

## **IADT Linked Provision – Procedure 2: Procedure for approving the Quality Assurance procedures of linked providers**

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<b>Purpose</b>	Procedures for IADT to consider and approve the QAE procedures of linked providers
<b>Policy Author</b>	Office of the Registrar
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Office of the Registrar
<b>Intended Audience</b>	Staff, prospective linked providers
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<b>Related Documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IADT Policy on Linked Provision Framework</li> <li>• Procedure for considering and establishing a linked provision relationship (Procedure 1)</li> <li>• Procedures for monitoring and reviewing the QA procedures of established linked providers (Procedure 3)</li> </ul>

## Document Version History

Previous Version	Notes	Replaced by
V1.0, 2024-25	New - First Version of this procedure	N/A

# Contents

1. Introduction and Context.....	4
1.1 IADT Linked Provision Framework .....	4
1.2 Roles and Responsibilities .....	6
2. Investigation and Consideration .....	7
2.1 Provider Submits Application.....	7
2.2 Partnership Oversight Committee (POC) is convened .....	8
2.3 Audit of Providers Academic Policies and QAE System .....	8
2.4 Due Diligence Investigation.....	8
2.5 Site Visit.....	9
2.6 Assessment of the Application and Making of Recommendations .....	9
3. Development of Linked Provision .....	10
3.1 Recommendation and Response .....	10
3.2 Linked Provision Development and MOA .....	10
3.3 General Principles Relating to Standards, Awards and Certification when completing an MOA for linked provision: .....	11
3.4 General Procedures Relating to Standards, Awards and Certification when completing an MOA for linked provision: .....	11
4. Appeals Process Provision.....	12
5. Next Stage .....	14

