

## CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT, APPROVAL, AND MODIFICATION OF TAUGHT PROVISION

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1	Quality Office	May 2019	Updated to reflect introduction of Stage Gate approvals.  Updated appendices for 2019/20
2	EQED	October 2021	Updated to reflect new terminology, process and procedure

## **Purpose**

1. This Code of Practice sets out the University's requirements and procedures for the development, approval, and modification of all taught programmes of study and their component parts. The Code applies to all taught programmes of study leading to a named award of the University, including any intermediate awards, and to short courses that lead to the award of credit. It also applies to the taught components of professional doctorate programmes. For programmes delivered in collaboration with a partner organisation, the requirements for programme development, approval, and modification set out in this Code will operate within the broader framework provided by the Code of Practice on the University's Procedures for Managing Higher Education Provision with others.
2. The purpose of this Code is to ensure that:
  - All taught provision is designed to deliver the highest quality learning opportunities for students in line with the principles set out in the University's Education Strategy;
  - Proposals for new provision are consistent with the University's Strategy, and with plans for development and growth, have a viable and sustainable market
  - The processes used to develop and approve new and modified programmes reflect institutional policies around programme design, assessment, resiliency, inclusivity and student development, as articulated through the Education Strategy;
  - All taught provision is designed to ensure that threshold academic standards are consistently set and maintained;
  - The detailed resource implications of taught provision are identified and met;
  - The University is able to meet the requirements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, aligning with the Advice and Guidance for Course Design and Development; and the requirements of relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs);
  - The approach used to approve new and amended programmes is proportionate to the risk inherent in the nature of a particular proposal.
3. This Code is informed by the following QAA Guiding Principles:
  - Strategic oversight ensures that course design, development and approval processes and outcomes remain consistent and transparent.
  - Accessible and flexible processes for course design, development and approval facilitate continuous improvement of provision and are proportionate to risk.
  - Internal guidance and external reference points are used in course design, development and approval.
  - Feedback from internal and external stakeholders is used to inform course content.
  - Development of staff, students and other participants enables effective engagement with the course design, development and approval processes.
  - Course design, development and approval processes result in definitive course documents.
  - Design, development and approval processes are reviewed and enhanced annually.

## **Responsibilities**

4. Senate, as the University's academic authority, has overriding responsibility for the development, approval, and modification of all taught provision. The University Education Committee has delegated

authority from Senate to agree the framework for programme development and approval as set out in this Code of Practice, and to approve amendments to the Code. Some further aspects are delegated as follows:

- The Quality and Standards Sub-Committee has delegated power to oversee the development and implementation of the requirements of this Code of Practice and, in particular, to convene Programme Approval Panels and to grant Approval in Full to proposals;
- The Head of School, supported by the School Leadership Team, has delegated authority to approve Stage Gate 1 (Initial Opportunity) of Phase One of the programme development and approval process;
- The Head of the relevant college, supported by the College Business Group (CBG) (or its equivalent) has delegated authority to approve Stage Gate 2 (Business Case) of Phase One of the programme development and approval process, on behalf of the College;
- The College Dean of Education, supported by the College Programme and Portfolio Development Group (PPDG) has delegated authority to approve Stage Gate 3 (Academic Case) of Phase One of the programme development and approval process, on behalf of the College. A copy of the Terms of Reference for College PPDGs is set out in Appendix A;
- College Education Committees have delegated power to implement the requirements of this Code of Practice as they relate to the minor modification of existing programmes or modules and, through their Chairs, to grant approval to proposals for such minor modification.

5. Senate maintains oversight of these activities through the following mechanisms:

- Approval of this Code of Practice;
- Routine reports on the progress of proposals for new programmes and those undergoing major modification;
- Regular analysis of the operation of this Code of Practice;
- Consideration of an annual academic assurance report;
- The assurance it receives in relation to the effectiveness of the annual programme review process, such that necessary minor modifications are identified, approved, and implemented in the School's action plans.

### **Externality**

6. The University ensures that the design of its process for the development, approval, and modification of taught provision includes the use of appropriate expertise external to the team developing and delivering the programme. Externality is built into the process in a number of ways:

- Initial scrutiny of the strategic and business case for proposals for new programmes involves expertise from outside the proposing school and, for complex proposals for example the introduction of new award, from outside the proposing College;
- External subject experts from other institutions, or from employment or industry, are key members of the Programme Approval Panels convened to consider the detailed academic case for proposals for new programmes or major modifications to existing programmes;
- Programme Approval Panels are Chaired by independent senior academic staff and also include academic staff from disciplines outside the proposing school;
- Programme Approval Panels include student members and input from the University Career Development Service;

- The requirements of PSRBs are built into the design of programmes, and the scrutiny and approval of proposals may take place in conjunction with the formal accreditation process of a PSRB;
- More informal use of external views is also encouraged through the early stages of programme development, for example, through seeking views of current external examiners, employers, or appropriate professional bodies;
- Comments from serving external examiners on existing programmes form a key element of the annual programme review process and may lead to the major or minor modification of existing programmes or modules.

