PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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Introduction

Our Strategy: The Way Forward 2018-2023: Recast COVID-19.

Our vision is to be a world-leading, research-excellent, educationally outstanding university, driven by creativity and curiosity, which fulfils its social, cultural and economic obligations to Cardiff, Wales, the UK and the world. By fulfilling our vision, we expect to improve our standing as one of the top 100 universities in the world and the top 20 in the UK.

The Way Forward **2018-2023: Recast COVID-19.** outlines the guiding principles for the way we put this vision into practice, and includes performance indicators that will help us gauge our progress. Our revised Education and Students Sub-strategy will re-prioritise activity to provide our students with the highest quality experience possible given the constraints of the Covid-19 crisis, whilst preserving our academic standards and integrity.

These include our commitment to:

- Learning environment
- Student experience
- Welsh-Language Strategy, Yr Alwad/Embrace It.
- Placement and Employability:
- Widening Participation
- Teaching excellence:
- Academic standards

Institutional oversight

This Policy has been endorsed by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) in June 2020 and approved by Senate in June 2020. It will be kept under regular review to ensure it continues both to support internal processes that function efficiently and effectively and to fully meet the expectations and practices set out in the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

The principles have been mapped against the UK Quality Code expectations and core and common practices alongside the supporting advice and guidance on Course Design and Development, Partnerships, Monitoring and Evaluation, Assessment, Enabling Student Achievement, External Expertise, Student Engagement and Work Based Learning as appropriate.

Expectations for standards	Expectations for quality
The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework'	Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.
The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector recognised standards'	From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.
Core practices for standards	**Core practices for quality**
The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications' frameworks.	The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.
The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.	Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.
Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.	The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.
The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.	The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
	The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

	Where the provider offers research degrees, it delivers these in appropriate and supportive research environments.
	The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.
	The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.
Common practices for standards	**Common practices for quality**
The provider reviews its core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement	The provider reviews its core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.
	The provider's approach to managing quality takes account of external expertise.
	The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.

Section 1: Scope and exclusions

Scope of the policy

From 1 August 2020 (updated June 2020), this document provides a framework for programme development and approval (including collaborative provision) giving guidance for the development and management of new taught programmes and making changes to existing programmes.

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that Cardiff University can discharge effectively its responsibilities for the academic standards of awards and the quality of learning opportunities provided for students, thereby ensuring that the programmes offered by the University are comparable to cognate provision offered elsewhere. In addition, the Policy reflects the University's responsibilities when making changes to existing provision under consumer protection law.

The Policy provides an overview of the procedures, processes and requirements for the:

i)   design and approval of new programme(s) or activity (including collaborative provision);
ii) updating and revising existing programmes;
iii) discontinuing programmes; and
iv) the continuous quality management of all credit bearing activity.

It is expected that the development of all new programme proposals and changes to existing programmes should be developed with reference to other Cardiff University policies and codes of practice alongside any professional and statutory body requirements:

• Academic Regulations;
• Assessment principles and commitments and associated assessment and feedback resources;
• Principles of Programme Structure, Design & Delivery (approved October 2019);
• Digital Education Strategy and Digital Learning Framework
• Welsh Language Strategy
• Collaborative Provision Policy (revised August 2020)
• Study Abroad Policy (revised August 2020), where appropriate
• Placement Learning Policy (Revised August 2020), where appropriate
• Admissions Policies (including terms and conditions of offer)
• Tuition Fee Policy
• Guidance relating to Teaching and supporting students.

Proposals strategically endorsed by University Executive Board

From time to time, UEB may strategically endorse proposals to develop links with other institutions or partnerships that have significant importance to the University. Any such proposals must complete all stages of the Approval Process outlined in this Policy and any additional requirements outlined in the Collaborative Provision Policy.

It is advisable that the Quality and Standards Team are contacted before any formal negotiations take place particularly with outside organisations to ensure that appropriate guidance and support can be given at the start of the process.

It is essential that Schools do not enter into any formal negotiations with partner organisations until Stage 1 Strategic Approval has been given by the Recruitment Admissions and Strategy Group.

Exclusions

This Policy provides guidance for the development of new taught programmes and the management of changes to existing programmes. The Academic Regulations for Research Degrees sets out the University's requirements for the management of its research degree programmes. It describes the principles by which the University requires Schools to manage and support their research students and sets out an institutional framework within which more detailed local arrangements can operate.

Advice and guidance on proposals for taught provision should be discussed with your College Quality Officer at quality@cardiff.ac.uk. For advice and guidance on research degrees please contact the PGR Quality and Operations Team at PGR@Cardiff.ac.uk.

