Course Planning and Approval/Re-approval Process

This document describes the principles and process for the approval or re-approval of courses for all University awards including those delivered through partnerships. Information regarding the establishment of partnerships is detailed under 'collaborative provision' on the AQU website.
A flowchart outlining the Course Planning and Approval Process is provided in Appendix 1.

Principles underlying Course Approval

1. Initial planning approval must be given by the Academic Planning and Portfolio Group (APPG) for all new award/course proposals.

2. The University maintains a commitment to open scrutiny through peer review to include representatives from industry, commerce and the professions, as appropriate, as well as academic staff working in Higher Education (HE). This assists the University in ensuring that its awards are fit for purpose and comparable in standard to those elsewhere in HE. It is also a valuable method of benefiting from the expertise and experience of others, and facilitates enhancement across the University.

3. There are five principles that underpin the approval process under the overall umbrella of ensuring that all internal and external requirements (such as those outlined in the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education) are met. These are that the process of approval should be:

   - student-focussed
   - holistic
   - mindful of minimising burden
   - transparent
   - flexible.

   The way in which these principles are met by the overall approach is set out in paragraphs 5 – 18 below.

4. In summary, the development process is based upon a consultancy model, enabling the proposer and Course Team to develop provision in conjunction with participants from both inside and outside of the University. These participants act as 'critical friends' throughout the planning and development process. This culminates in a formal approval meeting involving independent internal and external academic advisers assuring the University of the standards and academic quality of the provision. The process is explained in detail below (please see Outline of Process).

Internal and External Requirements

5. The overarching principle is to ensure that the academic standards and quality of all University of Worcester (UW) awards, wherever delivered, are appropriate and fit for purpose. The University has established standard criteria for the approval of courses (see Appendix 2). For courses that involve collaborative arrangements, a checklist of matters that require consideration is also provided (see Appendix 3).

6. The process is designed to take into account all relevant aspects of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Any other external requirements, such as those emanating from Ofsted or from Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) will also be acknowledged at an early stage and incorporated into the process as relevant.

7. Two External Academic Advisers are appointed for the development and approval of the proposed course. External Adviser 1 advises the Course Team in developing the course through meeting(s) and/or comment on draft course documentation. External Adviser 2 attends the final approval meeting to provide independent advice to the University on the quality and standards of the programme and to inform the decision to recommend approval. (For large subject-based course approvals/reapprovals, more than one External Adviser 1 may be appointed).

8. Courses with work-based elements (e.g. FDs, HNDs, work placements) will be asked to provide details of a third External Adviser to demonstrate consultation with employers, practitioners or industry representatives. Where possible these should be from relevant professional bodies and/or sector skills councils etc. The employer/practitioner is optional for other course approvals but can be useful in demonstrating that the course design takes account of graduate employability.

Student-focussed

9. Clearly, planning and development of provision is fundamental to the core business of the University, and is integral to the student experience in the sense that all students are primarily concerned with completing a UW programme of study. The Course Planning and Approval Process is therefore arguably the most important of all quality assurance and enhancement arrangements and it is appropriate that it involves a comprehensive range of academic discussion, both within the School from which new provision derives, and also across the University, with specialist support departments and, indeed, with the wider HE sector and community.

10. The process is designed to ensure that the end result is beneficial to students, not just in terms of provision but also in terms of the documentation produced. The main outcome of the process is therefore centred on the development of Course Handbooks (see Appendix 8 here). Course development teams are encouraged to consult with students, and where possible engage students and recent graduates in the development process.

Holistic: from inception to delivery

11. To encourage a holistic, 'joined-up' approach, key officers within the University are informed of developments from an early point and discussions will therefore be started as soon as provision is mooted. In the interests of ensuring that the 'big picture' remains evident, involvement of a wide variety of staff and external participants should also begin at an early stage and continue at least until, and ideally beyond when, final approval is granted.

12. Most importantly, attention is focussed on the design element of approving or reapproving provision. This is achieved through an iterative process, planned and overseen by the relevant academic School (but coordinated centrally), that encourages full and open discussion on a broad range of matters relating to the delivery of a successful and appropriate learning experience for all students.

13. External participants, whether they are from other HEIs or from practitioner-based sources, are involved on a practical basis from an early point. It is expected that consultation with relevant externals, including employer or other professional representatives, takes place through the planning and development process. This may vary, especially, for example, where employer involvement is beneficial to complement requirements for academic integrity or, indeed, where it is fundamental to development, as is the case for Foundation Degrees.

Minimising burden on participants

14. Formal recorded evidence is required to demonstrate that the Course Planning and Approval Process has been carried out in a robust manner. External Adviser 1 will provide a short report on their engagement in the development process. The designated AQU Officer will produce a summary report from the final approval meeting indicating the outcomes and how the Course Team has addressed any issues raised.

15. The Programme Specification/Award Map will be published on the Academic Quality Unit (AQU) website and is available externally; the Course Handbook is accessible to students via the Student Online Learning Environment (SOLE) or Blackboard.