# 1. Introduction and Context

## 1.1 IADT Linked Provision Framework

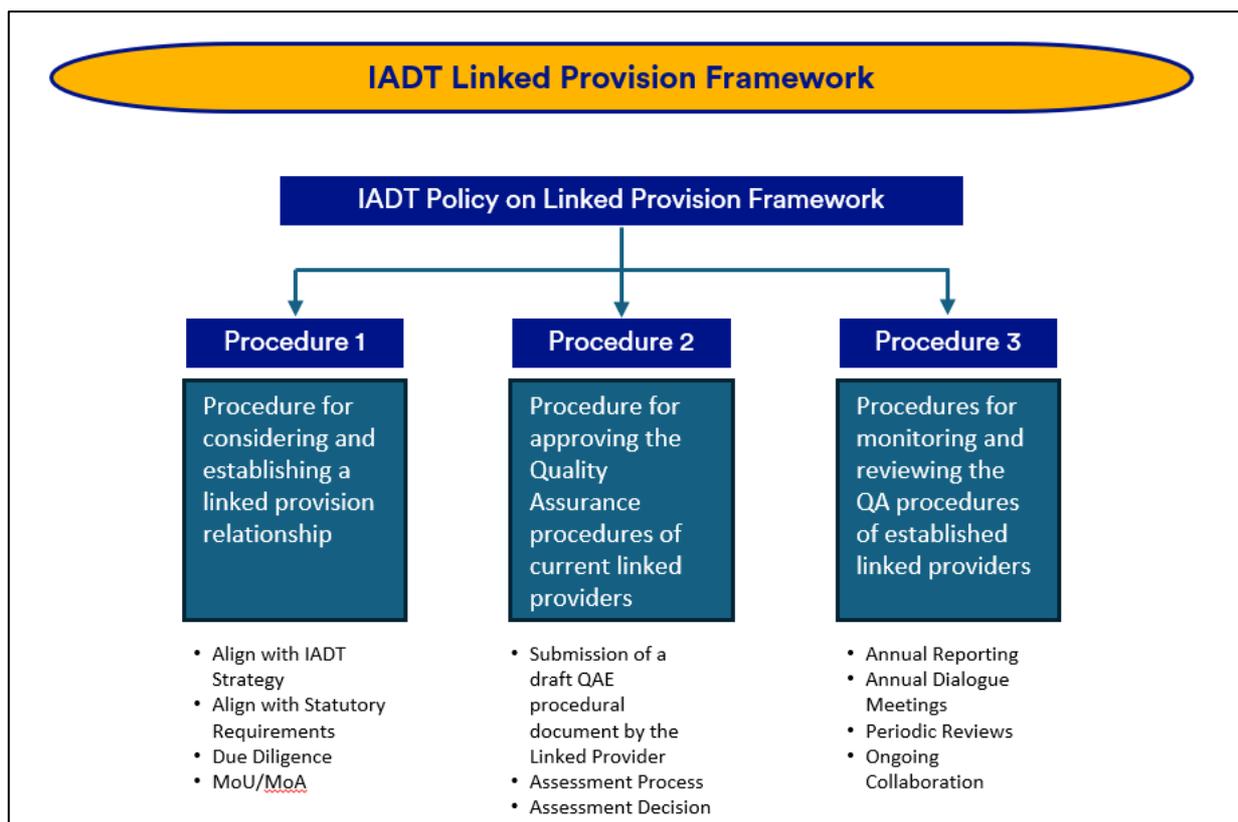


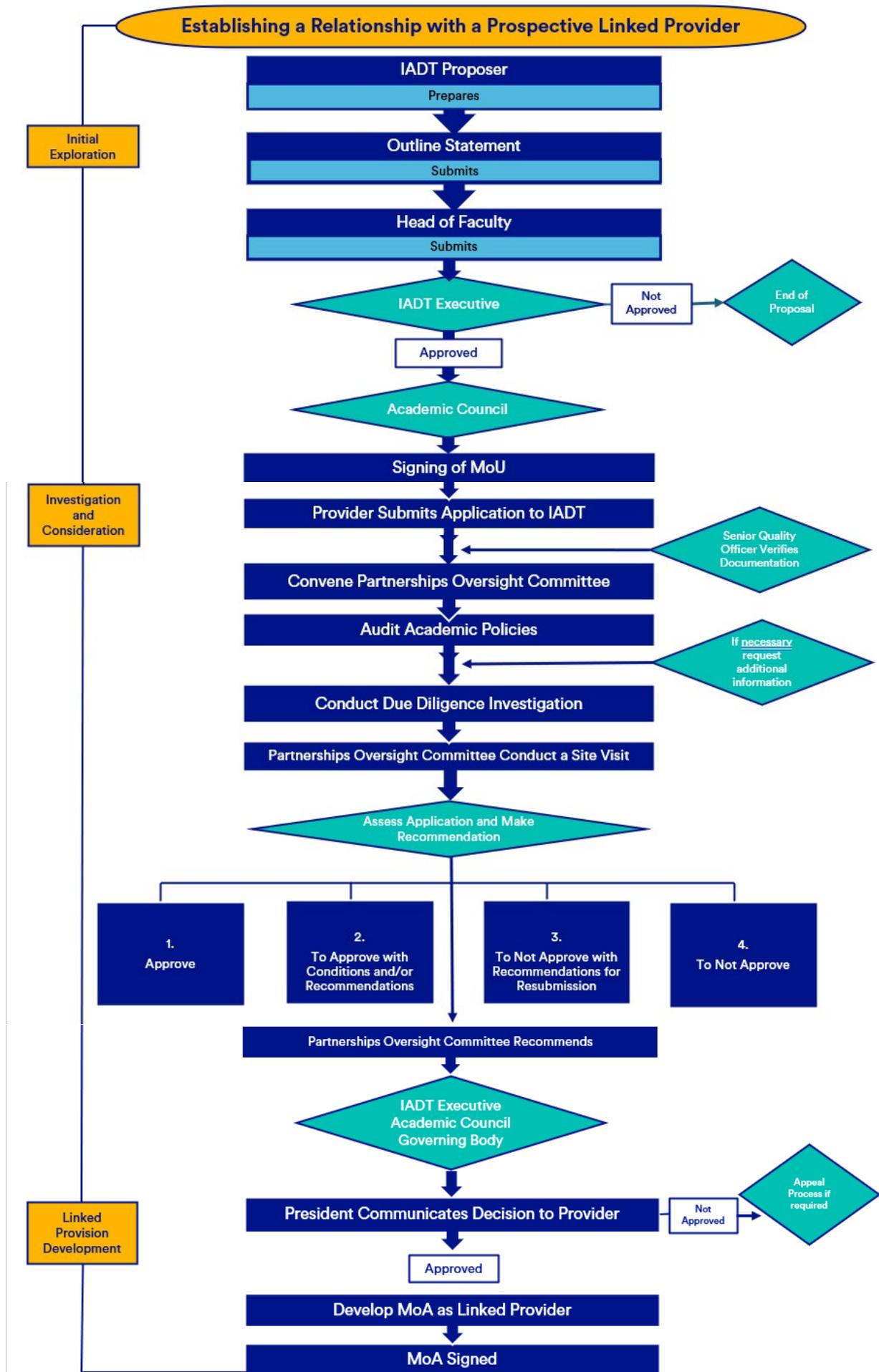
Figure X: IADT Linked Provision Framework

This procedural document refers to **Procedure 2**, the second stage of the IADT Linked Provision Framework, and outlines the process IADT will follow to investigate and consider a linked providers Quality Assurance Procedures and to make a decision and recommendation, and if approved, develop a relationship with a linked Provider. This stage follows the successful approval of an initial proposal and consideration of an Outline Statement, as outlined in the *Procedure for considering and establishing a linked provision relationship*.

