The Role of the University Link Tutor – Guidance and Processes

1. Introduction

1.1. University of Worcester courses delivered by partner organisations are supported by a Link Tutor, who is a nominated member of academic staff within one of the Schools at the University of Worcester. This would normally be the 'host' School in which the collaborative provision sits.

1.2. In most cases, there will be a named Course Leader/Manager within the partner organisation, who will be the Link Tutor's main point of contact.

1.3. Given the range of partner organisations it is recognised that the role of the Link Tutor may vary depending on the nature of the collaborative provision, the maturity of the relationship and if the course is delivered at an overseas location. However, the guidance for the role outlined below provides the key generic requirements and responsibilities of the Link Tutor.

1.4. The role of the Link Tutor is not dependent on the funding arrangements for the course – all collaborative courses can expect the same minimum requirements for quality oversight and support from their Link Tutor.

1.5. The Head of Collaborative Programmes in conjunction with the Senior Quality Officer (Collaborative) support the on-going development of the link tutor role and oversee the associated processes. Individual Link Tutors are managed within their School.

2. Overall Purpose of the Role

2.1. The Link Tutor role is key to the successful operation of the University's collaborative provision. Link Tutors make a significant contribution to the University's effective management and oversight of its partnership arrangements. The role contributes to meeting the requirements of the Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of Registration for Quality and Standards and the expectations and core practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA, 2023), and guiding principles of the Advice and Guidance for Partnerships (QAA, 2018).

2.2. Their primary role is facilitating and maintaining two-way communication between the Partner and the University. The Link Tutor is the key contact with the Partner Course Leader and with other appropriate staff at course level in the partner organisation. It is expected that the Link Tutor will work closely with them, acting as both a critical friend and offering support, guidance and advice to the relevant partner course team.

2.3. Link Tutors have a key role in supporting the application of University regulations, policy and procedures and signposting to other key departments outside of the School, e.g. Registry, Admissions, Student Services. They also have a role in monitoring academic standards and the quality of the student experience within the collaborative provision and ensuring that timely intervention occurs where appropriate. Consequently, the role of a Link Tutor requires experience of course management and delivery at the University, knowledge of the University's regulatory and quality expectations, understanding of partnership working and time to undertake the role, which may be greater in the earlier years of a new course or partnership.

3. Link Tutor Role and Responsibilities

Key aspects of the Link Tutor role are summarised in Diagram One. An Indicative Calendar of Link Tutor activities is also provided. This can be adapted by the Link Tutor to take account of specific partnership/course arrangements and those of the School.

3.1. Monitor the application of quality assurance and enhancement procedures in course management to ensure correct processes are followed and timely intervention occurs where appropriate, including:

   a. Ensure engagement of partner course teams in processes to facilitate the registration, retention, progression, and where necessary withdrawal of students on the partner course;
   b. Confirm that assessment arrangements are satisfactory and that timely internal and external moderation of marking is planned and takes place. This includes ensuring consistency across partners and cross moderation if a multiple partner course;
   c. Ensure that assessment results are submitted and exam boards take place for the course, either at the partner or at the University;
   d. Check that appropriate arrangements are in place for obtaining student feedback, including module evaluation, course experience survey and engagement with the NSS;
   e. Check programme information, including the programme specification, course handbooks and module outlines;
   f. Remind the course team that all teaching staff must be approved as Registered Lecturers with the University prior to their involvement in course delivery and any changes to the course team reported to the Academic Quality Unit.

3.2. Provide quality oversight of the course:

   a. Ensure that the course is operating in accordance with the Partnership Agreement, Course Approval (i.e. Course Handbook and associated documentation, e.g. WBL Handbooks) and University quality assurance requirements;
   b. Monitor the consistency in public information provided to prospective and current students, including UW and partner websites
   c. Provide a mid-year report on quality and standards of delivery at the partner, raising any issues of concern impacting on the student experience and identifying actions taken;
   d. Produce an annual Link Tutor Report (and share the draft report with the course team, prior to the production of the partner's course Annual Evaluation Report)
   e. Support the course team in accessing and engaging with key performance data, including OfS Outcomes data in their production of the Annual Evaluation Report, and review the draft report.