Section 2: Key principles

The decision-making processes within this policy are designed in relation to a guiding principle of subsidiarity, which aids the efficient process of University business whilst ensuring commensurate rigour and scrutiny. It allows the University to effectively discharge its responsibilities under the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education and under consumer protection law.

For proposals including collaborative provision, a key consideration when approving collaborative activity is whether collaboration with a partner poses a risk to the University's academic standards and student experience, and by implication the reputation of the University. The need to protect these is of paramount importance and must be the primary consideration in the evaluation of the benefits of any form of collaboration.

Overarching principles

Stage 1   **Strategic Approval**
Strategic Approval is taken at University level and addresses the key question, **'In principle, do we want to do this, and does it align with institutional priorities outlined in the Way Forward 2018-2023: Recast COVID-19?'** Answering this question also involves moving forward on plans to enhance our online and blended offering. New online provision will be considered for potential new revenue streams, underpinned by a University-level learning technology service. Careful consideration will be given to market intelligence, business viability including costs and tuition fee income and risks (including reputational risks).

Colleges will only put forward key proposals to the Stage 1 University panel that meet the institutional priorities outlined in the Way Forward 2018-2023: Recast COVID-19 highlighting how the proposal meets the criteria set out by the Recruitment and Admissions Strategy Group.

Each proposal will be considered at set meetings per year (normally quarterly), which will align with the timescales in Section 3. Each proposal will take into account institutional priorities, the resource needed from the School to commit to the development phase and the support required from CESI.

Detailed timescales for development phase will need to be outlined by the School including the academic sponsor who will be responsible for ensuring timescales are met. All proposals will need to take into consideration the timescales identified in section 3 to maximise recruitment opportunities.

Stage 2   **Programme Development phase**
There is an expectation that all proposals progressing from Stage 1 Strategic approval will engage with workshops offered through the CESI including the Digital Learning Framework. Workshops will cover digital education, curriculum design and delivery, assessment and re-assessment opportunities, the student experience and learning resources.

There is an expectation that all programmes will incorporate the principles outlined in the Welsh Language Strategy, Digital Learning Framework and the assessment and feedback commitments. All proposals will be expected to include the module threshold checklist to ensure a core level of consistency in students' educational experience in, when there will be a much greater emphasis on digital elements of their programme.

It is envisaged that more time invested during the programme development phase will increase high quality, innovative, programmes being put forward for academic approval to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel thus minimising conditions.

Stage 3   **Academic Approval**
This stage asks the question '**is this academically robust and does it fulfil the basic structure, digital education and curriculum and assessment principles expected for all Cardiff programmes?**'

All proposals put forward for consideration to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel must show how they have engaged with the workshops provided through the CESI to ensure they meet the following principles:

- there is appropriate core/required curriculum to uphold the standards of each academic award (50% core modules in subject specific areas).
- the assessment and feedback principles have been incorporated.
- for distance and blended learning programmes, the principles outlined in the Digital Learning Framework have been considered including the module threshold checklist.
- that any Profession, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements have been included including timescales for their approval.
- appropriate mechanisms and support structures in place to protect the student experience; and
- the programme complies with external benchmarks and quality and standards frameworks.

Student Membership on the panel is critical to gaining insight into student views on the proposal and identifying if any additional modifications are needed.

It is anticipated that engagement with the support available through the programme development phase will minimise the need for additional conditions/recommendations to be made before recommending for formal **University approval** by ASQC.

Our obligations under Consumer Law prevent us from advertising any programme(s) until formal ASQC approval is granted to ensure the accuracy of information available to students and applicants.

Level of change and academic sign off

It is anticipated that all Schools will initially review and discuss and identify changes to current provision through a range of processes e.g. module evaluation and outcomes via ARE and portfolio discussions with College representatives via Performance Review. These discussions will help identify the type of proposed change and the timescales for implementation. Where significant changes are required to a range of programmes within a School, the decision may be taken to undertake this task holistically through the revalidation process rather than through a series of independent changes.

Where changes to individual programmes are identified, the following table indicates the level of change and the locus of responsibility either at a Board of Studies/School Board or the Programme and Partner Standing Panel.

It is acknowledged that as the size and decision-making structures within each School will differ, Schools may wish to create an additional 'School oversight' mechanism in larger Schools where there are multiple Boards of Studies. This will ensure that there is a coherent approach to discussions around change at programme level taking into consideration any effect on shared modules within and outside of the School.

