

P1 S7 Educational Collaborative Arrangements - Governance Framework



INTRODUCTION

Forus Training's requirements for educational collaborative arrangements are set out in this Code of Practice, hereafter referred to as 'the Code'. The Code provides a formal structure for the development of educational collaborative arrangements within a quality assurance framework. This structure and framework incorporates the principles from QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines *Section 10: Other Parties Involved in Education and Training; 10.2 External partnerships and second providers*.

Adherence by the collaborator to Forus Training's quality assurance policies, procedures and processes including course monitoring, review and evaluation is of primary importance in this framework

All elements relating to the operation, quality assurance, monitoring and review of collaborative arrangements are governed by this Collaborative Framework including how such arrangements articulate with the Governance Framework.

The Quality Assurance and Academic Governance Council is responsible for the Code and for embedding policy and processes and ultimate oversight for educational collaborative arrangements within Forus Training's wider quality assurance governance. It has a central role in the safeguarding of quality and standards. It oversees the framework and the type of arrangement agreed, each of which is reviewed annually. It scrutinises proposals for new educational collaborative arrangements and for the renewal of existing arrangements following periodic review, to ensure that these align with Forus Training's regulatory, policy and quality assurance framework.

DEFINITIONS

Educational Collaborative Arrangement

An educational collaborative arrangement is a programme of study, or a part of a programme of study, that is delivered, supported or assessed with another organisation. An arrangement will fall within the scope of this Code if the achievement of the learning outcomes for a module or programme is dependent on the collaboration. The Code applies to educational collaborative arrangements with any organisation, within Ireland, where the achievement of learning outcomes is dependent on the collaboration.

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KEY PRINCIPLES

Educational collaborative arrangements can produce effective and innovative programmes by combining expertise and resources. They must align with Forus Training’s aims in order to justify the associated risks and the resources required to deliver them successfully.

Educational collaborative arrangements must be developed in accordance with the Governance Framework for Educational Collaborative Arrangements, as outlined in the following section. When Forus Training considers whether to work collaboratively, it is required to assess:

1. The rationale for the collaboration;
2. The contribution of the potential collaborating organisation(s) to Forus Training’s aims;
3. The infrastructure required for the collaboration to work effectively and with academic integrity.

Collaborating organisations should be highly-regarded organisations that share or have the capacity to share Forus Training’s educational aims and values. The quality of the learning opportunities and the learning environment are crucial concerns. As the approved QQI provider / validated programme owner, Forus Training has ultimate responsibility for the academic standards of its awards and the quality of the learning opportunities provided for its learners.

Educational collaborative arrangements are carefully developed and considered to safeguard the learner’s learning experience.

It is vital that arrangements give due attention to issues of academic standards and quality assurance. Clear agreement must be reached on the roles and responsibilities of each collaborating organisation.

THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The Quality Assurance and Academic Governance Council QAAGC is responsible for the framework and for embedding policy and processes and ultimate oversight for educational collaborative arrangements within Forus Training’s wider quality assurance governance. It has a central role in the safeguarding of quality and standards. It oversees the Code and the type of arrangement agreed, each of which is reviewed annually. It scrutinises proposals for new educational collaborative arrangements and for the renewal of existing arrangements following periodic review, to ensure that these align with Forus Training’s regulatory, policy and quality assurance framework.

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Other services within Forus Training that perform roles in the development and scrutiny of collaborative arrangements are: Head of Centre, Head of Operations, Head of Certification, Programme Delivery & Assessment Committee, Accounts Manager, Programme Development Manager, Course Coordinator, Director of First Impressions and Certification. For the purpose of this framework, these will be jointly known as internal professional services.

Figure 1: Governance Framework Summary for Educational Collaborative Arrangements

SAFEGUARDING QUALITY AND STANDARDS

Forus Training has ultimate responsibility for the academic standards and quality of its awards and programmes, including those that are wholly or partly conducted by collaborating organisations.