### Design of programmes and modules

7. The formal assurance process for the approval or modification of programmes and modules is predicated on the assumption that programme teams are able to bring forward for consideration well thought through and fully developed proposals. This means that proposals will be expected to provide clear evidence of a valid strategic and business case, and a clearly articulated and designed student learning experience.
8. Programme teams will be expected to have considered the following features that are likely to apply to the design of both programmes and modules:

Purpose	<p>What is the purpose the programme for the intended learners, for example the provision of personal academic development, preparation for knowledge creation and research, preparation for specific (often-professional) employment or for general employment, or as preparation for lifelong learning?</p> <p>Are appropriate learning opportunities provided to support learners to achieve the intended outcomes and purpose(s) of the programme?</p> <p>How does the programme further the University’s strategic objectives and demonstrate, in particular, the way in which the priorities set out in the University Education Strategy and Transferrable Skills Framework, are delivered through the programme design?</p>
Currency	<p>Does the curriculum reflect the contemporary state of the discipline?</p> <p>Does the programme design reflect current good practice in pedagogic design and delivery?</p> <p>Does the programme design reflect the needs of the identified market?</p>
Level	<p>What is the level – the relative demand, complexity, depth of study, and learner autonomy – of the intended learning outcomes for any named stages of the programme?</p> <p>Where is the programme located on the <i>Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland</i>?</p> <p>Are there any European or other reference points that should be considered with regard to level?</p> <p>What are the appropriate admissions requirements for the level and content of the programme?</p>

Progression	How does the curriculum promote progression so that the demands on the learner in intellectual challenge, skills, knowledge, conceptualisation and learning autonomy increase?
Accessibility and Inclusivity	<p>How does the programme design support the range of requirements of the intended learners, for example, those who study at a distance, international students, students with non-traditional educational backgrounds, or those with disabilities or specific learning difficulties?</p> <p>How does the programme and module design support the effective management of student workload and study time?</p> <p>Is the design of the assessment strategy accessible to those with a disability or specific learning difficulty?</p> <p>Does the programme include an appropriate blend on online and face-to-face activities?</p>
Structure and coherence	<p>Are the overall coherence and intellectual integrity of the programme clear from the design?</p> <p>Is there an appropriate balance between core and optional modules, and is the relationship between this and the intended learning outcomes clear?</p> <p>Has the programme been designed in a way that will ensure the students' experiences have a logic and integrity that are clearly linked to the purpose of the programme?</p> <p>Have the academic and practical elements and opportunities for personal development and the academic outcomes been considered?</p> <p>Is there evidence of the programme developing specific skills aligned with the Transferrable Skills Framework?</p> <p>Have the breadth and depth of the subject material to be included in the programme been determined?</p> <p>Is the design of the assessment clearly aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the programme?</p>
Assessment	<p>Is there evidence of engagement with the University Assessment Strategy?</p> <p>Is there evidence of engagement with the institutional move towards greater use of digital teaching and learning methods?</p> <p>Does assessment support progression through the programme?</p> <p>Is there an appropriate range of assessments to test all programme-learning outcomes?</p> <p>How has assessment been designed to be accessible and inclusive to account for the full range of learning styles and demographic backgrounds?</p>
Integrity	<p>Are the expectations given to students and others about the intended learning outcomes of the programme realistic and deliverable?</p> <p>Has the feasibility of attainment of the outcomes been considered?</p>

	Has appropriate provision been made for the academic, administrative, and personal support of the intended learners?
Reference points	<p>Have internal points of reference – for example, Senate Regulations and the principles of the Education Excellence programme – been used to inform the design of the programme?</p> <p>Have external points of reference – for example, subject benchmark statements, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, the requirements of PSRBs, employer expectations, funding bodies – been used to inform the design of the programme?</p> <p>Is there evidence of consultation with students in the development of the new proposal?</p>
Sustainability	Is there evidence of Education for Sustainable Development embedded in the curriculum at either module or programme level?

9. The documentation required for the formal stages of the approval process will enable programme teams to present detailed and comprehensive information about these design features for scrutiny.