In all cases, an accurate record of all changes will be required through the use of Variation template for Board of Studies in addition to the Programme Learning Outcomes mapping template. Detailed minutes of all changes will be required on the purpose of the change, the immediate impact of the change (including any Joint Honours provision) and what student consultation has taken place (see section six).

It is not possible to list all permutations of University level changes in this policy therefore you are advised to contact the Quality and Standards Team when you are unsure on the type of change proposed and the most appropriate approval route for the level of change particularly in the case of cumulative change

Table 1: Summary of levels of change

Board of Studies

Thresholds of Change for UG:
Up to180 credits across the entire UG programme (no core modules).

Thresholds of Change for PGT:
Up to 80 credits across the programme including dissertation module.

- **Routine updates to modules**: including minor updates to content, teaching methods, method of assessment and assessment weighting and general module description information.
- **Change in FHEQ level of modules** where appropriate after review and in line with Senate regulations and benchmark statements. (programme level learning outcomes mapping and assessment mapping should be included with this).
- **Merging credit/content between modules**: Merging optional modules or content diverted to other modules (must include mapping document as evidence to protect PLO's).
- **Addition/deletion of optional modules** (core modules are considered a major change);
- **Joint Honours programmes**: considerations of proposed changes by other Schools (e.g.UG joint awards) within the thresholds. Approval from both Schools is required before it can be actioned.
- **Introduction of a 60-credit semester of study abroad** into existing programmes in line with the Study Abroad policy. Grade conversion must be considered
- **Approval of module diets for incoming study abroad and or occasional studies students** in line with the Study Abroad Policy.
- **Approval of all RPL and RP(E)L applications and subsequent variations to programmes where appropriate** before submission to Registry for implementation

University level changes

It is acknowledged that all permutations of major changes are not listed. The Quality and Standards Team can advise on the type of change proposed and the most appropriate approval route for the level of change particularly in the case of cumulative change

- **Introduction of new programmes and major changes to existing programmes** above the threshold identified at Board of Studies;
- **Introduction of a year of study abroad/placement year;**
- **Change to programme award or title;**
- **Changes to the programme level aims and intended learning outcomes**;
- **Addition/deletion of core modules:** This will have a direct impact on the PLO's
- **Holistic changes to programme credit structure and /or assessment strategy;**
- **Change to the duration of the programme**;
- **Change in the mode of delivery of the programmes** (e.g. the introduction of a part time route or a move from face-to-face tuition to distance learning);
- **Collaboration with another institution or organisation** and/or delivery of a programme, or part of a programme, overseas;
- **Revalidation of programmes as a result of PSRB requirements;**
- **Any change that requires a variation to or exemption from University Senate Regulations**

Section 3: Timescales

As each proposal varies in scale and complexity, it is important that appropriate time and resources are available to School staff throughout each stage of the process outlined in Section 2. Proposals including collaborative provision may take significantly longer in order to undertake due diligence on the partner and to clarify the responsibilities of the University and the partner, and especially in cases where national government approval is required or where the programme may be subject to additional approval mechanisms at the partner organisation(s).

Developing new programmes

Proposals for developing new programmes are linked to the discussions about portfolio development within each College taking into consideration institutional priorities. Schools will be provided with market intelligence from each College that will support these discussions highlighting potential gaps in the market for the development of new programmes in addition to recommendations for programme review or discontinuation. In addition, the Recruitment and Admissions Strategy Group may recommend areas for development where it aligns directly to institutional priorities.

To ensure that there is successful recruitment to all new programme proposals, clear timescales for final approval by ASQC have been established and these will be agreed at the end of the Stage 1 Strategic Approval process by RASG.

Where programmes are not ready by the deadlines outlined below, that recruitment and marketing activities will be paused for the programme until the next cycle.

> **PGT** - programmes should be ready to market *a minimum of twelve months* before the start of the programme (e.g. September 2021 for a September 2022 start;
>
> **UG** - programmes should be ready to market *a minimum of eighteen months** before the start of the programme (e.g. December 2021 for a September 2023 programme.

The schedule of Recruitment and Admissions Strategy Group meetings will be published at the start of the academic year to each College. This will structure each College timeline for receiving School submissions for new programmes before reviewing and recommending to the Stage 1 Strategic Approval panel for consideration.

Proposals for new programmes can be considered by the Programme and Partner Standing Panel on a regular basis however they will only be submitted for consideration to the Panel with confirmation that there has been engagement with the core workshops provided through the CESI and the proposal meets the

principles of programme structure, design and delivery, the Digital Education Strategy and assessment and feedback principles

<u>Introducing new programmes late in the recruitment cycle will not be supported</u> through the Stage 1 Strategic Approval process as it will impact on the School's ability to maximise recruitment and marketing activities and recruit to the predicted numbers stated as part of their business plan.

