

Prison-University Partnerships: A Toolkit



Prison University Partnerships in Learning



Prisoners'
Education
TRUST

About this toolkit

This toolkit is designed to support educators and prison staff in setting up and delivering a prison-university partnership. In this toolkit you will find information and guidance on:

- The benefits of prison-university partnerships – to the prison as an institution, to the prison learners, to the university participants, and to the university as a whole.
- Some types of learning models.
- Things to consider when you are planning your partnership such as recruitment of participants, accreditation, ways to measure outcomes, and project funding.
- Tips on delivering a partnership.
- Evaluation.
- Ways to signpost the next steps for participants eager to continue engaging with education.

This is a brief guide to setting up a partnership. It is designed to be used by prison or university staff who want to know where to start.

This is not a detailed explanation of every prison-university partnership in the UK. If you want more background about the projects mentioned in this toolkit (and many others), you can find more information [here](#).

This toolkit is produced by [Prisoners' Education Trust](#), as part of the work of PUPiL (Prison University Partnerships in Learning).

PUPiL's key objective is to promote and support prison-university partnerships and to gather evidence of the positive impact that they can have. This feeds into the wider policy work of Prisoners' Education Trust.

To receive PUPiL news and case studies straight to your inbox once a month, sign up [here](#).

This toolkit written by the Policy and Communications team at Prisoners' Education Trust, It builds on significant work by previous PET Senior Policy Officer Morwenna Bennallick and previous Head of Policy Nina Champion.

Index

What is a prison-university partnership?	4
How can a partnership benefit a prison?	5
How can a partnership benefit a prisoner?	8
How can a partnership benefit a university?	10
How do you start a prison-university partnership?	12
Partnership models	14
Finding funding	16
Recruiting students	17
Potential challenges	18
Evaluation	20
What next?	21
Other considerations	23
More information	24

What is a prison-university partnership?

“We've had a 44-piece orchestra come in from De Montfort University to play to the prisoners - playing contemporary music but using classical instruments. The prisoners really appreciated the skill that took; many of them would never have been to see an orchestra outside.”

Phil Novis, then-governor of HMP Leicester

“The reading group runs for two to three hours once a month, usually on the first Friday of the month. The academic that is leading each session will choose a book for participants to read over the previous month. Our only condition is that they choose material that is related to the discipline of criminology and is agreed by staff at HMP Grendon.”

Dr Sacha Darke and Dr Andreas Aresti, University of Westminster

“The York St John (YSJ) University Prison Partnership Project started in 2013 and is a partnership between York St John University and HMP New Hall (closed female prison) & HMP Askham Grange (open female prison). It was born out of the idea and desire to provide a unique creative arts partnership between education, the arts and the prison service facilitating a weekly drama and arts provision in prison.”

Dr Rachel Conlon, Senior Lecturer in Theatre, York St John University

Prison-university partnerships are well-established and there are many different models, ranging from reading groups to art, philosophy courses, science labs, community development projects and much more. They often involve university and prison learners working on a module together over a number of weeks. We look at more models in detail in the [Partnership Models](#) section. There are also a number of [case studies on our website](#).

Our [PUPiL map](#) displays the information that we have about existing partnerships. We feature case studies of partnerships regularly in our [PUPiL blog](#).

How can a partnership benefit a prison?

“We are working under austerity across the public sector. You cannot deliver this alone – you need partners. The benefits to the prisoners are huge – through enhancement and in the regime and the unintended circumstances of safety. There has been no resistance from within the prison because you can see the benefits and most staff experienced a benefit. I can’t see that there are any negatives.”

Phil Novis, then governor of HMP Leicester, collaborating with De Montfort University

“The group helps the prisoners to gain employability skills that they are unable to develop through distance learning alone as they are able to exchange ideas and perspectives with other students and academics in a seminar style setting.”

Amanda Baldry, Distance Learning Tutor at HMP Coldingley, collaborating with University of Westminster

In 2017 the Ministry of Justice issued a new definition of prison education. They said that: **“The purpose of education in prisons is to give individuals the skills they need to unlock their potential, gain employment and become assets to their communities. It should also build social capital and improve the wellbeing of prisoners during their sentences and once released.”**¹ This acknowledges that the benefits of education go beyond simply enabling a prison learner to get a job on release.

