

## **Consultants at the Regional Teaching Partners Guidance, Information and Procedures**

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### **Introduction**

Information on the University's procedures for consultants at the Regional Teaching Partners (RTPs) is provided in this guidance document for use internally within the University by staff and programme consultants, and externally by the RTPs.

The consultant model described herein is currently used at two RTPs: Blackburn College and Blackpool and The Fylde College. A different consultant model is operated for Furness College as responsibility for this partner lies with the department.

Responsibility for RTP consultants currently lies with the Academic Quality, Standards and Conduct (AQSC) team within Student and Education Services (SES).

This guidance will be subject to annual review and updated accordingly.

### **Overview**

#### **Key principles and purpose of the role**

The primary role of consultants is to support the ongoing monitoring and maintenance of the quality and standards of Lancaster validated higher education programmes at the RTPs; in particular, to ensure comparability of standards and the quality of the educational experience between Lancaster awards delivered at Bailrigg and at the RTPs.

The University is responsible for the standards of its awards, irrespective of whether all or part of the programme is delivered by a collaborative partner (or partners). The consultant role has been created by Lancaster specifically to support the RTPs and whilst there will be similarities to other such roles within Lancaster and the sector (Link Tutors for example), the requirements of the consultant role match the needs of Lancaster in the ongoing monitoring of standards at the RTPs. As part of the role, consultants will assist with support for the design and delivery of programmes, student support and enhancement. The main aspect of the role is that of monitoring, and through discussions held with the RTPs, programme teams and students along with the consultant reports, the University can get an 'on the ground view' of how the RTP programmes are operating and the experience of students on the programmes. Consultants are therefore a key part of the University's quality and standards processes.

#### **Differences from external examiner role**

Whilst both form part of the University's quality assurance and enhancement processes, the role of consultant is different from that of external examiners.

External examiners are appointed to provide the University and its partner institutions with impartial and independent advice incorporating informative comment on the University's standards and on student achievement in relation to those standards. External examiners help to ensure that the

standard of awards (with reference to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, applicable subject benchmark statements, and relevant professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements) are maintained at the appropriate level; and that the standards of student performance are properly judged against these reference points and are comparable with standards in other UK Higher Education Institutions of which the external examiners have experience.

Consultants do take an interest in the maintenance of Lancaster standards and student experience at the RTPs; however, the focus is on comparability with other Lancaster awards. This is part of a wider remit which, amongst other areas, encompasses curriculum design, student support and monitoring of resources.

### Partnership context

Lancaster University has been in partnership with Blackpool and The Fylde College and Blackburn College, since 1992. This is a validation arrangement whereby each College designs, develops and resources its programmes and Lancaster is the validating and awarding body. Students are registered at the RTP and those who successfully complete their programme and meet the requirements qualify with a Lancaster award.

A delegation of responsibilities is specified within the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) for each partnership. The RTP is responsible for curriculum development, programme delivery (including resources), student support, assessment procedures (including setting of assessments, marking, moderation, feedback, administration of assessment boards, production of student academic transcripts, graduation arrangements), admissions, appointment, induction and ongoing development of staffing. Lancaster is responsible for the academic standards of the awards granted in its name and for the quality of the educational experience of students registered on programmes validated by the University. Lancaster also needs to be able to demonstrate academic equivalence between awards granted at the RTPs and awards granted at Lancaster. Lancaster has final responsibility for programme approval, definition of assessment regulations, appointment of external examiners, ratification of awards, production of award certificates, approval of staff to teach on Lancaster validated programmes. There are some joint responsibilities: student academic appeals and complaints, annual review and monitoring. The role of consultants provides support for the design, delivery, monitoring and enhancement of programmes at the RTPs.

The University validates certain types of programmes at the RTPs as specified in the MoA: Certificates of Higher Education; Foundation Degrees; Bachelors Honours Degrees; and Bachelors Honours Degrees as top up to Foundation Degrees.

Blackpool and The Fylde College were granted Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP) in 2016 which means they have a right to validate and award Foundation Degrees without the need for a validating partner. However, as they do not have full degree awarding powers (TDAP), Lancaster has agreed to provide validation for top-up honours degrees as a progression route for students progressing from related Blackpool Foundation Degrees.

Masters' provision is not validated at either RTP as the focus of these partnerships is on undergraduate provision.