<u>Changes to existing programmes</u>

Where Schools highlight the need for University level changes to individual or a series of programmes within the portfolio, careful consideration will be needed to ascertain both the timing and the resource needed to undertake the change. The timescales identified above will remain applicable alongside the additional time required for student consultation, updating applicant information and the process of developing/approving the proposal.

<u>Revalidation</u>

Where significant changes are required to a range of programmes within a School, the decision may be taken to undertake this task holistically through the revalidation process rather than through a series of independent changes. This will depend on the volume of the change, the timing of the revalidation cycle and if the changes are required by an external body. Schools may choose to utilise their accreditation cycle to co-ordinate with any University level changes to avoid duplication of effort and minimise administrative burden.

Section 4: Portfolio development / change

As identified in section 3, discussions around strategic priorities and portfolio development will take place with each College as part of Performance Review. Schools will be provided with a programme portfolio analysis and this will form the basis of a discussion with each College and University recruitment team.

Consideration will be given to a wide range of circumstances that include sector comparison, survey data, external funding and Welsh/UK strategic developments. The analysis will encourage Schools to consider:

- Development of programmes in line with the Digital Education Strategy;
- Recommendations on portfolio gaps in the sector;
- An assessment of current recruitment patterns outlining where market demand is diminishing for some programmes;
- Recommendations for a holistic review of programmes through revalidation to allow for significant strategic change or realignment;
- Recommendations on programmes from which Cardiff should divest based on the outcomes of the discussions on programme performance highlighted above.

New programmes

After detailed consideration/consultation with the relevant College and University recruitment teams, Schools will be encouraged to begin preparing proposals for new programmes to the College for consideration and onward travel to RASG for the Stage 1 Strategic Approval panel, where appropriate.

On submission to RASG, all proposals will need to show how they meet set University based criteria. This will allow the College to consider all proposals based on College and University strategic priorities and decide which programmes will be selected to go forward for formal University Stage 1 Strategic Approval.

Where proposals identify areas of uniqueness or significant external funding opportunities, careful consideration can be given if there is an absence of obvious or significant market demand however this will only be considered on an exceptional basis where there is evidence of external commitment to the proposal.

Submission to the College does not guarantee proposals will be progressed for further development.

University level changes to existing programmes

Stage 1 Strategic Approval for University level changes to existing programmes will continue to be discussed and authorised by each College.

It is anticipated that the portfolio development discussions within the College will focus on the principles identified above particularly when considering student

recruitment and programme viability. As identified in section 3, where Schools highlight the need for University level changes to individual or a series of programmes within the portfolio, careful consideration will be needed to ascertain both the timing and the resource needed to undertake the change and if the effort expended is proportionate to the anticipated gains.

Where significant changes are required to a range of programmes within a School, the decision may be taken to undertake this task holistically through the revalidation process rather than through a series of independent changes to allow for significant strategic change or realignment.

Stage 1: University strategic approval for new programmes

Each College will present its shortlisted proposals to the University Stage 1 Strategic Approval Panel (the Recruitment and Admissions Strategy Group) outlining how each proposal fits with the School, College and University strategic priorities. As each proposal will need significant investment of time and resource, the Panel will make decisions based on the following criteria:

• the strategic and academic justification for developing the programme in line with current institutional priorities.
• evidence of demand and proposed marketing strategy (UK and/or overseas);
• a detailed outline of academic and other resources needed (with input from College Finance, Library, IT and other professional services);
• the projected student numbers over a five-year period;
• financial analysis (including fee income and success criteria);
• identification of an academic and professional service lead from the School who will be directly responsible for the proposal and the proposed timescales for development;
• production of a risk register identifying any School, College or University risks associated with the proposal including failure to get approval within the stated timescales.

If Schools are submitting proposals that include collaborative provision, additional information will be required including:

• details of the proposed partner and associated risk assessment;
• a detailed financial plan with the proposed partner (including all staff costs).

The University Stage 1 Strategic Approval Panel (in consultation with other academic and professional service staff from the University), will consider the merits of the proposal and will decide if the proposal can move forward to Stage 2.

Once strategic approval has been granted, Schools will be required to undertake a commitment to the following:

• Clear timescales for completion and submission to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel including touch points with your College Quality Officer at regular interval to evaluate progress;
• The academic sponsor (and additional development team members where appropriate) to engage with compulsory workshops supported by CESI on the

development of digital education, curriculum, assessment and structure of programme;

- The academic sponsor (and additional development team members where appropriate) to utilise the workshops to share ideas through communities of practice;
- The academic sponsor to attend Programme and Partner Standing Panel as an observer to gain an understanding of the requirements and further their professional development in this area.

