



# UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Education Quality and  
Policy Office

## Policy cover sheet

<b>Policy name</b>	Framework for Collaborative Provision of Postgraduate Education
<b>Purpose</b>	To outline the current standards and requirements for collaborative provision in postgraduate degrees, and facilitate the development of collaborative partnerships.
<b>Owner</b>	University
<b>Contact</b>	<a href="mailto:Collaborativepgprovision@admin.cam.ac.uk">Collaborativepgprovision@admin.cam.ac.uk</a> , or <a href="mailto:educationalpolicy@admin.cam.ac.uk">educationalpolicy@admin.cam.ac.uk</a>
<b>Approved by</b>	General Board's Education Committee
<b>Approval date</b>	30 June 2021
<b>With effect from</b>	30 June 2021
<b>Next review due</b>	30 June 2025
<b>Version</b>	1.0 final

# Framework for collaborative provision of postgraduate education

June 2021

## Introduction

In January 2020 the University consulted on a draft framework for collaborative international postgraduate education, in support of a portion of its international strategy. The University encourages the development of student mobility and other forms of collaborative educational provision within the terms of the University's Statutes and Ordinances. Responses from the consultation were considered by the General Board's Education Committee (GBEC) in March 2020, and subsequent revisions made in response. The final version was approved in June 2021.

The purpose of this framework is to:

- a. Clarify the approaches for collaborative arrangements at postgraduate level;
- b. Facilitate the development of such arrangements in a strategic manner;
- c. Assist staff in monitoring and evaluation of existing collaborative arrangements.

Although deriving from and maintaining focus on international collaborations, all principles in this document apply equally to collaborations within the UK, except where University Partner Institution agreements already exist<sup>1</sup>.

Collaboration at postgraduate level has been identified as a strategic development area for a number of reasons, including:

- Increased student mobility
- Continuing to attract the best students
- Extending our impact by preparing students, within Cambridge and beyond, to contribute to the global academy commons and to the public good
- Building deeper relationships with other institutions, increasing strategic support of institutional goals and better research collaboration networks
- Providing a more fulfilling student experience, through greater exposure to diverse academic and cultural experiences.

The information in this framework takes account of the following sources:

- Quality Assurance Agency: Characteristics Statement, [Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body](#), Oct 2015
- Quality Assurance Agency: [UK Quality Code](#) Mar 2018, and Quality Code [Advice and Guidance: Partnerships](#), Nov 2018

## Terminology/nomenclature

This section outlines key terminology to inform the framework.

---

<sup>1</sup> University Partner Institutions: Babraham Institute, British Antarctic Survey, Cambridge Crystallography Data Centre, European Bioinformatics Institute, National Institute of Agricultural Botany, MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute.

- **Co-supervision:** agreed periods whereby a student is supervised at two (or more) institutions, with periods of time spent at both, but the award is only made by the home institution. Co-supervision arrangements may be formal or informal, and are usually unique to each student. Time commitments from each supervisor may not be wholly equal, but using this term implies a substantial time commitment or input from each supervisor; while there is no set percentage to constitute co-supervision, where supervision is minimal or occasional, it is more appropriate to refer to a “second supervisor” (see below) rather than a “co-supervisor”.
- **Cotutelle:** strictly speaking only a form of co-supervision, cotutelle has generally come to be associated specifically with a 50/50 split as part of a joint or dual degree. Many joint degree arrangements offered by other institutions are advertised to students as cotutelle programmes.
- **Dual degrees:** awards involving more than one degree-awarding body, with mixed collaborative and independent elements; for example, a jointly delivered block followed by separate blocks at each partner. This combination results in fully meeting the requirements of each partner for an award of this type, generally over a longer time period than usual though less than if the awards had been taken consecutively (for example, a 5-year PhD programme where a student undertakes a year of collaborative delivery, followed by two separate 2-year blocks at each partner). Because students fully meet the criteria for both partners independently, they receive an independent award from both institutions. Cambridge does not participate in dual degrees at this time.
- **Exchange agreement:** agreed exchanges of students between Cambridge and another institution, usually with a symmetrical relationship between outgoing (Cambridge) and incoming (students from another body) students.
- **Intermission:** a complete break in study, during which time students are not expected to undertake any study or research activity. Intermission may be requested for either medical or non-medical reasons, and should be sought at any time that a student is unable to pursue their course of study for more than two weeks. It is not necessary to apply for intermission to pursue work at a partner institution if that work will form part of the student’s course of study or research, but students will be required to apply to work away for the period of time at the partner institution (see below).
- **Joint or double degrees:** awards involving more than one degree-awarding body, where the course is jointly developed, delivered and assessed with equal weight from all partners. A single joint degree certificate is issued by all partners (joint degree) or, where for issues of legal complexity or other impediments this is not possible, the student receives a degree certificate from each partner separately (double degree). Cambridge does not participate in joint or double degree provision at this time.
- **Leave to Work Away:** a requirement for full-time postgraduate students who wish to undertake study, research or placement activity outside of their assigned Faculty or Department (or University Partner Institution) for more than two weeks. This includes locations which do not necessitate the student moving away from Cambridge. Part-time