The University committee responsible for monitoring provision at the RTPs is the Collaborative Provision Teaching Committee (RPTC). The University Academic Dean chairs the committee and membership include a representative from each Faculty (the Undergraduate Associate Dean or their nominee) and the Head of Academic Quality, Standards and Conduct. Representatives from the College and AQSC are also in attendance. The RPTC meets three-four times a year and has an agreed

schedule of business; receiving and discussing a number of reports and action plans including the RTP Annual Quality Report which amongst other things reflects on consultant reports.

Each RTP also has a Partnership Management Group (PMG) which meets four times a year.

## Consultancy role

### Selection criteria and appointment process

Consultants will hold an academic post of an appropriate level of seniority and normally be an employee of Lancaster University. In cases where an appropriate consultant cannot be identified from Lancaster University, a consultant may be appointed from another institution. Consultants must have a relevant subject specialism in at least a cognate academic area to the programme they are appointed to. Consultants must be able to demonstrate:

- a knowledge and understanding of the UK sector for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality;
- an awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula;
- familiarity with the standard to be expected of students to achieve the award that is to be assessed;
- competence and experience relating to the monitoring and enhancement of the student learning experience.

Whilst the role is separate to their substantive post, consultants must be able to undertake the indicative hours and meet the remit and required duties of the role, including provision of the mid-year and end of year reports to AQSC. Consultants are appointed on the understanding that their substantive post will not suffer as a result of accepting the additional workload.

There will be one consultant per programme or per group of programme pathways as identified by AQSC. A Foundation Degree and its related top up programme is counted as one programme. A consultant will be appointed for new programmes in the developmental period leading to initial validation. Where a programme has been laid down, a consultant will be retained during the teach out phase.

RTP programmes are categorised as either standard or established and the role and time commitment of consultants differs depending on a programme's categorisation. The role for new programmes in the developmental period leading to initial validation will also have a different time commitment. Prior to the start of each academic year, AQSC will decide whether each programme at the RTPs requires a standard consultant or whether it falls into the category of an established programme for that year. Programmes may be identified by AQSC as an established programme following a risk-based due diligence exercise:

- Programmes must have been subject to a successful revalidation and have been running for longer than five years;
- Programmes must be in good health. This will be determined by considering external examiner reports, consultants reports and Annual Programme Reviews (APR) from the last three years and the latest revalidation report;

For programmes previously classed as established, consideration will be made as to whether this remains appropriate. At any time, a programme may return to full scrutiny should any significant issues arise. This decision will be made by AQSC.

For those programmes with a consultant from the previous year who is still within the maximum term of office, AQSC will approach the consultant to ask if they wish to continue in the role for the

coming year. Continuing consultants should be aware that a programme may move between standard and established and that this is reflected in the expected workload and payment.

For new programmes or where a new consultant is needed AQSC will approach colleagues in a relevant academic field. Once a person has agreed to undertake the role the AQSC team will initiate the appointment process. Where a consultant is appointed for the first time, a more experienced consultant will be approached to act as a mentor to offer support and guidance during the first year of appointment.

At the start of each academic year, AQSC will provide contact details for programme teams and relevant quality staff at the College for which the consultant is appointed. AQSC also provide the college with details of all consultant appointments and contact details.

If consultants struggle to make contact with the programme team then they should let AQSC know as soon as possible so that this can be followed up.

### Core remit and required duties

In relation to annual review and monitoring, consultants are expected to:

- Monitor the quality and standards of learning and teaching and the student experience at the RTPs and comparability with those of Lancaster awards delivered at Bailrigg;
- Discuss with and advise programme teams on matters related to quality and standards;
- Provide a mid-year report to AQSC in December;
- Provide an end of year report to AQSC in July.

Whilst there are two formal reporting points within each academic year, consultants are asked to raise any issues and concerns with AQSC at any point in the year. Should there be a serious or potentially serious issue which risks quality and standards then consultants are expected to raise this with AQSC immediately.

In relation to programme delivery, consultants are expected to:

- Discuss with and advise programme teams on matters related to programme delivery including staffing, resources, learning and teaching, assessment;
- Discuss aspects of programme delivery with students to seek feedback.

In relation to staffing, consultants are expected to:

- When changes to programme teams occur after validation/revalidation, approve college staff to teach on Lancaster programmes;
- Monitor programme staffing (both volume and appropriate expertise) through discussions with programme teams and students.

