Appendix 19

**Joint/Dual PhD Award Approval Process**

A flowchart summarising the following Joint/Dual PhD Award Approval Process is set as Annex A.

Stage 1: Approval to Proceed

Approval to Proceed for a proposed Collaborative Research Degree Programme (CRDP) must be secured from the relevant Faculty Management Committee (FMC) to allow formal approval mechanisms to be instigated on behalf of the Education Committee Quality and Standards (ECQS).

Completed documentation should comprise the following:

* Approval to Proceed Pro Forma for CRDPs\*
* Supporting Statement addressing the University’s Policy on Joint and Dual Awards
* Risk Assessment
* Business Plan (agreed by Finance)
* International Triage Paperwork (New Partners only)

\* A single generic Approval to Proceed request is permissible to cover a consortium based arrangement.

Stage 2: Documentation for Formal Approval

On Approval to Proceed being agreed, a written submission, prepared by the School/Faculty should be provided in support of the proposed CRDP for consideration by ECQS. The submission should be prepared in view of normal academic requirements for a QUB award (quality and standards), which should be considered as the minimum threshold, and the likely student experience throughout all stages of the student lifecycle. Colleagues from Academic Affairs are available to advise on the preparation of the documentation - please do not hesitate to contact the team either prior to or during the completion of the documentation as each agreement can be very nuanced depending on the nature of the research programme and the regulations overseeing the partner institution. The detail required will vary from agreement to agreement. It is therefore important to speak to Academic Affairs early in the process to ensure that the School or Faculty is able to complete the documents in a timely way, that the University can remain assured that the necessary checks and balances are in place to assure the quality of the award, and protect the student experience.

A draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) will also be prepared for consideration by ECQS alongside the written submission. This will be compiled by Academic Affairs in consultation with the School/Faculty during proposal development.

Please note that when awarding a Joint/Dual award is it important that core elements of the arrangement are agreed in advance including who will supervise the students work, how their progression will be assessed and how the final work will be examined.

The following structure for the written submission is suggested (with further guidance set out in Annex B):

| **Section** | **Proposed Content** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Introduction | * Broad Overview of Proposal * Supporting Rationale |
| 1. Relevant Partner Information | * Specify which Higher Education Institution (HEI) is involved. * Extent of existing partnership activity with Queen’s. * Comment on the reputational and academic standing of the proposed partner (e.g. rankings or other notable measures). * General Assurance Statement on the quality/standard of PhD awards made by the partner HEI to ensure these are comparable to that which is expected at QUB. * Site Report prepared by QUB Academic Staff Member |
| 1. Programme Structure | * Overall programme structure, including required periods of residency at each institution. |
| 1. Regulations | * General Assurance Statement that the arrangement will align with QUB PGR Study regulations/Code of Practice and therefore meet normal expectations for a QUB award * Identification of any partner requirements impacting on alignment with key QUB regulations and inclusion of an appropriate rationale to support any necessary exemptions. * Arrangements for the induction, support, supervision and training of students on the programme. * Appointment and training of Joint Supervisors. * Progression and Examination * Intellectual Property Rights |
| 1. Operational Considerations | * Programme Management * Student Recruitment and Admission * Student Registration and Enrolment * Complaints and Appeals * Graduation |

Stage 3: University Approval

Supporting documentation (i.e. the written submission and draft MOA) should be submitted to the Secretary of the ECQS for consideration at the next available meeting.

Stage 4: MOA Signature and Implementation

When final approval has been given by ECQS, Academic Affairs will arrange for the MOA to be signed. Details of the new arrangement will then be circulated to relevant internal stakeholders and recorded on the Collaborative Provision Register.

A University Coordinator, appointed by the School/Faculty, will normally be responsible for taking forward implementation and should liaise with their School/Faculty, particularly in relation to the application of any Partnership Management Plans which may be required by Faculty. Schools will also be responsible for ensuring that each student recruited to the programme is supported by an individual co-tutelle, which should be approved and signed by Faculty. Joint supervisors should also be approved in parallel and briefed by Schools on University requirements following approval of recognised supervisor status and in advance of commencing their duties.

*Updated July 2025*

**STAGE 1 – APPROVAL TO PROCEED**

* International Triage Paperwork (New Partners only)
* Approval to Proceed Pro Forma for CRDP
* Risk Assessment
* Business Plan (agreed by Finance)
* University Policy on Joint and Dual Awards

**School /Faculty**

Approval to Proceed Documentation prepared and finalised in line with Faculty Procedures

**Faculty / School**

* Student Recruitment (*NB: Opportunities can be advertised on approval of the arrangement by the ECQS. Dispensation to advertise/recruit any earlier would require separate approval by the Chair of the ECQS on submission of a supporting rationale*).
* Individual Student Co-tutelle and Joint Supervisory Team agreed and signed off (including formal recognition of external supervisor by School Postgraduate Research Committee and Chair of ECQS)

**Faculty / School**

* Written Submission prepared with appropriate input from Professional Support Services and Partner
* Request(s) for regulatory concessions included where appropriate

**Education Committee Quality and Standards Consideration and Approval**

* Written Submission (including requests for regulatory concession)
* Draft MOA

*Paperwork considered during next available cycle of formal meetings or via fast track approval process.*

*If the latter, queries may be raised for a response from School/ Faculty.*

**Academic Affairs**

* Draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) prepared (aligned to written submission) with appropriate input from Faculty/School, Professional Support Services and partner (to include individual student co-tutelle template).