It should be noted that the Stage 1 Strategic Approval Panel may request further information or decide that the proposal should not be taken forward to Stage 2.

Full details of all the required documentation for Stage 1 strategic approval for developing new programmes and making changes to existing programmes are available on the intranet with support and guidance available from your College Communication and Recruitment team on assessing the market viability of your proposed programme developments and your College Quality Officer.

Stage 2: Programme development phase

Once strategic approval has been granted, Schools can start developing the full programme information in preparation for presentation to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel.

Developing the proposal

There is an expectation that each academic sponsor will engage with the core workshops offered through the CESI in addition to the principles outlined in the Digital Education Strategy before submission to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel.

It is envisaged that more time invested during the programme development phase will increase high quality, innovative, programmes being put forward for academic approval thus minimising high numbers of conditions. It is therefore very important that a team approach is taken to development to ensure that workload is manageable, and a full range of advice and expertise can be gained.

All proposals will have clear timescales (and scheduled touch points) for development therefore academic sponsors must take this into consideration when scheduling participation at each CESI workshop (evidence will be required of involvement/attendance at workshops).

Where proposals are not making sufficient process to meet the deadlines outlined in section 3, the University Stage 1 Strategic Approval Panel may decide to impose a later start date for the programme and pause subsequent recruitment and marketing activities until the next recruitment cycle.

Preparing for the Programme and Partner Standing Panel Meeting

In addition to the core workshops facilitated by the CESI, the academic sponsor is expected to promote a collaborative approach to developing the proposal allowing for a shared responsibility in the development of all programme information.   The involvement of key academic and professional service expertise within the School will differ depending on the nature of the proposal however as a minimum it should include:

- A student from within the proposing School;
- A critical friend with expertise in the subject area who can provide advice and support to the development team, and will provide a formal report on their engagement to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel (for changes to an existing programme, and it is recommended the current external examiner is used);
- Key academic teaching staff within the School (and outside if it is a joint proposal) to advise on content, assessment and delivery;
- Key administrative staff within the School to advise on implementation timescales and school processes;
- Any requirements for Professional, Statuary and Regulatory Bodies;
- Key staff within Registry to ensure any regulatory requirements are confirmed beforehand e.g. progression and award rules.

Programme Information sign off

The Academic Sponsor is responsible for ensuring all documentation required for developing new programmes is completed within the timescales identified in section 3 and signed off by the College Communications Team before submission to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel.

In addition, each academic sponsor will be expected to confirm that they have engaged with the CESI workshops and considered the associated policies and guidance highlighting where the information can be found in the main proposal documentation. Schools will be required to confirm the following:

- Each Academic Sponsor has engaged with the core workshops available through CESI including dates of attendance/engagement.
- The proposed programme information meets the learning outcomes specified in each of the core workshops;
- The programme information has been seen and developed by the appropriate Board of Studies/School Board before submission to the Standing Panel.
- The proposal meets the requirements of the principles of programme structure, design and delivery and the assessment and feedback principles
- The proposal has considered and implemented, where practicable, the principles outlined in the Digital Education Strategy and included the module threshold checklist.
- Where a proposal concerns changes to existing programmes, that appropriate teach out/transition plans have been developed if required.

School's will also be asked to nominate an external academic with subject expertise who can serve as an external advisor to the Standing panel. This should not be a

current, or recent external examiner, and cannot be the same as person engaged as the critical friend.

Once, completed, the Quality and Standards Team will arrange for the full programme information to be submitted to the Standing Panel.

Stage 3: Academic and ASQC approval

The Standing Panel Meeting

The Programme and Partner Standing Panel will meet regularly to consider new programmes and changes to existing programmes including those with collaborative provision. Whilst each level of change will consider a diverse range of issues, members of the Standing Panel will scrutinise all programme related information including issues of curriculum design and delivery, the student experience, student lifecycle including progression (and points of recovery from failure), learning resources and support and administration arrangements within the School. The panel will assess whether programmes meet the University thresholds and External benchmarks and quality and standards frameworks for approval.

For proposals involving collaborative provision, further consideration will be needed on the information presented about the proposed partner and the partner's ability to deliver/manage the programme, as specified in the Collaborative Provision Policy.

It is important that Schools understand that they will be required to submit their finalised documentation to the Standing Panel within the timescales outlined in section 3.