Reducing reoffending

[Ministry of Justice statistics](#) from the Justice Data Lab show that prisoners who, through funding provided by Prisoners’ Education Trust, have undertaken distance learning to Further and Higher Education levels go on to reoffend less than a matched control group (MoJ, 2013). Research consistently demonstrates a relationship between education and the reduction of reoffending: the proven one year re-offending rate is 34% for prisoner learners compared to 43% for people who do not engage in any form of learning activity.²

Establishing good practice

A review of prison education by Dame Sally Coates in 2016 ([Coates Review, Unlocking Potential](#)) highlighted a number of prison-university partnerships as examples of good practice from across the estate. Coates found that the impact was not limited to the sentence but extended to future aspirations. HMIP (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons) has also highlighted the good practice of prison-university partnerships, in their [inspection reports](#).

¹ <https://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/news/moj-on-education-balancing-autonomy-with-consistency>

² Ministry of Justice and Department for Education (2017) Exploring the outcomes of prisoner learners: analysis of linked offender records from the Police National Computer and Individualised Learner Records, London: Ministry of Justice

Supporting engagement with higher education

Partnerships are a way of engaging prisoners with education. Many participants in partnerships choose to go on to further or higher education through the Open University, or go on to study at university post-release. Partnerships give those prisoners contacts in universities who often advise and support them in making an application.

Utilising prison resources more effectively

Partnerships can increase prisoner engagement with existing prison activities in their regime such as a more meaningful use of time in the library and with education staff, and increased engagement with peer mentoring schemes, other studies (self-directed or taught), vocational and employment training and personal and social development.

Providing purposeful activity

Just two in five prisons (43%) received a positive rating from inspectors in 2017–18 for purposeful activity work - down from the already low base of half of prisons inspected the year before.³ Prison university partnerships can provide weekly purposeful activity that inspires further study and engagement with education.

Developing aspiration and learning pathways

“Higher education was something learners previously aspired to but they lacked confidence.”

Dr Anita Mehay,

in evaluation of a partnership between HMP/YOI Isis and Goldsmiths, University of London

Partnerships can be a good introduction, or re-introduction, to higher education. By establishing links between prisons and universities they also pave the way for continuing to higher education, either post-release or via distance learning. Dr Anita Mehay evaluated a Learning Together partnership between Open Book at Goldsmiths, University of London and HMP/YOI Isis in September 2017. Through interviews with prison learners in the weeks following the course, she found that “[S]ome were considering enrolling onto further higher education, others were aspiring for other careers in social work, and some were engaged in the next iteration of Learning Together.”⁴

³<http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Summer%202018%20factfile.pdf>, p.14

⁴ https://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/data/Resources/Goldsmith-Isis_Evaluation_final.pdf

Bring resources into the prison

Often prison university partnerships provide reading materials (photocopies, printouts and actual books) paid for by the university, for use by prison learners. In some cases the partnership can develop to provide even more – for example the partnership between University of Westminster and HMP Pentonville sparked the university's Outreach team, who were involved in delivery of the sessions, to run a textbook drive. They donated over 50 degree-level textbooks to HMP Pentonville library.

It is not just books that partnerships provide – they provide staff resources and contacts for prisoners to talk to about education. In some cases, university staff have been able to provide references for prisoners applying for courses and statements for parole board hearings.

How can a partnership benefit a prisoner?

“The material was unlike anything I’d ever read before and the words just didn’t seem to be going in. However, I persevered and was determined to get my head around it, so I looked up the meanings of words I didn’t understand, kept on reading and slowly things started to make a bit more sense.”

Joe, HMP Risley

“It’s been very beneficial seeing myself as a true university student not just a prison student.”

Raj, HMP Coldingley

Improved wellbeing

PET has for many years had regular contact with prisoner learners. The benefits of learning in prison for the prisoner can be huge. As our CEO Rod Clark [wrote in 2016](#), prisoners report to us a number of other benefits of education in addition to building a positive identity, including a developed sense of agency, resilience, and improved mental health and wellbeing.

