



# Characteristics Statement

Qualifications involving more than  
one degree-awarding body

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## About this Statement

This document is a Qualification Characteristics Statement about the characteristics of qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body. It describes the distinctive features of these types of awards.

The [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (Quality Code) sets out the Expectations and Core practices that all providers of UK higher education are required to meet. Providers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland must also meet the Common practices in the Quality Code. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) also publish 12 [Advice and Guidance Themes](#) and a number of other resources that support the mandatory part of the Quality Code. Characteristics Statements sit alongside these resources to help providers develop courses and refine curricula but are not part of the regulated requirements for higher education providers in the UK.

Characteristics Statements are closely linked to [The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#) (the Qualifications Frameworks). They complement and contextualise the information provided within the Qualifications Frameworks, providing more detail about the distinctive features of qualifications at particular levels of the frameworks and/or of qualifications at any level, which are awarded in a particular way. You may wish to read this Statement in conjunction with the QAA Advice and Guidance on [Partnerships](#).

Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body are distinctive because they involve a UK degree-awarding body working with at least one other body empowered to award higher education qualifications in a way that involves some pooling of those awarding powers. The qualification awarded in this way may be at any level of the Qualifications Frameworks, and the characteristics of graduates of such awards are described in the relevant qualification descriptors and other Characteristics Statements. This Characteristics Statement describes the principal types of these kind of arrangements, focusing on the consequences of pooling awarding powers for the ways in which academic standards are set and maintained.

This version of the Statement forms its second edition. It was first published in 2015. This edition has been revised following the publication of the revised Quality Code for Higher Education in 2018.

## How can I use this document?

You may want to read this document if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body
- a prospective student thinking about undertaking a qualification involving more than one degree-awarding body
- an employer, to find out about the characteristics of qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body.

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this Characteristics Statement can be found in QAA's [Glossary](#).

## **Relationship to legislation**

Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them, for example, by funding bodies. This Statement does not interpret legislation, nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements. The responsibility for academic standards remains with the degree-awarding body who awards the degree.

Degree-awarding bodies may need to consider other reference points in addition to this Statement in designing, delivering and reviewing courses. These may include requirements set out by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), and industry or employer expectations.

Sources of information about other requirements, and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Characteristics Statement where appropriate. Individual degree-awarding bodies will decide how they use this information.

## **Terminology: Degree-awarding body and degree**

In this document the term 'degree-awarding body' refers both to UK degree-awarding bodies (including all UK universities) and also to international bodies empowered to award higher education qualifications. These latter may not necessarily be referred to as 'degree-awarding bodies' in their own jurisdictions. This document also uses 'degree' to refer to the final qualification that is awarded by more than one degree-awarding body as an outcome of these arrangements. However, the same principles about how the awarding function is shared apply where the outcome is a qualification other than a degree, in an appropriate and proportional way if the volume of learning involved is smaller.

## Foreword

The purpose of this document is to provide information about the types and characteristics of qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body. It aims to help build a common understanding of these arrangements and highlight typical approaches to quality assurance, which enable academic standards to be set and maintained where degree awarding powers are pooled.

The document is concerned with the role of UK degree-awarding bodies in these arrangements. The guidance it contains is intended to protect the interests of students, prospective students, employers and the wider public by supporting those degree-awarding bodies to secure the academic standards and reputation of UK higher education qualifications. The guiding principle is that a qualification involving more than one degree-awarding body is underpinned by a genuinely joint enterprise and partnership between the degree-awarding bodies involved.

The document does not set out definitions for different types of arrangements, because UK degree-awarding bodies are involved in a wide range of practices that are best viewed as a spectrum rather than in discrete 'boxes'. However, the document does indicate how particular forms of arrangement relate to definitions established within Europe as part of the Bologna Process for the creation of the European Higher Education Area. Degree-awarding bodies may have their own terminology for the arrangements in which they are involved, which need not necessarily align with the terms adopted in this document. They need to be clear how they understand and use their own terminology both for themselves and for the partners with whom they work, and how different types of arrangements may have different requirements for quality assurance to secure academic standards.