In relation to academic standards and assessment, consultants are expected to:

- Review a sample of student work to ensure that programme learning outcomes are being achieved and to provide comment on student achievement and the equivalence of standards and achievement with Lancaster programmes delivered at Bailrigg;
- Attend examination boards as a University representative – this is normally the module board but can be the progression and final assessment board, or both at the consultant's discretion;
- Where possible establish contact with the external examiner to discuss the programmes;
- There is a possibility that consultants may be invited to be an independent external for the end point assessment on Degree Apprenticeships that follow an integrated approach.

In reviewing a sample of work and attending examination boards, consultants are looking at equivalence with Lancaster and are not acting as the external examiner. Unlike the external examiner, consultants are not required to approve marking and moderation and final assessment results though they may discuss these with the external and programme team as part of ongoing monitoring of the programmes. For the avoidance of doubt, in the areas of marking, moderation and final assessment results the view of the external examiner is final and always takes precedence over that of the consultant.

Please note that consultants are no longer required to approve examination papers in advance of them being sent to the external examiner.

In relation to student support, consultants are expected to:

- Discuss with and advise programme teams on matters related to student support and assuring the student experience;
- Discuss aspects of student support with students to seek feedback.

In relation to curriculum development, consultants are expected to:

- During the period of validation, discuss with and advise programme teams on matters related to curriculum development and currency of curriculum;
- Comment on programmes as they are developed for validation/revalidation (this may involve commenting on Outline Planning Permission and validation documentation);
- Comment on and give approval for programme and module amendments before they are presented for formal college and/or University approval.

In relation to admissions and recruitment, consultants are expected to:

- Discuss with and advise programme teams on matters related to recruitment, admissions and marketing;
- Grant final approval for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) application following College and AQSC consideration.

In order to achieve the above, consultants will establish and maintain contact with the programme team through regular communication. Consultants are required to visit the College to meet with staff and students in each semester during the year (therefore at least two visits per year). AQSC will monitor to ensure that the visits are taking place.

For consultants of an established programme:

- The core remit and required duties will still apply;
- The primary focus will be on monitoring quality assurance and enhancement rather than on curriculum support and development;
- The consultant may wish to select a quality assurance/ enhancement theme each year to focus on.

Therefore, consultants for established programmes will perform a similar role to standard programme consultants although given the risk-based assessment made in categorising the programme it is anticipated that less time will be required.

For consultants of a programme in the developmental period leading to initial validation the role will be more individual depending on the needs of the particular programme team. The consultant will offer support and guidance during this period, considering the relevant areas of the core remit and required duties. A mid-year and end of year report will be required but consultants should only complete the relevant sections of the template according to the areas of support that a particular programme team has required.

A consultant may have responsibility for more than one programme and this may encompass a mix of programme categories. If this is the case, whilst such programmes are likely to be in cognate areas and there may be benefits of cross programme sharing/discussion, the consultant must ensure that each programme has the relevant amount of attention and focus as per the remit definitions above. A separate mid-year and end of year report is required for each programme.

### Early termination of appointment

The importance of the role of consultant in contributing to the management of standards and quality means that any failure to fulfil the role is viewed seriously. The University reserves the right to terminate an appointment if a consultant fails to fulfil their obligation at the end of any single year of appointment.

Early termination may occur in the following instances:

- Serious illness;
- Resignation of the consultant concerned. It is expected that, other than in cases of serious illness, the consultant will fulfil all remaining commitments relating to the current academic year, in order to allow adequate time to find a suitable replacement;
- Changes in programme structure which render the appointment no longer applicable;
- Non-fulfilment of consultant duties (in particular, the failure to submit reports, or the provision of incomplete reports);
- Unprofessional conduct;
- Irretrievable breakdown of the relationship with the programme team.

### Restrictions on appointment

The University will not appoint as consultants anyone in the following categories or circumstances:

1. A current employee of the RTP in question;
2. Anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the programme of study;
3. Anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the programme(s) in question;
4. Former staff or students of the RTP in question unless a period of five years has elapsed and all student taught by or with the consultant have completed their programmes.

### Contracts and term of office

Upon receipt of a signed engagement form from AQSC, the University's Human Resources (POE) team arrange a variable hours contract which sits alongside the consultant's contract for their substantive post. This contract is in addition to the substantive role the consultant holds and does not affect that contract in any way.

The term of office for appointments will normally be four years, though in some subject areas this may not be possible due to the limited number of specialists within Lancaster. Contracts will be issued annually at the start of the academic year and will be for a period of one year at a time up to the maximum.