Responsibility for academic standards must be maintained in the context of educational collaborative arrangements. It must be ensured that standards reach the appropriate level in the National Framework for Qualifications and that Forus Training's assessment policies, procedures and processes are applied, including appropriate arrangements for external authentication and Results Approval Panels.

Forus Training's responsibility for quality assurance and the role of its quality assurance procedures must be clear to all collaborating organisations.

It is not normally permitted for a collaborating organisation to sub-contract collaborative provision to a third party, or assign powers delegated by Forus Training through an arrangement of its own. Exceptionally, proposals for sub-contracted arrangements must be endorsed by the QAAGC in principle before proceeding.

All learners who are registered for QQI awards with Forus Training, being delivered through an educational collaborative arrangement are considered learners of Forus Training for external and internal quality assurance purposes. Regardless of where they are located, these learners must not be disadvantaged in terms of the quality of learning opportunities.

In cases where Forus Training is a partner in a collaborative arrangement led by another organisation, the arrangement must still be consistent with this Code, including suitable provisions for annual programme review and external authentication. Any differences must be agreed as part of the approval process and explicitly stated in the written agreement.

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THE PROGRAMME LEADER

Forus Training will appoint an Programme Leader with appropriate delegated authority to manage an educational collaborative arrangement.

It is the responsibility of the QAAGC to ensure that suitable Programme Leaders are appointed, that they have appropriate knowledge and skills, and that they have time to carry out their obligations.

The Programme Lead is responsible for making collaborating organisation(s) aware that educational collaborative arrangements are subject to Forus Training's internal quality assurance procedures and underpinned by the principles from QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines *Section 10: Other Parties Involved in Education and Training; 10.2 External partnerships and second providers*.

Forus Training must be able to satisfy itself that the terms and conditions that were originally approved continue to be met, and that educational collaborative arrangements maintain adequate leadership.

A CENTRAL REGISTER

Forus Training maintains a central register of its educational collaborative arrangements. The register provides an accurate and up-to-date record of educational collaborative arrangements, and forms part of the oversight of these activities.

Programme Leaders are responsible for maintaining and ensuring that accurate and timely information on approved arrangements is uploaded and updated on the register.

The register is reviewed annually by the QAAGC.

DOCUMENTATION AND THE CENTRAL REPOSITORY

Forus Training expects that the documentation related to educational collaborative arrangements is accurate, complete and readily accessible. Formal documents establishing or renewing arrangements are held by QAAGC. Detailed records on the operation of an agreement are held locally and are the responsibility of the Programme Leader.

The central repository for Collaboration Agreements establishing or renewing educational collaborative arrangements is held by the QAAGC.

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A RISK-BASED APPROACH

Forus Training adopts a risk-based approach in developing, approving and managing educational collaborative arrangements. This risk-based approach is then used to approve, manage and review educational collaborative arrangements. This assists in mitigating the inherent risks of working with other organisations. Procedures for the approval and review of arrangements are tailored and proportionate to the risks of the collaboration.

An assessment of the risks of a potential collaboration is undertaken by Forus Training prior to the approval process. Assessment is based on a checklist system that takes account of the complexity of the collaborative arrangement, the resources available for the collaboration, and the status of the collaborating organisation(s), amongst other factors.

All potential arrangements are subject to the Forus Training [risk assessment policy](#) and [risk register](#).

DEVELOPING NEW EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

New educational collaborative arrangements will originate from either Forus Training strategic initiatives or from within programmes.

In all cases, the key principles, including strategic fit, the compatibility of potential collaborating organisations and the quality of learning opportunities – must be considered when developing new educational collaborative arrangements.

The **Governance Framework for Educational Collaborative Arrangements** is of particular relevance when developing a new arrangement. All proposals will be scrutinised in the context of the key principles in combination with the risk-based approach set out in the framework. It is therefore essential that these factors are considered when developing educational collaborations.

1. If an arrangement is being developed that does not fall into one of the permitted categories set out in the Governance Framework for Educational Collaborative Arrangements, advice must be sought from the QAAGC before submission to the initial assessment stage.
2. A Programme Leader must be in place to take a proposal forward. The focal point in supporting the development and negotiation of proposed new collaborative arrangements is provided by the QAAGC. Support will also be provided by the other organisational services as required.
3. During the development stage, timely consideration should be given to how the requirements of any professional, statutory or regulatory body will be met to secure accreditation of programme(s) that are to be delivered through the proposed collaborative arrangement.