Following a successful development of a Linked Provision Relationship with a third-party provider, IADT will implement the next stage of the Framework, implementing periodic procedures for monitoring and reviewing their QA Procedures. Refer to *Procedures for monitoring and reviewing the QA procedures of established linked providers*

This procedure and process will align with the IADT Strategic Plan 2024-28, 'Towards a university for the Creative Industries' and incorporates the relevant statutory requirements as specified in the relevant Acts and the QQI Sector-specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies as noted in the IADT Policy on Linked Provision Framework.

Refer to Figure X for a workflow of the overall process for **Establishing a relationship with a Prospective Linked Provider**, which incorporates Procedure 1 and Procedure 2.



There are two stages for IADT to consider and approve the QAE procedures of a provider when establishing a prospective Linked Provider relationship, each of which are broken down into further

steps.

- Investigation and Consideration
- Development of Linked Provision

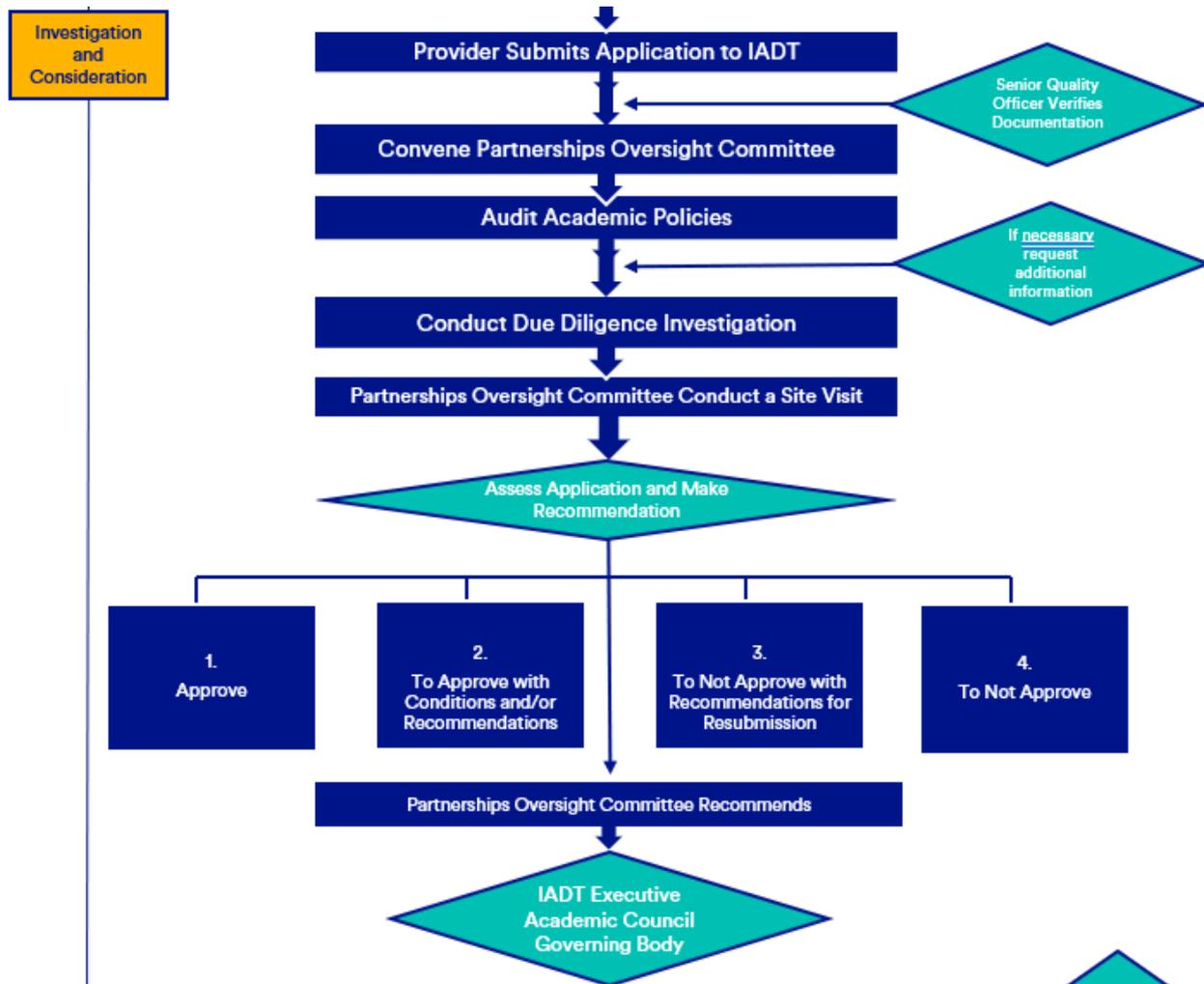
## 1.2 Roles and Responsibilities

- **IADT Proposer**  
The IADT representative who identifies linked provision opportunities in the capacity of their role and prepares a proposal for linked provision consideration.
- **IADT Head of Faculty** is responsible for submitting the proposal and Outline Statement to Executive for consideration.
- **Provider**  
The third-party educational provider (this could be an FE, private college, etc) who is interested in engaging with IADT to provide an award for one or more of the programmes the provider offers. The Provider is responsible for making the application, providing all necessary documentation, and engaging with IADT throughout the process.
- **IADT Executive**  
The Executive Team will review and consider the initial proposal made by the IADT Proposer ensuring the proposal aligns with the strategic aims and objectives of IADT and is compatible with and supports IADT's Quality Framework.
- **Academic Council**  
IADT's Academic Council will note the approved proposal at meetings and the recommendations made following the investigation and consideration stage.
- **IADT President**  
The President will engage with the Provider, communicate the application decision, and sign the MOU and MOA as required.
- **Office of the Registrar & Senior Quality Officer**  
Manage the coordination of the process between IADT, the POC and the Provider as required.
- **Partnerships Oversight Committee (POC)**  
