

# NATIONAL ACCREDITATION BOARD

## GUIDELINES FOR JOINT AWARDS

### **Preamble**

Approaches to tertiary education delivery are fast changing to meet the growing demands for higher education. These diverse and innovative approaches may be described largely as collaborative, flexible and/or distributive learning (CFDL).

There is a wide spectrum of collaborative activity which provides a continuum of opportunities for learning delivery, assessment, learner support and the location of learning. This may lead to joint, dual/double or multiple degrees involving one or more awarding bodies.

However, a degree awarded jointly by two or more degree awarding institutions (usually described as Joint Awards) are uncommon in Ghana. In the advanced countries where credit transfer and credit validation are common practices among degree awarding institutions, joint awards are common.

The increasing trends in institutional partnership at both local and international levels open a window of opportunity for Ghanaian degree awarding institutions to explore joint awards among themselves or with their international degree awarding partners.

Collaborative provision, wherever and however organised, should widen learning opportunities without prejudice either to the academic standard of the award or the quality of what is offered to students. The arrangements for assuring quality and standards in Joint Awards should be as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as those for programmes provided wholly within the responsibility of a single institution and through 'conventional' class-based modes of teaching. The National Accreditation Board (NAB) seeks to ensure this by providing the appropriate guidelines for joint award considerations by Ghanaian institutions.

### **The Guidelines**

#### *Collaborative Conditions for Joint Awards*

- i. Collaborative arrangements should be negotiated, agreed and managed in accordance with the formally stated policies and procedures of the awarding institution.
- ii. Collaborating parties need to develop, and formally adopt, policies and procedures which are fit for purpose and proportionate to the type of collaborative provision involved.

- iii. Institutions will need to demonstrate that they have adequately assessed the financial, legal, academic and reputational risks, have determined appropriate due diligence procedures to provide the necessary information, and have the ability to put appropriate safeguards in place to manage the risks of their various arrangements.
- iv. There should be a written and legally binding agreement or contract setting out the rights and obligations of the parties and signed by the authorized representatives of the awarding institution and the partner organisation or agent.
- v. An awarding institution retains responsibility for ensuring that its own academic standards are maintained in the context of making an award with one or more awarding institutions.
- vi. The awarding institution retains responsibility for ensuring that students admitted to a programme can complete it in the event that a partner withdraws from an arrangement. They will therefore need to agree appropriate mechanisms to protect the position of students.
- vii. In transnational education the awarding institution must make itself aware of the legal and cultural context and the higher education structures in which a partner organisation is operating, including ascertaining any requirements for the partner to be recognised by the appropriate authorities in the relevant country, and any other requirements for validated programmes to have the approval of the relevant national authority.
- viii. The prospective partner organisation must have demonstrated its ability to provide the human and material resources to operate the programme and an appropriate and safe working environment for students on the programme.
- ix. If a partner organisation is going to be directly involved in the delivery and/or assessment of learning, awarding institutions will need to assess the ability of the prospective partner organization to manage processes for quality assurance in tertiary education and to meet the expectations of the academic standards of the awarding institutions. They will also need to assess whether there is an adequate operational structure (including record-keeping) in place to support this in a valid, reliable and robust manner.
- x. The awarding institution is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the quality of learning opportunities offered through a collaborative arrangement is adequate to enable a student to achieve the academic standard required for its award.
- xi. It remains the responsibility of the awarding institution to ensure that the learning environment is fit for purpose, both at the outset of the arrangement and on a continuing basis.
- xii. The scope, coverage and assessment strategy of a collaborative programme should be described in the programme document as well the level of award and should be comprehensible to stakeholders.

- xiii. The awarding institution should be able to satisfy itself that staff engaged in delivering or supporting a collaborative programme are appropriately qualified for their role, and that a partner organisation has effective measures to monitor and assure the proficiency of such staff.
- xiv. External examining procedures for programmes offered through collaborative arrangements should be consistent with the awarding institution's normal practices.
- xv. The information made available to prospective students and those registered on a collaborative programme should include information to students about the appropriate channels for particular support, concerns, complaints and appeals, making clear the channels through which they can contact the awarding institution directly once the procedures at the partner institution have been exhausted.

#### Joint Awards

- i. An awarding institution that engages with another authorized awarding body jointly to provide a programme of study leading to a dual or joint academic award should be accredited in its home country and able to satisfy itself that it has the legal capacity to do so, and that the academic standard of the award, meets its own expectations, irrespective of the expectations of the partner awarding body.
- ii. In the context of joint awards, the academic standards will have to satisfy the expectations of the collaborating institutions and any national expectations, in terms of academic standards, of the partner awarding bodies.
- iii. A single certificate is issued and signed jointly by officers of the two (or more) higher education institutions involved in the programme unless a Degree Supplement that explains the nature of the joint programme is attached to the certificate issued by only one of the parties involved in the joint award.

*(Adapted from QAA “Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education”, Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning) – Amplified version October 2010).*