3.3. Attend and participate in the following meetings:

   a. Attend Link Tutor Forums to maintain currency and share good practice
   b. Attend Student: Staff Liaison committee meetings to represent the University perspective and advise the course team
   c. Attend course team meetings wherever possible or schedule regular meetings with the Course Leader to provide support and advice
   d. Attend Examination Boards (NB the Link Tutor must not chair the board, this must be the UW Head of School or nominee)

3.4. Provide support to the Course Leader or key contact at partner organisation:

   a. Support the course team in the understanding and implementation of University regulations, policies, processes and procedures

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b. Support the course team in aspects of recruitment and admissions procedures and retention;

c. Support the course team in promoting student engagement with module evaluation, the NSS and Course Experience Surveys where appropriate;

d. Respond to issues raised by the course team and liaise with other University staff to elicit responses and support as necessary, and ensure that contacts are put in place with relevant central departments (e.g. AQU, Library Services, Registry Services, Admissions, Student Services/First Point)

e. Direct the course team to staff development opportunities, including those available at the University

f. Play an active role in encouraging course enhancement to ensure the ongoing currency of the course

g. Support the course team in preparing for course or module amendments, course re-approvals, and partnership periodic reviews.

3.5. Provide a link for partner students:

a. Participate in student induction

b. Meet with students, and promote the role of student academic representative, to provide opportunities for student engagement and feedback on their experiences (in addition to the Student: Staff Liaison Committee);

c. Promote progression and support transition from the partner organisation to the University

4. Reporting

4.1. All Link Tutors are **required to complete an Annual Link Tutor Report at the end of the academic year/Semester Two** (in accordance with the University's annual evaluation cycle). The report summarises their views on the operation of the collaborative provision at a particular partner based on information gathered during Link Tutor visits and dialogue with the partner during the academic year (**see Link Tutor Report Template**). This report forms part of the annual evaluation of the course.

4.2. Link Tutors also provide interim feedback on the operation of the partner course early in the cycle through **a mid-year report (see Link Tutor Mid-Year Report Template)**. This should confirm processes have been completed appropriately, e.g. admissions and registration, approval of public information and identify any issues arising from dialogue with partner staff and students and the Student: Staff Liaison Committee and how these are being addressed. This report is completed at the end of Semester One (or equivalent).

5. Link Tutor Induction/Briefing

5.1. New Link Tutors (and those returning to the role after a significant break, i.e. more than 2 years) are required to attend **a formal Link Tutor induction/briefing** provided by the Head of Collaborative Programmes/AQU as preparation for the role. Where possible, this will take place early in the semester in which they commence the role. It may also be possible to arrange "buddying" where a more experienced Link Tutor provides support to a new Link Tutor during their first year.

6. Link Tutor Forum

6.1. Link Tutors are expected to attend the bi-annual Link Tutor Forums which are coordinated by the Head of Collaborative Programmes and AQU. The Forums aim to support the Link Tutors in performing their role, provide updates on policy and procedural changes relevant to collaborative provision, maintain currency and share experiences and good practice in collaborative working.

6.2. Link Tutors are invited to attend the annual Partner Staff Development event.

Diagram 1 - Summary of the Link Tutor Role

Monitoring of Quality Assurance and Enhancement

- Ensure partner engagement in processes for registration, retention, progression and, if necessary, withdrawal of students
- Confirm assessment arrangements are planned and take place, including submission of marks, exam boards, verification, internal and external moderation, cross-moderation (where applicable) and feedback.
- Check programme information, including the programme specification, course handbooks and module outlines
- Check appropriate arrangements are in place for obtaining student feedback, including module evaluation, course surveys and engagement with the NSS

Attendance and participation at meetings

- Attend Link Tutor Forums
- Attend Student: Staff Liaison committee meetings
- Attend course team meetings