# 1 Context and purposes of qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body

Awarding a qualification from another degree-awarding body provides numerous benefits. Such arrangements often provide distinctive educational opportunities and a rich and varied learning environment. Where international mobility is a prescribed part of the course, this can bring students enhanced employment opportunities in a global market. Such arrangements provide opportunities for students to interact with staff and students associated with related courses in other countries. Working with other degree-awarding bodies can enhance opportunities for research collaborations or offer students the opportunity to experience cutting-edge research, and to benefit from distance-learning delivery techniques that are at the forefront of development.

All forms of working with other organisations to provide higher education fall within the scope of the Quality Code, Expectations and Core practices, supported by the QAA Advice and Guidance on Partnerships. This Qualification Characteristics Statement focuses on the awarding function, and the setting and maintenance of academic standards, as distinct from the delivery and management of courses of study and learning opportunities.

Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body are distinctive, as they entail a UK degree-awarding body working with at least one other degree-awarding body (in the UK or internationally) in a way that requires some pooling of those awarding powers. This is different from partnerships, where the UK degree-awarding body works with a delivery organisation that does not have degree awarding powers or is not exercising them to provide learning opportunities. Instead, two or more organisations are working together as equals, each with responsibility for the academic standards of the award being made in their name.

There are alternative ways in which some of the benefits for students of a qualification involving more than one degree-awarding body may be realised through a different model of provision. These types of arrangements are all valid in their own right and include the following.

- Arrangements where a professional qualification, professional title or status, or licence to practise may be achieved alongside the academic qualification of a degree-awarding body.
- Articulation and progression arrangements, where credit achieved (or learning completed) for an agreed course of study at one degree-awarding body is transferred to contribute to the award completed at another provider, the degree-awarding body. In these arrangements, the two learning experiences are paired together but are not conceived as a joint enterprise, and each organisation retains responsibility for its respective component, although the degree-awarding body may have some oversight of the course of the delivery organisation.
- Arrangements where students initially follow a course of study that is jointly designed and/or delivered by more than one degree-awarding body, but then choose specific, separate routes (for example, in particular specialisms) leading to different awards at different degree-awarding bodies franchise or validation arrangements, where a degree-awarding body authorises a delivery organisation to deliver a course leading to one of its qualifications.

These types of arrangements do not fall within the scope of this document.

## 1.1 International contexts

Originally, in the UK, the focus on qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body was on their development within Europe. This was largely in the context of the Bologna Process or, within the UK, where qualifications awarded by more than one UK degree-awarding body have come into existence, for example, as a result of establishing joint medical schools, or of collaboration in delivering research degree courses (through doctoral training centres). UK degree-awarding bodies also work with degree-awarding bodies beyond Europe to develop other forms of qualifications involving the pooling of degree awarding powers, which has led to a diverse range of models for degree-awarding bodies working together to offer qualifications.

### Bologna Process

The UK is part of the intergovernmental initiative commonly referred to as the Bologna Process. The original aims of the Bologna Process were to create a European Higher Education Area and to make Europe's higher education systems more transparent, thus facilitating international recognition of qualifications and creating opportunities for increased student and graduate mobility. One of the principal objectives has been the development of innovative, cooperative, cross-border study programmes and the award of degrees jointly by more than one degree-awarding body. The first Bologna ministerial meeting called for the development of 'modules, courses and degree curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognised joint degree' as a way 'to further strengthen the important European dimensions of higher education and graduate employability' (Prague Communiqué, 2001). The Erasmus initiative supported higher education providers across Europe in pooling their academic resources to develop integrated study programmes, particularly at master's and doctoral levels.