Transparent

16. The process has been designed to be transparent to those external to UW, students and both academic and support staff. AQU has a key role in coordinating and monitoring progress and ensuring that all appropriate interests are taken into account. The designated AQU Officer produces a report of the process to inform formal decision making for course approval.

Flexible

17. The process is constructed in such a way as to define parameters for quality assurance purposes but is not so rigid as to impede necessary innovation or flexibility. The likely timing and needs of each proposal will be discussed in initial meetings between AQU and proposers. In certain circumstances, for example where a new award is composed of previously approved modules, and/or a new pathway is being developed through the addition of a small number of new modules, the approval process may be carried out via correspondence rather than through a formal face to face meeting.

18. The process is designed so that approval can be achieved at a steady rate over a number of months but also enables rapid approval where required, subject to the satisfaction of Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC) that all appropriate quality assurance and enhancement undertakings have been fulfilled. AQU staff will coordinate development, offering advice on both the process and on matters pertaining to quality assurance and enhancement as appropriate. AQU will also be responsible for organising the final approval meeting and for working with the Course Team in finalising documentation.

Role of Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC)

19. ASQEC has formal responsibility, on behalf of Academic Board, for approval of new courses. Initial approval is normally granted for a period of six years.

20. Formal approval of provision is gained at the point at which it is clear that the process has been completed appropriately. In practice, this will be demonstrated by the completion of the Course Handbook, the Programme Specification/Award Map and Module Specifications to the satisfaction of all parties involved, and the fulfilment of any actions arising from the final approval meeting. ASQEC will grant approval provided that it has been assured that the approval process has been carried out robustly.

Re-approval of provision

Periodic Review

21. Periodic review enables departments to take a holistic and strategic view of a complete portfolio of courses with critical advice from a panel of internal peers and external subject experts. The scope of review includes all levels of taught provision, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, within a Department. It will normally be based on a six yearly cycle although on occasion there may be a need for more frequent or early review should key indicators suggest this to be necessary. Details of the role and focus of Review can be found on the Periodic Review page on the AQU website but essentially the purpose is to review and evaluate the management of academic standards and quality across the taught provision of a department, whilst also supporting continuous improvement in the student academic experience and in student outcomes.

Maintaining Currency

22. It is expected that Course Teams update their award documentation on an annual or ongoing basis as required. Programme Specifications/Award Maps should be reviewed and checked for accuracy annually, as well as being updated following any relevant minor amendments through UW quality processes. Normal year on year amendments to maintain currency (such as links to indicative reading lists, adjustments to due dates of assignments or to assignment

briefs), are reflected in module outlines and made at the discretion of the Course Team with no formal approval process.

Amendments to modules and courses

23. The University takes a risk-based approach with regard to approving changes to modules and/or courses. The majority of changes to existing provision can be approved through a formal sign-off process or via College Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement (LTQE) Sub-Committees (please see Module and Course Amendments below), with the degree of external input varying according to the types of changes that may occur. In cases where substantial changes to provision are required, (for example to more than 50% of any one level of the course, or more than 25% of a course in total) discussion will take place with AQU to determine the most appropriate mechanism of change. In such cases the Course Planning and Approval process as outlined within this document will typically apply.

Outline of Process

24. This section should be read in conjunction with Appendix 1, a flowchart which outlines the process, available at the end of this document.

25. The Course Planning and Approval Process comprises in outline a number of key stages:

- submission of course proposal to Academic Planning and Portfolio Group
- initial discussions with AQU and completion of 'Intent to Approve' form
- development of course proposal and documentation
- consultation with internal and external advisers
- preparation of final documentation
- final approval meeting
- response by Course Team to any actions from final approval meeting
- report to ASQEC.

26. In certain circumstances, for example where the approval is of a new award from existing modules, or the delivery of an approved course by a partner organisation, the above stages may be condensed or combined, possibly involving the current external examiner, a single external adviser, and the final approval meeting carried out by correspondence. This will be ascertained through the 'Intent to Approve' form.

27. The course development process is centred on the formulation of a Course Handbook and associated Programme Specification and Module Specifications drafted through a consultative process involving internal and external participants from both academic and supporting areas. The Course Handbook is written primarily for a student audience and includes a hyperlink to the Programme Specification.

Submission of course proposal to Academic Planning and Portfolio Group (APPG

28. Schools initiate the course development and approval process by presenting the proposal for a new course to the University's Academic Planning and Portfolio Group (APPG) – please see AQU's Course Approval webpage for further guidance and the relevant APPG proposal forms, which will cover such matters as award title, relationship to the University Strategic Plan, market for the course, financial viability, as well as an outline of the structure of the course and plans for the design and delivery. If successful, AQU will set up a preliminary meeting to discuss the process and any matters which will need to be considered prior to approval.
NB. In the case of re-approval, there is not normally a need to seek approval from APPG/VCAG unless this involves new award titles or has financial implications. This should be discussed with AQU in the first instance.