#### Approval of new programmes of study

10. The University operates a Stage Gate process for the development and approval of a new programme, which is divided into two phases. The phases that are then subdivided into five Stage Gates are set out in the flow chart in Appendix Bi. The formal approval process is designed to be completed without placing undue burden on programme teams and in a way that allows the University to bring new programmes to the market in an appropriately agile way. The key determinant of the length of the approval process for a particular proposal is the completeness of the proposal such that it fully addresses all the relevant design issues before presentation for scrutiny. Phase one is the developmental part of the process, Stage Gates 1-3, of which are implemented at College level. Phase Two is the approval part of the process, Stage Gates 4-5 of which are implemented at University level.
11. The table below identifies the individual roles of senior staff to preside over each Stage of the approval process. There is an expectation that in discharging responsibility, the individual receives the necessary support of the relevant body within the College or University governance structure, as set out in the table below:

Approval and Development Phase	Stage Gate	Approval required	Stage Gate approver	Supporting body
Phase One (development)	1	Initial opportunity	Head of School	School Leadership Team
Phase One (development)	2	Business Case	Head of College	College Business Group
Phase One (development)	3	Academic Case (College Approval)	College Dean of Education	College Programme and Portfolio Development Group

Phase Two (approval)	4	Academic Case (University Approval)	Chair of Programme Approval Panel	Programme Approval Panel
Phase Two (approval)	5	Final University ratification (Report and Response)	Chair of Quality and Standards Sub Committee	Quality and Standards Sub Committee

12. It is expected that all new programme developments will be identified in the relevant College Plan(s), such that they have been identified at least a full year before the expected delivery date of the new programme. Other than in exceptional circumstances, the latest date that a Programme Approval Panel will be asked to consider a proposal is six months before the new programme is expected to be delivered. This cut-off date is set on the assumption that the Programme Approval Panel will receive fully developed, well-designed final proposals (approved through Stage Gate 3) and that the Panel considers that the Programme Team and programme resources are in place to deliver the programme on the intended start date. The development of credit bearing provision that does not lead to an award of the University is also subject to a two-stage approval process as outlined above. The process of approval for credit but non-award bearing provision shall be proportionate to the scale and risk of the development, including whether it is based on existing provision.
13. To ensure that programme teams are fully supported to meet the University's requirements through, the programme development process is supported through the active engagement of a College Programme and Portfolio Development Group (PPDG). The Group's membership will include academic representation through selected Directors of Learning and Teaching from within the College, staff from the Education Services and other key stakeholders, (the Terms of Reference and Membership for PPDGS are set out in appendix A). This process will ensure that the Programme Team has necessary access to expertise from key professional service providers from within the University.
14. It is a condition of acceptance of proposals for formal scrutiny that programme teams have fully engaged with the support available to ensure that programme design meets the University's requirements. The Secretary to the relevant approval body, in consultation with its Chair, is empowered to decline a submission to a Panel where it is considered to require further work although it is not anticipated that this mechanism will need to be used frequently.
15. The development, approval or modification of programmes will be informed by the University's obligations under consumer rights legislation and Conditions of Registration with the Office for Students. The University's Policy on Consumer Rights with respect to taught programmes sets out the principles of how the development, approval and modification processes take account of these requirements and how applicants and current students are either consulted or informed about programme changes as may be required.

#### Phase One: Approval in Principle

16. Phase One of the approval process is designed to provide approval of the Business Case proposal and is the responsibility of the proposing College.
17. Final College level approval will be by the Head of College, with the support of the College Business Group (or equivalent). There are some circumstances under which the potential wider implications of new programme developments on the University portfolio or quality assurance processes would require approval from outside of the College. Such circumstances are where:
- A programme represents a completely new award type for the University, which will require consideration and approval by the University Education Committee;

- A programme, or suite of programmes, in a completely new subject area, which will require approval by the Executive Board.
18. The programme development processes for new collaborative partnerships and associated programmes are covered by the Code of Practice on Managing Higher Education Provision with Others (MHEPWO). While the process for the approval of the academic programme sits within this code, it should be read in conjunction with the Code of Practice on MHEPWO) which contains additional requirements such as appropriate risk assessment and due diligence
19. The purpose of Phase One of the formal approval process is to ensure that proposals meet the strategic and business requirements of the College as well as the University from both an educational and a commercial perspective. Detailed information about these issues, together with sufficient details of the proposed academic design to support scrutiny of the business case are required.
20. The key considerations for Phase One are:
- Appropriate fit with the University's mission, strategic objectives, with the University Education Strategy and Transferrable Skills Framework; and with the relevant College strategies;
  - Clear evidence of sustainable market demand for the proposal;
  - Detailed financial data to demonstrate the financial sustainability of the proposal;
  - Evidence that the resources necessary and available to support the provision, both within the school and across the University as a whole, for example, Library, IT and timetabling requirements have been identified and are available;
  - The appropriateness of key features of academic programme design, in sufficient detail to ensure that the academic scope of the proposal is clear and that the Programme Team has undertaken sufficient development to ensure that all strategic or business issues have been identified.
21. Phase One also provides an opportunity to identify any complex or non-standard issues – for example, the involvement of a collaborative partner, or novel or complex regulatory issues – and to ensure that these are referred for detailed consideration as appropriate.
22. The process for proposals, which include working with a partner, is set out in the Code of Practice on Managing Higher Education Provision with Others.
23. The following documentation and approval is required for a proposal to be considered through Phase One, Stage Gates 1-3:
- Stage Gate 1: Consideration of the initial opportunity by the Head of School with the support of the School's Leadership Team.
  - Stage Gate 2: Consideration of the Business Case (sections A and B of the PDA Form and the Income and Expenditure projection), by the Head of College, with the support of the College Business Group or its equivalent.
  - Stage Gate 3: Consideration of the Academic Case (College approval including section C of the PDA Form, Programme specification(s), module specifications). For DL provision, this should also include a copy of the delivery schedule for the programme. Consideration is by the College Dean of Education with the support of the PPDG. Development of the academic case can be completed in parallel to the approval of the Business Case.
  - Reference programme design checklist for PPDG.