Acceptance of 'joint degrees' was initially hampered by legal impediments in some jurisdictions and a lack of recognition by credential evaluators. Successive Bologna ministerial meetings reiterated the importance of joint degrees, with an additional focus on overcoming legal impediments and recognition challenges. At the 2003 Berlin Higher Education Summit, ministers expressed their commitment 'to engage at the national level to remove legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of such degrees and to actively support the development and adequate quality assurance of integrated curricula leading to joint degrees' (Berlin Communiqué, 2003). The Lisbon Recognition Convention called for signatory states to review their legislation 'to improve recognition of joint degrees' (*Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees*, 2004). Similarly, ministers at the 2007 ministerial meeting in London reiterated this commitment to work at the national level 'to implement fully the agreed recognition tools and procedures and consider ways of further incentivising mobility for both staff and students', including by 'encouraging a significant increase in the number of joint programmes and the creation of flexible curricula' (London Communiqué, 2007). At the 2015 ministerial meeting in Yerevan, the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes was formally adopted, aiming to 'facilitate integrated approaches to the quality assurance of joint programmes that genuinely reflect and mirror their joint character' (European Approach to Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, 2015).

### Developments beyond Europe

Outside the Bologna Process, UK degree-awarding bodies work with other degree-awarding bodies internationally to award qualifications through a varied range of arrangements, which may not always reflect the patterns for such awards developed, defined and embedded within the European context. They may be delivered in only one jurisdiction, with international mobility not a prescribed part of the course, and only one degree-awarding body may be involved in delivery of the course, but the exact nature of the activities involved

forms a broad spectrum. For example, they may emerge from long-standing collaborations and reflect the need to take account of other organisations as they mature and develop; in other cases, they may be a way to address capacity or skills needs as educational provision in other jurisdictions evolves.

For example, international organisations that have previously delivered franchised or validated courses leading to a qualification of a UK degree-awarding body acquire their own degree awarding powers but want to continue their original arrangement for the award of a UK degree in addition to providing their own award. The extent to which the requirements of the two degree-awarding bodies take account of each other, rather than operating in parallel, may vary. Ultimately, the arrangement is seen to be one of mutual recognition. Alternatively, a non-UK degree-awarding body may request to be 'accredited' by a UK degree-awarding body so that they have more autonomy to design, approve and oversee the delivery of courses leading to both a UK degree and to their own qualification. In this scenario, the UK partner may be less closely involved in the operational management of the course.

Other examples include articulation agreements between a UK degree-awarding body and another degree-awarding body being converted into an agreement where students gain an award from both degree-awarding bodies, having followed a period of study at each consecutively. At master's level, this may be a '1 plus 1' arrangement, involving study for a one-year master's course in the UK plus one year's study (of a two-year master's programme) at an international partner leading to two discrete master's awards at an equivalent level.



## 2 Scope and types of qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body

The significant defining feature of qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body is that they are the outcome of distinctive educational provision that none of the partners could offer, in that form, independently of the others, and which is enhanced by the contribution of multiple partners. They can be characterised, therefore, as representing innovative and enhanced learning experiences often, but not exclusively, in an international context. This is underpinned by the fact that they are genuinely joint enterprises, from the earliest stages.

The exact form of the contribution from each degree-awarding body differs in every arrangement, but arrangements of this type are premised on there being substantial contributions from each participating partner in the creation, management and decision-making related to the course and award. Anything significantly less than this would be more appropriately described as contracting for the delivery of teaching or an educational service, which is legitimate and beneficial when operated within a model that takes full account of the Quality Code.

Within these broad parameters, there are a vast range of different arrangements that lead to the award of a qualification involving more than one degree-awarding body. It is possible to characterise these under two broad headings, although in practice arrangements may be seen more as a continuum. The arrangements described in this section are given as typical examples but are not intended to cover all possible ways in which qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body may be offered.

### 2.1 Co-dependent, mutually contingent qualifications

The shared characteristic of the models described in this section, is that to successfully complete the course, students must fulfil the requirements of all degree-awarding bodies involved. Where students receive more than one qualification on completion, the awards are fundamentally linked: a student cannot meet the requirements to receive one award and its associated certificate without the other(s). Commonly, receipt of the final award(s) is dependent on students achieving a single, shared set of criteria (which may be learning outcomes or other requirements).

These arrangements may be joint in all aspects, involving all partners (of which there may be more than two) in roughly equal proportions in all aspects of course design, development, delivery, assessment, management and decision-making on student achievement. Students may spend time studying at each of the partners involved in the arrangement. Students successfully completing the course gain a single certificate bearing the signatures of the competent authorities of all degree-awarding bodies involved, replacing the separate institutional or national qualifications. Within the Bologna Process, this is described as a **joint degree**.