Discussion with AQU and completion of 'Intent to approve' form

29. Once APPG approval has been obtained, (or in some cases, in parallel) the proposer notifies AQU of initial information using an 'Intent to Approve' form (see Appendix 5). At this point an AQU Officer will be designated to oversee and coordinate progress through the course

development and approval process. An initial meeting is normally arranged by AQU to discuss requirements and ensure the proposer is fully briefed on the development and approval process.

30. The proposer completes the 'Intent to Approve' form outlining the nature of the provision, indicating any involvement of PSRBs (for instance any external accreditation requirements) and nominating external advisers who will either assist with course development, or will be involved in the final approval meeting. The completed form is sent to AQU who review it to identify 'risks', relevant external and internal reference points and any requirements for additional information/documentation, individuals who should be consulted/involved in the process and/or matters to be taken into account in approval. The completed form is forwarded to the Director of Quality and Educational Development (QED) who, as appropriate, will formally approve the external advisers.

31. The expertise of external advisers is evaluated in relation to the level and nature of the course as well as the subject, experience of HE, and may include professional/industry representatives, where relevant. Usually external advisers have experience of course management and preferably experience of external validation/review. Guidance on nominating external advisers is available (see Appendix 6). External examiners will not normally be used as external advisers either during a period of office or for at least five years after. The University does reserve the right to exceptionally request the external examiner to act in lieu of External Adviser 1 for Category 3b changes involving the restructuring of existing provision where there is no significant developmental role for an independent External Adviser 1. In such instances, the arrangement will be formally agreed by the Director of Quality and Educational Development, and an independent External Adviser 2 will always be appointed (see para 83 for categories of change).

32. Once approved by the Director of QED, AQU contacts the external advisers (copied to course proposer and School Quality Co-ordinator and School Quality Administrator) with information about their role, requirements and fee arrangements. From this point the School then takes responsibility for communications and liaison with External Adviser 1 who works with the Course Team to develop the course. AQU will be responsible for communicating and liaising with External Adviser 2 who attends the final approval meeting.

Development of course proposal and documentation

33. The development of the course normally begins with the drafting of the Programme Specification/Award Map, using the relevant standard University template (see Appendix 7). The Programme Specification should be drawn up with consideration of a range of guidance, including external and internal reference points (UK Quality Code, FHEQ, benchmark statements and University Curriculum policies etc.) provided primarily by AQU and through discussion with internal and external participants. Such reference points will be important in shaping the aims, learning outcomes and structure of the proposed programme and further advice is available from AQU.

34. As the Programme Specification/Award Map takes shape, work will normally commence on the Course Handbook and on the Module specifications. Again, AQU provide guidance for this (see Appendix 8). The Course Handbook should be produced to suit the students for whom the provision is intended. Handbooks are designed primarily as electronic documents, meaning that they summarise information and include hyperlinks to current, accurate material maintained elsewhere. The guidance is designed in such a way as to encourage consideration of a variety of facets relating to curriculum design, curriculum content, approaches to learning, teaching and assessment, course management and resourcing. Proposers are invited to add information on any areas not included in the guidance that are believed to be useful to students, and to present and format the document in order to meet their own needs and preferences. The Checklist for Collaborative Provision (see Appendix 3) indicates additional information that may need to be included if a programme is delivered by a partner organisation.

35. A module specification template (see Appendix 9) is also provided, indicating the standard required information for all modules.

36. Some courses will require additional documentation to be produced – for example if the course is collaborative, delivered through flexible or distance learning, has work-based learning or placement elements. The requirement for additional documentation will be made clear by AQU on the 'Intent to approve' form.

Consultation with internal and external advisers

37. An early draft of the programme specification should be shared with the AQU Officer, who will check and comment on it. The Course Team are encouraged through the development and drafting process to consult with a range of internal 'stakeholders' and advisers (for example from Library Services, Registry Services (particularly Student Records and Admissions), and in the case of collaborative programmes it is expected there will be close and extensive partnership working between the partner and staff from the School, as well as AQU). In some cases the 'Intent to approve' form will have indicated a requirement that certain individuals are consulted (e.g. the Head of Collaborative Programmes, or the Learning and Teaching Technology Unit).

38. Throughout the consultation and redrafting process, proposers and participants will refer to the standard criteria for the approval of all courses listed in Appendix 2.

39. The University places a strong emphasis on 'employability' for its courses, and links with employers and the development of work-based learning and 'earn as you learn' opportunities are key elements of our approach to curriculum design. It is therefore expected that Course Teams will develop links with employers/representatives of professional bodies and similar bodies as appropriate, and will take the opportunity to consult with them in the design and development of courses. In the case of professional and vocational courses, including HNDs and Foundation Degrees, this is a requirement. (See para. 8).

40. The Course Team is responsible for liaising with the designated external adviser appointed to advise them on the course development (External Adviser 1). How the external adviser will be used should be a matter for discussion and planning between the Course Team and the AQU Officer, considering where and when liaison and dialogue is best conducted through correspondence and/or face-to-face meetings. This is likely to vary according to a variety of factors such as the complexity and design of the course, the experience of the Course Team, and the location and preferences of the external adviser etc.