A POC will be convened by the President to consider the application of a Provider, review to submission, conduct a site visit and make recommendations regarding the application. The POC will ensure that the application and prospective relationship aligns with the strategic aims and objectives of IADT and is compatible with and supports IADT's Quality Framework. The composition and terms of reference for the POC are available from *IADT Policy for the Quality Assurance of Collaborative Provision*. The POC is responsible for carrying out the due diligence and will ensure that statutory requirements associated with linked provision can be fully met and that the provider meets the provisions of the QA process necessary. The POC will typically report within 6 months of being established.
- **Governing Body**  
IADT's Governing Body will note the recommendations made following the investigation and consideration stage ensuring that the new relationship aligns with the strategic aims and objectives of IADT.

## 2. Investigation and Consideration

In summary, the investigation and consideration Stage incorporates several steps and actions:

- Submission of Application to IADT by the Provider
- Partnership Oversight Committee is convened
- Audit of Providers Academic Policies and QAE System
- Due Diligence Investigation
- Site Visit by Partnership Oversight Committee
- Assessment of Application and make recommendations



### 2.1 Provider Submits Application

The Provider submits an application and necessary supporting documentation to IADT. This application should include:

- A completed Linked Provider application form (see sample in Appendix X)
- Copy of the Providers Quality Manual / or draft of QAE Procedures, providing and overview of their QAE framework, policies, and procedures as applicable.
- An evidence-based Self-Assessment Report (SER) outlining the Providers compliance with ESG and statutory QQI Core Guidelines.
- Equality, Diversity + Inclusion, and Sustainability Policies
- Additional documentation as applicable

The completed form and documentation should be submitted to IADT via the Senior Quality Officer ([quality@iadt.ie](mailto:quality@iadt.ie)), who will disseminate to the Partnership Oversight Committee when established.

## 2.2 Partnership Oversight Committee (POC) is convened

IADT establishes a Partnerships Oversight Committee that has a specific role in advising Academic Council and the President on decisions to be made in respect of partnerships and collaborative programme development. The President appoints members of the POC, who will conduct the Investigation and Consideration of the Application.

The POC is usually composed of the following members:

- Head of Strategic Projects (or nominee) (Chair)
- Assistant Registrar
- Secretary/Financial Controller
- Appropriate Discipline Experts who may include internal and external Experts
- Finance Representative
- Student Union Representative

IADT Policy for the Quality Assurance of Collaborative Provision & IADT Procedures for the Quality Assurance of Collaborative Provision<sup>1</sup> outlines the procedures for the Committee.