In some jurisdictions there are legal or regulatory impediments to the award of a single certificate of this kind. In other cases, there may be difficulties with the recognition or acceptance of a single joint certificate, which mean that it is not in the interests of students to mark their achievement in this way. In these circumstances, students completing a course that is otherwise wholly joint (as described above) are awarded two (or more) certificates, one from each degree-awarding body involved. The certificate and/or transcript or record of achievement, or Diploma Supplement, of at least the UK degree-awarding body or bodies refer to the existence of the other(s) and makes clear that they refer to the completion of a single, jointly conceived course. Where legally permissible, the same reference is included

on the documents issued by the other degree-awarding body or bodies. Within the Bologna Process, this is described as a **double degree** (or **multiple degree**, where more than two degree-awarding bodies are involved).

A variant on this model is where a UK degree-awarding body has an established collaborative arrangement with an international provider who has subsequently gained their own powers to award higher education qualifications. The design and development of the course, aspects of its management and oversight, and ultimate decision-making on student achievement, is carried out jointly by both degree-awarding bodies, but delivery may involve one partner more than another and mobility between partners may not be an essential part of the arrangement. Certification may be as described above (joint or double). This model is distinguished from franchise and validation arrangements, where only one body is involved in the design and development of a course (whether the UK degree-awarding body in a franchise, or the delivery organisation in a validation arrangement), and where the ultimate decision on student achievement and the award of the qualification rests solely with the UK degree-awarding body.

A further model, operated most commonly for master's level qualifications and involving two degree-awarding bodies, entails students completing a course of study comprising a significantly greater volume of learning than that required for a single award. The course is jointly conceived and managed, and decisions about student achievement are jointly made by the partners. Both degree-awarding bodies are involved in delivery, although this may be in discrete blocks covering different stages of the course. Students successfully completing the course receive a certificate and transcript, record of achievement or Diploma Supplement from each degree-awarding body, each of which indicates the existence of the other.

## 2.2 Integrated but independent qualifications

The distinguishing feature of the models described in this section is that, while they involve more than one degree-awarding body working together to offer a jointly conceived course, a student does not need to satisfy the requirements of all the partners to receive an award. In this case, the courses are designed to enable students to achieve more than one distinct set of criteria (learning outcomes or other requirements), although in some arrangements the different sets may overlap.

One example of this type involves two degree-awarding bodies jointly designing a course of study comprising a joint initial curriculum (or two parallel and equivalent curricula), followed by two separate blocks taken consecutively at each partner in turn, leading to two separate qualifications awarded individually by the two degree-awarding bodies. The qualifications may be at different levels. Students who successfully complete both courses receive separate institutional or national certificates - one for each of the two separate qualifications, granted by each of the awarding bodies involved. Each degree-awarding body is responsible for its own award, but the two components form a single package, and the overall arrangement is a joint enterprise that requires elements of joint management and oversight. Each degree-awarding body generally delivers a substantial proportion of the course at the level of the qualification they award. A distinguishing feature of this type of arrangement is that the overall study period and volume of learning is longer than for either of the individual awards separately, but typically shorter than if each of the courses of study had been taken consecutively. This is because they are designed to lock together with overlapping curricula. Within the Bologna Process, this is described as a **dual degree**.

A variation on this model is where two courses are arranged to lock together with overlapping curricula, but the student completes them consecutively, rather than involving an initial joint element. This may also lead to overall efficiencies in study time. The courses may

be specifically designed for this purpose, or such an arrangement may be built from existing courses, conceived as a single package.

In both these cases, where a student completes only one course of study and/or meets the requirements of only one degree-awarding body, they receive a single award. Depending on the design of the arrangement, a student may not be able to receive a second award without having fulfilled the requirements for the first. This is particularly the case where the two awards are at different levels or where the courses are taken consecutively, as learning from the first or lower-level course is considered as fulfilling part of the requirements for the second or higher-level award. These types of arrangement have aspects in common with articulation arrangements, in that the two learning experiences are paired, the curricula are aligned, and one partner recognises learning undertaken at the partner degree-awarding body as contributing to its own qualification. However, they are distinguished by the way in which they are conceived as a joint enterprise involving more than one degree-awarding body, and where the award made by each is dependent on the other.