41. Once the documentation is nearing its final version, the School should ask External Adviser 1 to complete a report on their engagement in the process and summarise issues raised. A template is provided for this purpose (see Appendix 10 for Academic External Advisers and Appendix 10b for Employer Advisers). The completed report should be submitted with the final draft documentation to AQU for the final approval meeting. Receipt of the report prompts payment of the External Adviser 1 fees and any related expenses.

Production of Final Draft Documentation

42. The following documentation is required in electronic format for the final approval meeting and should be submitted to the designated AQU Officer by the agreed deadline date:
    - Course Approval Briefing Paper (see Appendix 4b)
    - Proposal Form as submitted to APPG (for information)
    - Completed Provision of Information for Prospective Students template as supplied to APPG, updated if necessary
    - Programme Specification/Award Map
    - Module Specifications
    - draft Course Handbook
    - staff CVs (for all staff who will be teaching on the course)
    - resource statement completed by Head of School (or Principal/Chief Executive for collaborative courses)
    - report from External Adviser 1, plus any reports or comments from employer external advisers, placement providers, students/graduates, etc., regarding the proposal.
    - draft course agreement (for collaborative courses, prepared by AQU).

- where WBL or placements: WBL/Placement Audit, guidance for students, guidance for mentors/employers
- other – as identified on the Intent to Approve form (e.g. management of programme, FDL materials).

43. The Head of School, or nominee, is required to produce a resource statement for the final approval meeting. The purpose of the resource statement is to allow the final approval meeting to reach a decision about the appropriateness of resources and preparedness for delivery of the course in relation to resource requirements. In the case of collaborative provision, the statement should be completed by the Principal/Chief Executive (or completed on their behalf and signed off) of the partner organisation responsible for delivering the course, where appropriate in association with the relevant Head of School at the University (e.g. where delivery is shared, and/or where students have access to University resources). The Head of School responsible for the collaborative course should countersign the resource statement.

44. The resource statement covers staffing, specialist resources and learning resources, including electronic and computing resources. Templates and guidance are provided (see Appendix 11 for UW based programmes or Appendix 12 for collaborative provision courses). Heads of School (and Heads of partner organisations) are advised to provide as full information as possible in order to avoid the final approval meeting requesting further information before it can reach a decision. Much of this information can be adapted from the APPG forms that were previously submitted.

45. Schools should carry out some form of internal scrutiny of documentation at this stage, including proof-reading and editing to appropriate standards. The Course Proposer is responsible for ensuring all documentation is complete, accurate and consistent, and for providing electronic copies to the College Director and/or School Quality Co-ordinator for sign off, by the agreed deadline (normally three weeks before the final approval meeting). The School Quality Co-ordinator (and the Department Head, where appropriate) must provide signed confirmation (see Appendix 4a) that they have checked and approved the documentation as fit for circulation before sending to the designated AQU Officer.

Final approval meeting

46. The designated AQU Officer is responsible for making all arrangements for the final approval meeting and for liaising with the School and with External Adviser 2 and all other participants in the process. The AQU Officer is also responsible for producing the report of the meeting and for following up on actions with the Course Team/School as appropriate.

47. The purpose of the final approval meeting is to:
    - confirm the course is consistent with external and internal reference points/policies etc.
    - confirm that the necessary resources are in place (or will be in place) for the course to commence
    - discuss any outstanding matters identified and determine actions to resolve these as appropriate
    - confirm the Departmental Review Group to which the course(s) will be allocated
    - make a formal recommendation to ASQEC on the approval of the course.

48. The final approval meeting will normally be scheduled for a half day, although in some cases (e.g. courses that are collaborative and/or delivered off-site or through flexible and distributed learning), there may be additional participants and/or meetings (e.g. with resource and quality managers, mentors, employers, etc.) in which cases, the final approval meeting may be more than a half day.

    Approval of courses that involve a PSRB will wherever possible have a conjoint approval meeting, taking account of the requirements of the PSRB. The AQU Officer will be responsible for liaising with the School to make arrangements for arranging and minuting the meeting.

49. The final approval meeting will normally be Chaired by a senior academic member of staff from another School. Chairs will be allocated and contacted by the AQU Officer. In some cases,

and particularly for complex events, the AQU Officer will set up a brief pre-meeting, around a week before the approval event, in order to finalise any arrangements with the Chair and Course Proposer.

50. Other participants in the final approval meeting should be:
    - appropriate representation from the relevant School
    - Course leader/Proposer for the proposed course (and where possible, the Head of Department)
    - representation from the Course Team (normally this should be key teaching staff only)
    - External Adviser 2
    - academic member of staff from another School (obtained by AQU Officer)
    - student representative (obtained by AQU Officer)
    - AQU Officer for the course
    - Head of Collaborative Programmes (as appropriate)
    - employer representative/s (as appropriate)
    - PSRB representative/s (as appropriate)
    - students/recent graduates (e.g. where specified for PSRB or for re-approval events)
    - Service users (as appropriate).

