

PARTNER LINK TUTOR GUIDE

University of Suffolk

Partner Link Tutor Guide

Introduction

Academic Link Tutors play an important role in the effective management of the University of Suffolk's partnership activity, for example in terms of:

- ✓ working closely with relevant University academic and professional services teams to ensure that the partnership is effectively managed in accordance with internal and external requirements, and that any associated risks are mitigated
- ✓ building and maintaining strong professional relationships with colleagues at the partner institution, to enable the smooth operation of the partnership and ongoing enhancement of the student experience
- ✓ facilitating effective channels of communication between the University and the partner institution, particularly in relation to academic matters
- ✓ ensuring that the partner upholds the University's expectations in terms of quality and academic standards, in order to safeguard both the student experience and the University's reputation.

Link Tutors are normally appointed and managed by the relevant University academic school associated with the partnership arrangement. Deans of School should ensure that sufficient time is allocated to Link Tutors for effective performance of the duties associated with the role, commensurate with the scale of the partnership and the level of risk involved. This should include provision for regular visits to the partner institution to nurture a strong working relationship between the parties and ensure the smooth academic operation of the partnership. For overseas partners, the Link Tutor is expected to visit on at least an annual basis.

The Centre for Academic and International Partnerships is responsible for ensuring that all staff appointed as Link Tutors are fully briefed on the nature of the partnership arrangement and their role in managing and supporting it, both through initial induction and ongoing support and guidance.

This handbook is intended to provide guidance on the main responsibilities associated with the Link Tutor role, while recognising that each partnership is unique and might require differing levels of input, engagement and support.

THE MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LINK TUTOR ROLE

Acting as the primary point of academic contact

The Link Tutor is the primary point of academic contact between the partner and the relevant University academic school, acting as a critical friend in the ongoing enhancement of partner academic provision. A key aspect of the role is working with partner institutions to oversee and enhance the quality and academic standard of collaborative programmes, providing constructive advice, guidance and support. This includes ensuring that partner staff understand and effectively implement University regulations, policies and procedures as they apply to partnership provision (especially those relating to programme delivery and assessment); identifying and mitigating any perceived risks to the quality of the learning experience; responding proactively to any issues or concerns highlighted by internal or external stakeholders; and facilitating mutual sharing of good practice between the University and the partner in relation to learning, teaching and assessment.

Ensuring that partner admissions procedures are robust

The Link Tutor works with the University's Admissions team to ensure that partner students are admitted in accordance with agreed entry requirements and admissions processes. The role may include providing guidance on appropriate entry requirements, advising on non-standard admissions, and considering applications for recognition of prior learning in accordance with established University procedures.

Engaging with partner students to ensure they are benefitting from a high quality learning experience

It can be beneficial for Link Tutors to work with the Centre for Academic and International Partnerships to organise opportunities to meet with partner students (either face-to-face or virtually) to introduce them to the University, discuss their learning opportunities and wider student experience, and identify associated good practice and areas for enhancement.

This may be achieved, for example, through:

- ✓ involvement in student induction processes at the partner institution, to ensure that students feel an integral part of the University community
- ✓ participating in relevant student meetings/forums to enable the University to gather feedback directly from partner students on their academic and wider student experiences (including support services, facilities and learning resources)
- ✓ facilitating student visits to the University where appropriate, for example for guest lectures or special events.

Contributing to programme design and development at partners

The Link Tutor should provide advice and guidance to partner staff on the design and ongoing development of academic programmes, to ensure ongoing currency and relevance. This may include supporting the partner in preparing for course (re)validation events, submitting course modification requests, or submitting course withdrawal requests. The Link Tutor will normally support the partner course team in responding to any resulting conditions of validation or any recommendations of the panel. For franchised programmes, the role will include ensuring ongoing alignment with the programme delivered at the University, and keeping the partner up-to-date and engaged in any discussions regarding programme development and enhancement.

Overseeing the conduct of the assessment process and external examiner engagement

The Link Tutor is responsible for overseeing arrangements for the conduct of assessment at the partner institution. This normally includes:

- ✓ providing advice and guidance on proposed assessment tasks, examination papers and marking criteria as and when requested
- ✓ where required under individual partnership collaboration agreements, participating in moderation of marking to ensure alignment with University expectations and standards
- ✓ advising on external examiner nominations and overseeing the partner's interaction with external examiners appointed by the University to the course
- ✓ advising on recognition of prior learning (RPL) applications as required
- ✓ chairing or attending Assessment Boards for partners as required by the Dean of School (noting that chairing of Boards is not possible where the link tutor has been involved in moderation of marking)
- ✓ considering external examiner feedback (both verbal at Assessment Boards and in writing in the annual external examiner report) and ensuring that the partner takes appropriate action to address any issues or concerns.

Involvement in partner quality monitoring processes

The Link Tutor should work with the Centre for Academic and International Partnerships to oversee partner annual monitoring processes, including attending relevant quality monitoring events at the partner institution, overseeing responses to any identified areas of concern, reviewing and providing feedback on completed annual monitoring reports (AMRs), and overseeing the timely completion of associated action plans.

Approval of partner staff to be involved in programme delivery

Where required under the partnership collaboration agreement, the Link Tutor is normally responsible for reviewing CVs for new or existing partner academic staff who are intended to be involved in programme delivery, to ensure they have relevant experience and expertise for teaching at the proposed level.

Peer observation of teaching

The Link Tutor should normally conduct peer observations of teaching at the partner institution on a regular basis to ensure that students are benefitting from a high quality learning experience. For online provision, this may alternatively involve review of online teaching materials. Following the observation, the Link Tutor should provide developmental feedback to partner staff to enable them to reflect on strengths and areas for development. A copy of the written feedback should also be shared with the Centre for Academic and International Partnerships for quality monitoring purposes.