A further model where, in principle, a student may gain one award but not the other, involves the student being required to fulfil additional requirements to gain the qualification of the non-UK degree-awarding body. For example, these may be national or cultural requirements that are not academic in nature and equate to a relatively small proportion of the overall volume of study of a full degree course. The main course of study completed by the student may follow any of the models described above as a genuine joint enterprise, but if the student fails to complete the additional requirements, they may only receive the qualification of the UK degree-awarding body. In practice, legal restrictions in the overseas jurisdiction commonly mean that students must complete both academic and national requirements for the UK award to be made.

The fourth Core practice for Standards in the Quality Code requires a UK higher education provider working in partnership with other organisations to have in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them. This would preclude UK degree-awarding bodies making arrangements for students to receive a UK degree alongside that of a non-UK degree-awarding body where the UK degree-awarding body has had negligible input to the design of the programme and little control over its delivery. The converse is also possible, where a non-UK degree-awarding body makes an award without the knowledge of the UK degree-awarding body, where a student has completed a programme of study designed to lead to a UK qualification offered through a franchise or validation arrangement. It is contingent on the UK degree-awarding body to maintain awareness of how their programmes and academic credit are used, and to take steps to address any misconceptions that may arise in situations such as this, including making clear the nature of the UK programme and qualification, and ensuring that any marketing materials are not misleading.

### **3 Characteristics of arrangements to set and maintain academic standards of qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body**

The need to accommodate the regulatory requirements and quality assurance requirements of two or more different degree-awarding bodies can be challenging. The fact remains that if an organisation (either degree-awarding or without degree awarding powers) is involved in delivering a programme of study that leads to an award from a UK degree-awarding body, then that UK degree-awarding body is ultimately responsible for the standards and quality of the qualification it awards, irrespective of who delivers it or where it is delivered. It cannot delegate this responsibility. The quality assurance challenges - which qualifications awarded by more than one degree-awarding body pose - include, but are not limited to, the following.

- i **The legal authority to award a qualification jointly (because this represents a pooling of degree awarding powers) or otherwise to award a qualification with another degree-awarding body.**

This applies not only to international degree-awarding bodies but also to any UK degree-awarding body. For example, for UK universities who hold their degree awarding powers through a charter, the legal authority to grant a joint degree may not be secure unless the charter explicitly permits it. In recent years, several chartered universities have petitioned the Privy Council to effect such a change to their charter, and this has been granted.

- ii **The potential risk to the security of a degree-awarding body's own academic standards.**

When there is partnership with a delivery organisation that is not a degree-awarding body, the authority of the sole degree-awarding body is clear. However, in the case of qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body, the academic standards of two or more awarding bodies have to be secured and there is potential for the academic standards of one or more to be compromised. The paramount concern is that the arrangement made between the degree-awarding bodies involved must protect both (or all) degree-awarding bodies' academic standards. This may imply that, in certain partnerships, the academic standards set exceed the standards and requirements normally obtained in one or more of the degree-awarding bodies.

- iii **The recognition by other jurisdictions of qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body.**

Authorities in jurisdictions other than the UK may be concerned where some arrangements have the potential to transgress their own requirements for courses and qualifications involving joint working between degree-awarding bodies. Where authorities in those jurisdictions are taking measures to restrict arrangements that contravene their regulations, it may have the consequence of students being ineligible for a qualification in that jurisdiction and thus having been misled as to qualifications that they might receive.

UK degree-awarding bodies should fully apprise themselves of the legal and regulatory frameworks of the country in which they are operating, and of the national or regional qualifications frameworks or requirements. This is particularly important in the context of awarding qualifications with a non-UK degree-awarding body, where additional stipulations may be made by authorities to those that apply to working with organisations to deliver higher education in that jurisdiction.

iv **Providing clarity for students in relation to a variety of arrangements and the potential for inaccurate or misleading information.**

Arrangements involving more than one degree-awarding body may present challenges because degree-awarding bodies, their partners, students, employers and other stakeholders need to be clear about what these arrangements entail and how they differ from other forms of provision leading to UK higher education qualifications.

