**GUIDANCE NOTE FOR STAFF PREPARING AND CONSIDERING COLLABORATIVE PROPOSALS FOR CO-SUPERVISORY RESEARCH ARRANGEMENTS LEADING TO DUAL OR JOINT AWARDS (COTUTELLE)**

See also the **Guidance Note for Research Students Working Away from Aston University** at <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/clipp/quality/a-z/collaborativeprovision/index>.

**1 Introduction**

1.1 The University defines a Cotutelle agreement as an arrangement for a research degree student to be jointly supervised by supervisors from different universities from different countries. If successful, the doctoral candidate may be awarded a dual or joint doctoral degree by the two institutions

1.2 Whether a dual or joint award, students are required to be enrolled at both institutions throughout the duration of their research and spend a minimum of six months at each institution.

1.3 During their enrolment, students are jointly supervised by a member of staff from Aston and a member of staff from the partner institution and have access to the research facilities of both institutions for the duration of their enrolment.

1.4 Successful submission of the thesis and completion of the viva voce (or oral) examination may result in a research degree from Aston and a qualification from the partner university.

1.5 The subject area will need to gain approval of the partner and set up an institutional agreement. Proposals should be approved by the School Senior Management Team, School Research Committee and be submitted to the Collaborative Provision Strategy Group (CPSG) and Graduate School Management Committee (GSMC) based on the following guidelines. The Secretaries of CPSG and GSMC can provide advice on drafting the agreement. Once an institutional agreement has been approved by CPSG and GSMC, and signed by the Executive Dean of the School and the University’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor, arrangements for individual students may be approved by School Research Committees. A template for such agreements may be found at: <http://www.aston.ac.uk/staff/legal-services/template-agreements/>.

1.6 Arrangements for the supervision of students working away from the University must meet the University’s General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis and proposers will need to demonstrate this in any proposals for the establishment of a collaborative arrangement with another institution or organisation.

1.7 Arrangements for students working away from the University must also ensure that students are able to acquire appropriate research skills wherever they study. Reference should be made to the training needs analysis for the individual student and consideration given to the skills development opportunities that may be available in industry or in another institution.

**2 Fees**

Schools must discuss appropriate student fees with their School Accountants in advance of recruiting students.

**3 Attendance**

Any attendance requirement at the University must be specified at the outset.

**4 Selection of Partners**

The selection of partners should be as set out in the Process Document for Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative Activity and should include consideration of the organisation’s legal status and standing, resources, and the qualifications and experience of staff. Proposers will need to ensure that there is an appropriate research environment, in terms of the student having other researchers to work with, and the relevant equipment and learning resources.

Due Diligence must be carried out, and a Risk Assessment for Research Students Working Away from the University completed. A Due Diligence Checklist and a Risk Assessment proforma for research and cotutelle students may be found at <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/clipp/quality/a-z/collaborativeprovision/index>.

CPSG may wish to make enquiries of any other UK awarding institutions known to have a current or previous relationship with the prospective partner organisation.

**5 Staffing**

There must be a clear requirement that immediate notification of key staff resignations and appointments be provided

**6 Quality Assurance**

Quality Assurance should be no less stringent than the arrangements operating entirely within Aston and should include provision for:

 clear administrative systems to provide reliable information to the

University;

 effective systems for communication between the collaborative institutions.

The School will be responsible for an annual review of the arrangement.

**7 Assessment**

 Assessment will normally be in accordance with the University’s General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis. If the partner’s procedures for the examination of research candidates differ substantially from these Regulations, a set of agreed Instructions for Examination must be drawn up – see Section 9 below.

 The External Examiner will be appointed from an organisation that is independent of all partner organisations involved in the student’s research degree programme.

**8 Supervisory arrangements**

8.1 Supervisory arrangements must comply with the University’s General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis, and the Aston University Supervisor is responsible for establishing at the beginning of the student’s research programme a satisfactory framework for supervision, including arrangements for communicating with the student, and the relative participation of the Associate or Joint Supervisor. There should normally be at least one face- to-face meeting between the Supervisors each year and monthly communication by other means. The Aston Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that any other Supervisor of the student is carrying out his or her responsibilities to the student and to the University.

8.2 Normally, meetings between the student and the Supervisors will take place at least twice a year during the supervision period and at least one of these meetings should normally be face-to-face.

8.3 Details of the proposed Supervisors and the examination arrangements for the candidate must be set out in an individual Cotutelle Agreement, approved by the Chair of the School Research Committee and signed by the student and both Supervisors. The agreement must state the language and other requirements of the thesis, and take into account any requirement from a partner that the thesis, or a summary of the thesis, needs to be provided in a second language. The agreement should also cover information about student enrolment, payment of fees, any necessary health insurance, and information about accommodation. The partner institution(s) must provide the CVs of proposed Supervisors for approval by the respective partners, before the agreement is finalised.

**9 Arrangements for Examination**

Aston will appoint examiners in compliance with the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis. The partner institution will appoint examiners according to their relevant procedures. Where the partners’ respective procedures for examination of research candidates substantially differ, a set of agreed procedures must be drawn up that reflect the following requirements and otherwise satisfy the minimum requirements of the parties:

 the examining board should comprise a minimum of three voting members: one examiner from Aston, one examiner from the partner institution, and at least one examiner external to both institutions, to a maximum of five voting examiners;

 the candidate’s Supervisors may attend the examination but must not take part in the examination.

The arrangements will be agreed by the Graduate School Management Committee and will be specified in the agreement between the parties and in the student’s Cotutelle Agreement.

**10 Admissions**

All applications will be considered for approval by the relevant School and the partner institution. Applicants must meet Aston’s entry requirements, including English language.

