

Course Approval: guidance for Student Panel Members

**These guidance notes are intended to provide information to students who are interested in getting involved in course approval and re-approval panels at the University of Worcester.**

# Why does the University carry out Course Approvals?

The overarching principle of the Course Approval process is to ensure that the academic standards and quality of all University of Worcester (UW) awards, wherever delivered, are appropriate and fit for purpose.

Approval/re-approval processes ensure that:

* courses are effectively designed and deliver a high-quality learning experience
* there is a rationale for offering these courses
* courses are current and industry relevant
* courses are designed and delivered to standards that support equality and diversity
* courses comply with the University’s academic framework

**How are students involved in the (re)approval process?**

The University, as part of its wider student engagement agenda, is interested in understanding students’ views on the courses that are offered by the University, and how these courses support students’ learning and development. Participating in the course (re)approval process provides students with an opportunity to actively engage in the development and improvement of our courses.

To participate in the process student panel members are expected to:

* Read the documentation provided for the approval event
* Provide in advance to a set deadline, written comments by email to the review Academic Quality Officer
* Attend at the Course Approval Event
* Read through the approval report and comments / suggestions

Student panel members receive payment for their role in this process.

# Who conducts the approval?

The University’s Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC) is responsible for course approvals. Each approval is carried out by a team consisting of:

* Chair: independent senior member of UW staff
* An academic from an external university (EA2)
* Student representative
* Senior experienced member of staff from outside the School
* AQU officer
* Other post holder (i.e.: international officer, employer rep)

# What happens during an approval?

Course teams usually spend 9-12 months developing a course, engaging a range of stakeholders throughout the process. When the development process is completed, an internal school scrutiny is undertaken, to provide the course team with any final feedback or areas for development.

Following this process, documentation is sent to the approval panel, usually two weeks ahead of the approval event. Approval panel members are asked to provide comments on the documentation, each with a particular focus according to their role in the process.

The approval event usually lasts around 3 hours and should be a collaborative, collegiate meeting where the course team and panel members discuss the course, ultimately providing assurance to the University of the standards and academic quality of the proposal.

The full course approval process can be found at <https://www2.worc.ac.uk/aqu/655.htm>

# Role and Responsibilities of Student Panel Members

Student panel members will be required to attend a briefing prior to undertaking the role to explain the role and answer any questions. Once allocated to an event, you will also be supported by the Academic Quality Officer for the event who will be available to answer any queries. As a student panel member, you are a full member of the panel. You will be expected to be fully participative, actively contributing to the discussions and the decision-making process. Your views will be equal to those of any other panel member.

You will be expected to:

* Acknowledge receipt of the course approval documentation. The documentation in total may, at first glance, appear overwhelming; do not be put off by this. Your main focus and starting point should be the Course Approval Briefing paper and the Course Handbook.
* Seek guidance from the AQU Officer if you have any concerns about the documentation or your role in the approval; feel free to ask as many questions as you need, we want to ensure that you feel supported in this important role.
* You will be asked to comment on the student journey (arrangements for induction through to graduation); academic support arrangements; access to resources; arrangements for course committees and student representation/feedback; and the effectiveness of approaches to learning and teaching
* Spend some time reading through the documentation, making notes of key points as you read. Highlight points of good practice and areas on which you would like further clarification. These will form the feedback you submit to the AQU Officer.
* Do not worry that you are not an expert in the subject matter or in educational quality standards; those are the areas of expertise for which the other members of the panel have been appointed. You are on the panel to offer the student viewpoint, the other panel members will be happy to help if you have questions about some of the more complex issues.
* Whilst your own experiences are of value, it is important to consider the general student experience of the course under approval. It is important that any issues you raise are based on the evidence received and not on your own experience as a student at UW.

Effectively, you will need to:

* Provide comments on the documentation within the specified deadline.
* Attend the Course Approval meeting
* Review the final report and approve or suggest amendments as necessary within the specified timescales.

Once you have been confirmed as a panel member you will receive the documentation, via One Drive, usually 2 to 3 weeks before the event date. This will give you plenty of time to read through and ask for any clarification you need. You will be given a deadline by which your comments on the documentation should be submitted to the AQU Officer;

**After the approval event**

The Academic Quality Officer responsible for the event will produce a written report outlining the discussion and approval conditions as set out by the panel. Panel members will be asked to read the report and feedback to the Academic Quality Officer on its accuracy. The final report, as approved by the Chair of the panel, will then be forwarded to the Course Team for their response.

Following receipt of the report, the Course Team will be asked to address the actions as set out in the action plan from the report of the meeting, and provide final updated documentation, normally within a period of four weeks from the date of the meeting. The final report is submitted to ASQEC.

# What are the outcomes of the approval?

The outcomes of the final approval meeting will be either:

* Recommendation to ASQEC that the course be approved (subject to any actions for the Course Team/School), or
* Recommendation that a further approval meeting is held (with advice provided on matters to be addressed/developed and suggested timing for further meeting).