students, who are not required to live in Cambridge, must apply to work away if they will be undertaking study, research, or placement activity away from their normal place of residence for more than two weeks. Examples of activity which would require leave to work away include, but are not limited to: undertaking essential fieldwork; completing an internship, placement, or language training which is integral to the course of study or research; utilising facilities at an institution which will directly relate to the course of research.

- **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU):** a short document signed between partners to demonstrate their desire or commitment to undertake a collaboration. MoUs are generally high-level and should be considered as distinct from a partnership agreement (see below). With the exception of certain clauses regarding public statements, brand protection and efficacy of the memorandum, MoUs are not normally intended to be wholly legally binding; instead, these act as expressions of desire from each institution to undertake a partnership and outline a broad framework of the ways in which the relationship will proceed.
- **Partner:** any body involved in the delivery of collaborative educational provision
- **Partnership agreement:** a detailed legal agreement between partners outlining the terms and conditions of the partnership; this would usually include details such as division of responsibility between the partners, fees and financial arrangements if applicable, criteria for entry, validity and duration. More detail on the types of information included in partnership agreements is included below in the framework.
- **Second supervisor:** while there is no formal percentage requirement and this term may be used broadly, in an effort to distinguish between “co-supervision” arrangements, which are more weighty and require a more substantial time commitment, the term “second supervisor” may be more appropriate for arrangements in which the commitment or input is minimal or occasional. Examples may be the supervision of a visiting student attending at Cambridge for only 2-3 months.
- **Split-site programme:** awards with only one degree-awarding body, with agreed periods whereby all students on the course spend time at the other partner. Partners may be other degree-awarding bodies or may be non-awarding partners, such as research institutions.

## Framework

Collaborative educational provision occupies a spectrum of formality and risk, such that a single approach for management is neither desirable nor feasible. Each arrangement will fall at a different point along the spectrum. The framework seeks to identify key points for consideration to determine in which area of the spectrum a proposed collaboration may fall, and identify where staff, Faculties and Departments may seek advice, guidance and support on a case-by-case basis.

The spectrum can be broadly defined as follows:



The following sections identify key concepts and requirements of each stage, and identify where further information may be obtained. Appendix A provides a larger, summary version of the spectrum above.

## Red zone: Joint, double and dual degrees

### Key concepts

These courses are designed and delivered collaboratively between two or more degree-awarding partners, with a variety of structures. Common to all is that there is not a single responsible awarding body; awards are offered by both, or sometimes all, of the institutions involved.

### Requirements

It is not possible to undertake these types of awards at Cambridge.

### Key contacts

For more information about joint, double or dual provision, please [contact the Education Quality and Policy Office](#).