Providing a link for partner students

- Participate in student induction
- Meet with students, and promote the role of course representative, to provide opportunities for student engagement and feedback on their experiences (in addition to the Student: Staff Liaison Committee);
- Promote progression and support transition from the partner to the University

Providing quality oversight

- Ensure the course is operating in accordance with the Partnership Agreement and Course Approval
- Monitor the consistency in public information provided to prospective and current students, including UW and partner websites
- Provide a mid-year report, raising issues of concern and actions taken;
- Produce an annual Link Tutor Report
- Support the course team in accessing and engaging with key performance data, including OfS Outcomes data in their production of the Annual Evaluation Report

Providing support to Course Leader

- Support the course team in the implementation of University regulations, policy and processes
- Support the course team in aspects of recruitment and admissions procedures and retention
- Support in planning recruitment activities
- Support the course team in promoting student engagement with module evaluation, the NSS and CES where relevant;
- Respond to issues raised by course team and liaise with other University staff to elicit responses
- Direct the course team to staff development opportunities
- Play an active role in course enhancement
- Support the course team in preparing for course re-approvals and reviews (as appropriate)

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7.   Support, Queries and Concerns

7.1. The University Link Tutor is supported and advised by:
  - The Head of School/Department and/or nominated Partnerships Lead in the host School/Department
  - The Head of Collaborative Programmes and Senior Quality Officer (Collaborative)
  - For International Partnerships, support is available from the Head of Collaborative Programmes and Worcester International

7.2. If Link Tutors have concerns regarding the management or quality of a collaborative course they should seek guidance from the nominated member of staff in their academic Department/School with responsibility for partnerships and collaborative provision, and ensure that the Head of Collaborative Programmes and Senior Quality Officer (Collaborative) are also informed.

7.3. If partner staff have concerns regarding the Link Tutor role they should seek guidance from the relevant academic Department/School, the Head of Collaborative Programmes and partner senior management as appropriate.

8.   Other Support for Partners

8.1. In addition to the Link Tutor, staff at partner organisations can find support and advice from a range of services at the University, including:

University Partner Webpages

  - The partner webpages are available at http://www.worc.ac.uk/partners/ and act as a repository of information for all staff involved with partnerships.

Academic Quality Unit

  - The Senior Quality Officer (Collaborative) provides specific support for partnerships/collaborative arrangements regarding quality assurance and enhancement processes and procedures. The Departmental Administrator (Quality and Educational Development) can provide advice on the Registered Lecturer application process.

Head of Collaborative Programmes

  - The Head of Collaborative Programmes has responsibility for oversight of collaborative programmes from their approval and in their on-going delivery, for promoting effective operational processes and partnership working and acts as the senior contact person in providing support and guidance for staff developing and managing collaborative programmes both in the University and partner organisations.

Library Services

  - The Academic Liaison Librarians within Library Services each support specific academic Schools, including their collaborative provision. The Link Tutor should support partner staff in setting up contacts with the relevant Academic Liaison Librarian.
  - In addition, the Partnerships & Transitions Liaison Librarian has specific responsibility for partnerships.
  - Staff who are Registered Lecturers/Administrators/HE Managers can contact IT via the IT Website or by calling 01905 85 7500 for IT support.

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Firstpoint (Telephone 01905 542551 or email firstpoint@worc.ac.uk)

- Firstpoint is the first point of contact for all student enquiries whether they are about fees and finance, registration, ID cards, disability support, study abroad, module choice or anything concerning student life at the University of Worcester. Firstpoint's advisers aim to handle the majority of enquiries themselves but can also call upon specialist advisers from Student Services and others. Firstpoint advisers can also make appointments with specialists such as counsellors and mental health advisers.

Registry Services _– Student Records_

- The teams within Student Records are responsible for managing the records of all UW students within specific subject areas, including collaborative provision. The Link Tutor should support partner staff in setting up contacts with the relevant member(s) of staff in this department so that partners can liaise directly with Student Records as appropriate.

Communications and External Affairs – Admissions

- The teams within Admissions manage the admissions processes for UW courses, including most collaborative courses. The Link Tutor should support partner staff in setting up contacts with the relevant member(s) of staff in this department so that partners can liaise directly with Admissions as appropriate.