**11** **Certificates**

Following successful examination, candidates for dual awards will be awarded the appropriate degree qualification from each institution. Each degree certificate will be accompanied by a Diploma Supplement which will state the language(s) of assessment and will specify the names of the institutions participating in the dual award programme. Successful candidates for a joint award will receive a single certificate which replaces the separate institutional qualifications.

**CHECKLIST**

**1 Is the proposal of strategic benefit to the School and University?**

* How long is the intended collaboration?
* Does the collaboration help achieve the University’s International Strategy?
* Does the partner enhance the reputation and/or brand impact of the University?
  1. **Is the documentation submitted complete?**

Does it include draft institutional and cotutelle agreements which follow the key points of University templates and which have been discussed with the partner organisation?

**1.2 Is the quality of the supervision provided through the collaboration likely to be comparable to the quality supervision provided by the University itself?**

**2 Institutional Context**

* What is the range of other HE programme provision at the partner organisation?
* Has there been any external accreditation of the partner organisation and are there any issues to be resolved?
* What is the standing of the partner organisation’s research in the area of the collaborative arrangement, e.g. is there a national equivalent to REF?
* What is the institution’s country/global ranking?

**3 Research Training and Monitoring of Progression**

* What research training is the student expected to attend at each institution? How else will training requirements be satisfied and the 90 hours’ skills training be met?
* What will be the arrangements for completing Aston’s Qualifying Report assessment and quarterly supervisory meetings, and the equivalent processes for the collaborating institution?

**4 Programme Management and Administration**

* Are there effective communication links between members of the supervisory team?
* Are the respective responsibilities of the University and the partner organisation for quality assurance clear, explicit and documented?

**5 Staffing**

* What is the staff provision for the research programme/area at Aston and the partner organisation?
* What level of qualifications are held by the proposed supervisors? (Attach CVs)
* What are the staff development needs of the proposed supervisors and how will they be addressed?
* What are the appraisal and performance monitoring arrangements?
* Will University insurance cover staff in the country visited and how easy is it to gain visas?
* Can staff from abroad easily gain entry to the UK if needed?

**6 Facilities and Learning Resources**

* What are the resource implications?
* What are the facilities and accommodation, including office/laboratory space for the student, at both Aston and the partner organisation?
* What is the extent of student access to University facilities?

**6.1** What is the role of the University Library Services in supporting staff and students?

* + 1. Are the resources provided by the partner adequate?
* what books are available?
* what journal coverage is available?
* what measures are there to ensure that relevant texts will be available to students?

(Library support must not rely on the proximity of another university to the site of learning as they will not be set up to provide that cover and a reliance on Sconul Access – the cross access scheme - will undermine willingness to participate.)

* + 1. Students will be enrolled at Aston and so are entitled to use Aston’s library. For some courses use of the physical collection might be a reasonable expectation. Students on all courses will be able to use e-resources but due to licencing restrictions access to all collections may not be automatic. Each programme needs to be discussed with Library Services who can provide advice and estimates of costs:
* will students need access to printed materials at Aston?
* will they need access to e-books at Aston? (Existing titles may not be automatically available.)
* will they need access to journals and databases at Aston? (Not all collections may be automatically available. For some collections there may be additional costs to provide access and for some, access may not be permitted.)
  + 1. Who is responsible for teaching students information literacy?

If Aston services are to be used at least some of this needs to be provided by Library Services and specific needs must be discussed with Library Services.

* + 1. Academic and library staff in the partner institution will need to be aware of what is available to students and direct them accordingly. Library Services can provide relevant material.
    2. Do supervisors at the partner institution require access to Aston’s library services?

This needs to be discussed with Library Services as the same issues regarding access to e-resources apply to staff as to students, although licence terms tend to be more restrictive.

**7 Recruitment and Registration of Students**

* What is the market for the programme, and who is responsible for the marketing activity?
* What are the minimum entry qualifications and who has responsibility for approving any exceptions?
* What are the target numbers and who is responsible for agreeing the numbers?
* What is the recruitment procedure and has due regard been given to the expectations of any professional and statutory bodies?
* Has consideration been given to whether participants will need a visa to visit the UK or the country of the partner organisation and any implications this may have for timescales?
* What are the arrangements for the Recognition of Prior Learning?
* What are the student tracking systems and MIS: are there clear protocols in place with partner institutions regarding the exchange of information? (The use of the University’s standard forms by partner organisations is strongly encouraged for enrolment, leave of absence,change of programme and withdrawal. The University needs to be told promptly by the partner organisation about any change in supervisory arrangements or students who are not making satisfactory progress.)

**8 Assessment and Examination Arrangements**

* What are the examination arrangements? (As a minimum, the requirements in Aston’s General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis must be met, including the inclusion of the independent Chair.)
* Is there examination at one institution that takes account of the requirements for both institutions? If so, will the examination be held at Aston or the partner organisation?

OR

* Are there two examinations, one at each institution, in accordance with the requirements and regulations of each institution?

**9 Student disciplinary regulations, complaints and academic appeals procedures**

How will students and their advisers be made aware of information on the procedures for complaints, academic appeals, student discipline, examination malpractice and plagiarism and the equal opportunities policy?

**10 Student Welfare and Academic Counselling**

What is the provision of pastoral care, including the provision for students with additional needs? Does personal tutoring meet the University personal tutoring policy?

**11 Colleagues should also familiarise themselves with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others, December 2012, available as a link from:** [**https://www2.aston.ac.uk/clipp/quality/a-z/collaborativeprovision/index**](https://www2.aston.ac.uk/clipp/quality/a-z/collaborativeprovision/index).

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