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THE APPROVAL PROCESS

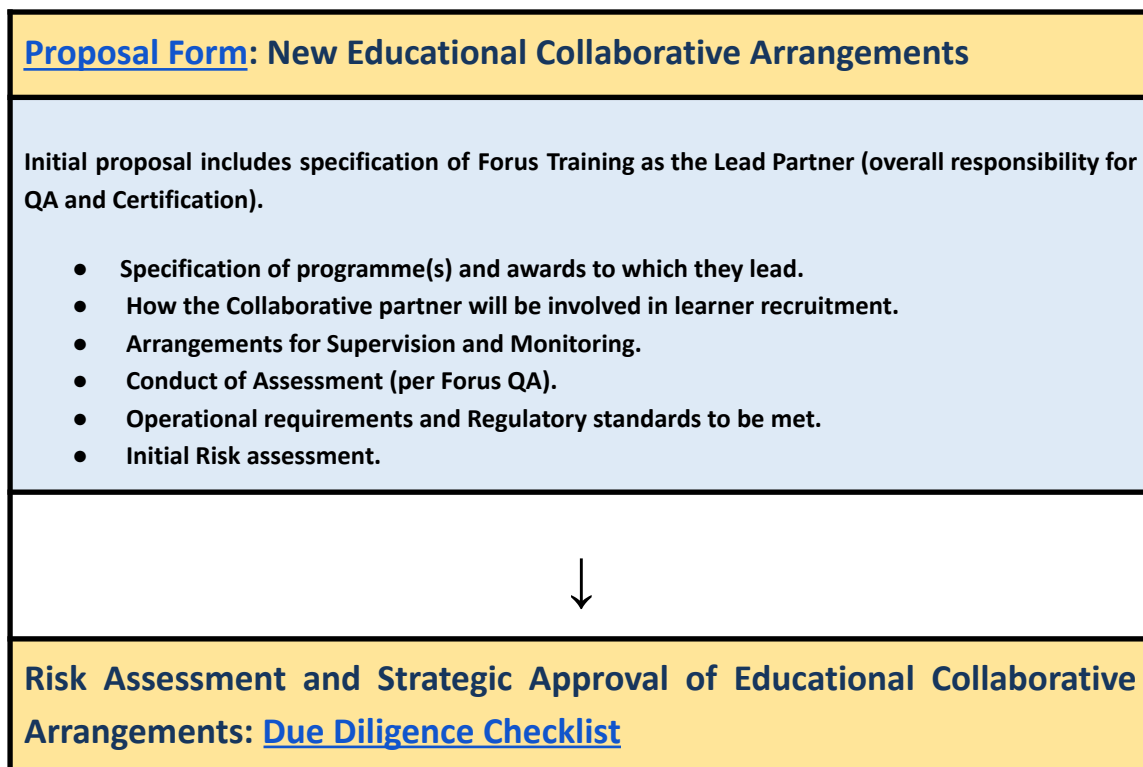
Scrutiny of proposals for new collaborative arrangements includes those where Forus Training is a partner in a collaborative arrangement led by another organisation. It is proportionate to the nature and complexity of the arrangement and the level of risk involved. Forus Training led scrutiny is carried out by the Head of Centre with oversight by the QAAGC.

Legal, financial and academic due diligence checks must form a key part of the approval process.

All proposals for educational collaborative arrangements are subject to an initial assessment stage. Programmes involving collaborative arrangements must subsequently follow the formal programme approval process.

Proposals for new educational collaborative arrangements submit to an initial assessment stage. This is designed to (i) confirm that there is a strategic fit and (ii) assign risk to the proposed arrangement using the risk assessment framework. The **Proposal Form – New Educational Collaborative Arrangement** is used for this stage of the process.