## 2.3 Audit of Providers Academic Policies and QAE System

In the case of Linked Provision, the POC will consider the Providers Application, their Quality Framework, relevant policies and procedures, the submitted Self Evaluation Report, and the information related to programme(s) being proposed for award where applicable. If any clarification, or additional information or documentation is required, the request will be issued to the Providers contact by the IADT Senior Quality Officer, who will collect and disseminate to the POC.

## 2.4 Due Diligence Investigation

The due diligence process helps to determine the level and likelihood of exposure that might be anticipated and how it should be contained and managed. The paramount consideration informing any risk assessment must be learner protection.

- a) Overall oversight over the due diligence search related to a proposed collaborative arrangement remains with the Partnership Oversight Committee (POC)
- b) The due diligence involves a detailed investigation of the proposal under five key risk areas and will take account of the guidance for due diligence provided in the *QQI Sector-specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies*. The five key risk areas are:
  1. financial risk;
  2. legal risks;
  3. academic risks;
  4. operational risks;
  5. reputational risk.
- c) Responsibility for the conduct of due diligence enquiries into Financial and Legal Risks will lie with the Secretary/Financial Controller / Finance Representative, unless otherwise determined by the President.
- d) Responsibility for due diligence enquiries into Academic Risks will lie with the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Registrar, unless otherwise determined by the President.
- e) Responsibility for due diligence enquiries into Operational and Reputational Risks will be determined by the Partnership Oversight Committee (POC) on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature of the potential risk. Operational and Reputational risks will intrinsically form a part of the investigation of the financial, legal and academic risks.
- f) IADT will establish detailed criteria for evaluation of the risk categories that align with the specific context of the proposed Linked Provider context.
- g) IADT will require the prospective Provider to conduct a self-evaluation against those criteria and submit relevant documentation as required to complete the due diligence investigation. Independent validation of the self-evaluation may be required along with independent investigations.
- h) Given the developmental nature of the proposed collaboration, due diligence enquiries should

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<sup>1</sup> Both documents are available from the IADT Website: <https://iadt.ie/about/iadt-policies-procedures/>

- be carried out in consultation with the IADT proposers, and in a manner appropriately respectful of both the proposed partner and the preliminary stage of the discussions.
- i) As part of the due diligence process, provisions will be made for at least one site visit to the prospective Linked Provider by IADT representatives, including a meeting with key stakeholders and a visit to the key learning facilities and resources. This is necessary to ensure that local facilities and infrastructure are adequate in order to validate equivalence of learner experience.
  - j) To support the due diligence process, the applicant provides documentation that enables the following requirements to be assessed:
    - legal status, reputation and compliance;
    - financial sustainability;
    - organisational structure, governance and management of QAE;
    - QAE system and procedures;
    - equality, diversity & inclusion policies;
    - additional information as requested by TUS to enable completion of the due diligence investigation.
  - k) The recommendation and a short justification are forwarded by the Faculty to the IADT Executive, Academic Council and Governing Body for their consideration and approval.
  - l) Those with responsibility for due diligence in the respective risk area shall collate a report of the due diligence investigation. The Reports shall contain an overall finding and recommendation to be submitted to the IADT Executive for consideration.

## 2.5 Site Visit

The members of the POC will also conduct a site visit to the Providers location, meeting with key stakeholders (e.g. Head of Provider / Management / Quality Team / Support Services / Programme Team etc). The visit provides an opportunity to assess the key learning facilities and physical resources and ensure that facilities and infrastructure are adequate in order to validate equivalence of learner experience.

## 2.6 Assessment of the Application and Making of Recommendations

The POC has two functions:

1. To contribute to an evaluation of academic risks as part of the due diligence exercise described in Section 2.4
2. To make a finding with respect to the approval of the QAE system of the prospective linked provider.

The POC assesses the extent to which the Linked Provider has met relevant (QAE-specific) requirements. Depending on the context, the POC may make a decision based on a desk review and discussion of the documentation submitted. The POC may also seek third-party input into the process at its discretion.