Broader options of subjects and study levels

The majority of education happening in prisons is up to Level 2, which leaves students at Level 3 or above with little education to engage with. The 2016 [Coates review](#) found that out of 101,600 learners, under the present OLASS (Offenders’ Learning and Skills Service) contracts for prison education, only 100 prisoners participated in a full Level 3 course in 2014/15 (equivalent to ‘A’ level), with none participating at Level 4 or above. It also found that one fifth of prisoners say they would have preferred to be studying at a higher Level than they were currently. Partnerships offer opportunities not only to experience education at a higher level, but also to experience a far broader range of subjects than funding for education in the prison may allow.

Support for ongoing studies

For those already studying in prison, partnerships can be a way of enhancing the learning experience and supporting the prisoner through to completing the qualification. Some partnerships might particularly focus on this as an objective, for instance the distance learning mentoring scheme at Goldsmiths, University of London. Student Ambassadors from Goldsmiths, University of London, receive training on mentoring distance learners. They are then paid by the university to support prisoners in HMP/YOI Isis who are studying on distance learning courses. The course subjects do not need to be the same.

Developing transferrable skills

Succeeding in employment requires more than just a qualification – many of the skills learned by participating in a partnership increase a prisoner’s employability, for instance working in a group, punctuality, communication, presentation and critical reading skills. Writing in the [Prison Service Journal](#) in 2016, former prisoner and now criminologist Jason Warr describes these transferrable skills as “informal benefits or skills which can include such diverse factors as the development of greater wellbeing as well as critical reasoning skills, self-confidence, self-esteem, empowerment, changed perspectives and, in specific circumstances, narrative change.”⁵

⁵ <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/PSJ%20225%20May%202016.pdf>

How can a partnership benefit a university?

“When I went up to collect my certificate in the final session, I said something like, this experience has made me so excited to do similar things for the rest of my life, I was not lying.”

Hannah, University of Manchester student and participant in partnership with HMP Risley

“It was during my few weeks at HMP Birmingham that I truly understood and experienced what education is and should be for everyone.”

Sharonjit, Newman University student and participant in partnership with HMP Birmingham

A Unique Learning Experience for Students and Tutors

In those partnerships where students of the university learn alongside prisoners, there is a unique opportunity for both parties to develop a level of skills and awareness not achievable in a traditional university seminar. Our case studies from [Hannah](#), who took part in the Learning Criminology Inside partnership between the University of Manchester and HMP Risley, and [Natalie](#), who took part in the Making Links partnership between the University of Westminster and HMP Pentonville, give detailed personal accounts of the benefits.

Meeting Access Agreements

A partnership can be a mutually beneficial way of meeting widening participation targets, set out by the Office for Students (OfS). While prisoners have not been specifically identified by the OfS as a target group, the cohort of prison learners contains many individuals who would be considered, by the OfS’s definition in its latest document, widening participation students; for example a greater proportion of the prison population are BAME than the general population, and a far greater proportion have experience of the care system.⁶ Universities receiving public funding are required to demonstrate the impact they are having on widening participation for these groups.

Improved Employability and Source for Work Experience and Placements

For many university students, a prison-university partnership is their first interaction with the criminal justice sector. By introducing students of all disciplines to the broad range of opportunities for meaningful, high-impact work in the sector, partnerships can improve employability and suggest new career paths.

⁶ https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/b6e62c0c-e056-40c3-a2bd-0a5a25678bf2/ofs2018_33.pdf p.

Access Route for Student Recruitment

There are approximately 80,000 members of the prison population in the UK.⁷ Within that cohort are many people who are capable of studying for a degree, either via distance learning, while released on temporary licence, or post-release. These potential students are unable to attend a UCAS fair, or visit The Student Room online, and so direct contact (via a partnership) is really important in making sure recruitment is accessible.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-population-figures-2018>

How do you start a prison-university partnership?

Making the initial connection

We know that having buy-in from the senior leadership in a prison or university helps partnerships to run smoothly and to be sustainable. While they may not be involved beyond visiting the project or attending a graduation, the support of a vice chancellor or a governor can influence the attitudes of staff across the institution.

However, there is no one set person who can commission a partnership, and across the PUPiL network you can find examples of partnerships initiated by:

Prison Staff

Prison Governors

The most senior governor in a prison, often called ‘the number one’, overseeing day-to-day management.