Figure 2: Summary of approval framework for Educational Collaborative Arrangements



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Proposal must have agreement of QAAGC before proceeding to Due Diligence.

- Full Risk assessment as part of Due Diligence.
- Full investigation of proposed partner's standing: establishment, mission, QA, resources and facilities. Legal, financial and academic standing fully reviewed.
- Due Diligence report re-submitted to QAAGC for approval to proceed to MoU.



Memorandum of Understanding (Collaborative Agreement)

*Adherence to Forus Training quality assurance policies, procedures and processes including course monitoring, review and evaluation.

The written agreement will cover, as applicable, inter alia:

- The responsibilities of the collaborating organisations;
- Regulations and quality assurance processes;
- Arrangements for the admission and registration of learners;
- Assessment requirements;
- Award arrangements;
- Financial arrangements;
- Provisions for withdrawal or termination of the agreement;
- Including the discharging of obligations to learners in those circumstances.

Collaboration Agreements with insufficient information will be considered incomplete and will not be approved.



P4 S1 Data Processing Agreement for Collaborative Agreements

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The Code of Practice is supported by relevant QA documentation including a signed data processing agreement and forms/documents relevant to the collaborative process and programme delivery.

These include:

- Proposal Form: Educational Collaborative Arrangements
- Collaborative Arrangement for Course Form
- Learner Recruitment Registration Policy

THE WRITTEN AGREEMENT

Once a proposal for an educational collaborative arrangement has been approved, a written agreement must be put in place before it becomes active. A written agreement is required for all arrangements.

This will generally take the form of a Collaboration Agreement.

Where Forus Training is not the lead, the Forus Training appointed Programme Leader must still ensure that the content set out in this Code is included in the written agreement.

The written agreement will cover, as applicable, *inter alia*: the responsibilities of the collaborating organisations; regulations and quality assurance processes; arrangements for the admission and registration of learners; assessment requirements; award arrangements; financial arrangements; and provisions for withdrawal or termination of the agreement, including the discharging of obligations to learners in those circumstances. Collaboration Agreements with insufficient information will be considered incomplete and will not be approved.

Learner admissions and registration arrangements are fundamental to all educational collaborative arrangements. Responsibilities for admissions decisions and management of the admissions process, and with which organisation learners will be registered, must be, where applicable, set out in the written agreement.

All educational collaborative arrangements must be fully costed and accounted for comprehensively with adequate safeguards and contingency plans against financial or other considerations that might compromise academic standards or the quality of learning opportunities. A detailed Financial Memorandum may form part of the written agreement where applicable.

Expectations concerning the involvement of collaborating organisations in Forus Training's quality assurance procedures must be set out in the written agreement.

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The written agreement must make clear which organisation is responsible for issuing award certificates and transcripts. Forus Training must retain control of award certificates and transcripts issued in its name.

Arrangements for terminating a collaborative arrangement must be included in the written agreement.

Collaboration Agreements are put in place for a specified period and must be ratified by the QAAGC.

IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY

Responsibility for delivery

The Programme Leader has responsibility for overseeing the delivery of an educational collaborative arrangement in accordance with the written agreement. Where a Collaboration Agreement is in place, this should include an annually-updated operating agreement.

It must be clear throughout the programme of study which collaborating organisation has ultimate responsibility for the learner, as distinct from the organisation where the learner is based at any one time (and where visiting registration arrangements may be made to enable the learner to access appropriate facilities).

It must be clear with which awarding body a learner is to be registered. The relationship of the learner to Forus Training and to the other collaborating organisation(s) must be clear - for example in terms of grants or funding - and provision must be made for appropriate exit routes for learners.

Information requirements

Public information on educational collaborative arrangements, and information for both prospective and current learners, must be clear and accurate. This must include details on the roles of the collaborating organisations in terms of teaching, supervision, facilities and other aspects of programme delivery. There must also be an explicit statement on which collaborating organisation will be granting the award. The responsibilities for producing, approving and monitoring information must be clearly set out.

Current learners must receive timely information clarifying their relationship to the organisations involved in the collaborative arrangement; what regulations and procedures apply to them, including for complaints and appeals; their entitlements; and how to access relevant services and support.