If UK degree-awarding bodies have not made clear in certificates and/or transcripts or record of achievement, or Diploma Supplement, where a single course of study has led to the award of more than one qualification by independent degree-awarding bodies, the award of two or more separate qualifications could be misleading as to the study undertaken. There may also be consequences for students who may be misled as to whether they may obtain a second local degree in addition to a UK qualification.

### **3.1 Approaches to quality assurance**

Where degree-awarding bodies work together to offer a qualification, questions are frequently raised about the extent to which quality assurance functions may be shared and whether each degree-awarding body has to 'duplicate' all the processes. The focus needs to be on identifying the substance of the questions to be answered and issues to be addressed rather than the process of obtaining these answers and the individual degree-awarding body's processes per se.

The following table describes two possible approaches to aspects of quality assurance of qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body. The two columns are intended to illustrate distinctly contrasting approaches at opposite ends of the spectrum, and between them lie a range of possibilities that may be employed in any specific circumstance. The appropriateness of any particular approach depends in particular on whether the qualifications are co-dependent and mutually contingent, or integrated but independent.

<b>Aspects of quality assurance</b>	<b>Approach 1</b>	<b>Approach 2</b>
Academic oversight	<p>The qualification is jointly overseen. This is typically achieved by a joint board or consortium, which is established to be accountable to the highest academic authority in the respective degree-awarding bodies. The respective highest academic authority may delegate decision-making to the joint body on a range of matters, including approval of, and changes to, the course, assessment strategies, appointment of examiners (including external examiners) and changes to regulations.</p> <p>The governance arrangements are approved by the degree-awarding bodies, as are a range of policies and procedures specific to the award of the qualification (or an agreement is made to adopt the policies and procedures of one of the partners).</p> <p>Day-to-day course management is usually undertaken jointly, with all participating partners represented on a course team.</p>	<p>Each degree-awarding body oversees its own qualification, using its own policies and procedures.</p> <p>There may be a consortium or joint course management board to enable joint decision-making about, and management of, the course on a range of matters. However, this would make recommendations through the normal academic decision-making structures of each of the respective awarding bodies, rather than having delegated authority to make decisions on their behalf.</p>

<b>Aspects of quality assurance</b>	<b>Approach 1</b>	<b>Approach 2</b>
Academic regulations	<p>The participating degree-awarding bodies jointly determine which academic regulations govern the award of the qualification(s). Bespoke regulations may be agreed and approved by all the partners, ensuring that the academic standards of each of the degree-awarding bodies involved are satisfied. In some cases, these may be exceeded to take account of a particular partner's requirements but under no circumstances are they compromised.</p>	<p>As individual and separate qualifications are awarded, the academic regulations of each of the degree-awarding bodies apply to the sections of the course they deliver. The academic standards of each of the degree-awarding bodies involved have to be satisfied. In some cases, these may be exceeded to take account of a particular partner's requirements but in no circumstances are they compromised.</p>
Course approval	<p>The course is jointly approved, through an approval process involving representation from all the degree-awarding bodies involved.</p> <p>Detailed approval of modules or components is also undertaken jointly.</p>	<p>The course is approved through each degree-awarding body's usual channels for course approval.</p> <p>UK degree-awarding bodies may accept the detailed approval processes undertaken at module level by their partners for the modules or components that those partners are delivering. UK degree-awarding bodies retain responsibility for making an assessment as to whether the proposed course as an entity (and its assessment strategy) delivers and tests course outcomes at the appropriate level for the award; and maintains its own academic standards as a degree-awarding body.</p>