Learning and Skills Managers/Heads of Learning and Skills

Sometimes called HOLS, these managers oversee education provision in a prison.

Heads of Reducing Reoffending

Sometimes called HERR, they usually oversee workshop activities, gym, library, and other resettlement services.

Other Education Department Staff

For example distance-learning tutors, who support those studying distance learning courses in prison and may see partnerships as a way of supporting distance learning by developing skills.

Independent Education Consultants

These staff may be employed on a contractual basis by the prison to facilitate and deliver education activities.

University Staff

Vice Chancellors (VCs)

VCs are equivalent to the governor in a prison, overseeing all aspects of university management.

Widening Participation and Outreach teams

These teams traditionally focus on schools and colleges, running activities such as workshops, visits, tours and seminars to increase engagement with higher education for people in underrepresented groups. They also work with care leavers and mature students and, more recently, people with convictions.

Academics

These could be lecturers, senior lecturers, professors or readers. The majority of partnerships involve criminology or sociology academics, but increasingly other disciplines are being represented. Some academics are involved in organising partnerships, others might give guest lectures.

PhD students

Sometimes called doctoral candidates, these are people working on a thesis (a book-length research project). While they are technically students, they will often teach within their department.

If you want to plan a partnership and don't know who to contact, please feel free to [contact us](#). We can introduce you to someone in your region or discuss the process with you.

Partnership models

Think about what kind of partnership you want to run. Will it be delivered through weekly, monthly, or one-off events? Will you involve university students, or just staff?

The best way to work out what is right for you and your institution is to find out about existing partnerships and their benefits or challenges.

It is important that whatever you choose to do is appropriate for the available resources (time, space, and materials) that both institutions can contribute. All of these examples can be found on the [PUPiL map](#).

- **[Learning Together](#)** began as a partnership between criminologists at the University of Cambridge and governing staff at HMP Grendon, teaching prison and university students alongside each other. There are now over 50 Learning Together partnerships in the UK, and new partnerships developing internationally.
- **The [Inside Out](#) programme** began in the US before expanding to the UK and other countries. It involves a rigorous academic module taught to prison learners ('inside students') and university learners ('outside students') alongside each other. Practitioners must have had training in the Inside Out method.
- **A seminar series:** talks and Q&As are hosted by the prison, with speakers from the university. The Open University (OU) run OUREsearch across HMPs Stafford and Oakwood and Learning Together run the Big Ideas series of lectures in HMP Whitemoor.
- **A mentoring scheme:** students from the university support prisoners studying via distance learning. At Goldsmiths, University of London, student ambassadors are trained and then paid by the university to go into HMP/YOI Isis to support distance learners in a mentor capacity.
- **A monthly reading group:** The University of Westminster runs partnerships with HMPs Grendon and Coldingley where criminological readings are discussed in a seminar style.
- **A module offered by a university for prison staff:** a partnership between Leeds Beckett Psychology department and HMP Full Sutton teaches a psychology short course to students from both institutions, and Full Sutton staff.

- **A creative collaboration:** such as a co-produced and performed play. The partnership between York St John University and HMPs New Hall and Askham Grange has been designed by university and prison staff to offer students from both institutions the opportunity to collaborate on creative projects.
- **A placement scheme:** students from the university undertake various jobs in the prison. At Edinburgh Napier University students in the School of Arts and Creative Industries can do work placements in HMP Edinburgh, as part of a longstanding partnership between the institutions.

If you want to contact a partnership facilitator, or even perhaps visit a partnership, you can find more information on the [PUPiL map](#).

We try to keep the information on the website to a brief summary, so if you'd like more details please [contact us](#).

Finding funding

There are various potential funding sources for a partnership. Some partnerships may not need much funding. At universities, people are often keen to get involved, and volunteer time to do so if the experience is meaningful and productive. Some examples of the costs involved are:

- A monthly seminar might require refreshments, and a lecturer's transport.
- A reading group might require travel costs for the students, and the initial outlay on books.
- An accredited module being co-taught in the prison might require travel costs, books, and the entrance fee for each student to be submitted for assessment.
- A mentoring scheme may require the cost of wages for the mentors.
- All of the above may have printing costs for teaching or mentoring materials.