Learners undertaking a programme delivered in a collaborating organisation venue that leads to a Forus Training QQI Approved award must be made aware in all programme and publicity material

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that they are Forus Training learners and are therefore subject to the Forus Training Learner Code of Conduct.

MONITORING REQUIREMENTS

All programmes delivered through educational collaborative arrangements are subject to Forus Training's Quality Assurance procedures. The Programme Leader has responsibility for this requirement, with support from the Head of Centre and the QAAGC.

The Programme Leader is responsible for ensuring that quality assurance procedures for educational collaborative arrangements are in place, and that collaborating partners are appropriately involved in these procedures.

All programmes delivered through educational collaborative arrangements are subject to an Annual Programme Review (APR).

The Monitoring, Review and Self-Evaluation policy and report templates include specific directions for the reviewing of programmes, including those delivered through educational collaborative arrangements.

PERIODIC REVIEW AND RENEGOTIATION / RENEWAL

All educational collaborative arrangements are subject to a periodic review process which will include an initial risk reassessment screening. This process includes refreshed due diligence checks and the reassessment of risk. Arrangements can only be renewed once the review has been satisfactorily concluded.

Arrangements deemed to require enhanced scrutiny will then also be subject to a panel review stage before the renegotiation/renewal of the arrangement can take place. The scrutiny of the review process is carried out by the Programme Delivery and Assessment Committee with oversight by the QAAGC.

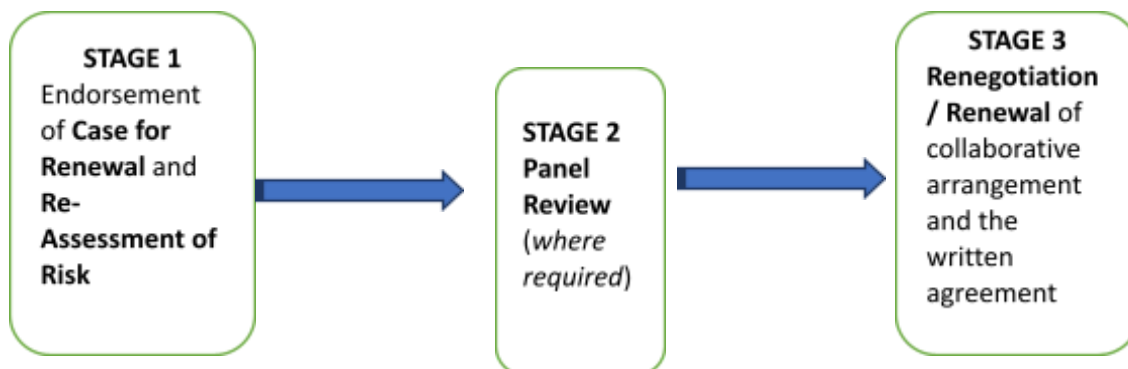
Following the reassessment of risk, arrangements deemed to require enhanced scrutiny must complete a formal panel review process before the renegotiation/ renewal of the arrangement can take place.

For arrangements that have a Collaboration Agreement, review will normally occur one year before the arrangement is due for renewal, unless otherwise stated in the agreement or deemed necessary for other reasons.

The Programme Leader is responsible for leading the periodic review process.

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Figure 3: Summary of periodic review framework for Educational Collaborative Arrangements



TERMINATION OF EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

The provisions for terminating an educational collaborative arrangement must be included in the written agreement. Proposals for termination or non-renewal of arrangements must be scrutinised by the Forus QAAGC before being confirmed.

Where a collaborative arrangement is being terminated, appropriate provision must be made for learners, staff and resources during the final phase(s) of its operation. This provision must be set out in an exit strategy, which describes how suitable support and guidance will be given to learners.

APPENDIX 1: COLLABORATIVE AGREEMENT REGISTER

Sean Burke Training

APPENDIX 2: ASSOCIATED POLICIES

[P6 S8 C10 Programme Evaluation, Monitoring & Review Policy and Procedure](#)