

## **Framework for De Montfort University Dual Awards Taught Degrees and Research Degrees**

### **1. Reference Points**

1.1 The Dual Awards Framework reflects the following:

*The QAA Revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education*

*QAA Characteristics Statement: Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body (October 2015)*

*QAA Characteristics Statement: Doctoral Degrees (February 2020)*

### **2. Preamble**

2.1 This framework provides guidance for those developing and running dual awards; however, it is acknowledged that there is significant variety in the way dual awards are defined and operated within the sector, both in the UK and overseas. In some circumstances there may be arrangements that operate outside the framework and where this is the case, a rationale and summary of the key differences will be presented for consideration as part of the approval process.

2.2 De Montfort University is committed to developing educational partnerships with international universities, colleges and other organisations. These are important for the success of the University and provide the opportunity for students around the world to study for a De Montfort award in their home country and, where possible, at the De Montfort campus in Leicester.

2.3 The University has a range of activity with its collaborative partners, including franchise, validation, joint and dual award models. This Dual Awards Framework document relates to the provision of dual awards with collaborative partner organisations that have their own degree awarding powers. Dual awards are arrangements where two awarding bodies together provide a single jointly delivered programme (or programmes) leading to separate awards (and separate certification) being granted by both of them.

2.4 The *QAA Characteristics Statement: Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body* makes it clear that the significant defining feature of dual awards is that they are “the outcome of a genuine collaboration that creates distinctive programmes which neither partner could offer, in that form, independently of the other, and which is enhanced by the contribution of multiple partners” (p. 7). The *Characteristics Statement* further recognises that dual awards may be developed in various ways, including design and development of programmes from scratch, or where an existing international partner of a UK institution subsequently gains its own degree awarding powers for higher education qualifications but may wish to continue the partnership with the UK provider. Delivery may involve one partner more than another

and mobility between partners may or may not be a part of the arrangement, but the design and development of the programme, programme management and oversight, and ultimate decision-making on student achievement are all carried out jointly by both degree-awarding bodies.

### **3. Framework**

#### **3.1 Definition of Dual Awards**

- 3.1.1. At De Montfort University a dual award is a joint package of study leading to two separate qualifications awarded by two separate awarding bodies. A dual award programme may be jointly developed from scratch, or it may be based on a programme already being offered at either of the partner institutions. However it must be a truly joint programme, designed and developed by both partners to offer a distinctive learning experience enhanced by substantial contributions of both partners in the creation, management and decision-making related to the programme and award, and which could not be offered in that form independently of the other partner.
- 3.1.2 A dual award arrangement must not simply be the "badging" of a partner award by the University. Nor can it be an arrangement that could be described as "contracting for the delivery of teaching or an educational service".

#### **3.2 Standards of Dual Awards**

- 3.2.1 De Montfort University is responsible for the standards of all awards issued in its name and must ensure that any awards meet the required UK Higher Education benchmarks. The University must ensure that provision delivered under a dual award is subject to quality procedures that are at least as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as those used for the provision delivered by De Montfort (see *Quality Assurance* below). For the purpose of a collaborative research degree at DMU this ensures that a co-supervision arrangement alone is not recognised as a dual award; the appropriate recognised due diligence must also have been undertaken.

#### **3.3 Involvement of Partners in Design and Development**

- 3.3.1 Within some partnership arrangements there will be opportunities for the creation and design from the beginning of a programme or programmes, drawing on the respective strengths of each partner to create a distinctive learning experience for students. In such cases it is likely that each partner will render similar levels of contribution to the development and design process. Where a partner has a pre-existing programme which would benefit from additional curriculum input provided by the specific expertise of another organisation there may be a necessary difference between partner contributions. In all cases however the teams from each partner must be satisfied that the proposed award has coherence and integrity within the field, meets the required standards, is of the quality required of a DMU award at that level, and is likely to be successful at a DMU programme approval

event. The respective roles of partners in design and development of programmes may vary with particular circumstances, but in all cases a substantial contribution from both partner academic programme teams in the design and development of the award must be demonstrable. Ideally, one partner will be designated a lead partner in drawing up the collaborative agreement.

- 3.3.2 It is acknowledged that development of a programme is ongoing and continues beyond initial approval: it includes both programme modifications arising from annual monitoring and periodic and collaborative review. Programme teams from both partners should play a full part in this development process over time.
- 3.3.3 To reflect the nature of the dual award, the DMU and partner design and development teams should ensure that the programme does not make it possible for a student to engage only with one partner. The development teams will also ensure that the design considers any prior learning undertaken at FHEQ level 8, recognising what is permissible within the collaborative agreement.