A proposal will not be allowed to proceed from Phase One to Two until written approval has been provided from each Stage Gate of approval. The approving College will be responsible for submitting written approvals to the Education Quality, Enhancement & Development of Education Services

Alongside the documentation submission for the proposal.

24. In all cases, the relevant Head(s) of School must signify approval of proposals before they are submitted for Stage Gate 2 consideration. Head(s) of College must signify the College's approval of Stage Gate 2 to the School and Quality Office along with a signed copy of the Business Case.
25. The outcome of Phase One of the process will be one of the following:
  - The proposal is granted 'Approval in Principle' and may move to Phase Two of the formal process;
  - The proposal is referred back to the Programme Team for further development;
  - The proposal is referred for further consideration by another body;
  - The proposal is rejected.
26. Where a proposal is granted Approval in Principle, the approving body may identify further issues for the Programme Team to address and request that these be given detailed consideration during Phase Two of the process.
27. Communication of the status and progress of individual proposals shall take place between the School, College Business Group and PPDG and Education Services. Once Stage Gate 2 of Phase One is complete (i.e. College approval of the Business Case has been achieved), the relevant College will provide formal confirmation to the Education Quality, Enhancement and Development (QED) Team within Education Services along with a copy of the final approved Business Case. The QED Team will then be responsible for confirming Business Case approval to colleagues across the University so that advertising can commence with all materials marked \*subject to approval\*. This part of the process will NOT be completed until the required written confirmation has been received. Programme teams should note that programmes being advertised as \*subject to approval\* may only be opened to applicants when the programme receives FINAL approval from QSSC, which will also be communicated by the QED Team in a Final sign off memo. Programme teams should carefully plan their intended 'open to applicants' date, to ensure the programme is ready to launch at an appropriate time.

#### Phase Two: Approval in Full

28. Phase Two of the formal approval process is designed to provide 'Approval in Full' for proposals and is the responsibility of the Quality and Standards Sub-Committee (QSSC). Scrutiny of a final proposal and response at Stage Gate 4 is delegated to a Programme Approval Panel or to the relevant College Education Committee, for short courses for the award of credit only.
29. The composition of a Programme Approval Panel will be:
  - A Chair from outside the proposing College, drawn from a pool of senior academic staff approved by QSSC;
  - At least one external adviser, although current or recent external examiners will not be invited to serve as external advisors during the formal elements of the programme approval process;
  - An academic member from a cognate discipline, drawn from a pool approved by QSSC;
  - A further academic member with particular expertise relevant to the features of a specific proposal, for example where the proposal is collaborative;
  - A student sabbatical officer.

- A member of staff of the QED Team will act as Secretary to the Panel.
30. The criteria for selection and the roles of Panel members are set out in Appendix D.
31. The pool of University staff serving as Panel members will be briefed on their roles on an annual basis. External Advisors and student members of Panels will be briefed before the relevant Programme Approval Panel meeting.