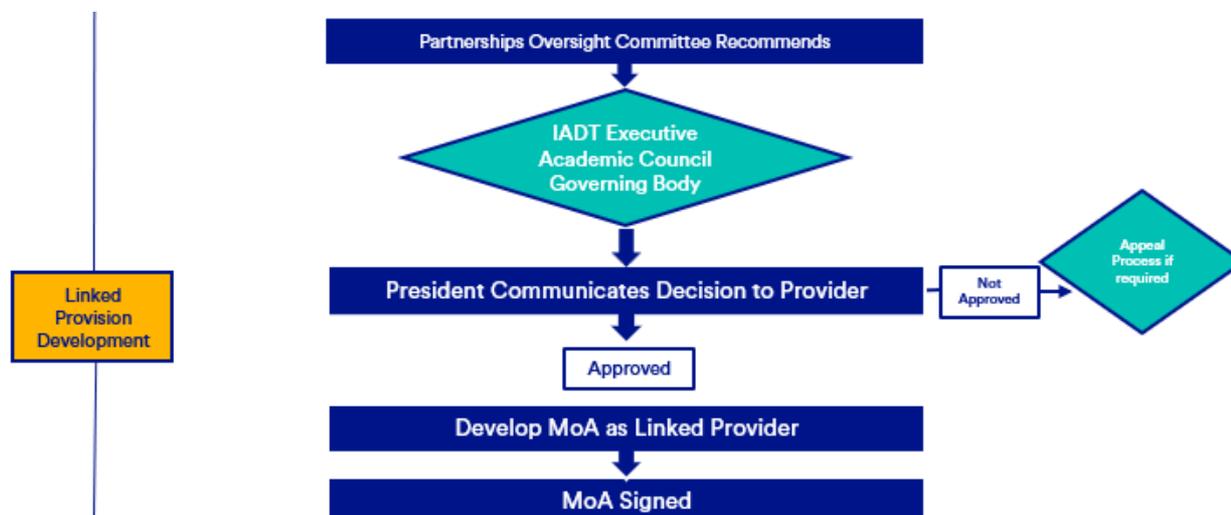
Following assessment by the POC, the Chair, or their nominee, coordinates the collation of a Report of POC.

Following its review of the QAE System, the POC may recommend one of the following four outcomes:

- i. approve the proposed procedures as presented
- ii. approve the proposed procedures as presented but include specific recommendations and timelines for future enhancements
- iii. do not approve the procedures;
- iv. do not approve the procedures but make recommendations, which must be met prior to resubmitting the procedures for approval.

The Report of the POC is presented to the IADT Executive, Academic Council and Governing Body for consideration and ratification as appropriate.

### 3. Development of Linked Provision



#### 3.1 Recommendation and Response

The IADT Executive considers the POC/Due Diligence Report received from the POC and takes into account the evidence, analysis and conclusions of the report.

Based on these considerations, Executive will issue a recommendation on the further development of the proposed collaborative arrangement. It may recommend that:

- a) development of the arrangement should be progressed;
- b) development of the arrangement should be terminated;
- c) parameters of the arrangement should be modified with a proposal resubmitted.

Executive will notify the proposers of the reasons for its recommendation through the Faculty/School structure. Upon endorsement by Executive, the recommendations will be formally presented for ratification by Academic Council and Governing Body.

Where the IADT Executive and Academic Council has recommended approval of the Linked Provision arrangement, the President shall inform, in writing, the partner organisation. The proposers in conjunction with the proposed partners should commence preparation of a detailed Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) as appropriate.

Where the Executive and Academic Council has recommended that a proposed collaboration should not be pursued, the President shall inform, in writing, this decision to the proposed partners.

Where IADT does not approve a Linked Provision arrangement, the Linked Provider may appeal against the decision using the Appeals Procedure as set out in Section 4 below.

#### 3.2 Linked Provision Development and MOA

Once the academic linkage has been approved, a comprehensive Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) shall be developed between IADT and the recognised Linked Provider. The MoA shall make provision for the academic management, assessment and QAE procedures and processes. The precise nature of the relationship between IADT and the Linked Provider shall be articulated in the MoA. The MoA will contain clauses that shall include but are not limited to:

1. The scope of provision covered by the agreement;
2. A statement on what aspects of this policy, if any, are delegated to the linked provider
3. A statement on the academic regulations that apply to the linked programmes;
4. A statement on the obligations of the Linked Provider in respect of quality assurance procedures
5. A statement outlining the content and design of the award parchment to be provided to

learners

6. A statement on the obligations of IADT to approve, monitor and review those procedures
7. Arrangements for the termination of the agreement;
8. A statement on the arrangements in place for the protection of learners in the case of termination of the agreement. In the event of the termination of the academic linkage between IADT and the recognised Linked Provider, IADT shall ensure that the learners enrolled on linked programmes leading to awards of the Institute are protected. IADT and the recognised Linked Provider shall implement, on commercially reasonable terms, arrangements to enable students who are enrolled on programmes that are accredited by IADT and are the responsibility of the recognised Linked Provider to complete their programmes.
9. The MoA shall be submitted to Executive for approval.
10. The President signs any MoA on behalf of the IADT. The MoA must be countersigned on behalf of any other party by a representative of similar status and with the authority to enter into such an agreement.