51. Documentation will be made available electronically (via One Drive for Business) by AQU to the participants in the final approval meeting normally two weeks in advance. Hard copies will not be provided. Participants will be asked to focus on aspects of the documentation as follows and to provide comments in advance of the meeting (by email to the AQU Officer) on perceived strengths of the proposal and matters for discussion:

    - Chair: consistency with University policies and regulations, appropriateness of documentation (clarity, accuracy and comprehensiveness)
    - External Adviser 2: alignment with external benchmarks (particularly FHEQ, subject benchmark statements, etc.) and currency of curriculum, appropriateness of learning opportunities and resources
    - Member of staff from another School: extent to which proposal meets internal policy requirements (e.g. employability, personal academic tutoring, PDP, inclusion, internationalisation, etc.)
    - Student Representative: 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
    - AQU Officer: consistency with University regulations and course structures, appropriateness of documentation, clarity, accuracy and consistency.
    - Head of Collaborative Programmes: matters related to the management of the collaborative course (and, as appropriate, matters relating to FD and HN programmes).

52. The AQU Officer will draw up an indicative draft agenda for the final approval meeting in advance, based on comments received from participants, together with any matters raised in the report of the External Adviser 1 who worked with the Course Team. Where appropriate, the schedule for the meeting may include a resource tour and any additional meetings with, for example, representatives from the management of the partner organisation, mentors, placement providers etc. For particularly large or complex courses and in the case of conjoint approvals with PSRB there should be consultation with the Head of School and/or Department and the School Quality Co-ordinator on the proposed agenda.

53. A typical schedule for an approval meeting might be as follows:

    - informal introductions
    - resource tour with course leader (if applicable)
    - meeting of all participants to discuss matters identified for agenda
    - meeting with any specific groups of staff to discuss specific issues (determined in advance)
    - conclusions, including recommendation for approval and actions required.

54. The Chair is responsible for ascertaining that the agenda covers all issues that participants wish to discuss. It may be necessary in certain circumstances to update/add to the agenda at the start of the meeting. The Chair and AQU Officer should ensure that the meeting explicitly covers the formal requirements confirming academic standards and quality matters (as set out on the report template) and reaches clear conclusions and outcomes, including identification of good practice/commendations and actions, including where necessary any specific arrangements for confirming responses to actions (see below).

55. 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).

56. Where actions are set for the Course Team/Department/School, **these must be able to be addressed prior to the course being formally approved and before it commences**. Other issues raised which may be broader or more long-term can be included, but should be listed as recommendations or suggestions, e.g. where monitoring or further development is required once the course has started being delivered, issues relating to staff development, monitoring, external accreditation, etc.

57. It will normally be the case that the response is checked and confirmed by the Chair and AQU Officer. However, there may be occasions where responses to specific actions require confirmation from others – e.g. the external adviser, the Academic Registrar, the Head of Academic Quality or Director of QED before the response can be confirmed.

58. The AQU Officer will produce a short report of the meeting (see Appendix 13 for standard template) normally within two weeks covering:

- participants in development and approval process
- background to proposal (nature/purpose of programme and planned start date etc.)
- list of documents provided for final approval meeting
- summary of key matters discussed at final approval meeting
- confirmation that academic standards and quality of learning opportunities, including resources are appropriate, and that (subject to any actions) the team is ready to deliver the course
- confirmation that the Provision of Information for Prospective Students template is accurate and ready for publication on the UW website
- confirmation of the Departmental Review Group to which the course(s) will be allocated
- good practice/commendations
- action plan for Course Team
- any longer-term recommendations for consideration by the Course Team
- date for completion of actions and submission of final documentation to AQU Officer.

59. Separately the course leader will be provided with details of any minor amendments/ corrections/clarifications required of the documentation. This may be in the form of an appendix to the report.

Response by Course Team to actions from final approval meeting

60. Following the final approval meeting, 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 team is expected to work with the Head of Department/School Quality Co-ordinator/College Director as appropriate, to complete this, and where appropriate, with the AQU Officer.

61. The completed action plan (noting the response of the Course Team, and the document page/reference to where it is evidenced) is then incorporated, by the AQU Officer, into the final version of the report recommending approval.

62. The Course Team must also provide AQU with final versions of all documentation. The AQU Officer will be responsible for checking that actions have been appropriately addressed and amendments to documentation made. The AQU Officer will send the final version of the programme specification to the Director of Quality and Educational Development for final sign-off at this stage, prior to ASQEC. The final approved version of the Provision of Information for Prospective Students template will be sent to Communications and Participation for inclusion on the website and to replace any previous versions.

Report to ASQEC

63. The final report (incorporating the completed action plan) should be agreed with the Chair of the final approval meeting and the AQU Officer to confirm the Course Team has addressed satisfactorily the action plan.

64. The report will be provided to ASQEC to confirm the recommendation for approval of the course. Formal approval of the course is established provided ASQEC is satisfied that the approval process has been carried out robustly, there has been appropriate independent externality and all matters for action have been adequately addressed. Approval decisions will be reported to Academic Board following the ASQEC meeting.