## Orange zone: split-site courses

### Key concepts

For split-site courses, there must be only one body awarding the degree. This is normally Cambridge although it is possible to participate in split-site courses with another provider with the degree awarded elsewhere. The requirements in this section apply when Cambridge is the awarding body; if the degree is awarded by another partner then students' time at Cambridge is treated as that of co-supervision of students from another institution (see the [Green zone](#), below).

In all cases where Cambridge is the awarding body, Cambridge retains the responsibility to ensure the quality of the academic standards and the student experience, regardless of whether the student is on- or off-site. The University is also required to provide detail on these types of exchanges in national statutory data returns. These schemes must therefore undergo robust quality assurance and monitoring. Students must be made aware at the point of application that the programme will require them to spend time off-site at the partner institution.

### Benefits

Split-site experience can be a positive factor in student recruitment, delivering opportunities to work with world leaders in their chosen discipline. Experience obtained collaboratively is valued generally in the labour market, as well as preparing very high-quality graduates for further levels of study. It also provides opportunities for students, and the institution, to cultivate and strengthen research networks and may lead to further partnership opportunities.

### Requirements

Due to the need for the University to ensure it is maintaining the appropriate standards, a formal partnership agreement must be in place to undertake this type of provision. These agreements will be bespoke for each partnership and must be formally approved by the General Board's Education Committee (GBEC). The agreement would cover the following detail:

- Division of responsibility between each partner, including approximate time to be spent at each, supervision arrangements, and how this will be monitored
- Fee/financial arrangements, including insurance and liability; note that Cambridge fees will be charged in full for the duration of the period of study, the partnership arrangement should detail the extent to which those fees will be transferred to or shared with the partner institution
- Which partners' procedures will apply and/or take priority in case of any dissimilarity; e.g., student discipline, support available both on/off site, access to material, data sharing, ethics, open research, IP (note that in most cases the procedures of the awarding body will take precedence)
- Communication and marketing agreements, such as use of relevant logos, terminology to be used, consent requirements for advertising the partnership
- Validity/duration of agreement, and dates at which it will be revisited; exit arrangements may also be included
- How disputes between the partners will be managed

Split-site course agreements must be approved by GBEC before they may be advertised to students. Once approved, subsequent reviews of the agreement do not require GBEC approval unless significant changes are made. Split-site agreements will be included in the review of educational provision at Learning & Teaching Reviews.

### Key contacts

If you are interested in instituting a split-site course, or wish to review existing split-site provision, you should contact Education Services at: [collaborativepgprovision@admin.cam.uk](mailto:collaborativepgprovision@admin.cam.uk) in the first instance. More detail on drafting partnership agreements can be obtained from the [Education Quality and Policy Office](#).

### Examples

- [National Institutes of Health Oxford-Cambridge Scholars Programme](#) (NIH Oxbridge)
- [MRes 1+3 in Future Propulsion and Power](#) (formerly Gas Turbine Aerodynamics)
- [CamTü](#) (Cambridge-Tübingen PhD Fellowships in Machine Learning)

## Amber zone: Exchange agreements

### Key concepts

As outlined above, exchange programmes are those where there is a defined relationship between a course or department at Cambridge and another institution, with agreed periods of exchange between the two. Exchanges are not mandatory; if they are mandatory, the guidance above regarding [split-site agreements](#) should be followed. There are positive benefits to making students

aware of the opportunity at the time of application, but this is not a requirement and exchanges may develop during the course of a student's study. The University is required to provide detail on these types of exchanges in national statutory data returns.

### Benefits

Like split-site agreements, exchange agreements can be a positive recruitment tool; particularly international exchanges can be attractive to students wishing to obtain exposure to global culture and languages during their study. Exchanges also broaden the educational experience through different forms of study and group work. Institutionally, exchanges increase the internationalisation and global reach of the Cambridge community and may provide opportunities for increased recruitment to future study.

### Requirements

A formal partnership agreement is required for exchange agreements. The International Student Office has a template for this purpose.