After the proposal has been considered the Standing Panel will recommend one of the following outcomes in writing to the School and the Academic Standards and Quality Committee:

•	the proposal should be approved unconditionally with or without recommendations;
•	the proposal should be approved subject to the satisfaction of certain conditions within a specified period of time, with or without additional recommendations;
•	the proposal should be referred back to the School for detailed further consideration prior to its representation to a later meeting of the Standing Panel;
•	the proposal should be rejected.

If conditions have been set, the School will need to clearly identify when they propose to re-submit the documentation to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel. Once the Chair of the Programme and Partner Standing Panel has confirmed that all conditions have been met, a recommendation can be made to the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience and Academic Standards for approval on behalf of ASQC.

Our obligations under Consumer Law prevent us from advertising any programme(s) until formal approval is granted to ensure the accuracy of information available to students and applicants.

Section 5: Board of Studies level changes

Heads of School have overall responsibility for ensuring that there is a clear cycle of programme monitoring, review and evaluation in line with the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education with specific reference to the advice and guidance sections relating to course design and development, monitoring and evaluation, learning and teaching and student engagement.

Schools should have a well-established cycle of review and evaluation for both programmes and modules incorporating feedback from a variety of sources including external examiners, students and external bodies. In order to facilitate routine changes, Schools have the opportunity to make changes to programmes within a specific threshold (identified in Table 1). These changes do not need to be considered by the Programme and Partner Standing Panel and are usually updated and confirmed in the University's Student Management Information System (SIMS).

Responsibility of the Board of Studies

It is acknowledged that as the size and decision-making structures within each School will differ, Schools may wish to create an additional 'School oversight' mechanism in larger Schools where there are multiple Boards of Studies. This will ensure that there is a coherent approach to discussions around change at programme level taking into consideration any effect on shared modules within and outside of the School.

In all cases, an accurate record of all changes will be required through the use of Variation template for Board of Studies in addition to the Programme Learning Outcomes mapping template. Detailed minutes of all changes will be required on the purpose of the change, the immediate impact of the change (including any Joint Honours provision) and what student consultation has taken place (see section six).

A key question that each Board of Studies should ask is '***What does the effect of the proposed changes have on the programme or interconnected programmes?'***

Whilst it is usual for a Board of Studies to be presented with modules, members are responsible for considering the impact of proposed changes at programme level including the impact of shared modules within and external to the School.

Each proposal for change will need to demonstrate the following:

• the academic rationale and justification for making changes to the module/programme(s) including agreement from other Schools where the change affects programmes outside the School;
• the academic session the proposal is due to come not effect (in line with the routine updates required for programmes each year);

- the impact of changes on the information given to applicants as par of the 'contract'
- the potential effect on other modules within or external to the School;
- consideration of the potential effect on any Joint Honours provision and confirmation that consultation has taken place with the sister School and there is full agreement with the proposed change;
- consideration of the potential effect on programme level learning outcomes;
- evidence of student consultation in line with in line with the variation of arrangements statement outlined in the University's terms and conditions of offer;
- the impact of the change in line with the University's responsibility under consumer protection law;
- a detailed outline of any increased academic and/or other resources needed as a result of the change;
- consideration of any potential risks for the School or wider College or University risks associated with the proposed changes.

Removing/adding core modules to a programme diet cannot be approved by a Board of Studies as it has an impact on a students' terms and conditions of offer.

Where any changes to core modules are proposed, you should contact your College Quality Officer to discuss further.

In addition, it is the responsibility of the Board of Studies to ensure the following are considered:

- the programme level aims and intended learning outcomes have not been affected or changed by the proposed change;
- any revised assessment strategy and structure is in line with principles of programme structure, design and delivery, assessment and feedback committments and the Digital Education Strategy;
- all professional accreditation reports and visits are reviewed and actioned appropriately;
- all collaborative provision programmes are monitored with particular reference to the moderator reports and student feedback;
- monitoring 'Teach Out' plans for any programmes that have been discontinued;
- all External Examiner reports are reviewed with particular reference to feedback on quality and standards of programmes and any proposals for changes to programmes.
- Any feedback from the Examining Board has been considered, implemented and responded to.

Schools must use the Variation template for Board of Studies in addition to the Assessment Mapping template and the Programme Learning Outcomes mapping template. Detailed minutes of all changes will be required on the purpose of the change, the immediate impact of the change (including any Joint Honours provision) and what student consultation has taken place (see section six).

Timescales for programme/module review and change

The role of each Board of Studies is to monitor and periodically review the programmes to ensure they continue to meet the original objectives/audience set for them and they continue to respond to the needs of students (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area).