#### Documentation for a Programme Approval Panel

32. The following documentation is required for consideration by the Programme Approval Panel:
- The documentation considered at stage one of the approval process, together with written confirmation from the body which granted Approval in Principle
  - The full Programme Development and Approval Form (Appendix C)
  - A Programme Specification for each programme under scrutiny
  - A Module Specification for each module contributing to the programme(s) under scrutiny
  - A copy of the relevant PPDG minutes;
  - Such other specific documentation as recommended by PPDG in support of the programme proposal;
  - Programme design checklist;
  - Comments from the External Advisor(s) (by correspondence where the external is not present);
  - For proposals relating to distance learning provision, a calendar of study, appropriate examples of learning materials sufficient to allow the Panel to make a judgement about the capability and capacity of the Programme Team to provide a high quality learning experience to students, and a schedule for the timely production of material for all other modules;
  - Confirmation that a due diligence process has been completed and, where appropriate, a draft operational manual for the partnership, and sign off of contract by Head of Academic Partnerships.
33. Where a proposal for a new programme includes existing modules, these should be reviewed by the Programme Team to ensure that they are both suitable and current. The Programme Approval Panel will ensure that existing modules have been appropriately updated and meet the University's requirements, as they currently exist. A programme team will be expected to have addressed any issues of module design arising from modules that are shared across multiple programmes and have consulted appropriately. This means that changes may be required to previously approved modules.
34. Panel members will also be provided with appropriate reference material, which may include:
- This Code of Practice;
  - The University's Education Strategy and Education Planning Principles
  - Transferrable Skills Framework
  - University Degree Classification Descriptors (for level 6 qualifications)
  - The relevant Senate Regulations;
  - The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications;

- The relevant subject benchmark statements;
  - Details of any relevant PSRB requirements; a bespoke agenda may be prepared for joint PSRB and University approval events to meet the requirements of internal as well as external reference points. This will be prepared by the Secretary and Chair through consultation with the Programme Team;
  - The Code of Practice on the University's Procedures for Managing Higher Education Provision for others (for collaborative arrangements);
35. The Panel will be provided with a briefing note prepared by the Panel Secretary ahead of the Panel meeting that will be considered alongside the standard agenda, which is provided in Appendix E.

#### The remit of a Programme Approval Panel

36. The role of a Programme Approval Panel is to test the final proposal against the design features set out in paragraph 8 above. A fully worked-up programme design, with a full set of programme documents, is required.
37. The key considerations for a Programme Approval Panel are:
- Appropriate fit with the University's strategies, in particular the Education Strategy and the Assessment Strategy;
  - For UG programmes, alignment with the University Degree Classification Descriptors
  - Clear evidence of the way in which threshold academic standards have been set and will be maintained;
  - Clear evidence of the design of student learning opportunities such that a coherent academic experience is provided to the intended learners;
  - The accessibility and inclusivity of the curriculum and assessment and learning experience of all learners ;
  - The appropriateness of proposed arrangements for initiatives with a collaborative partner;
  - That the programme design, as expressed in the programme and module documentation, is comprehensive and complete.
  - That there is evidence of alignment with the design features set out in point 8 above and the key priorities identified in the Programme Development and Approval Form;
  - That there is evidence of curriculum development to meet the aims and priorities of the Transferrable Skills Framework;
  - That there is evidence of enhancing curriculum delivery through greater use of digital teaching and learning methods.
38. The Programme Team, together with the relevant Head(s) of School, will be invited to present the proposal to the Programme Approval Panel and to provide any clarification necessary on the proposal. The meeting of the Programme Approval Panel should not be seen as a substitute for a full written articulation of the proposals; rather it is to seek clarification on specific elements of the proposal and to provide an opportunity for a constructive enhancement discussion.
39. A Programme Approval Panel will make one of the following recommendations:
- A proposal is granted Approved in Full, with or without conditions or recommendations;

- A proposal is granted Approved in Full, with or without recommendations, but only after specified conditions have been met;
  - A proposal is not approved but may be referred for further development.
40. A 'condition' is a requirement that must be met before Approval in Full can be granted. A 'recommendation' is a suggestion for the enhancement of the programme that the Programme Team is required to address through the next annual developmental review cycle. Technical corrections are amendments to the documentation such as factual inaccuracies, typographical errors and incorrect references, which require correction within a specific timeframe (prior to delivery) but are not serious enough to prevent approval of the programme.
  41. Where conditions are attached to approval of the proposal, the Programme Approval Panel will set a date for the Programme Team to address these satisfactorily. A Programme Approval Panel will not set a large number of substantial conditions that relate to shortfalls in the design or delivery of the programme. In such cases, the Panel will recommend that the programme is not approved but is referred back to the School for further development.
  42. For proposals relating to distance learning provision, the Programme Approval Panel will also approve a schedule for the timely production of material for all modules and the module materials for the first module of delivery.
  43. For proposals involving a collaborative partner, the Programme Approval Panel will also approve the operational elements of the partnership relating to education delivery, quality and standards including, where relevant, any contractual schedules that address these themes'
  44. The Panel Secretary will provide to the Programme Team an outline note of the decision of the Programme Approval Panel, to include any conditions and recommendations, within one working day of the Panel meeting. A full report, following the template provided in Appendix F, will be issued once the Panel has approved it, normally within 2 weeks of the Panel meeting.
  45. The Programme Team will provide by the specified deadline a written response using the standard response template provided in Appendix G, to any conditions, together with appropriate evidence including redrafted programme and/or module documentation to the Panel Secretary. Unless specified otherwise by the Panel, the Chair of the Panel, in consultation with the Secretary, will determine whether there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the conditions have been met. The Panel will agree the process and agreed timeline for responding to PSRB outcomes resulting from a joint approval and accreditation panel during the approval meeting.
  46. Stage Gate 4; is the mechanism by which the Chair of the Programme Approval Panel is able to formally recommend approval of the proposal, on behalf of the programme approval panel and after conditions have been met where relevant, to the Quality and Standards Sub Committee for consideration.
  47. Stage Gate 5 is approval in Full on behalf of Senate by QSSC. The Chair of QSSC will provide final ratification of the proposal with the support of the Committee as necessary.
  48. Senate will receive a report of approvals. Once the proposal has been granted Approval in Full offers of admission may be made to applicants.
  49. The University Education Committee and Senate will receive an annual report from the Quality and Standards Sub-Committee on the operation of the programme development and approval process.
  50. Communication of the status and progress of individual proposals shall be undertaken by the Secretary to the Programme Approval Panel to ensure that where Approval in Full has been granted, the steps required to make offers to prospective students and to facilitate the operational delivery of the programme can be completed.