All appointments will be considered at the end of each year of appointment and where still required and as appropriate appointments are renewed at the start of the academic year. All parties will be under the understanding that where possible there will normally be a change of consultant four yearly. Where a programme consultant is at the end of their appointment term, handover comments

are required for the incoming consultant. If possible, it is useful for the outgoing and incoming consultants to meet to discuss the programme and latest report.

Consultants are appointed on the understanding that programmes will continue to run and that in the case of new programmes, they will recruit students in the first year of operation. Whilst this is rare, if a programme is not continuing or does not recruit and/or there are no remaining students on the programme, the AQSC team will inform the consultant as soon as possible that they are being stood down.

### **Payment and indicative workload**

Consultant for a standard programme: £1500

Approximate number of days per year: 3

Consultant for an established programme: £1000

Approximate number of days per year: 2

Consultant for new programme in its initial period of development: £500

Approximate number of days per year: 1

Payment will be made through the University payroll and the amounts paid are subject to tax and National Insurance contributions.

Payments are made at two points in the academic year: the first third after receipt of the mid-year report; and the remaining two thirds after receipt of the end of year report. Please note that the timing of payments will change, particularly if there are delays to the submission of reports.

Consultants are paid per programme. AQSC are responsible for categorising each programme for a given academic year. Consultants should be aware that a programme may move between categories and therefore the workload and payment may change between years.

### **Travel and expenses**

Reasonable expenses for undertaking the role can be claimed in line with the University's expenses policy, which is available on via the finance department's website: [Expenses](#)

Consultants should use the online expenses system for any expenses and travel claims. The relevant finance codes are available from AQSC.

Non-Lancaster consultants will not have access to the online expenses system and will make claims via a different process. AQSC will advise non-Lancaster consultants on this individually.

## Reports

### Content of reports

Consultant reports are an important source of information and evidence to support the ongoing monitoring by the University of the quality and standards and student experience at the RTPs.

Consultants are expected to provide a report for each programme for which they are a consultant for. Where a consultant's remit covers more than one programme then a separate report is required for each.

The purpose of the **mid-year reports** produced by consultants are to assist the AQSC to monitor the quality of the programmes the University validates at the RTPs by bringing to the attention of AQSC any major issues they recommend be considered before the end of the academic year. The mid-year report will cover any *evidence-based major issues or concerns* arising within the areas of programme delivery and student experience:

- learning, teaching and assessment;
- learning resources;
- staffing;
- student satisfaction;
- communications with the programme team.

The meetings with staff and students held in the first semester should, along with other communications, inform the mid-year report. Consultants should use this report to confirm that these meetings have taken place.

The **end of year report** is an opportunity to reflect upon the year and provide comments on the quality and standards of and student experience on the programme; to make recommendations on issues for consideration by the programme team and/or college and/or the University over the coming year; and to note any good practice/enhancement worthy of wider dissemination.

Programme consultants are expected to comment on the following areas in their end of year report:

- Programme delivery (including staffing and resources);
- Student achievement;
- Student support and student experience;
- Curriculum and development;
- Recruitment;
- Communications with the college (including confirmation of visit dates);
- Good practice/enhancement;
- Recommendations on issues for consideration.

Templates for each report provide the specific questions/areas which consultants are expected to address. Templates are disseminated via consultant bulletin emails. They are also available to download from the AQSC webpages:

<https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/academic-standards-and-quality/lancasters-collaborative-provision/regional-teaching-partnerships/consultancy-at-the-regional-teaching-partnerships/>



## Submission of reports

Mid-year reports are submitted in December and end of year reports are submitted in July, both directly to AQSC. Consultants should not send reports directly to programme teams; AQSC are the conduit for the dissemination of reports.

Deadlines are set for report submission are publicised via the AQSC webpages and in consultant bulletins. If a report is not submitted by the deadline, consultants will be reminded by AQSC to submit.

Consultants should be aware that their interim payment will only be paid following receipt of their mid-year report and that their final payment will only be paid following receipt of their end of year report.

## Consideration of reports by the institution and RTP

Mid-year reports are considered by AQSC. The AQSC response to the mid-year report will take the form of a rolling action plan (RAP). At the January meeting of the Regional Partners Teaching Committee (RPTC), AQSC will discuss the content of the mid-year reports with the RTP and agree actions which will form the basis of the RAP. All actions included in the RAP should normally be actioned before the end of the year and it will be a standing item on RPTC agendas until actions are complete. Mid-year reports will be shared with the RTPs as part of the RPTC papers.

