

**The Role of the University Link Tutor – Guidance and Processes**

**(Updated September 2019)**

1. **Introduction**
	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.
	2. In most cases, there will be a named Course Leader/Manager within the partner institution, who will be the Link Tutor’s main point of contact. In a small number of cases, the Link Tutor may also be the Course Leader/Co-Coordinator if they have a strong involvement in teaching on the course.
	3. Given the range of partner institutions 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 basic requirements and responsibilities in which the Link Tutor is expected to be involved.
	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.
	5. The Head of Collaborative Programmes in conjunction with the Deputy Head of Academic Quality support the on-going development of the link tutor role and oversee the associated processes. Individual Link Tutors are managed within their School and College.
2. **Overall Purpose of the Role**
	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 expectations and core practices for Standards and Quality of the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code) (QAA, 2018) and reflects the guiding principles of the [Advice and Guidance for Partnerships](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/partnerships) (QAA, 2018)
	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.
	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, 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.

* 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:**
1. Ensure engagement of partner course teams in processes to facilitate the registration, pro­gression, and where necessary withdrawal of students on the partner course;
2. 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;
3. Ensure that assessment results are submitted and exam boards take place for the course, either at the partner or at the University;
4. Check that appropriate arrangements are in place for obtaining student feedback, including module evaluation, course experience survey and engagement with the NSS;
5. Check programme information, including the programme specification, course handbooks and module outlines;
6. 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.
	1. **Provide quality oversight of the course:**
		1. 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;
		2. Monitor the consistency in public information provided to prospective and current students, including UW and partner websites
		3. 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;
		4. 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)
		5. Support the course team in the production of the Annual Evaluation Report, including considering a draft report.
	2. **Attend the following meetings:**
7. Attend Link Tutor Forums to maintain currency and share good practice
8. Attend course committee meetings to represent the University perspective and advise the course team
9. Attend course team meetings (in addition to course committee meetings) wherever possible or schedule regular meetings with the Course Leader to provide support and advice
10. Attend Examination Boards (NB the Link Tutor must not chair the board, this must be the UW Head of School or nominee) to support the course team
	1. **Provide support to the Course Leader or key contact at partner institution:**
11. Support the course team in the understanding and implementation of University regulations, policies, processes and procedures
12. Support the course team in aspects of recruitment and admissions procedures;
13. Support the course team in promoting student engagement with the NSS (and Course Experience Surveys where appropriate);
14. 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, Student Services/First Point)
15. Direct the course team to staff development opportunities, including those available at the University
16. Play an active role in encouraging course enhancement to ensure the ongoing currency of the course
17. Support the course team in preparing for course or module amendments, course re-approvals, and partnership periodic reviews
	1. **Provide a link for partner students:**
18. Participate in student induction
19. 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 Course Management Committee);
20. Promote progression and support transition from the partner institution to the University
21. **Reporting**
	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.
	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 Course Management Committee and how these are being addressed. This report is completed at the end of Semester One (or equivalent).
22. **Link Tutor Induction/Briefing**
	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.
	2. Further information to support induction and briefing on the Link Tutor role is provided on the Link Tutor Blackboard site.
23. **Link Tutor Forum**
	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.
	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, pro­gression and, where 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
* Remind the course team that all teaching staff must be set up as Registered Lecturers

***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 Course Management Committee);
* Promote progression and support transition from the partner to the University

***Attendance at meetings***

* Attend Link Tutor Forums
* Attend course committee meetings
* Attend course team meetings
* Attend Examination Boards

***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 update report, raising issues of concern and actions taken;
* Produce an annual Link Tutor Report
* Support the course team in the 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
* Support the course team in promoting student engagement with the NSS (and CES where used);
* 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)
1. **Support, Queries and Concerns**
	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 Deputy Head of Academic Quality
* For International Partnerships, support is available from the Deputy Head of Academic Quality and Worcester International
	1. 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 Deputy Head of Academic Quality are also informed.
	2. 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.
1. **Other Support for Partners**
	1. In addition to the Link Tutor, staff at partner institutions 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 Deputy Head of Academic Quality, Melanie Jarman (m.jarman@worc.ac.uk) provides specific support for partnerships/collaborative arrangements regarding quality assurance and enhancement processes and procedures. Charlotte Taylor (charlotte.taylor@worc.ac.uk ) can provide advice on the Registered Lecturer application process.