When Cambridge students are off-site at a partner institution, Cambridge retains responsibility to maintain the appropriate standards of both academic quality and student experience. The student must have a Cambridge supervisor assigned at all times, and all conditions of the relevant Code of Practice (for Research students or Taught Masters, MPhil by Advanced Study and MRes, students) apply. Students must apply to Work Away from Cambridge, with associated Risk Assessment; this application should be made at least two months before students plan to leave Cambridge. Colleges must also be involved in discussions where exchange opportunities develop during a student's period of study, as they are also responsible for student welfare while away.

When off-site, Cambridge students remain subject to Cambridge rules and requirements, and retain the ability to access all central procedures, such as the Student Complaints Procedure. They also retain the ability to access central services, such as the Disability Resource Centre and Counselling Service, albeit that this may require additional support to effect in practice or may be supplemented by facilities at the partner institution. The Cambridge supervisor and the student's College retain responsibility for the student with regard to monitoring progress, support and safeguarding; this cannot be delegated or devolved to the partner institution.

Cambridge fees will normally apply in full for the duration of the students' course of study. However, there may be opportunities these fees to be covered, or reimbursed, by the partner institution. Any consideration of agreements which affect fees should be discussed in the first instance with the [Academic and Financial Planning and Analysis Team](#), before entering into any agreement.

### Key contacts

If you are considering instituting an exchange agreement, or wish to review your existing exchange provision, please contact Education Services at: [collaborativeprovision@admin.cam.uk](mailto:collaborativeprovision@admin.cam.uk) in the first instance.

The Codes of Practice may be [found on the Cambridge Students website](#).

### Examples

- [CamPo](#)
- [Witwatersrand-Cambridge Exchange Programme](#)



- [Faculty of Law Harvard exchange link](#)

## Yellow zone: Co-supervision of Cambridge students

### Key concepts

Co-supervision may be formal or informal, and may be put in place to address specific learning or development needs of the student, or out of a discrete research need (for example, accessing particular equipment or expertise). It may also be put in place as a result of particular funding arrangements (e.g., CASE studentships). While the actual division of labour may vary and need not be equal between the partners, it is always expected to refer to a substantial time commitment. Where additional support is put in place with minimal input or time commitments, it is more appropriate to refer to a “second supervisor” rather than “co-supervisor”.

Note that placement and fieldwork activity may fall into this category, where these are required elements of a course but the location of the placement is not defined. This does not mean that all placement or fieldwork elements are or are expected to be part of collaborative educational provision, but that a collaborative agreement may be beneficial where students always, or often, undertake placement or fieldwork with a particular partner.

### Benefits

Co-supervision generally benefits the student by providing access to a wider range of specialist skills training and advice; this may be essential to bolster elements of study at Cambridge (for example, utilising specialist laboratory techniques not available on-site to gather data) or may strengthen the student’s wider research profile. Institutionally, it strengthens research networks and may lead to further, more formal, collaborative opportunities.

### Requirements

A formal partnership agreement of the type outlined for exchange or split-site arrangements is not required, but it is recommended that all partners are clear on the arrangements and division of responsibility. While there need not be dedicated funding streams for this activity, where this is the case a partnership agreement is recommended.

As with split-site courses, when Cambridge students are at a partner institution, Cambridge retains responsibility to maintain the appropriate standards of both academic quality and student experience. The student must have a Cambridge supervisor assigned at all times, and all conditions of the relevant Code of Practice (for Research students or Taught Masters, MPhil by Advanced Study and MRes, students) apply. Students must apply for Leave to Work Away from Cambridge, with associated Risk Assessment; this application should be made at least two months before students plan to leave Cambridge.

When at the partner institution, Cambridge students remain subject to Cambridge rules and requirements, and retain the ability to access all central procedures, such as the Student Complaints Procedure. They also retain the ability to access central services, such as the Disability Resource Centre and Counselling Service, albeit that this may require additional support to effect in practice.

or may be supplemented by facilities at the partner institution. The Cambridge supervisor and the student's College retain responsibility for the student with regard to monitoring progress, support and safeguarding; this cannot be delegated or devolved to the partner institution.