End of year reports are circulated by AQSC to the quality teams at the RTPs who disseminate these to programme teams. Within the RTPs, end of year reports are reviewed by the programme team who are required to consider the report as part of the Annual Programme Review (APR). All recommendations made in consultant reports should be addressed and where appropriate, programme level actions included in the programme rolling action plan which is monitored throughout the year by the appropriate programme level committees. Programme teams should also write to consultants with a formal response.

The end of year reports will also be considered within the quality unit and relevant managers/academic leaders as part of annual monitoring processes and the review of individual APRs. Management level recommendations are discussed in the Annual Quality Report that the RTP submits to the January meeting of the RPTC. Actions identified form part of the Annual Quality report action plan which is considered at RPTC meetings for the rest of the academic year.

Within the University, AQSC consider all end of year consultant reports as part of annual monitoring processes and a summary report is produced for the RPTC which is considered at the January meeting alongside the RTP Annual Quality report. Any University-level actions are identified as part of the summary report and form an action plan which is considered at RPTC meetings for the rest of the academic year.

Issues raised in consultant reports may form themes for discussion at consultant meetings and sharing practice events.

## Support for consultants

### University contacts

Responsibility for consultants currently lies with the AQSC team within Student and Education Services.

For general queries and anything related to contracts and payments, please contact [programmeconsultants@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:programmeconsultants@lancaster.ac.uk)

## Induction

When a new consultant is appointed they are provided with the following information:

- Consultant Guidance and Information
- Last consultant report
- Last external examiner report
- Last annual programme review
- Last set of validation/revalidation documents for programme and module specification information.

A meeting can be arranged with AQSC representatives to discuss the role and logistical procedures.

In addition, a mentor is allocated to each new consultant for their first year in the role.

## Mentors

The role of mentor is to provide consultants in their first year of appointment with an independent, experienced point of contact for advice and guidance.

The mentor should:

- Establish contact with the mentee;
- Wherever possible, arrange to meet the mentee face-to-face, but if not possible the mentoring role can be accomplished via email or telephone;
- Provide advice and guidance on consultant processes and procedures;
- Advise on the role, context and content of written reports;
- Clarify details, provide support and build confidence.

All regulatory and procedural issues would continue to be communicated as currently by AQSC.

Mentors should normally be a current consultant of the University and should normally have been in role for at least one full academic year. The role of mentor attracts an additional fee of £100, which is paid automatically at the end of the academic year. The role of mentor is in addition to other consultant duties.

## Termly bulletins

AQSC will issue termly consultant bulletins via email. These bulletins include information and updates, as well as prompts on the various activities consultants should be undertaking that term as part of the requirements of the role.

## Meetings and sharing practice events

In order to create a community of practice for consultants AQSC will hold consultant meetings up to twice a year. A theme or themes will be selected for discussion with a view to sharing practice, identifying challenges and opportunities for enhancement and development for both the role and the partnerships.

## Additional information

## RTP quality procedures and processes

There are established RTP policies and procedures for all aspects of quality and annual monitoring including:

- Admissions/recognition of prior learning (RPL);
- Programme design, development and approval;
- Programme monitoring and review;
- Assessment and review;
- Complaints and appeals.

These are available via the RTP section of the AQSC webpages: [Regional Teaching Partnerships](#)

Consultants should make themselves familiar with the various policies and procedures and should remain aware that whilst similar to those at Lancaster, some differences do exist.

## RTP assessment regulations

Consultants should be aware that the RTPs are not bound by Lancaster's Manual of Academic Regulations and Procedures (MARP).

A separate agreed delegation of responsibilities is in place, as agreed within the Memorandum of Agreement for the partnership, which is reviewed five yearly. In a number of areas, the RTPs follow their own academic regulations and some areas are covered by the agreed RTP quality procedures and processes policies.

In terms of assessment regulations, the RTPs must adhere to the *University's Regional Teaching Partner Assessment Regulations* (available to view via the RTP section of the AQSC website ([Regional Teaching Partnerships](#)))

## External examiner reports

As with all HE provision, an external examiner is appointed for each programme at the RTPs. Ideally, the consultant is able to establish contact with the external and details of externals are provided to consultants by AQSC. Consultants receive a copy of the yearly external examiner report for their programme(s).