<b>Aspects of quality assurance</b>	<b>Approach 1</b>	<b>Approach 2</b>
Assessment	<p>Each participating degree-awarding body is normally responsible for the assessment of the components of the course that it delivers. A holistic view of the assessment strategy is taken by the joint authority that oversees the course. In particular, a decision is made about whether a single marking scheme will be adopted or whether components of assessed work will be marked in accordance with the local regimes and then rescaled to a single scheme.</p> <p>All partners agree a common set of assessment regulations.</p>	<p>Each degree-awarding body is normally responsible for the assessment of the components of the course that it delivers. Each degree-awarding body is responsible for the overall assessment strategy leading to its qualification. The course is subject to that degree-awarding body's assessment regulations for the respective qualifications.</p> <p>Marks are then imported from the other partner (as appropriate) by each degree-awarding body for the qualification it awards. A decision is made about whether a single marking scheme is to be adopted by all participants in the jointly-delivered course or whether components of assessment will be marked in accordance with the local regimes and then rescaled to the scheme of each individual degree-awarding body.</p>
Examination board	<p>A joint, usually bespoke, examination board (or equivalent) is established to oversee progression through the course and the award of a qualification.</p>	<p>Assessment decisions are taken by an examination board, which conforms to the requirements of the degree-awarding body involved. A joint board, additional and subsidiary to those already existing in each degree-awarding body, may be established to oversee the confirmation of marks for individual components and determine progression through the jointly conceived course. The joint board reports to the relevant structures in the individual degree-awarding bodies.</p>



<b>Aspects of quality assurance</b>	<b>Approach 1</b>	<b>Approach 2</b>
External examining	UK degree-awarding bodies consider what external examining arrangements are appropriate to satisfy the requirements of all the partners involved. Joint or dual appointments may be feasible.	The UK degree-awarding body's usual external examining arrangements apply to modules that it delivers and also with respect to the award of the qualification, with suitable arrangements for external oversight of the partner's modules agreed with the partner.
Monitoring and review	A collective decision is made about the monitoring and review procedures to be adopted, which satisfies the principles of each of the degree-awarding bodies involved.	<p>The usual monitoring and review procedures of each of the partners apply to the component of the course that they respectively deliver, and the outputs are shared with the other partners. Reports are submitted through each degree-awarding body's own quality assurance framework.</p> <p>A process for periodic review is decided collectively and the outcome reported through each degree-awarding body's own quality assurance framework.</p>

Aspects of quality assurance	Approach 1	Approach 2
<p>Certification and transcripts</p>	<p>On successful completion of the course, a student receives either of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a single certificate or equivalent document, which lists the title of the qualification as recognised in all the legal frameworks in which the participating degree-awarding bodies are based, to aid qualification recognition</li> <li>• a certificate from each of the degree-awarding bodies involved - the certificate and/or transcript or record of achievement, or Diploma Supplement, of at least the UK degree-awarding body or bodies refer to the existence of the other(s) and makes clear that they refer to the completion of a single, jointly conceived, course of study and assessed learning leads to more than one separate qualification. Where legally permissible, the same reference is included on the documents issued by the other degree-awarding body or bodies.</li> </ul> <p>Where a single certificate is awarded, each degree-awarding body has in place systems and processes that enable it to jointly produce award certificates without risking control of their crests, logos, watermarks, holographs and authorising signatures.</p>	<p>Students who successfully achieve each set of criteria (learning outcomes or other requirements) receive separate institutional or national certificates and/or transcript or record of achievement, one for each of the separate qualifications being granted by each of the degree-awarding bodies involved, referring to the existence of the other.</p>

### **3.2 Research degrees involving more than one degree-awarding body**

In addition to the considerations relating to the management of academic standards described above, arrangements for research degrees involving more than one degree-awarding body typically entail students being jointly supervised by supervisors from each of the participant degree-awarding bodies (often in different countries). The detail of how the students are supervised is often set out in cotutelle agreements. Students receive roughly equivalent supervision from each partner and participate in jointly agreed skills training. Both, or all, partners are involved in monitoring students' progress and determining whether requirements are met at key milestones. Joint decisions are reached about the length of thesis and the form of examination that satisfies the requirements of all partners involved. Arrangements take account of the status of doctoral candidates in some jurisdictions as employees of the degree-awarding body.

## Related guidance and further references

All links last accessed February 2020.

The Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region (2004) *Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees*, available at:

<https://rm.coe.int/090000168092a3e1>

European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (2015) *European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes*, available at:

[www.egar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/02\\_European\\_Approach\\_QA\\_of\\_Joint\\_Programmes\\_v1\\_0.pdf](http://www.egar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/02_European_Approach_QA_of_Joint_Programmes_v1_0.pdf)

European Commission Erasmus Mundus programme (2009-13), more information available at:

[https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/em\\_programmeguide\\_nov2013\\_en\\_1.pdf](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/em_programmeguide_nov2013_en_1.pdf)

European Commission Erasmus+ programme (2014-20), more information available at:

[https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus_en)

European Consortium for Accreditation Joint Programmes project, more information available at:

[http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/Portal:Joint\\_programmes](http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/Portal:Joint_programmes)

European Consortium for Accreditation (2013) *Guidelines for Good Practice for Awarding Joint Degrees*, available at:

<http://ecahe.eu/home/services/publications/guidelines-for-good-practice-for-awarding-joint-degrees>

European Consortium for Accreditation (2013) *Framework for Fair Recognition of Joint Degrees*, available at:

[http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/Framework\\_for\\_Fair\\_Recognition\\_of\\_Joint\\_Degrees](http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/Framework_for_Fair_Recognition_of_Joint_Degrees)

European University Association (2004) *Developing Joint Masters Programmes for Europe*, available at:

<https://eua.eu/resources/publications/665:developing-joint-masters-programmes-for-europe.html>

European University Association (2007) *Guidelines for Quality Enhancement in European Joint Master Programmes*, available at:

<https://eua.eu/resources/publications/658:guidelines-or-quality-enhancement-in-european-joint-master-programmes.html>

Joint Degree Management and Administration Network (JOIMAN), more information available at:

[www.joiman.eu](http://www.joiman.eu)

Joint Degree Management and Administration Network (JOIMAN) *How to Manage Joint Study Programmes? Guidelines and Good Practices from the JOIMAN Network*, available at:

[www.joiman.eu/ProjectResults/default.aspx](http://www.joiman.eu/ProjectResults/default.aspx)

Joint Degrees from A to Z (JDAZ) project (2015) *Joint Programmes from A to Z: A Reference Guide for Practitioners*, available at:  
[www.nuffic.nl/en/publications/joint-programmes-z-reference-guide-practitioners](http://www.nuffic.nl/en/publications/joint-programmes-z-reference-guide-practitioners)

The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (2008) *Joint and Double Degree Programmes: Vexing Questions and Issues*, available at:  
[http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/Vexing\\_questions\\_and\\_issues\\_re.\\_joint\\_and\\_double\\_degree\\_programmes](http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/Vexing_questions_and_issues_re._joint_and_double_degree_programmes)

## Appendix: Members of the advisory group

The second edition, published in 2020, was revised by QAA to align the content with the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education, published in 2018. Proposed revisions were checked by a member of the *Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body* development group from 2011.

Dr Frank Haddleton	University of Hertfordshire
Dr Andy Smith	Quality and Standards Manager, QAA
Dr Alison Felce	Accreditation and International Services Manager, QAA

## Membership of the external development group for *Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body 2011* (details as published in the 2011 version)

Professor Liz Barnes	Sheffield Hallam University
Steve Barnett	Harper Adams University
Alison Blackburn	University of Salford
Professor Brian Caraher	Queen's University Belfast
Professor Laurie Cuthbert	Queen Mary's University London
Richard Gill	University of Bolton
Professor Colin Grant	University of Bath
Louisa Green	London School of Economics and Political Science
Dr Frank Haddleton	University of Hertfordshire
Raegan Hiles	UK Higher Education International Unit
Elaine Jenkins	Independent
Professor David Lamburn	University of Warwick
Huw Morris	Swansea University
Wendy Muir	University of Glasgow
Paul Norris	UK NARIC
Derfel Owen	University College London
Dr Steve Wyn Williams	Staffordshire University

The following current and past members of QAA staff have also contributed to the development of this document:

Harriet Barnes  
Janet Bohrer  
Sarah Butler  
Jane Holt  
Alan Hunt  
Dr Cathy Kerfoot  
Dan Murch  
Rafe Smallman  
Dr Fabrizio Trifiro

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB  
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557 000

Website: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)