Approval of new delivery venues for existing provision (site and resources) and changes to balance of course delivery between the University and collaborative partners

65. The agreed delivery venues for new provision are confirmed through the course approval process in conjunction with assurances that appropriate specialist and learning resources are in place to support the provision. Equally in the planning of a collaborative course, the balance of delivery between a partner and the University is considered from a cost and risk perspective. This is followed through in the course approval process where assurance is sought that the staffing and resourcing for a given delivery split is appropriate to support the provision.

66. Should a new venue (either additional or alternative) be proposed for the delivery of existing provision, assurances will be sought that this is appropriate both from a resources and student experience perspective.

67. In cases where existing modules previously approved to be taught on UW sites only are proposed to be taught by UW staff off-site, a site and resources visit will be undertaken by the School. The report (Appendix 14) will be signed off by the School and the College Director LTQE and reported to the College LTQE Committee.

68. Should the proposal involve the off-site delivery by UW staff of a full course formerly delivered on UW premises only, the submission of a Course Proposal Form to APPG detailing rationale and costings for the initiative will be required.

69. In cases where partner institutions wish to propose an alternative or additional delivery venue for existing UW-approved collaborative courses or modules, a site and resources visit will be undertaken by the relevant UW School. The report (Appendix 14) will be signed off by the School and the College Director and sent to AQU.

70. Where individual collaborative courses are delivered across a number of venues, Schools are expected to keep a record both of those approved and those in use in a given year.

71. Any proposals involving overseas delivery of existing UW provision must be referred to the Academic Planning and Portfolio Group for consideration.

72. The balance of delivery between the University and a collaborative partner cannot be substantively varied from the model agreed at course approval and as articulated in the course

agreement. Acceptable models include a sliding scale arrangement through which the University delivers a decreasing proportion of the provision to a set plan over time as expertise grows. Unless such an arrangement has been agreed, any changes to the balance of delivery which affect 25% or more of the modules on any collaborative course must be considered by APPG and then discussed with AQU as a Category 3b change (see below) since they could potentially impact on the quality of the student experience. A mechanism of approval will be agreed based on the scale of change but will as a minimum include mapping of staff against modules, assurance of resource and expertise, an updated course agreement including a new financial annex and updates to student documentation.

Approval of provision involving Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)

73. Due to the potential variety of bodies, and subsequent variety of approaches to validation/approval, accreditation and monitoring, it is not appropriate to have a one-size fits all policy with regard to including specific PSRB requirements within this process. In all cases therefore, there will need to be some discussion to negotiate a means of approval with the PSRB that fits with the UW process without causing undue burden to any party.

74. Primarily, the ITA form alerts AQU as to PSRB involvement. When this is confirmed, AQU will discuss with course leaders and ascertain whether the relevant body wishes to hold a stand-alone event or whether they might be included in the process described above, thus fulfilling their needs in line with the UW process.

75. In all cases, the key aim is to synchronise the process with the PSRB concerned, and wherever possible to arrange conjoint approval meetings.

Revisions and additions to agreed Joint Honours Degrees

76. Proposals for 'integrated joints' i.e. new named awards based on the combination of existing provision are treated as new course approvals. They will be subject to APPG approval and the full course approval process. The approval would be chaired by a member of staff with joint honours expertise from outside any of the Schools concerned.

77. Given the range of potential implications concerned, any changes to the pathway offers of single, major, joint, minor must be discussed with AQU in the first instance in order to ascertain their impact and agree the most appropriate level of approval. They will therefore be treated as a Category 3b change (see para 83) in the first instance.

Module and Course Amendments

78. It is anticipated that within the duration of a module's or course's approval, proposals will be put forward for their development and enhancement as part of the Course Team's ongoing reflection on the provision and in response to stakeholder feedback.

79. The University's approach to managing Module and Course Amendments is underpinned by a commitment to proportionality based on the perceived level of risk, the impact on the course as approved, and the associated level of externality required to inform and confirm the revision.

Categories of change

80. The categories of change are defined as follows. Further guidance is provided through the Table of Guidance on Module and Course Amendments, Appendix 15:

Low level Amendments (no category assigned)

These are routine updates which would be expected as part of the annual review of modules and their operation and, as such, do not constitute a Module Amendment. Examples include:

- Updating bibliographies with new editions, texts, websites etc.
- Minor changes to topics taught within a module
- Changes to formative assessment

- Change of module leader

Module Amendments (Category 1)
These are revisions to individual modules which do not impact on the overall programme learning outcomes or its assessment pattern and delivery design and impact on up to 60 credits only of the overall award (for a 360 credit UG award and no more than 20% of any course).
N.B. Where changes to learning outcomes or summative assessment are proposed to more than 60 credits of a course overall and up to 90 credits in total (for a 360 credit UG award and no more than 25% of any course), the Minor Course Amendments (Category 2) process will be implemented.
Examples of Module Amendments include:
- Changes to the module title
- Changes to the learning outcomes
- Changes to summative assessment
- Changes to pre-requisites which do not impact on the overall rationale for progression