Funding routes for these can include:

- An academic department at the university, for instance Criminology, Education, Psychology.
- The Widening Participation or Outreach teams at the university.
- The prison education department budget.
- Miscellaneous pots of money from either institution – for instance where a prison has not been able to recruit to fill its allocation of officers, there may be money remaining in the staffing budget that could be used on education.

Often a partnership is funded by more than one of these routes.

As of April 2019, the way that prison education is funded [will change](#), and this may impact some of the above funding routes. Core prison education services will be delivered through the Prison Education Framework by main education providers. Governors will also be able to commission additional services through the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). Any university can apply to be registered on the DPS.

Recruiting students

Some partnerships only require participants to be interested in order to participate. Open Book at Goldsmiths, University of London, allows people working at any level to attend their drop-in classes and in this way makes sure access is as wide as possible.

Another example of recruitment without restrictions is OUResearch, a partnership between the Open University and HMPs Stafford and Oakwood. Each month, an OU academic will deliver a short lecture to prisoners, who are then invited to ask questions and discuss the issues raised. There is no requirement for participants to be doing an OU course, or to have any particular academic level, and in some cases the audience has ranged from PhD students to prisoners struggling with basic literacy.

For some types of partnerships, particularly where there is a final assessment, your recruitment may need to consider academic levels. Recruitment may be different for the university and prison.

Considerations for recruiting university students

- *Do you want them to be on a particular module?* For example, the University of Westminster and Royal Holloway, University of London partnership project with HMP Bronzefield, is offered to students enrolled onto the Criminology module 'Gender and Crime'.
- *Will you ask them to submit a written application?* Some projects have a full application form, some ask for a statement of interest or a short essay, and some are open to anyone interested.
- *Will you choose students based on their previous attendance or participation in class (if known)?*
- *How will you tell students about it?* Students may engage with their Virtual Learning Environment and their email less at certain times of year – recruitment may need to be face-to-face (e.g. 'shout outs' at the start of lectures, or asking seminar tutors to mention it).

Considerations for recruiting students in prison

- *Do you want the students to be working at the same academic level as the university students?* If so, do you want them to have previous qualifications to prove this?
- *Do you have any way of assessing aptitude and/or prior learning?* A way around formal assessment criteria is to have a recruitment and induction process that makes it very clear to students what the course will entail and what level they will be working at, so that students can decide for themselves if they feel confident participating.
- *Will you take the nature of a prisoner's conviction into account when selecting students?* For the prison, there are considerations around which prisoners can associate with each other safely and potential disruptive behaviour. The prison staff will authorise who can be involved in the partnership.

Potential challenges

In her independent evaluation of the Learning Together partnership between Leeds Beckett and HMP Full Sutton in 2017, Dr Suzanne Young used semi-structured interviews with participants to identify challenges and make recommendations for the project in the future. You can find this useful report [here](#).

Overenthusiasm (starting too big or too quickly)

A partnership which is rushed in the planning stage or which tries to do too much too soon can pose a high risk of damaging the relationship between the two institutions, and failing to deliver the desired experience for the participants.

It can be helpful to run a pilot programme, perhaps with a smaller number of students, or for a shorter time. One-off events, such as an academic seminar delivered to prisoners, can be a good way to understand the environment.

Identifying and observing boundaries

The relationship between prison and university students learning in partnership is a unique one, and the boundaries can sometimes be difficult to navigate. For many academics and university students this may be the first time they have been inside a prison.

There are specific rules about contacting and corresponding with prisoners, confidentiality and use of social media and it is important that participants understand what these are.

The prison's security processes themselves can be a challenge – university students and staff may not know what items are prohibited to take into the prison, what clothing regulations a prison has, or what the search procedures could be. Failure to talk about these things in advance could lead to students being turned away at the gate.

A thorough briefing before the project starts, preferably from someone who has worked with both groups of students before, can pre-empt any of these issues. Different partnerships have different guidelines about contact between participants, so this is something you will need to decide as well as to communicate to your students. Participants should know who to talk to if they are uncomfortable, and what information they can take out of the room.

Generally speaking, a security briefing might cover:

- Security information needed for the university participants.
- Prohibited items, dress code, searching procedures.

