Board of Studies consideration and reporting of partnerships/partnership activity

A review of School Board of Studies minutes (from 2013/14 and 2014/15), undergraduate and postgraduate Annual Programme Evaluation Reports and Academic Partnership Co-ordinator Reports (from 2012/13 and 2014/15) has been undertaken to monitor and report on the Boards of Studies consideration and reporting of partnerships/partnership activity, following a request from Education and Student Committee in January 2015.

The following report identifies areas of good practice and risk and sets out some possible actions, which have been agreed by Partnerships Sub-Committee, for final approval by Education and Student Committee.

Proposed Action

Education and Student Committee is asked to:

- **Receive** the report and;
- **Agree** actions to take forward

INTRODUCTION

At the January 2015 meeting of Education and Student Committee it was agreed that Partnerships Sub-Committee should carry out an audit of Board of Studies' consideration of partnership activity, to enable any risks to be identified and addressed. This was to ensure that Boards of Studies were operating within their Terms of Reference, which required them to; comply with the Memoranda of Agreement relating to partnership provision, fully document consideration of partnership activity and ensure that issues identified by the Lead Partnership Coordinator are noted and reported to Education and Student Committee via the Partnerships Sub-Committee. This was to address the recommendation made by the QAA, following Institutional Review in October 2012; that the University strengthen its mechanisms for the management of quality and standards within partnerships in Schools and oversight of partnerships at University level.

During October 2015 a review of all Annual Programme Evaluations and Academic Partnership Coordinator reports from 2012/13 and 2013/14 and all Boards of Studies Minutes from 2013/14 and 2014/15 was undertaken. An overview of the APE documentation reviewed is attached. Detailed information on the documentation and outcomes reviewed will be made available to the School Lead Partnership Coordinator to support the implementation of the actions, should they be agreed.

OUTCOMES

Strengths and Areas of Good Practice

- Some Boards of Studies (BoS) regularly received the School Specific Collaborative Provision Register (SSCPR) as an agenda item, which encouraged discussion around current partnership programmes and partnerships in development. For example; the CLS BoS recorded no discussion of partnership arrangements until the SSCPR was received as a standing item on the agenda.

- In some cases, where the APC report had been identified and the APE completed with reference to the partnership arrangements, areas for development regarding the partnership arrangements were identified and recorded in an action plan.

Areas of Risk

- Some Schools produce APEs for a grouping of programmes, such as the Cass Undergraduate programme or SMCSE's Undergraduate programmes in Mechanical Engineering and Aeronautics. This is good practice in terms or regulating the number of APEs produced, helping to reduce the amount of duplication in administrative work. Unfortunately however, this may lead to some programmes within these groupings, which have particular partnership arrangements, to be overlooked.

- Programme Directors and Academic Partnership Coordinators are at times unclear as to the nature of the partnership they are overseeing. For example the arrangement may be recorded on the Collaborative Provision register as an articulation arrangement, but referred to in associated documentation as being a dual award. This could lead to confusion over requirements for the management of quality and standards on the programme.

- Not all partnership programmes had an APE report or APC statement. Details of Individual programmes with missing reports will be shared with Lead Partnership Coordinators.

- Some APEs did not identify all the partnership arrangements associated with those programmes and did not correspond with the School Collaborative Provision Register. Therefore not all the Academic Partnership Coordinator reports were provided.

- Some partnership arrangements require a separate APE, which is identified on the SSCPR, but not all of these programmes produced a separate APE. In these cases, the partnership provision was also not explicitly covered by an APE for cognate programmes meaning there was no analysis of the quality and standards for the partnership programme.

- Not all School BoS had a standing item in the agenda to discuss partnership provision.

CONCLUSION AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

From reviewing the APE/APC reports and the BoS minutes it is evident that structures are in place that enable the Schools to take oversight of the quality and standards on partnership programmes. However, more support could be given to Schools to enable them to better embed the structures in existing processes.

Each year Boards of Studies receive a School Specific Collaborative Provision Register which identifies all programmes with collaborative arrangements, what type of arrangement is in place, the student numbers for each arrangement, the name of the APC, expiry date of the current agreement, date of approval or last periodic review, whether a separate APE is required and the dates of meetings where the External Examiner report and response was considered. This information, when used in conjunction with the APE form and APC report and combined with the standing item on the BoS agenda and the role of the Lead Partnership Coordinator, should be sufficient for Schools to undertake their requirements for the monitoring of quality and standards on partnership programmes. At present the SSCPR is produced at the end of the academic year and distributed to Schools ahead of the first BoS of the year.

It should be noted that the role of the Lead Partnership Coordinator was introduced in December 2014, after the majority of APEs reflecting on 13/14 had been finalised. As the role becomes fully embedded during 2015/16, it is expected that the coordinating function that the Lead Partnership Coordinator takes for completion of annual reporting to BoS will result in much fuller reporting this year. .

The BoS agenda template was updated in February 2015 to including a standing item for partnership provision. It is proposed that more guidance and support should be given to BoS Secretaries to better enable them to embed the process for consideration of partnership programmes in existing School processes, working closely with the relevant academic leads.

Education and Student Committee is asked to **consider** and **agree** the following proposed actions.

- For Lead Partnership Coordinator BoS report to be received at Partnerships Sub-Committee to reflect the respective responsibilities each committee has for the oversight of collaborative provision.

- For the Validation and Partnerships Manager to meet with each LPC and identify programmes within their School that have not provided the correct information relating to their partnership arrangements and agree actions to be taken forward to Board of Studies in order to ensure this information is completed in future.

- For the Quality Forum, managed by Student and Academic Services, to provide more guidance to support Boards of Studies Secretaries in coordinating BoS reporting working closely with relevant academic leads, with particular emphasis on Board of Studies responsibilities for partnership programmes.

- For Student and Academic Services to produce the SSCPR in May, at the end of the academic year rather than at the beginning to better enable BoS secretaries to coordinate the production of APEs and APC statements from partnership programmes.

- To reinstate the Academic Partnership Coordinators' Forum to better support APCs in their role including the management of Memoranda of Agreement and production of APC statements.

Abi Moran
Validation and Partnerships Manager
October 2015

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL APE REQUIREMENTS AND APES PROVIDED

School	No. of separate APEs required (inc. APC Report)	No. of separate APEs provided (inc. APC report)	No. of APC reports needed for integrated APEs	No. of APC reports provided for integrated APEs
Cass	2013/14 4 2012/13 3	2013/14 1 2012/13 1	2013/14 6 2012/13 6	2013/14 3 2012/13 3
CLS	2013/14 1 2012/13 1	2013/14 1 2012/13 0	N/A	N/A
SASS	2013/14 1 2012/13 1	2013/14 0 2012/13 1	2013/14 2 2012/13 1	2013/14 2 2012/13 1
SHS	2013/14 4* 2012/13 4*	2013/14 0 2012/13 1	N/A	N/A
SMCSE	2013/14 3 2012/13 3	2013/14 0 2012/13 0	2013/14 12 2012/13 12	2013/14 0 2012/13 0

* 1 APE is for a programme overseen by an Institutional Partnership Course Board.