***Head of Collaborative Programmes***

* The Head of Collaborative Programmes, Sue Cuthbert (s.cuthbert@worc.ac.uk) 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, Rosamund Sykes (r.sykes@worc.ac.uk) works as Partnerships & Transitions Liaison Librarian, with specific responsibility for partnerships.
* Staff who are Registered Lecturers/Administrators/HE Managers can contact the ICT Service Desk (<https://servicedesk.worc.ac.uk/> or by calling 01905 85 7500) for IT support.

***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 the 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.

***Registry Services – 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 direct with Admissions as appropriate.

***Student Services***

* Student Services provide support to students in a range of areas including finance, careers advice, counselling and disability/dyslexia support. The Link Tutor should support partner staff in liaising with the relevant Student Services contact so that partners can liaise directly with this department 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 Liz Bessant, the QED Project Coordinator, Quality and Educational Development (e.bessant@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.

* Partner staff should be invited to any staff development opportunities available through the ***relevant academic School or Department*** – Link Tutors should forward on any such opportunities to course teams as appropriate.
* HE Managers are invited to the twice-yearly ***HE Managers’ Forum***, organised by the Head of Collaborative Programmes and the Academic Quality Unit.
* Partner staff are also invited to specific ***partner staff development days***, such as the annual New Partner Staff Development Day and the Partner Conference.

***Communications and public information***

* The University’s [Communications & Participation department](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/comms/index.html) can provide advice to partners regarding publicity and prospectus 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
* 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]
* Support course team in understanding of UW regulations, policies and processes
* Remind course team about Registered Lecturer Status and process of approval if any staff change
* Support course teams in developing contacts with central UW departments
* Liaise to resolve queries/troubleshoot, e.g. applications process
* Direct the course team to staff development opportunities
* Play an active role in course enhancement
* Support partner CLs with student participation in NSS and CES
* Support the course team in preparations for course re-approvals, periodic reviews and partnership reviews (if appropriate)
* Support CL/ team with preparation for College Course and module amendments sub group (CMAS)
* Attend UW/Partner strategic partnership meetings
* Support CL/module leads if action plan necessary post module evaluation
* Identify any staff development needs
 |
|  | * Attend reassessment boards (if applicable) [may not apply to all partner crses]
 |
|  | * 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, course management committees, student feedback opportunities, assessment schedule and exam boards [NB assessment and feedback calendar for students]
 |
|  | * Submit Link Tutor report to UW and partner for previous academic year
 |
|  | * 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, there is no contradiction between web based information and the programme specification and correct use of logos/identity
 |
| October | * Promote retention and progression - identify student numbers, engagement, reminder re: recording attendance
 |
|  | * Participate in AER peer scrutiny exercise
 |
| November | * Attend Link Tutor Forum
 |
|  | * Attend Course Leaders Forum (School-based if applicable)
 |
| December | * Attend course management committee meetings
 |
|  | * Check arrangements are in place for module evaluation
 |
|  | * Confirm arrangements are in place for moderation
 |
|  | * Promote progression
 |
| January | * Attend new external examiners induction day (if the course has new EE)
 |
| February | * Attend Examination Boards (if applicable)
 |
| March | * Promote progression and support transition to UW
 |
| April | * Attend course management committee meetings
 |
|  | * Attend Link Tutor Forum
 |
|  | * 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
 |
| June | * Attend Examination Boards
 |
| July | * Attend School partner staff development day (if applicable)
 |
| August/ September | * Draft Link Tutor reports
 |
| * Consider draft Annual Evaluation Report from course teams
 |
|  | * Support transition to UW (if appropriate)
 |
|  | * Support course team in preparations for next academic year
 |