and delivery of the academic partnership and provision therein.

The process will be proportionate to the nature and level of risk identified; for example, a review meeting may be called with senior members of the partnership organisation's staff to further investigate the concern(s), or an oversight group may be formed to manage the immediate risk presented by the circumstances triggering the concern(s), or regular written updates may be required to demonstrate ongoing actions to address the concern(s).

The process will be led by a member of the External and Professional Programmes team in Academic Services.

7. Outcomes

The process implemented will always strive to resolve the concern in a collegial and constructive manner.

For purposes of quality management oversight, progress updates (prepared where necessary) and a final report will be provided by the External and Professional Programmes team to relevant University committees, including Faculty Boards of Studies.

8. Withdrawal from an Academic (Delivery) Partnership

Failure to address concern(s) through the process may result in a recommendation to Portfolio Development and Management Committee on withdrawal from the academic (delivery) partnership and the Academic Partner Concerns process could result in the termination of an academic partnership earlier than the contracted date.

ACADEMIC (DELIVERY) PARTNER RENEWAL PROCESS

STAGE 1 – STRATEGIC REVIEW

November: AQS notifies academic (delivery) partner organisation that Organisational Agreements and associated annexes are due to expire in following academic year. Partner asked to confirm if they wish to seek renewal of the partnership, information supplied on the process.

YES

NO

January: CPsC notified that partner organisation is seeking renewal of Organisational Agreement at end of next academic year and Faculty reps asked for initial views on renewal

January: CPsC & PDMC notified that partner organisation wishes to withdraw from partnership at the end of the Organisational Agreement

AQS undertake Due Diligence (DD) for each partnership due for renewal & prepare individual organisational reports covering:

- refreshed DD (incl risk analysis);
- review of finances;
- CP Management Data (for period since last (re)approval);
- outcomes of Organisational Annual Monitoring (for period since last (re)approval);
- views of CPsC.

Partnership follows process laid out in 'Collaborative Provision: Withdrawal from Partnership' flowchart

May: PDMC receive AQS' reports and consider renewal from an institutional strategic perspective

STRATEGIC APPROVAL:
CONTINUE TO CPR STAGE 2

NON-RENEWAL ON
STRATEGIC GROUNDS

AQS advise partner, linked Faculty office and department of outcome and any requirements/recommendations from PDMC

Partner moves to Stage 2 of renewal process

STAGE 2: OPERATIONAL REVIEW

CPR operational review takes place between June and September through a range of activities coordinated by AQS.

Relevant BoS nominates academic staff member to review programme documentation to confirm currency, identify potential areas for enhancement or areas of concern.

AQS hold meetings with key personnel from partner organisation to discuss operational aspects of the partnership and current/potential programmes, and with current students to hear the student view.

AQS hold meeting with key personnel from linked Faculty/faculties and department(s) including Partnership Link Tutor(s) and support staff to discuss operational aspects of the partnership and current/potential programmes.

September: AQS prepare operational review report(s) and conclusions which recommend renewal of the partnership, or withdrawal from the partnership through non-renewal. Can also include the recommendation to withdraw a poorly performing programme as evidenced through CME.

Report to include required or recommended actions and affirmations as appropriate.

October: CPsC receive AQS report and recommendation on continuation of partnership from an operational perspective.

OPERATIONAL APPROVAL

NON-RENEWAL ON OPERATIONAL GROUNDS

Chair's Action on behalf of PDMC to ratify decision

Chair of PDMC informed to ratify decision

AQS advise partner, linked Faculty office and department of outcome and circulates CPR report with required and/or recommended actions, and any affirmations

OVERTURNS

AGREES

AQS advised by PDMC of reasons. CPsC advised.

AQS arrange for issuing and signing of Operational Agreement and associated annexes to be completed by 1 July in following year.

Partnership follows process laid out in 'Collaborative Provision: Withdrawal from Partnership' flowchart

ACADEMIC COLLABORATIVE PROVISION: WITHDRAWAL FROM PARTNERSHIP

DECISION TO WITHDRAW FROM ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP

Decision made to withdraw from academic partnership by UoC or partner and ratified by Portfolio Development and Management Committee

Withdrawal of Collaborative Arrangements form is completed.

JoC issues letter confirming withdrawal from partnership under relevant clause of Organisational Agreement (OA), final intake date for the admission of new students, references financial and marketing arrangements that will apply for the teach out period, plus any specific points of note.

Letter copied to Faculty Office, HoDs, PLTs, MRA Finance and Registry.
Collaborative Provision sub-Committee notified

TEACH OUT PHASE

Following expiry of OA, Head of Academic Services (AS) issues letter confirming move into teach out phase of the withdrawal. Confirms also cessation of student admissions, marketing etc, any specific arrangements in place, and the financial arrangements which apply during teach out. List of programmes in teach out including student numbers and anticipated and final end dates for each cohort is appended.

Letter copied to Faculty Office, HoDs, MRA, PLTs, and Registry

AS update the programme teach out list 3 times a year sharing information with partners, PLT and reporting into CPsC. AS confirm through this process when a programme has completed teach out.

AS close down partner accounts related to taught out programmes stopping access to Portal, Moodle etc.

Completed teach out information copied to Faculty Office, HoDs, PLTs, and Registry

Faculty update Programme Specification removing partner site as necessary

WITHDRAWAL FROM ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP COMPLETED

At end of teach out, Head of AS issues letter confirming completion of students and end of partnership.

AS close down final partner accounts to stop access to Portal, Moodle etc.

Letter copied to Faculty Office, HoDs, PLTs, Finance, Registry, and LIS

Faculty to update Programme Specification removing partner site as necessary