### **3.4 Involvement of Partners in Programme Management**

- 3.4.1 Within dual award arrangements programmes are jointly managed by both institutions. A Joint Management Board (JMB) will normally be established, in line with University guidance. For the purpose of research degrees, dual award arrangements will be a standing item on the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) at DMU. RDC will periodically review all research collaborative arrangements, which may, on occasion, require attendance from the various partners. The JMB maintains oversight of all operational, strategic and quality related management of dual award courses in the partnership. It will meet according to a schedule agreed by the partners to monitor and review dual award arrangements. It should have a reporting channel to the corresponding Faculty Academic Committee (FAC) and to the equivalent body at the partner institution and also to DMU's University Collaborative Provision Committee (UCPC) and the equivalent body at the partner institution.
- 3.4.2 Each awarding body should identify staff responsible for the management and oversight of a programme or programmes. Joint management may include regular meetings via videoconferencing, Skype or similar platforms. Full details of how programmes will be jointly managed should be provided as part of the programme approval documentation, and may be in the form of a management handbook for the collaborative partnership.
- 3.4.3 There should be a single programme handbook for each dual award, not a DMU handbook and a partner handbook, and a single set of programme documents (Programme Specification, Module Specifications), normally a hybrid of DMU and partner documents. These should be presented and finalised through the University's approval processes, and with sufficient detail to allow setup on DMU's student records and progression system.
- 3.4.4 A contingency plan and exit strategy must be recognised as part of the collaborative agreement for research degrees. This will be agreed by the Research Degrees

Committee, should there be a breakdown between the partners in the course of the programme.

### **3.5 Involvement of Partners in Decision-Making Related to the Programme and the Award**

3.5.1 Decision-making related to the programme and the award includes the following areas: admissions, teaching and assessment and regulatory issues.

#### **3.5.2 Admissions**

- a. Admission onto the dual award must be aligned with standard DMU admissions policy. This should be confirmed at the point of programme approval, and must be defined within the programme documentation, including any English language requirements (normally IELTS, but specifying if other equivalent qualifications are accepted).
- b. Responsibilities of each awarding body in the admissions process will be agreed and confirmed at programme approval.
- c. Should any students be admitted onto the programme with advance standing, each partner must ensure that these students experience delivery by both partners during their studies. This contact may be face-to-face or virtual. Admissions processes should reflect this requirement.

#### **3.5.3 Teaching and Assessment**

- a. Teaching and assessment responsibilities for each partner should be clearly stated in the programme approval documentation. Lead responsibility for each module should be defined within each Module Specification document.
- b. To ensure that the dual award is a joint enterprise both partners must be active in the delivery of the award. Each partner would normally deliver credit at the highest intended level of its award; if the award is at Level 6, each partner should deliver credit at that level. Delivery may be face-to-face or virtual (see 3.6.2-3.6.3 Delivery)
- c. Partner staff teaching on a DMU award would normally be approved to teach at the approval event, or by the DMU Co-Chair of the Joint Management Board (JMB), and De Montfort's established quality assurance processes will normally apply. Where a different approach is agreed, in recognition of the experience and expertise of the partner, this must be approved by Academic Quality Committee on the recommendation of the programme approval panel. For Level 8 awards, a supervisory team would normally be approved as part of the admissions process by the respective school/Research Institute at DMU and its established quality assurance processes will normally apply.

- d. Each partner will normally have lead responsibility for assessment of the components of the programme that it delivers (see also 3.5.3 *Regulatory Issues*)
- e. To ensure effective oversight of assessment, each partner should have the opportunity to review and comment on the assessment materials developed by the other partner. De Montfort University will normally require its staff to review and approve all examination papers, coursework and other assessments developed by the partner that contribute towards the DMU award before these are submitted to the DMU External Examiner for approval.
- f. Moderation: both partners should undertake moderation activity on those elements of the programme that are the lead responsibility of the other. In order to verify the standard of marking, DMU staff should see a sample of examination scripts and of summative coursework marked by the partner for all modules contributing to the DMU award in accordance with DMU's Assessment and Feedback Policy.
- g. De Montfort University will appoint an External Examiner to the programme leading to the De Montfort award following its established criteria for external examiner appointments. All formal communication by the DMU-appointed External Examiner will be made with De Montfort University. Both partners will contribute to the responses to External Examiner Report. If the partner also appoints an external examiner, joint appointments may be explored and any joint appointment must be approved by the External Examiner and Reviewer Appointments Committee. External Examiners appointed to dual award programmes should be given a full induction, including details of the regulatory framework.
- h. Membership and terms of reference for module boards and award and progression boards should be agreed between the partners and confirmed at programme approval. The partners may decide to hold joint module boards and award and progression boards. Where joint boards are agreed, both partners should be represented and the boards should be co-chaired. The boards must meet the requirements of De Montfort University, including the same quoracy requirement.
- i. For research degrees, the procedure of Viva Voce will be agreed as part of the programme approval and must be clearly outlined within the approved programme documentation. To avoid duplication, the student must only undertake one Viva Voce. The programme documentation would need to meet the requirement of the De Montfort University Research Degree Regulations.