The MoA shall take full cognisance of the principles and procedures relating to *Standards, Awards and Certification* as outlined below in 3.3 and 3.4.

### **3.3 General Principles Relating to Standards, Awards and Certification when completing an MOA for linked provision:**

- 3.3.1 The integrity of the awards and QAE procedures of linked providers is an integral part of IADT's Marks and Standards and Quality Framework.
- 3.3.2 IADT will ensure that each award made on behalf of the recognised Linked Provider within the specified Linked Provision framework, in so far as is reasonable and practicable, is recognised within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).
- 3.3.3 IADT will ensure that learners enrolled on programmes leading to awards recognised within the NFQ acquire the standard of knowledge, skills and competencies associated with the level of that award.
- 3.3.4 IADT will safeguard that the development and validation of new programmes by the recognised Linked Provider are conducted in a systematic way and are designed in a constructively aligned way so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes and appropriate assessments.
- 3.3.5 IADT will ensure that professional regulatory bodies and QQI are consulted with on the standards and quality assurance of programmes leading to qualifications in regulated occupations.

### **3.4 General Procedures Relating to Standards, Awards and Certification when completing an MOA for linked provision:**

- 3.4.1 Learners enrolled on linked programmes leading to awards of IADT shall be registered students of both the recognised Linked Provider and IADT (as the DAB).
- 3.4.2 Proposals regarding the accreditation of new and/or modification of existing programmes of the recognised Linked Provider shall be directly submitted to IADT's Academic Council for approval through its Programme Validation Sub-Committee (PVC)
- 3.4.3 Validation panels for new or modified programmes of the Linked Provider shall be convened and chaired by IADT. Such validation panels shall comprise representatives from both institutions and external advisors. The recommendation for a new or modified programme award made by the Validation panel shall be submitted to TUS Academic Council for approval.
- 3.4.4 In certain circumstances, IADT Academic Council may delegate responsibility regarding the validation of new programmes and the modification of existing programmes to the relevant academic authorising body of the recognised linked provider. That authorising body of the Linked Provider should communicate in writing its decisions to the chair of IADT Academic Council in a timely manner.
- 3.4.5 IADT Academic Council shall ratify all awards made on linked programmes leading to awards of the Institute

- 3.4.6 On behalf of IADT Academic Council, examination boards for programmes offered by the Linked Provider that lead to awards of the IADT shall be constituted and chaired by an IADT nominee of the IADT Registrar. The examination board shall make recommendations to IADT Academic Council in relation to the awards to be made to students who have completed such programmes of study.
- 3.4.7 IADT Academic Council shall meet to consider the recommendations of a duly constituted examination board for linked programmes leading to awards of IADT. The recommendations of the examination board shall be communicated to IADT Academic Council, for ratification, in a timely manner.
- 3.4.8 The decisions of IADT Academic Council in the case of these recommendations shall be considered final, and appropriate awards shall be granted to the candidate on linked programmes leading to awards of IADT. IADT Academic Council shall determine the award, including grade and classification (if applicable), to be conferred on the candidates considered.
- 3.4.9 IADT Academic Council shall retain the power to appoint external examiners to the programmes offered by the recognised linked provider. The functions of such external examiners shall be those set out in IADT Academic Regulations.
- 3.4.10 A recognised Linked Provider must have robust approaches in place in regard to learner admission, progression and recognition. This means that there are pre-defined and published regulations that are consistently applied by the Linked Provider to cover all areas related to learner admission, progression, recognition and certification of awards. Access policies, admission processes and criteria are established and implemented consistently and in a transparent manner and, as appropriate, in accordance with national policies and procedures for access, transfer and progression.
- 3.4.11 The academic regulations for IADT -accredited programmes offered by the recognised Linked Provider shall be, or shall align as fully as practicable with, the academic regulations of IADT. Exceptions to this stipulation may be requested by the recognised Linked Provider through formal written proposal to IADT Academic Council.
- 3.4.12 The recognised Linked Provider shall commit to ongoing monitoring and periodic review of all linked programmes in accordance with Procedure 3 of Linked Provision Framework. The outcomes of annual monitoring, which will include an action plan for quality enhancement, shall be communicated to IADT in an open and timely manner. There should be an emphasis on opportunities to evaluate and enhance the programme with the benefit of feedback from staff, students, external examiners, employers, student enrolment, retention, progression, completion and graduate destination data, as relevant.