### **Stage two approval of stand-alone credit bearing modules**

51. Following Phase One approval, proposals for the creation of individual stand-alone credit bearing modules for CPD or other purposes may be considered and approved by College Education Committees, which will receive a proposal form and relevant module specification forms. Additional comments may be sought from external examiners if required. A record of approved modules will be sent to the Admissions Office and Student Records.

### **Modification of existing programmes and modules**

52. New guidance sets out the University's requirements for the annual review of existing programmes and their constituent parts through the process of Annual Programme Review. Where a programme team determines that modifications to existing programmes or modules are necessary following the APR process, or where changes become necessary for other reasons, proposals will be considered as set out in the following sections.
53. Modifications to existing programmes or modules are categorised as either 'major modifications' or 'minor modifications'. The paragraphs below provide more information about each of these, with the table in Appendix H exemplifying the type and extent of proposed modifications that would fall into each category.
54. In order to ensure that the University meets its obligations with regard to Consumer Rights Legislation, programme teams are required to undertake communications and consultations with current and prospective students where necessary in the event that changes relate to their current or intended programme of study. For further guidance, please refer to the Quality Office.

### **Approval of major modifications to existing programmes**

55. A major modification is one, which involves substantial change to an existing programme of study in one or more respects. Such changes will have been identified in College Plans in most cases. Major modifications cannot be made to programmes on which students are registered without prior consultation. Schools should be aware that there is a significant lead-in time before a modification can be implemented. Examples of major modifications include:
  - The award to which a programme leads;
  - The overall programme aims and/or intended learning outcomes;
  - The approved length and/or mode(s) of study of the programme;
  - Changes that would require an approved derogation from the Senate Regulations;
  - A change to, or addition or deletion of, module(s) where the effect of this would lead to an alteration in the overall aims and/or intended learning outcomes of the programme;
  - A significant change to the resources required to deliver the programme.
56. The precise arrangements necessary to consider and approve a proposal for a major modification to an existing programme will be proportionate to the risk inherent in the nature of the particular proposal. The process for approving a major modification to an existing programme of study is based on that used to approve proposals for new programmes of study; this is set out in paragraphs 10-30 above and in Appendix H but there are some circumstances under which a fast tracked approval process may be possible. The QED team will advise upon the appropriate approval route for major modifications on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with the relevant Dean of Education. Following Phase One approval, proposals for some major modifications to existing programmes may be considered and approved by College Programme Portfolio and Development Groups through delegated authority of the College Education Committees. PPDGs will receive a proposal form and programme documentation. Comments from external examiners by correspondence will be required as part of the academic submission under consideration.

Where a proposal for major modification requires consideration by a Programme Approval Panel this may be undertaken by correspondence, and comments from external advisors sought by correspondence.

As part of any proposal for major modification, the Programme Specification for each programme must be specific to and available by cohort year of entry to comply with version control requirements. Schools must ensure that new modifications to the curriculum are reflected in the programme documentation specific to each of the affected cohorts.

In line with the requirements of the Policy on Consumer Rights with respect to taught programmes, schools must be able to provide evidence to demonstrate that consultation has taken place with all the affected cohorts.