## Validation/revalidation schedule and programme closures

As per validation/revalidation procedures, each programme requires initial validation and then revalidation every 5 years. As part of business planning processes, the University agrees a schedule of validations/revalidations each year. Consultants are advised via the consultant bulletins which programmes are on the schedule and also of the outcome.

As part of business planning processes RTPs also inform the University of any intentions for programme closures and when these will come into effect. Once closures are finalised AQSC advise consultants that this is the case; each programme retains a consultant until the final cohort of students has completed.

## Annual Programme Reviews (APRs)

APRs are written as a reflection on the previous academic year, with action plans to be completed over the current academic year being devised to address any issues and to enable enhancements to programme delivery etc. Final versions are submitted to AQSC mid-December and these are circulated to consultants in January.

## **Programme staffing**

Whilst the RTPs are responsible for their own staff including appointment, induction and ongoing professional development, the University is responsible for ongoing oversight of any RTP staff member to teach on a University validated RTP programme.

A set of staffing criteria is used to assess the suitability of any individual and this is available via the RTP webpage on the AQSC website.

Programme staffing is approved at validation and again at revalidation however it is the responsibility of the consultant to monitor programme staffing if any changes are made in the interim period.

The RTPs provide AQSC with information about any proposed changes (including CVs) and AQSC liaise with the relevant consultant to seek approval.

If at any point in the academic year a consultant has concerns about programme staffing:

- that there appears to be insufficient or insufficiently qualified staff to teach the programme,
- that there appears to have been changes to staffing that they have not had a request via AQSC to approve,
- that staff seem unduly overworked or there is a high volume of staff sickness (short or long term);

then the consultant should contact the appropriate RTP representative in AQSC to raise these concerns.

There is a significant difference in contracted teaching hours at the RTPs (which are delivering Higher Education in a Further Education context) as opposed to Lancaster and other universities. Blackpool and The Fylde academic staff are contracted to 820 teaching hours each academic year and Blackburn College academic staff are contracted to 720 teaching hours each academic year. Typically programme teams will also be smaller. Therefore, consultants should keep this in mind when commenting on staff workload and numbers of staff. The University cannot dictate to the RTPs who they appoint, but it does have the responsibility of approving which staff teach on University-validated programmes. If staffing issues have the potential to affect programme delivery, quality, standards and the student experience in a negative way, the University will require reassurance from the college about how such issues are being addressed and resolved.

Research hours are not part of a contract for RTP teaching staff, although many staff actively research; there is provision for them to bid for remission from teaching hours for research and staff development activity.

## **Recognition of prior learning (RPL)**

Approval of any application by a prospective RTP student for recognition of prior learning is one of the consultant responsibilities. The College provide details of the application, including a programme mapping, which is then considered by the AQSC representative who will then liaise with the consultant over approval. Whilst the consultant takes academic judgement on the case, it is the responsibility of AQSC to liaise with the College quality/admissions team to communicate decisions and ensure that details are recorded correctly on the student's academic record.

## **Programme amendments**

As part of annual review processes, programme teams may identify minor or major amendments they wish to make to a programme and/or its modules. The programme team should discuss any

proposed changes with consultants and seek the consultant's approval before submitting the amendment request.

### **University library access for RTP students**

The issue of RTP students being granted access to the University's library and online books, journals and resources is one that is often raised by students.

RTP students (and staff) are eligible to join the University Library provided they are studying (or teaching) on a course validated by Lancaster. There is an application form to complete (or students can join by presenting their RTP student card) and a £5.00 initial fee for students (free to staff), with an automatic right of renewal each year of study. RTP students can borrow up to six books and have walk-in user electronic resource access.

Unfortunately, RTP students cannot have access to online resources other than when on campus in the library. This is because officially (and in terms of HESA statistical returns and funding arrangements) they are students of the RTP and not of the University. The licensing agreements for the University's online resources do not extend to permit access to any student not officially a member of the University (and in terms of HESA statistical returns and funding arrangements); therefore, it would not be legal to allow access to RTP students. The position is regularly revisited and several alternative solutions have been considered; however, it has not been possible to change the current position.

The RTPs do inform students of this and AQSC asks that this message is reiterated by consultants as University representatives. The University does understand that students feel they should have access given they receive a University award; however, they often do not understand the detail of the partnership arrangements or their student status.

### **Data protection**

The University's policy on categorising and protecting University information and assets is available via this link: <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/privacy/>.