## 4. Appeals Process Provision

In a situation where an application from a provider has not been approved, the provider may appeal the decision.

An appeal from a Linked Provider against a decision of IADT must be submitted within X timeframe, following receipt of the decision from the President of IADT.

The Appeal will be considered under the procedures described below. In dealing with an appeal, privacy and confidentiality will be respected.

4.1 IADT will nominate a panel / independent person to hear the appeal.

The independent Appeals Person shall be external to TUS and have senior management experience in Registry and/or Quality assurance in higher Education.

4.2 An appeal must be submitted in writing to the Registrar within one calendar month from the date of notification of decision.

4.3 The written appeal must state all the grounds on which the Linked Provider challenges the decision and any documentation the Linked Provider relies upon must be attached.

4.4 IADT shall provide the Independent Appeals Person with all relevant documentation necessary to carry out the appeal. This shall include:

1. The written report submitted to the Provider following the Assessment of the application
2. The written appeal by the provider
3. additional relevant documentation submitted by the provider.
4. Any additional information or documents requested by the Independent Appeals Person.
5. The Independent Appeals Person/Panel shall consider the Linked Provider's written appeal and IADT's report and engage with either organisation to request additional information if required. They will then respond to the Registrar within 5 working days with their decision outlining if they recommend the appeal is upheld or not upheld, including reasons for their decision.
6. If additional time is required for the appeal to be considered, this will be communicated to the IADT Senior Quality Officer, who will notify the Registrar and Provider.
7. The Registrar will communicate the outcome of the appeal to the Provider within 5 working days of receipt of the decision from the Independent Appeals Person/Panel. The Registrar will also communicate the outcome of the appeal to IADT Executive and Academic Council.
8. If the appeal is upheld, the Independent Appeals Person/Panel should outline any recommendations or actions required if appropriate. Following this, IADT and the Provider will commence the Linked Provision Development stage (from Section 3.2), taking into account any recommendations made by the Independent Appeals Person/Panel.
9. If the appeal is not upheld, there shall be no further right of appeal related to the application.

## 5. Next Stage

Following the successful development of the Linked Provision with the Linked Provider and signing of MOA, the Linked Provision partnership will commence, and the Procedure 3 of the Framework will come into effect: See the *Procedures for monitoring and reviewing the QA Procedures of established linked providers*

## References and Resources

1. [Technological Universities Act 2018](#)
2. [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act \(2012\)](#)
3. [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) \(Amendment Act\) 2019](#)
4. [QQI Sector-specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies](#)
5. [ESG Guidelines](#)
6. [QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines 2016](#)
7. [General Data Protection Regulation \(EU\) 2016/679](#)
8. [Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018](#)
9. IADT Quality Framework\*
10. IADT Policy on Linked Provision Framework\*
11. IADT Policy for the Quality Assurance of Collaborative Provision\*
12. IADT Procedures for the Quality Assurance of Collaborative Provision\*
13. IADT Marks and Standards
14. [IADT Strategic Plan](#)
15. [IADT Performance Agreement](#)
16. [IADT GDPR and Data Protection](#)

*\*IADT Policies and Procedures are available via the IADT website:*

<https://iadt.ie/about/iadt-policies-procedures/>

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The following documents were consulted when drafting this document

QQI Sector Guidelines for DABs <https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-11/gg-4-sector-specific-qa-guidelines-for-universities-and-other-designated-awarding-bodies.pdf> (see Section 5)

### Other HEI Procedures

1. TUS Policy on Linked Provision  
[https://tus.ie/app/uploads/AcademicServices/Quality/Handbook/VOL4/12\\_TUS-Policy-on-Linked-Provision-and-Linked-Provider-Framework-2022-%E2%80%93-2025-AC-29.04.2022.pdf](https://tus.ie/app/uploads/AcademicServices/Quality/Handbook/VOL4/12_TUS-Policy-on-Linked-Provision-and-Linked-Provider-Framework-2022-%E2%80%93-2025-AC-29.04.2022.pdf)
2. UL Linked Provider Framework  
<https://www.ul.ie/media/8680/download?inline>
3. UCC Linked Providers Outline Procedure for Approval of LP QA Procedures  
<https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/qualityenhancementunit/guidelines/UCCLinkedProvidersProcedure.pdf>
4. UCD procedures for approval of UCD linked provider  
<https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/Procedures%20for%20the%20Approval%20of%20UCD%20Linked%20Provider%20QA%20Procedures.pdf>