#### 3.5.4 Regulatory Issues

- a. Each partner's award under the dual award arrangement may be governed by their own regulations. Alternatively, joint or combined regulations may be developed for the dual award. These must be agreed between the faculty/faculties and the Department of Academic Quality (DAQ) and approved through DMU's established processes. However joint or combined regulations should not compromise the rigour and the spirit of De Montfort University regulations. Joint or combined regulations are approved by the Taught

Programmes Management Committee (TPMC), Academic Quality Committee (AQC) and Academic Board (AB). This is typically completed before approval of the dual award(s).

- b. Where separate regulations are developed, and marking schemes differ between the partners, a conversion scale should be developed to convert marks between the marking schemes of the partner institutions, and a procedure for application of the conversion scale should be defined. The conversion scale and procedure should be approved by the Taught Programmes Management Committee (TPMC) and Academic Quality Committee (AQC). This is typically completed before approval of the dual award(s).
- c. Student complaints processes for the management of student complaints comparable to those at De Montfort University should be agreed by the partners and confirmed by the panel at approval. Where joint or combined regulations are developed, the agreed process for student complaints will normally be set out in the regulations.
- d. Student appeals: student appeals against an examination board decision should be dealt with by De Montfort University where the decision relates to the De Montfort University award. This should be agreed by the partners and confirmed by the panel at approval. Where joint or combined regulations are developed, the agreed process for student appeals will normally be set out in the regulations.
- e. Bad academic practice and non-academic misconduct: processes comparable to those used at De Montfort University should be agreed by the partners and confirmed by the panel at approval. Where joint or combined regulations are developed, the agreed process for bad academic practice will normally be set out in the regulations.
- f. Extensions, deferrals: processes comparable to those used at De Montfort University should be agreed by the partners and confirmed by the panel at approval. Where joint or combined regulations are developed, the agreed process for extensions and deferrals will normally be set out in the regulations.

### **3.6. Involvement of Partners in Delivery**

3.6.1 An important characteristic of dual awards is joint delivery of the programme. The *Characteristics Statement* states: "each degree-awarding body generally delivers a substantial proportion of the programme at the level of the qualification awarded" (p.8). For the purpose of awards at Level 8, the four core characteristics within the *Characteristics Statement: Doctoral Degrees* (p. 6) are considered throughout programme delivery.

3.6.2 **Delivery:** It is recognised that delivery may take different forms, including both traditional and more innovative methods, and may vary along a continuum from intensive face-to-face delivery of content to remote provision of materials via an online platform such as a VLE. Thus the term delivery under a dual award



arrangement encompasses: flying faculty, where staff travel to the partner institution to deliver multiple face-to face sessions; face-to-face guest lectures and seminars by visiting members of a faculty; delivery of webinar sessions via video link; synchronous or asynchronous delivery by staff via an appropriate online platform such as Blackboard and; provision of content in a form such as a VLE, DMUReplay or other electronic format but taught by staff from the partner institution. If student mobility is built into the programme for a dual award students will normally experience direct delivery by staff at the DMU campus. Likewise, if a summer school or short residency is included, students may be taught by DMU staff for some or all of the time.

- 3.6.3 *Each partner's contribution to delivery*: Best practice is for both partners to make a substantial contribution to delivery, and teams are strongly encouraged to bear this in mind when designing programmes. Over the course of a programme a number of delivery methods may be employed in various combinations. Depending on the particular arrangements, the subject area and the academic decisions made by programme teams, dual awards may vary widely in the amount of content delivered by each partner. Where an award is delivered wholly in one country, a greater proportion of the programme will often be delivered by the partner institution in that country. In this situation the partner delivering the smaller proportion of the award could normally be expected to deliver between 10% and 30% of the programme, depending on other delivery and design factors. Where the proportion delivered by DMU deviates significantly from these guidelines the case must be made for this approach at approval and accepted by the panel.
- 3.6.4 The proportion of a programme taught by each partner may be calculated by counting credits delivered, contact and/or study hours associated with delivery, or a combination of these. It is recognised that it may not always be easy to quantify delivery precisely, particularly where optional student mobility is included or optional modules are delivered by different partners.
- 3.6.5 The language of delivery of the whole programme is English, apart from where study of a foreign language forms an integral part of the programme.