When reviewing programmes, it is important that each Board of Studies has an awareness of issues which have been discussed and considered during the ARE process and a holistic understanding of the timescales for the approval of proposed changes to programme information. Having a clear understanding of the level of change and the timescales for review and approval is essential to ensure that the student experience is protected.

Clear deadlines are in place for approving programme and module diets as they have a direct impact on the student experience: access to timely information, selection of modules, access to learning materials, timetable.

If the level of change falls into the category where it can be facilitated through the Board of Studies approval confirmation of the full programme diet must be signed off by each Chair of the Board of Studies and subsequently the programme information on SIMS updated by the stated deadline as any delays will significantly impact on timetabling and module selection for students.

Any routine change requests from a Board of Studies that goes beyond the deadline will not be approved, unless for exceptional reason and will require the approval of the Chair of ASQC.

Audit of changes approved by the Board of Studies

The Chair of the Board of Studies will be responsible for ensuring that there are clear audit trails and detailed minutes outlining the proposed change, the discussion taking place and the rationale for approving/rejecting the changes.

This detail must be made available for any institutional audit or to support with investigations into student complaints and appeals.

It is advisable that each School submits an audit report of all changes made at each meeting the same way that ASQC presents and Executive Action Report to each meeting. A final independent report should be submitted at the first meeting of the next academic session for scrutiny highlighting how any actions identified will be taken forward.

Section 6: Student consultation

<u>Changes to existing programmes that affect current students</u>

The University has clearly defined responsibilities outlined in its <u>terms and conditions of offer</u> when making changes to existing provision under <u>consumer protection law</u> and Schools are required to consult with existing students on any proposed changes.

Consultation with students is seen as a positive developmental tool to help further shape the content of the programme and Schools must consider a range of strategies to protect both the student and the applicant experience through this process. When consulting with students, Schools must consider the following:

o   Building in appropriate timescales to engage in meaningful consultation with students through a variety of formats e.g. focus groups, student staff panels, questionnaires and social media;

o   Providing students with clear and concise information about the proposed changes and the context in which the changes are being made in line with the University's <u>terms and conditions of offer </u>and <u>variation arrangements</u>;

o   Consideration should be given to the effect that the changes are likely to have on the students in practice e.g. will students need any additional support to adjust. (Tutoring, mentoring, skills workshops). How can this be provided ahead of the change taking effect?

o   Ensure that students have a reasonable period of time (at least 2 weeks) in which to respond to the proposed changes and a clear point of contact if they wish to raise concerns;

o   Clear timescales of when the outcomes of the consultation will be available and the support mechanisms available for students in the transition period.

<u>Changes to programmes that will affect applicants</u>

Schools need to develop a bespoke communication plan to ensure that all applicants are contacted identifying the changes that have been made in line with the University's <u>terms and conditions of offer</u>. Early contact with the <u>Admissions Team</u> will help support the process of contacting and supporting applicants to ensure they are aware of the impact of the changes to programmes and any support that can be offered to find suitable alternatives within the University.

For changes to undergraduate programmes, Schools must be aware of the UCAS deadline for making changes in January each year as this will minimise the options available to applicants if they decide they want to change their choice of institution.

Further advice and guidance on the University's responsibilities under consumer protection law can be found at the following: <u>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-provider</u>

Section 7: Discontinuing a programme

Key principles

Schools are expected to review their portfolio periodically to ensure they continue to align with institutional priorities. As identified in section 4, discussions around strategic priorities and portfolio development should include discussions about discontinuing provision that no longer fits with strategic priorities.

If after review, a School decides to permanently discontinue a programme (or portfolio of programmes including those with collaborative provision), Schools need to consider the timing of the proposal to minimise the impact of the decision on current students and any applicant(s) who have been made offers to study in future years.

All discontinuation requests should be submitted at **least 9 to 12 months before the start of the next academic session** to allow current applicant sufficient time to look for alternative provision.

This process is not designed to suspend recruitment for one academic session due to over or under-recruitment concerns.

Protecting the student experience

The main consideration when deciding to discontinue a programme should be *'how can students continue to meet their programme level learning outcomes and complete their studies on time? Is this possible? If not, what resources are needed to ensure it can happen? Will students need to be transferred to another institution and/or compensated if this is not possible?'*

Discontinuation of programmes must be carefully managed to ensure that academic standards and the quality of the experience are maintained for the students remaining on the programme. Students must have a clear plan of what is expected to happen to them throughout the process and access to the agreed 'Teach Out Plan' setting out the responsibilities of both parties and clear timescales.