**STAGE 2 –DOCUMENTATION PREPARATION FOR APPROVAL**

**STAGE 3 – UNIVERSITY APPROVAL**

**Academic Affairs**

* Faculty Notification of Outcome
* MOA Finalisation and Signature

**Faculty Management Committee**

Approval to Proceed Considered and Agreed – Outcome reported to Academic Affairs

**STAGE 4 – MOA SIGNATURE AND IMPLEMENTATION**

Annex B

**Collaborative Research Degree Programmes – Joint / Dual PhD Awards – Written Submission Guidelines**

On Approval to Proceed being agreed, a written submission, prepared by the School/Faculty should be provided in support of the proposed CRDP for consideration by ECQS. The submission should be prepared in view of normal academic requirements for a QUB award (quality and standards), which should be considered as the minimum threshold, and the likely student experience throughout all stages of the student lifecycle.

Colleagues from Academic Affairs are available to advise on the preparation of the documentation - please do not hesitate to contact the team either prior to or during the completion of the documentation as each agreement can be very nuanced depending on the nature of the research programme and the regulations overseeing the partner institution. The detail required will vary from agreement to agreement. It is therefore important to speak to Academic Affairs early in the process to ensure that the School or Faculty is able to complete the documents in a timely way, that the University can remain assured that the necessary checks and balances are in place to assure the quality of the award, and protect the student experience.

The following structure for the written submission is suggested:

| **Section** | **Proposed Content** | **Notes / Considerations** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Introduction | * Broad Overview of Proposal * Supporting Rationale |  |
| 1. Relevant Partner Information | * Specify which Higher Education Institution (HEI) is involved. * Comment on the reputational and academic standing of the proposed partner (e.g. rankings or other notable measures). * Extent of existing partnership activity with Queen’s. * General Assurance Statement on the quality/standard of PhD awards made by the partner HEI to ensure these are comparable to that which is expected at QUB. * Site Report prepared by QUB Academic Staff Member | *Academic Affairs can provide information on whether the University is already in an academic agreement with the proposed partner.*  *Research and Enterprise can provide information on whether the University is involved in a research agreement/contract.*  *Appropriate information on partner study regulations and awards should be sought to help inform views on the comparability of academic quality and standards.*  *A Site Report prepared by a QUB Academic Member of Staff commenting on the quality of resources, facilities available at the partner institution, should be appended.* |
| 1. Programme Structure | * Overall programme structure, including required periods of residency at each institution. | *If the agreement involves international students coming to the UK to study, please contact Immigration Support Service (ISS) to confirm that this is possible.*  *Note that the overall programme of study should conform to normal periods of study for PhD research at Queen’s (e.g. FT minimum 2 years, normal 3 years, maximum 4 years)* |
| 1. Regulations | * General Assurance Statement that the arrangement will align with QUB PGR Study regulations/Code of Practice and therefore meet normal expectations for a QUB award. * Identification of any partner requirements impacting on alignment with key QUB regulations and inclusion of an appropriate rationale to support any necessary exemptions. | *It is imperative that agreements are clear from the outset about which institution’s study regulations will apply, particularly in relation to progression and examination. This can be very nuanced depending on the country in which the partner HEI is based. Please do not hesitate to discuss this with Academic Affairs if you need advice on the key issues to consider.*  *QUB PGR Study Regulations and Code of Practice can be viewed on:*  [*https://www.qub.ac.uk/dasa/AcademicAffairs/GeneralRegulations/StudyRegulations/StudyRegulationsforResearchDegreeProgrammes/*](https://www.qub.ac.uk/dasa/AcademicAffairs/GeneralRegulations/StudyRegulations/StudyRegulationsforResearchDegreeProgrammes/)  [*https://www.qub.ac.uk/dasa/AcademicAffairs/ResearchDegreeProgrammes/*](https://www.qub.ac.uk/dasa/AcademicAffairs/ResearchDegreeProgrammes/) |
|  |  | *Overall, the key PGR Study Regulations for QUB are as follows:*  *3.3 - External Students / Students working away from Queen’s (availability of appropriate resources, training and support).*  *4 - Periods of study*  *5 - Temporary Withdrawal*  *6.1 - Supervision (partner staff should meet normal appointment criteria)*  *6.5 - Annual Progress Review (including differentiation)*  *7.1 - Notice of Intention to Submit*  *7.2 - Title and Format of Thesis*  *7.4 - Requirements for the Doctoral Degree*  *7.6 - Appointment of Examiners (normal nomination/approval processes through Qsis)*  *7.7 - Examination Process (in particular requirement for oral examination and submission of a joint examiners report confirming final outcome)* |
|  | * Arrangements for the induction, support, supervision and training of students on the programme. | *Consider and comment on what arrangements, in general, will be put in place and available to the students throughout the programme at both sites. For example - student entitlements such as library access or access to support services should be clarified. (Library access may be determined by the student career path and entitlements may differ from other institutions involved in the collaborative arrangement).*  *Note that Individualised arrangements for each student will be detailed in an agreed student co-tutelle agreement as and when students come on board. A template co-tutelle agreement should be included within the supporting MOA.*  *PGR Study Regulations 3.3 and 6 are relevant here. Also note general requirements under PGR Study Regulation 1 concerning health and safety, research integrity and ethics, IP and training.* |
|  | * Appointment and training of Joint Supervisors. | *Comment on the expected quality of supervisors from the partner institution and how they will be trained to ensure appropriate awareness of QUB requirements.*  *Note that Supervisors from the partner institution will require formal approval by Queen’s through the appropriate School Postgraduate Research Committee and by Education Committee (Quality and Standards). Partner staff should meet normal appointment criteria.*  *QUB PGR Study Regulation 6.1 relevant here.* |
|  | * Progression and Examination | *Consider and comment on approach to student differentiation, progression and examination, detailing how these key processes will be managed / accommodated.* |
|  |  | *How will differentiation and annual progress review be conducted if/when students are off-campus? These are important milestones (equivalent to examination) for each student to pass. If an equivalent process is required by the partner, there may be scope for a joint approach/sign-off provided the review panel composition is aligned to QUB requirements.*  *Will there be a standard viva conforming to normal QUB standards?*  *What will be the composition of the examination panel? QUB normally requires an internal, an external and an independent convenor. What are the partner’s requirements? If both require an external, an agreed nomination could be put forward as a joint appointment.*  *How will the examiners be appointed and reimbursed?*  *How will thesis submission and examination operate? What will be the language of submission? Will translations and/or executive summaries in translation be required to support assessment? Note that theses should be presented and examined in English for a Queen’s award.*  *Who will take lead?*  *Discuss proposed approach with Student Records and Academic Affairs as appropriate.*  *PGR Study Regulations 6.5, 7.1, 7.2, 7.4, 7.6 and 7.7 relevant here.* |
|  | * Intellectual Property Rights | *Consider and comment on expectations around the sharing and/or management of IPR. These should be clarified and agreed between the partners.*  *Consult with Legal Services and/or Contracts Office.*  *QUB PGR Study Regulation 1 (General) is relevant here. See also:*  <https://www.qub.ac.uk/Business/Commercialisation/IP-and-innovation/IP-policy/> |
| 1. Operational Considerations   *(relevant, high level information required for MOA)* | * Programme Management | *Consider appropriate mechanisms to support the management and administration of the arrangement, even if it is just one student, and ongoing liaison with the partner to promote shared understanding of expectations/roles/responsibilities.*  *Will there be any resource implications for the School / Faculty (e.g. additional administrative support)? Is the School aware of the resource implications?*  *A University Coordinator will be required to lead and provide academic oversight of the arrangement on behalf of Queen’s.*  *Note that the arrangement will be subject to annual review through the University’s Targeted Enhancement Approach and submission of an annual monitoring report to ECQS.* |
| * Student Recruitment and Admission | *Consider approach to recruitment, how candidates will be selected and respective roles/responsibilities in this.*  *How will QUB be involved in selection decision making e.g. will candidates be considered through a joint selection panel involving representatives from both parties or will decision making be phased or undertaken in parallel by each party separately, but subject to approval by both?*  *What will be the entry criteria?*  *Will there be any requirement for the transfer or sharing academic reports on prior progress from the partner to Queen’s (e.g. to facilitate admission with advanced standing)?*  *How will applications be identified and processed by Admissions?*  *Will students need to be issued with a CAS for visa application purposes?*  *Will students be sponsored or self-funded?*  *Please discuss proposed arrangements/approach with relevant professional support colleagues (Admissions, ISS, Student Finance)* |
| * Student Registration and Enrolment | *QUB Registration will be required throughout for students undertaking a joint/dual award to ensure the QUB portion of the award can be conferred on completion.*  *Please consider how registration and (initial) matriculation at Queen’s will be accommodated through the arrangement, particularly when students are off-campus. Specific arrangements will be required if students are not in attendance during the first year of study. Remote registration may be possible, but would need to be discussed with Student Records.*  *PGR Study Regulations 3.3, 4 and 5 relevant here. Note also PGR Study Regulation 2 (Registration).* |
| * Complaints and Appeals | *e.g. how will potential disputes be managed – would the partner be content for QUB processes to be applied with a report back on outcomes? Is there scope for an exit award by QUB if a joint decision is not forthcoming as a result of the examination process?*  *Consult with Complaints and Appeals Team in Academic Affairs as appropriate.*  *Academic Appeal Regulations (Research Degree Programmes) relevant here.* |
|  | * Graduation | *e.g. consider location, degree certificate design and issue (bespoke parchment and transcript required to attest to partner involvement in the award). It may be that the MOA should specify that certain arrangements (e.g. venue) is subject to student preference.*  *Consult with Student Records.* |