When discussing these types of arrangements with partners and students, Faculties and Departments may find it useful to consider the following questions; these need not form part of a formal partnership agreement although in some cases this may be desirable:

- How will the Faculty or Department ensure quality of the student experience, and gauge that it is appropriate? This should include who the student should approach regarding issues experienced whilst at the partner institution, and how students' views of the partner and their educational experience will be captured.
- What contact will the Cambridge supervisor, and the Faculty or Department as a whole, have with students during their time away? How will this be reflected in termly Postgraduate Feedback and Reporting Surveys (PFRS)?
- Is the student's College aware, and supportive, of the experience? Colleges are responsible for aspects of student welfare and may be required to support students at a distance; they should be involved in any discussions as the opportunity develops.
- Students are still able to access central University support (University Counselling Service, Disability Resource Centre) while away, although in practice this is not always feasible. Has the student considered their needs or any required reasonable adjustments while away, and would any partner resources be available to the student?
- Will students be expected to uphold any particular code of behaviour when at the partner institution, or will the institution have other expectations of students? If so, it is beneficial to explore this in more detail with partners to ensure that these requirements do not conflict with any Cambridge expectations.
- Will there be any potential barriers as a result of visa restrictions? While it is accepted that international border restrictions are fluid and outside of an institution's immediate control, partnerships with any high/higher risk region should include contingency plans for access to the partner institution, or to Cambridge from elsewhere. Particular support for visa requirements can be provided by the International Student Office. The University's Student Protection Plan should be updated appropriately; where the plan does not appropriately reflect the risk or compensatory measures in response, it is the responsibility of your Faculty Board to [contact the Education Quality and Policy Office](#) to discuss.
- Ownership of anything produced by the student whilst at the other institution.

### Key contacts

If you would like information on instituting a co-supervision arrangement as part of a wider international collaboration, please contact Education Services at: [collaborativepgprovision@admin.cam.uk](mailto:collaborativepgprovision@admin.cam.uk) in the first instance.

If you would like further information about University procedures in relation to student status, please contact your Degree Committee in the first instance.

The Codes of Practice may be [found on the Cambridge Students website](#).

### Examples

- [Programme in European Private Law for Postgraduates](#) (PEPP)

- Co-supervisions may be frequently arranged independently on the basis of individual relationships between Principal Investigators

## Green zone: Co-supervision of external students *and* Cambridge staff supervising at another HEI

### Key concepts

Partnerships in the green zone are those involving only staff, not students, of the University. Either students come to Cambridge from another institution (without a corresponding exchange), or a member of staff undertakes additional supervision duties for a student from another institution. Both of these activities can greatly strengthen relationships with other institutions and bring greater depth to the Cambridge community.

### Benefits

The benefits of these activities are usually at the level of individual staff, enabling the growth of research or collaborative networks or strengthening personal profiles. It may also be a desirable option where a student's supervisor has moved institution, rather than formally transferring students from one institution to another.

### Requirements

Because Cambridge students are not involved directly in these partnerships, requirements to ensure quality of standards may be less formal. Students coming to Cambridge should be managed as visiting students, and the [University's visiting student arrangements](#) apply. These arrangements clearly set out expectations for assessing suitability of visiting students, fee requirements, and maximum time limits.

Staff entering supervision arrangements elsewhere will wish to ensure they remain able to undertake expected duties at Cambridge, and/or that stints are adjusted to recognise or enable partnership work. Staff should consult the University's Global Mobility Policy, which provides detailed information on issues of compliance, tax, payroll and immigration.

### Key contacts

Further information on visiting student arrangements can be obtained from the [International Student Office](#).

The University's Global Mobility Policy is available from the Human Resources Office, [Global Mobility and Overseas Assignments website](#).

## APPENDIX A

### SUMMARY FRAMEWORK

Partnership agreements which must be reported to the Office for Students