#### **Change of Programme Title, addition of a specialism or Year in Industry**

57. Proposals to change the title of an existing programme, for the addition of a named specialism to an existing suite within a programme, or the addition of a Year in Industry (where the standard CDS model for placement preparation and management is being used), Year Abroad, may be considered and approved by College Education Committees. Where a local model will be employed for the preparation and management of placements, then consideration of the proposal by a programme approval panel will be required along with written approval from the Future Students Office.
58. College Education Committees will consider a programme proposal form and a revised programme specification for a change in title. For the addition of a specialism relevant module specifications will also be considered. A report will also be requested from the external examiner for the programme. College Education may request such other information as may be necessary for full consideration of the proposal. A record of approved amendments will be forwarded to the Admissions Office and Student Records.
59. In cases where a school wishes to develop named specialisms for a programme where specialisms have not previously existed this will be considered a major modification and the process outlined in paragraphs 54-56 will apply.
60. Where a proposal is made to offer an existing MSc programme on an intercalated basis, it can be considered and approved by QSSC on submission of the form provided in Appendix J.

#### **Approval of minor modifications to existing programmes and modules**

61. There will be a published annual window for minor amendments to programmes and modules for delivery in the following years, via the process of Curriculum Planning.
62. A minor modification to an existing programme of study is one which does not affect the overall aims or intended learning outcomes, but may involve changes to one or more of the following aspects:
  - A change to, or addition or deletion of, module(s) where the effect of this would not lead to an alteration in the overall aims and/or intended learning outcomes of the programme;
63. Minor modifications may also be made to existing modules:
  - module title;
  - Learning and teaching strategy, including a change to the balance of student workload;
  - Assessment methods and weightings;
  - Syllabus and curriculum updating.
64. Where a minor modification to an individual module is proposed, it is necessary to ensure that any impact on existing programme(s) is taken into account and fully addressed.

65. The process for minor modifications does not include the annual updating of operational information conducted by Student Records. This administrative process does not require approval through the modification process, unless a particular change meets the definition of a minor modification.
66. Requests for minor modifications to existing programmes or modules will be considered according to the criteria set out in Appendix H.
67. The following documentation is required for consideration of minor modifications:
  - A completed entry on the relevant curriculum planning tool which sets out a summary and rationale for change as well as the impact of the change on the programmes in question
  - Updated module specification(s)
  - Updated programme specification(s)
  - Evidence of student consultation, where appropriate;
  - Evidence of consultation with appropriate staff and school approval;
68. Consultation with relevant staff will be required where the minor modification affects more than one programme. Such consultation may also need to extend across school and College boundaries, or to collaborative partners, where a module is widely shared. Evidence of consultations with other programmes affected by the change(s) will be required.
69. The College Dean of Education, with the support of the College Academic Advisor, will consider proposals for minor modifications. The College Dean of Education may determine whether the proposed minor modifications would benefit from wider consideration by the College Education Committee.
70. The approval process for minor modifications will, in particular, confirm that:
  - There is no reason for the modification to more appropriately be considered to be 'major', for example, where the cumulative effect of a series of minor modifications to a programme have been such as to result in significant changes to a programme (see para74);
  - There is an appropriate rationale for the modification;
  - The relevant design features set out in paragraph 8 above have been fully addressed;
  - Relevant consultation has taken place and the impact on all existing programmes has been identified and addressed;
  - The relevant documentation has been fully updated to reflect the proposed modification.
71. The College Dean of Education may seek advice in relation to a proposal, as they deem necessary.
72. The outcome of the minor modification process will be one of the following:
  - A proposal is approved;
  - A proposal is referred back to the Programme Team for further development or consultation;
  - A proposal is deemed to constitute a 'major' modification and referred to that process;
  - A proposal is rejected.
73. Communication of the status and progress of individual proposals shall be undertaken by the QED Team to ensure that, where approval has been granted, the steps required to facilitate the operational delivery of the programme or module can be completed.

74. The Future Students Office will be informed of any changes to programmes, which may require highlighting to applicants in line with the Policy on Consumer Rights with Respect to Taught Programmes.
75. Where multiple minor modifications to programmes have been made over more than one academic year, programme teams will be required to consider their cumulative effect on the programme. Teams will be required to comment on the effect of the changes on the programme learning outcomes and the external examiner will be asked to confirm whether the cumulative minor modifications represent a major change. Where this is the case, the process for major modifications outlined in paragraphs 54-56 will apply.
76. Requests for minor modification for programmes or modules that arise outside of the standard period will be considered through an exceptional late change mechanism. This will take into consideration the potential impact of the timing of the change on the student experience and the student records and other relevant systems. Requests for a late change may be declined where the impact upon the above would be negative.