- Whether the prison has sufficient storage facilities to leave personal belongings including bags and mobile phones.
- Rules about contact between participants (during and after the project).
- Safeguarding – what constitutes risk of harm in prison, what to disclose if a prison learner tells you they are at risk of harm and how to do this.
- Confidentiality and sensitive information.
- Use of social media.
- Raising alarms and contacting officers if needed.

Lack of technology

Within the prison there is usually limited – or no - digital access. Where a university lecturer might normally email their students readings, put assignments on a Virtual Learning Hub, and rely on Powerpoint presentations and multi-media to deliver their teaching, in a prison, alternatives need to be considered.

This means that teaching requires more planning than in a university setting. All required resources must be printed out and brought into the prison. While there may be a computer or laptop available for the lecturer in the lesson, USB sticks are prohibited, so any presentation or files needed must be sent to a member of prison staff in advance.

It might be possible to communicate with prison learners between sessions but this is not guaranteed. A member of prison staff may be able to assist but they are likely to be facilitating a prison university partnership in addition to their usual duties. When designing assignments it is important to consider the limited library and computer facilities available to prison learners to do their research, and it is very unlikely they will be able to use the internet.

Regime

A prison regime is a timetable of activities including visits, gym, showers, meals and education, as well as other activities. The regime of each prison is different, and within that each prisoner may have a different regime. It dictates when prisoners are in their cells, when they move about the prison, and it will dictate when you can run a partnership. However, if there are security or staffing issues in a prison, the regime may change or run late. This may impact on the time you have to deliver a session.

Evaluation

There are various ways that you could evaluate your project, but the first step is to decide what you want to measure. In 2017, PET supported Dr Anita Mehay's [evaluation](#) of a partnership between Open Book at Goldsmiths, University of London and HMP & YOI Isis. This is a very thorough, formal evaluation and we are not suggesting every project will have something like this: simpler methods are possible. As Mehay notes, after the Learning Together partnership between HMYOI Feltham and Royal Holloway, University of London:

“The convenors utilised various methods including student reflections during each session where students were asked to reflect on ‘one thing I want less of’, ‘one thing I want more of’, and ‘one thing I’d keep the same’.”⁸

You could evaluate weekly, monthly, or at the end of the course. You could use:

- Questionnaires
- Reflective statements
- Whole-group discussions
- Focus groups.

You may want to record and review:

- Attainment
- Attitudes towards education
- Plans following the course

“Qualitative evaluation seems the best model to me, with short ten-minute interviews to assess course efficacy and impact, and to guide what you need to improve on.”

Ben Walker, The Crito Project in partnership with HMP Warren Hill

⁸ https://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/data/Resources/Goldsmith-Isis_Evaluation_final.pdf

What next?

“Two learners from the Thorn Cross cohort have gone on to University after release. Others have expressed an interest in further/higher education in the future. In addition, the Learning Together module has also spawned other collaborative projects between Edge Hill and Thorn Cross: we are currently in the process of organising a second exhibition of prisoner artwork in the University, to which the artists and guests will be invited (subject to ROTL conditions).”

*Dr Alana Barton and Dr Anita Hobson,
Edge Hill University working in partnership with HMP Thorn Cross*

Prison-university partnerships can spark new ideas, aspirations and progression into further learning. But, it is important that expectations are realistic and that participants can access good information about potential next steps.

Information you could cover in a concluding session include:

Routes into higher education:

- Here at PET we offer funding for Open University Access courses, which prepare students for degree study, as well as a number of other Level 3 qualifications such as A-Levels. These can be found in our [curriculum](#).

Degree opportunities, funding and entry requirements:

- The [Open University](#) offers a number of degrees to those studying in prison and have many years' experience supporting learners in secure environments.
- PET funds many prison learners for their first module of an Open University degree, using [Garfield Weston funding](#).
- [Longford Trust](#) offer scholarships to young serving and ex-prisoners who want to study for a degree, as well as mentoring.
- Student Finance England will fund degree level study for prisoners in the last six years of their sentence. The [Prisoner Funder Directory](#) produced by the Hardman Trust details other funding opportunities.
- Entry requirements might be best explained by somebody in Admissions or Outreach at the university, as there can be many ways to meet these, and requirements can vary greatly between universities. This is particularly relevant for students thinking of studying post-release.