Process: Amendments to Approved Modules form (Appendix 16) and consideration for approval through the School

Minor Course Amendments (Category 2)
These are changes which do not affect the overall course learning outcomes, and would cover the addition of up to 60 credits of new or shared modules of a course overall (for a 360 credit UG award and no more than 20% of any course) *provided these do not result in the introduction of a new named short award.*
Examples of Minor Course Amendments include:
- Changes to the assessment balance of a course, including additions or deletions of examinations
- Changes to the mode of attendance from full-time to part-time
- Revised pathway requirements
- The addition of one existing module from another course as a shared option.
- Minor module amendments (see above) which are proposed to more than 60 credits of a course overall and up to 90 credits in total.

Process: Amendments to Approved Courses form (Appendix 17) and consideration for approval through the School and reported to the College LTQE Committee

Major Course Amendments (Category 3)
These are changes which impact on the overall course structure and content, its learning outcomes, its assessment strategy and the alignment with its current title. Within the category of Major Course Amendment there are two levels of change:

Category 3a
- The addition of up to 90 credits of new or shared modules (affecting no more than 50% of any one level of the course, and no more than 25% of a course in total and not resulting in a new named award))
- The addition to a multi-pathway programme of a new named (short) award of up to 60 credits using either new or shared modules
- A combination of the changes listed under Minor Course Amendments (Category 2)
- Revised and/or updated admissions requirements

Process: Amendments to Approved Courses form (Appendix 17) plus discussion with AQU to confirm impact of change. Typically consideration for approval through the College LTQE Committee.

Category 3b
These are more substantive or higher risk changes, for example:

- The addition or substantive changes to more than 90 credits of a course (affecting more than 50% of any one level of the course, or more than 25% of a course in total).
- Changes to the mode of attendance involving changes from part-time to full-time and/or the length of a course
- Title change (subject to APPG agreement)
- The introduction of flexible and distributed learning
- Off-site or multi-site delivery or change in balance of course delivery between the University and a collaborative partner which affects 25% or more of the modules on a course
- Changes to pathway offers of *single, major, joint, minor*
- Introduction of a new pathway

Process: Discuss with AQU and College Director of LTQE to establish proposed appropriate mechanism of change, to be confirmed by Head of Academic Quality and Director of Quality and Educational Development.

N.B. This second level of change would likely lead to a full course re-approval and should therefore be discussed with AQU and the College Director of LTQE at an early stage in order to determine the most appropriate process.

Process for managing module and programme amendments

81. It is anticipated that the majority of changes will be managed , either as an aspect of annual updating or through School or College-level approval, provided the full course re-approval process is not required. Detailed guidance is provided in the Table of Guidance on Amendments to Modules and Courses, Appendix 15.

82. Whilst a range of amendments arise from student comments and evaluation, it is essential that students are consulted on all proposed revisions to modules and courses. Evidence of this consultation is required as part of the proposal documentation. School Quality Co-ordinators will ensure that, where possible, all amendments to modules and courses are agreed before students make their Level 5 and Level 6 module selection.

83. Proposals for changes to modules or courses should be considered by the appropriate course team in the first instance. Course Leaders are primarily responsible for ensuring that the appropriate forms are completed to correlate with the proposed revisions. Similarly, they are responsible for ensuring that revised documentation is current, accurate and accessible.

84. Further to the written guidance, additional advice on the processes necessary to secure approval for the proposed changes is available from the Academic Quality Unit. Early liaison with AQU is required where there is likelihood that changes might be complex or significant in their impact.

85. It is the responsibility of the School and/or College Director of LTQE in association with AQU to manage the process for Category 1, 2 and 3a amendments. Depending on the volume and complexity of the proposals and the range of additional business, amendments may be considered under the core LTQE Committee agenda, or at a separate meeting. See table of Guidance on Amendments to Modules and Courses, Appendix 15).

86. Decisions relating to proposed amendment proposals will be one of the following broad recommendations:

    - to approve the proposal as described;
    - to approve the proposal, subject to conditions and/or recommendations that the Committee considers to be necessary. Conditions should be explicit, time-limited and must be fulfilled. Recommendations should reflect matters of less concern to the Committee; however, the course team must still provide a written response by a set date and, in the case of deferral of action, on a recommendation, should state a reason;
    - to refuse approval, providing reasons for this decision.

The outcomes of all amendment proposals must be approved by the appropriate process/College LTQE committee prior to commencement of the revised course or new module.

87. Following approval, updated documentation should be retained on file within the School and a revised Programme Specification/Award Map (if relevant) should be sent to AQU for publication on the website. School Quality Administrators are responsible for communicating changes to existing documentation, normally via the Module Specification and/or Programme Specification/Award Map, to Registry Services in order to facilitate changes to the student records system. Registry Services will **not** make such changes on the advice of Course Leaders without completed documentation.