### **Suspension or withdrawal of an existing programme or module**

77. Where a school is seeking permission to suspend recruitment to an existing programme or to permanently withdraw an existing programme to new entrants, the process described below should be followed. The process is designed to ensure that the interests of students registered on a programme are protected and programmes, which are being suspended/withdrawn, are carefully managed, enabling the University to meet its obligations with respect to consumer protection law, the Office for Students and the requirements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.
78. Withdrawal of a programme is a permanent process and a programme cannot be re-instated after withdrawal. Any proposal would be considered as a new programme proposal in accordance with the requirements articulated in this Code of Practice. Schools may request permission to suspend a programme to new entrants for a specified period.
79. The intention to withdraw or suspend a programme should normally be raised in the College Plan(s). Schools should be aware that there is a significant lead-in time for withdrawing a programme as the University must continue to fulfil its obligations to existing students, applicants and offer holders. If a programme has been advertised and students made offers to study, the University should not withdraw or suspend that programme. If, for unavoidable reasons, a programme with offer holders must be withdrawn or suspended, applicants and offer holders must be given as much notice as possible and, where appropriate, offered alternative routes of study.
80. The withdrawal of a programme may have resource implications for the School and any other schools involved in its delivery. An initial proposal for withdrawing a programme must therefore be considered by the College Business Groups(s) (or equivalent). Any request to withdraw or suspend must be submitted on the standard form. The form and guidance can be found at:  
  
<https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/sas2/courses/suspending-or-withdrawing-courses>
81. A proposal to suspend a programme should indicate the intended date that the programme will resume, where this is known.
82. The proposal to withdraw a programme should be considered by the School Education Committee, which should consider the impact of the withdrawal on other programmes in the School and in other schools in the University. The proposal should then be submitted to the College Business Group or equivalent for consideration. The Quality and Standards Sub-Committee will give final approval for a programme to be withdrawn if it is satisfied that appropriate arrangements are in place to manage the withdrawal and protect the interests of students registered on the programme. This will be reported to Senate.

83. As part of the suspension/withdrawal process the School will be asked to provide the proposed date of the last intake of students, the expected end date of the last cohort of students assuming normal progression and the latest potential end date for any particular student, while taking into account the maximum registration period of the programme. The teach-out plan for the remaining students should specifically take into account the maximum possible registration period for remaining students.
84. The School should ensure that the necessary arrangements are in place to manage the running out of the programme with oversight of this process delegated to the School Education Committee.
85. All students must have access to the full range of teaching and learning opportunities until they have finished the programme. In addition to the arrangements for students registered on the programme, consideration must also be given to the impact the withdrawal of the programme may have on students registered on other programmes. Following approval of a programme suspension or withdrawal, the QED team will issue a confirmation memo to communicate the decision to the relevant school and professional services staff.
86. The withdrawal of a whole area of provision or suite of programmes may represent a “reportable event” to the “-Office for Students-”. The Quality Office will be able to provide advice on what constitutes a “reportable event”.
87. The University is committed to the ongoing support of students on programmes that are suspended or withdrawn to ensure that they have the opportunity to complete the award for which they registered. As part of this commitment, the University has developed and published this Student Protection Plan, which meets the requirements of the Higher Education and Research Act (2017), and Condition C3 of the Office for Students Regulatory Framework. The Plan has been submitted to and approved by the Office for Students. This plan is made available to all applicants and current students, as well as to staff and the University’s governing body, Council.
88. This is section of the Code should be read in conjunction with the Student Protection Plan. Actions taken may result in triggering the Student Protection Plan. <https://le.ac.uk/study/how-to-apply/student-protectionlan#:~:text=This%2520Student%2520Protection%2520Plan%2520sets,the%2520risks%2520w ere%2520to%2520crystallise.>

#### **Re-instatement of a suspended programme**

89. The University’s procedures for the suspension or withdrawal of programmes are articulated above. The time limit for suspensions should normally be no longer than two academic years. After this point, the School should consider the case for re-opening the programme, or withdrawing. A programme to be re-opened to applicants following two academic years or more in suspense will need to be reviewed in terms of its currency ahead of re-opening, and re-approval will therefore be required. Details of the re-approval proceed are outlined in the link attached:

**Appendices:**

**Appendix A: Terms of Reference for the College Programme Portfolio and Development Group**

**Appendix B: i Programme Development Flowchart**

**ii Process for the approval of new credit bearing (non-award) provision**

**Appendix C: Programme Development and Approval Form**

**Appendix D: Criteria for the appointment of and roles of members of Programme Approval Panels**

**Appendix E Standard Agenda for Programme Approval Panel meeting**

**Appendix F: Template for reports from Programme Approval Panels**

**Appendix G: Programme Approval Response Form**

**Appendix H: Curriculum Planning – approval consultation**

**Appendix I Programme withdrawal and suspension form**

**Appendix J: Form for proposing an Intercalated option (MSc).**