Developing a 'Teach Out' Plan.

The programme lead has the responsibility to produce a suitable 'Teach Out Plan'. The Board of Studies is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the plan and for monitoring its implementation until all students have completed or have left the programme(s). All plans should be monitored alongside the relevant External Examiner report (s) to ensure the quality and standards are maintained and the student experience is protected.

Key considerations of the 'Teach Out' Plan

- Who is covered by the Teach Out Plan?

- What is covered by the Teach Out Plan?
- What communication plan has been agreed with current students and applicants to the programme?
- Availability of modules throughout the time of the teach out period
- Students who may need to re-sit/repeat modules
- The student experience and sense of cohort for students on a teach out programme
- Any professional body requirements including time limits of programmes
- Availability of exit awards if a student choses to finish early.

For collaborative provision, all 'Teach Out Plans' must be agreed with the partner organisation and signed by both institutions. This will be monitored through the Moderator Reports when presented to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel as well as the Board of Studies. Additional consideration will need to be given to:

- the notice period identified in the contact with the partner organisation and the termination of agreement arrangements;
- the arrangements for teaching/student support if the programme is taught away from Cardiff University premises;
- informing the external examiner and University moderator of the termination of agreement arrangements;
- updating the partnership management plan to reflect the agreed teaching out arrangements to protect the student experience;
- specific arrangements for students on interruption of study, placement year or repeating modules in line with the termination of agreement arrangements.

The School must submit a completed, signed Discontinuation Form to the College Quality Officer before being submitted to the College PVC for consideration. The College PVC may request further information before recommending the discontinuation to ASQC for approval.

Late discontinuations

Where discontinuations have been identified late in the academic cycle (post January 15th), the University Stage 1 Strategic Approval Panel, will consider the request as part of the strategic approval process and may require further information from the Head of School including mitigation of financial loss and the protection of the student experience.

The University panel may decide that the programme should not be discontinued due to the potential risks associated with stopping the programme at short notice.

Informing current students and applicants of the discontinuation

All discontinuation requests should be submitted at least 9 to 12 months before the start of the next academic session to allow current applicant sufficient time to look for alternative provision.

A communication plan for applicants will be implemented, to advise applicants of the reason for discontinuing intake and to confirm that the decision has been taken in line with the terms and conditions of offer.

<u>Reinstating a programme within 2 years of discontinuation</u>

As with discontinuation requests, proposals to [reinstate of a programme](#) which has been discontinued for less than two consecutive sessions will require discussion around the programmes continued alignment with University strategic priorities and portfolio development. The School will need to complete the Stage 1 strategic approval process outlined in section 4 along with a rational as to why the circumstances for the previous discontinuation have changed. In addition, the School will also need to consider:

• if any changes are needed to update the programme information and if so, what the prosed changes would be. In cases where the changes are extensive, Schools will be required to go through the University level change process and will be treated as a new programme.
• the academic year the reinstatement is be effective from and the timescales for programme development.
• the financial implications of re-introducing a programme and how staffing duties will be redistributed within the School to cover the reinstatement.
• a detailed communication plan describing what action is to be taken in respect of marketing the programme.

The University Stage 1 Strategic Approval Panel (RASG) will consider the request and may require further information from the Head of School including the reason for the original discontinuation.

The University panel may decide that the programme should not be reinstated if there is insufficient evidence to support the proposal or the request is at short notice where the opportunity for marketing and recruitment is limited.

Any proposal that has been discontinued for more than two consecutive sessions will need to go through the full programme development process outlined in section 4.

<u>Suspending Intake</u>

The disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the requirement to meet new health and safety requirements may require us to conclude that it is not possible to deliver a blend of high-quality on-campus and online learning and support a new intake to a degree programme. As a consequence, it may be necessary to suspend an intake.

The Recruitment and Admissions Strategy Group will approve 'in principle' the suspension of an intake to a degree programme, taking the advice of the College Pro Vice-Chancellor. Prior to taking a decision to suspend an intake, consideration will need to be given to the implications, with reference to consumer law, for those applicants who have accepted an offer of a place (and therefore a contract has been formed).

All suspension of intake requests should be submitted at **least 9 to 12 months before the start of the next academic session** to allow current applicant sufficient time to look for alternative provision. **Suspension of intake is for one academic session only as the programme will remain live in Coursefinder for the following academic year.**

A communication plan for applicants will be implemented, to advise applicants of the reason for suspending intake and to confirm that the decision to suspend intake has been taken in line with the terms and conditions of offer.

For information on how to suspend an intake for a programme, please contact central [Admissions Team.](#)