There are various ways you could make this information available. You may want to:

- Run a drop in session for prison learners, perhaps advertised by posters and prison staff, to talk to individuals on a one to one basis about their education journey.
- Invite in an advisor from a university outreach or widening access team. These professionals will know lots about non-traditional routes into education and various career paths that might follow on from particular qualifications.
- Ask the university admissions team to come in to talk to prison learners about what happens when they apply and if they are required to disclose a conviction.
- The prison may have education peer mentors or champions who promote education and support other prisoners to engage. They may also have PID (prisoner information desk) workers or other prisoners offering advice and guidance. They may be able to support the partnership by publicising it, encouraging participation, supporting learning or finding information about progression routes.

Models of ongoing support

Inside Out have ‘think tanks’, where academic facilitators continue to meet the prison students: “In partnership with HMP Frankland, Durham University *Inside-Out* team attend monthly ‘think tank’ meetings at the prison with the ‘Inside’ alumni still imprisoned there.”⁹ Learning Together have a [Learning Together Network](#) of practitioners and alumni, offering support and developing relationships beyond the reach of individual projects.

[Open Book](#) at Goldsmiths, University of London offer an Extended Project Qualification course which prepares students for studying at degree level. Students who successfully complete their extended project can then make application to university; they are supported throughout this process and their entire academic journey. Open Book also offers dyslexia, literacy, basic skills and study skills support.¹⁰

Participants of British Convict Criminology partnerships (currently active at HMPs Pentonville, Grendon and Coldingley) have sometimes been inspired to take up an offer of mentoring. The [mentoring scheme](#) matches prison learners studying law or social sciences with an academic to provide ongoing advice and guidance.

⁹ <https://www.dur.ac.uk/sociology/crim/insideout/>

¹⁰ <https://www.gold.ac.uk/open-book/open-book-about/>

Other considerations

Should we accredit the course?

Partnerships do not need to be accredited to be valuable and have an impact for both institutions. In some cases accreditation is not appropriate. Ruth McFarlane, Senior Manager of the Open University's Students in Secure Environments team, has produced this table to explain accreditation options and routes into higher education for PUPIL partnerships:

	<u>Accreditation</u>	<u>Pathway</u>
1	Course is not accredited but celebrates wider learning benefits.	Student has option to explore other learning.
2	Course is accredited by provider University.	Provider University offers option to register for further study.
3	Course is accredited by provider University.	Student applies for credit transfer to The Open University (as 30 or 60 credits)
4	Option for student to use learning towards Open University Make Your Learning Count Module (30 credits at level 1)	Student registers for Open University Open Degree
5	Course counts as introduction to HE (at level 3), but is not accredited	Student applies for PET funded OU Access module.
6	Course counts as introduction to HE (at level 4 or higher), but is not accredited	Student applies for Garfield Weston scholarship funding for first level 1 OU module.

Some universities will accredit a partnership module at different levels for students from the prison and students from the university, which means that the learning outcomes and assessments can be different. The University of Westminster, for example, accredits its partnership modules with Pentonville at Level 3 for prisoners and Level 6 for university students, and requires different things from those students to pass the module.

Can a prison-university partnership work in my type of prison or university?

There are successful partnerships between all types of prison and universities, and you can use the [PUPIL map](#) to find out more about which prisons are hosting partnerships.

- The secure estate (for example at [HMPS Durham and Frankland](#))
- Local prisons (for example at [HMPS Leicester and Pentonville](#))
- The women's estate (for example at [HMPS Send and Bronzefield](#))
- Prisons that hold younger people (for example at [HMYOI Feltham and HMP/YOI Isis](#))

More information

A range of case studies can be found on [our website](#). We are always looking for contributors to provide case studies and share best practice, so if you are a current partnership practitioner and would be happy to write something for PUPiL please get in contact with Academic Networks Officer Rosie Reynolds – rosie@prisonerseducation.org.uk.

“There are benefits for all involved: prisoners come to see themselves as no different or less able than their student colleagues; university students are able to see prisoners as fellow human beings with abilities, limitations and potential just like any other person.”

Sarah Armstrong, Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research