### **3.7 Student Mobility**

- 3.7.1 The *QAA Characteristics Statement* includes student mobility as a characteristic of some dual award arrangements, as "students may spend time at each of the partner institutions", but acknowledges that for others "mobility between partners may not be an essential part of the arrangement" (pp. 7, 8). Student mobility is not identified as a requirement for dual degrees. There may be many reasons (including cost to students, or in-country regulatory requirements) why student mobility may or may not be included in a given dual award arrangement, and programme teams should consider these when developing dual awards. Where a programme includes mobility, either through an extended period of study at a partner institution or a shorter residency, the programme will be distinctive in offering students the opportunity to learn at DMU as well as at the partner institution.
- 3.7.2 The *QAA Characteristics Statement: Doctoral Degrees* includes reference to student mobility (p.6): "The UK actively contributes to the development of the

doctorate worldwide while ensuring that global changes are taken into account in UK policy-making and practice". Further, "...mobility continues to increase through programmes such as the EU Erasmus Mundus and Marie Skłodowska-Curie initiatives, and a growing number of UK universities offer joint or jointly supervised doctoral programmes with non-UK European partner providers." Where a programme includes mobility, the programme will be distinctive in offering students the opportunity to learn at De Montfort University as well as at the partner institution. The expected location of study will normally be outlined within both the collaborative and student agreement.

### **3.8 Overall Study Period and Greater Volume of Learning**

- 3.8.1 The *Characteristics Statement* states: "The overall study period and volume of learning is longer than for either of the individual awards separately, but is typically shorter than if each programme of study had been taken consecutively (because they are designed to lock together with overlapping curricula)" (p.8). The expectation is that students will spend longer studying for a dual award than they would for either of the single awards. They will typically complete a greater volume of learning. The *Characteristics Statement* does not put a minimum value on either how much longer the overall study period should be or how much greater the volume of learning should be. In practice this varies across partnerships depending on the factors operating in any given context. For Level 8 awards, the expectation is that students may need to complete additional academic milestones to satisfy both partner requirements.
- 3.8.2 The University recognises that the expectation for a longer overall study period and a greater volume of learning may be met in a number of ways. Additional credit-bearing modules such as an internship or capstone project, non-credit bearing modules or other units of study may be required to achieve the dual award. This may have the effect of lengthening the overall period of study in order to complete the additional learning. Alternatively, additional study hours may be scheduled within the existing academic year, for example through the inclusion of a January-term, Summer School or short residency, when students would not normally be studying if they were studying for either of the single awards. The expectation of additional learning hours could be demonstrated by the delivery of additional credits (e.g. 10 ECTS) each year of study in the form of a capstone module/project. While this would be seen as best practice and strongly recommended, a rationale and explanation could be provided for consideration at approval if this were neither appropriate nor achievable.
- 3.8.3 Teams should bear in mind the requirements for a longer overall study period and a greater volume of learning when designing and developing dual awards. This should be agreed between the partners with a clear rationale provided for the choices made. Should a programme be developed where it is apparent that the overall study period is not longer than for the single awards, or the volume of learning is not greater than for the single awards, this will need to be approved by De Montfort's Academic Quality Committee on the recommendation of the approval panel.



- 3.8.4 In line with the *Characteristics Statements: Doctoral Degrees*, access to an active and vibrant research environment, including contact with other researchers, is fundamental to doctoral candidates' success, irrespective of subject, mode of study, or location.

### **3.9 Quality Assurance**

- 3.9.1 The *Revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education* states: "provision delivered through partnership arrangements will be subject to quality procedures that are at least as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as those of the awarding organisation." (*QAA Revised Code, Partnerships Advice and Guidance Principle 4*). The *QAA Characteristics Statements: Doctoral Degrees* also states: "Key factors affecting the reputation of UK doctorates include having in place adequate and rigorous quality assurance mechanisms for doctoral programmes, and the ability to demonstrate consistency of standards across varied programmes." Arrangements for quality assurance should be clearly set out in the approval documentation, including any departures from De Montfort's standard quality assurance arrangements, such as any additional quality procedures and safeguards.
- 3.9.2 Quality procedures for the provision do not have to be the same as those used at De Montfort University. Partners may decide to work with a single agreed set of quality procedures that satisfy the requirements of both quality assurance frameworks. Such procedures might draw mostly upon the existing procedures of one partner, or they may be a combination of both partners' quality assurance processes. However they must be as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as De Montfort's own quality assurance procedures and must enable the University to meet the expectations of the *QAA Revised Code*.

### **3.10 Student Records**

- 3.10.1 The *Revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education* makes it clear that "awarding organisations retain the authority and responsibility for awarding certificates and records of study in relation to student achievement" (*Revised Code, Partnerships, Guiding Principle 5*).
- 3.10.2 A full and accurate record of student achievement held on the University's record system enables De Montfort University to make an award and issue a degree certificate. DMU must ensure that it maintains protected and secure records of study and achievement for students studying for a qualification under a dual award arrangement. Arrangements for recording of student achievement and sharing and transfer of student marks and other data should be agreed by the partners and detailed in the partnership approval documentation. The robustness of the arrangement should be confirmed by both the partner and DMU at approval.