88. Registry Services will update the student records system based on the information provided.

89. ASQEC will ensure that the process for managing module and course amendments is being carried out efficiently and effectively by maintaining oversight of LTQE Committee minutes.

Simultaneous and cumulative change

90. The impact of minor changes to individual modules which contribute to a course or a combination of small changes to a course must be considered in terms of their simultaneous impact. As detailed in the Table of Guidance on Amendments to Modules and Courses, Appendix 15, a combination of changes at a given point in time could signal a move to the next category of approval in order to reflect and manage the combined volume and impact of the changes proposed.

91. Equally, it is recognised that the effect of minor changes over a period of time may lead cumulatively to a substantive revision of the course as originally approved. It is the responsibility of the School Quality Co-ordinator through the School Quality Administrator to record and monitor on an ongoing basis the minor amendments made at module and course level. This is recorded through a standard spreadsheet which is made available to AQU for independent review at the commencement of each academic year (Appendix 19). This forms the basis of a discussion arranged by AQU with the School as to which courses should be flagged as red, amber or green in relation to the volume and level of change.

92. Following this discussion an annual paper is prepared by the School for the College LTQE Committee at the start of each academic year, identifying from the School's records the volume and level of change. Using a standard template (Appendix 20), this reflects on the courses which have been identified as red, amber or green and makes recommendations for re-approval in relation to any courses identified as red, and flags for oversight, pending any further change, those identified as amber. An overview cross-institutional paper will be produced by AQU for ASQEC.

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Revision History

Date	Version	Reason for Change	Effective from	Author
28/08/13	1.1	Addition of Appendix 4b Briefing Paper and UE ADP1 form, ADPU name change, section 36 and 40 section 45; internal scrutiny, proof reading advice, section 48; format of documentation, section 55.	September 2013	T Nahajski

01/10/14	1.2	Revised section on Module and Course Amendments, para 79-94 as agreed at ASQEC 24.09.14.	October 2014	D Hodson
27/11/14	1.3	Revised section 53 and 54 to include reference to student representative	October 2014	T Nahajski
23/09/15	1.4	Updates on balance of delivery (section 75 & 83), revisions to joint honours (section 79, 80 & 83) and use of the external examiner (section 33) as agreed at ARC 11.03.15. Reference to periodic review cluster approach and move to 6 year approval period added (section 22, 49 & 61) as agreed at ARC 10.12.14.	August 2015	D Hodson
15/10/2015	1.5	Addition of new hyperlinks (section 39) and inclusion of cumulative change in Institute AER (section 95).	September 2015	T Nahajski
18/08/2016	1.6	ARC changing to ASQEC. Additional sign off of documentation required by IQC Chairs.	August 2016	T Nahajski
12/01/2017	1.7	New sign off form added and clarification of process for checking draft programme specification. Appendix 18 added for removal of optional modules.	January 2017	T Nahajski
22/09/2017	1.8	Chair of Approval to be external to the Institute.	IQC Chairs' approval – July 2017	J. Zandbeek
26/09/2017	1.9	Updates to oversight of cumulative change (Section 93, 94 and appendices 19 and 20).	September 2017	D Hodson
26/10/2017	1.10	Amendments to the Periodic Review Process and University Committee Structure (i.e. UE changed to VCAG), plus minor typos.	October 2017	R White
13/02/2018	1.11	Inclusion of Provision of Information for Prospective Students template as part of process for checking.	February 2018	T Nahajski
15/08/2018	1.12	Changes due to restructure from Institutes to Schools and Colleges, CSG to APPG	September 2018	T Nahajski; J Zandbeek

Appendices

The appendices referred to throughout this document, and listed below for ease of reference, are available via the AQU Course Planning and Approval webpage:

Appendix 1:	Flowchart outlining Course Planning and Approval/Re-approval Process
Appendix 2:	Standard Criteria for Approval of all Provision
Appendix 3:	Checklist for Courses involving Collaborative Arrangements
Appendix 4:	APPG Course Proposal and Planning Proforma
Appendix 4a:	Sign off document for School Quality Co-ordinator
Appendix 4b:	Briefing Paper for final approval meeting
Appendix 5:	Intent to Approve Form (ITA)
Appendix 6:	Guidance on choosing External Advisers/External Panel Members
Appendix 7:	Programme Specification templates
Appendix 8:	Course Handbook guidance for 2018/19
Appendix 9:	Module Specification Template including guidance
Appendix 10:	Report Template for External Adviser 1
Appendix 10b:	Report Template for External Employer Advisers
Appendix 11:	Resource Statement – UW based programmes
Appendix 12:	Resource Statement – Collaborative Provision courses
Appendix 13:	AQU Officer's Report Template
Appendix 14:	Approval of new delivery venues for existing provision (site and resources)
Appendix 15:	Guidance on Amendments to Modules and Courses
Appendix 16:	Amendments to Approved Modules form
Appendix 17:	Amendments to Approved Courses form
Appendix 18:	Removal of optional modules form
Appendix 19:	Cumulative change tracking spreadsheet
Appendix 20:	Cumulative change report template