Staff development

- **_Educational Development -_** Registered Lecturers are eligible for consideration of a fee reduction for relevant higher level postgraduate study offered by the University, including the PGCert Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. Please contact the Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Project Officer (Josh Simpson, j.simpson@worc.ac.uk) for further information regarding the PGCert.

- Registered Lecturers can access relevant staff development at the University through the portal 'Staff Development Workshops' on the University's Staff webpages depending on availability (University log-in required).

- Partner staff should be invited to any staff development opportunities available through the **_relevant academic School or Department_** – Link Tutors should forward opportunities to course teams as appropriate.

- Partner staff are also invited to specific **_partner staff development days_**, such as the annual Partner Staff Development Day.

Communications and public information

- The University's Communications and External Affairs Department can provide advice to partners regarding course pages, publicity and marketing materials.

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	Appendix 1 - Indicative Link Tutor Calendar: Can be adapted by Schools	Throughout the year
September	• Participate in course inductions	• Attend course team meetings wherever possible
	• Attend reassessment boards (if applicable) [may not apply to all partner crses]	• Be aware of partnership agreement and confirm that course is operating in accordance with the agreement and course as it was approved [NB any subsequent changes]
	• Remind course team about Registered Lecturer Status and check new tutors are approved prior to teaching	
	• Confirm all arrangements are in place for start of year, e.g. course handbook, Student:Staff Liaison committees, student feedback opportunities, assessment schedule and exam boards [NB assessment and feedback calendar for students]	• Support course team in understanding of UW regulations, policies and processes
	• Submit Link Tutor report to UW and partner for previous academic year	• Remind course team about Registered Lecturer status and process of approval if any staff change
	• Support course team in submitting Annual Evaluation Report to UW	
	• Attend UW Partner staff development day	
	• Confirm all information about the course(s) on the partner's and UW website is accurate, no contradiction between web based information and the programme specification and correct use of logos/identity	• Support course teams in developing contacts with central UW departments
October	• Promote retention and progression - identify student numbers, engagement, reminder re: recording attendance	• Liaise to resolve queries/troubleshoot, e.g. applications process
	• Participate in AER peer scrutiny exercise	• <mark>Support course teams in planning recruitment activities</mark>
November	• Attend Link Tutor Forum	
	• Attend Course Leaders Forum (School-based if applicable)	• Direct the course team to staff development opportunities
December	• Attend Student: Staff Liaison meetings	• Play an active role in course enhancement
	• Check arrangements are in place for module evaluation	
	• Confirm arrangements are in place for moderation	• Support partner CLs with student participation in module evaluation, NSS and CES
	• Promote progression	
January	• Attend new external examiners induction day (if the course has new EE)	
	• Submit Mid-Year Link Tutor Report	• Support the course team in preparations for course re-
February	• Attend Examination Boards (if applicable)	
March	• Promote progression and support transition to UW	
April	• Attend Student:Staff Liaison meetings	
	• Check arrangements are in place for module evaluation	
	• Confirm arrangements are in place for moderation	
	• Check progress with recruitment/application numbers for next academic year	
May	• Attend pre-boards	

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June	• Attend Examination Boards • Attend Link Tutor Forum	approvals, periodic reviews and partnership reviews (if appropriate)
July	• Attend School partner staff development day (if applicable)	• Support CL/ team with preparation for College Course and module amendments sub-group (CMAS)
August/ September	• Draft Link Tutor reports • <mark>Support partner staff in accessing UW data systems</mark> • Consider draft Annual Evaluation Report from course teams • Support transition to UW (if appropriate) • Support course team in preparations for next academic year	• Attend UW/Partner strategic partnership meetings • Support CL/module leads if action plan necessary post module evaluation • Identify any staff development needs

Approval/Review Table

Item	Notes
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Approved by	Academic Board
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Policy Officer	Head of Collaborative Programmes
Department	Directorate of Quality and Educational Development
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