Supporting partner staff continuing professional development

The Link Tutor should support partner staff in terms of continuing professional development, including signposting relevant opportunities for staff development within the University, promoting academic links between the University and the partner, and keeping partner staff up-to-date in terms of developments within the School or wider University that may be of interest or benefit.

Involvement in partnership governance arrangements

The Link Tutor will normally participate in relevant partnership management and/or operational groups as required, including course committees. Depending on the partner, attendance may be in person or virtually.

GUIDANCE ON DEVELOPING A STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH PARTNERS

- ✓ Get to know a wide range of partner staff well, so that you gain a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and develop a mutual sense of trust and respect.
- ✓ Familiarise yourself with the partnership legal agreement, including information on operational roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ Ensure regular, proactive communication, both face-to-face and via virtual meetings, phone or email. It may help to agree a schedule of activities with the partner at the start of each academic year (a suggested annual checklist is provided in Appendix A).
- ✓ Share expertise, knowledge and experience with partner staff.
- ✓ Provide honest yet constructive advice and guidance to promote ongoing enhancement.
- ✓ Get to know partner student representatives well and strive to make the wider student body feel part of the University community.
- ✓ Work closely with colleagues in the Centre for Academic and International Partnerships to ensure that all parties are kept up-to-date in terms of partnership developments. Flag any concerns with the Centre at the earliest available opportunity.
- ✓ Be responsive and supportive in terms of collaboratively overcoming any challenges the partner is facing.
- ✓ Be aware of the partner's internal quality processes and how they interact with University processes.
- ✓ Celebrate the strengths of the partnership and act as an ambassador for the partnership arrangement.
- ✓ Promote opportunities for partners to actively engage with the University, for example in terms of professional development and facilitation of academic links.

KEY POINTS OF CONTACT AND SUPPORT FOR LINK TUTORS

In performing your Link Tutor role, you will work closely with a number of professional services teams including:

Centre for Academic and International Partnerships (CAIP)

The CAIP team are responsible for managing and supporting all of the University's partnership arrangements. The team are the key point of contact for Link Tutors in terms of partnership operational matters, and act as a central conduit for communication relating to wider partnership activity. Normally, each partnership arrangement has a dedicated member of the CAIP team allocated to it, who you will work with closely in performing your role. The CAIP team coordinates briefing sessions for link tutors, and can also facilitate mentoring by experienced link tutors where this would be beneficial for those new to the role.

Quality team

The Quality team support arrangements for institutional and course level validation and review/re-approval of partner institutions, and also coordinate the approval process for course modification, suspension and withdrawal requests.

Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)

The CELT team can advise partners and link tutors on course design and development and on approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. For partners who use the University's online learning environment, Brightspace, support can be provided by the Centre's dedicated Learning Designer.

Admissions team

The Admissions team support partners in terms of enquiries relating to recruitment and admissions, facilitating the registration of students with the University where relevant and working with other teams as necessary (for example the Student Records team).

Student Services

The Student Services team can provide advice and guidance to partner staff on the provision of student support services. For some partnerships, partner students may be able to access University support services (please see partnership legal agreement for further information).

Library and Learning Services

The Library and Learning Services team facilitate partner access to relevant University learning resources, in accordance with arrangements outlined in the relevant partnership agreement, and can also provide advice and guidance to partner staff on students' academic skills development.

Students' Union

Partner students are normally either full or associate members of the University of Suffolk Students' Union (depending on partnership arrangement type). The SU Advice Service can offer independent advice and guidance to partner students on a range of issues such as complaints and academic appeals.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND LINKS

[Partnerships Handbook](#)

[Quality Manual](#)

[Partner Annual Monitoring Report \(AMR\) template](#)

PARTNER LINK TUTOR: ANNUAL CHECKLIST OF ACTIVITIES

This checklist is intended to provide a guide to activities that Link Tutors may be involved in each year. It can be adapted to suit particular partner institutions or link tutor roles.

Prior to the start of the year	
Where required by the partnership collaboration agreement, approve any new partner staff to be involved in programme delivery	
Facilitate appointment of new external examiner(s) for the academic year, as required	
Advise on RPL as required as part of the admissions process	
Attend partner student induction events as required	
In-year: assessment activity	
Advise on the suitability of assessment tasks prior to issue, as and when requested	
Where required by the partnership collaboration agreement, participate in moderation of marking to ensure alignment with University expectations and standards	
Chair/attend Assessment Boards as required	
Review student retention, progression and achievement (normally via the Assessment Board and Partnership Management Group) and work with the partner to deal proactively with any resultant issues	
In-year: academic oversight and support	
Attend partnership management/operational groups as required	
Attend meetings with partner student representatives (organised by the CAIP team) as required, to gather direct feedback on students' experiences	
Provide guidance and support to the partner in relation to course validation, reapproval or modification, as required	
Conduct teaching observations across all sites of delivery (or review of online teaching material for online provision)	
Provide broad advice and guidance to partner staff on professional development opportunities within the University	
Where required by the partnership collaboration agreement, approve any additional new partner teaching staff appointed in-year	
Attend partner graduation ceremonies as appropriate	
End of year: annual monitoring	
Review external examiner reports, ensuring that the partner responds appropriately to the feedback	
Attend partner monitoring / evaluation events as required	
Review annual monitoring reports (AMRs) for partner programme(s), adding a Link Tutor report on the year under review (Appendix 3 of the AMR form)	