Programme Approval Procedure

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Document History			
Version	**Date**	**Author**	**Notes on Revisions**
V1	15 June 2022	Martine Woodward	The Programme Development Policy has been replaced with a programme approval procedure only. The development element has been incorporated into the Institutional Expectations for programme structure, design, and delivery.
V2	3rd July 2023	Martine Woodward	The introduction of a new Education Partnership Policy (replacing Collaborative provision, study abroad, and placement learning policies) required an update to the procedure. Part 4: Role of Board of Studies has been removed as this is covered in advice and guidance on the [University Quality and Academic Standards network](#).

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Institutional oversight

From 1 August 2022, this document outlines the University's programme approval procedure for all taught programmes (including proposals with external partners).

The procedure has been mapped against the requirements of the UK Quality Code expectations (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.

Institutional oversight is provided through the Monitoring and Review Policy approved by Senate in 2020. The procedure will be kept under regular review to ensure it continues to meet the expectations and practices set out in the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) 2015

Strategically endorsed programmes with external partners

The establishment of external partnerships are important aspects of any higher education institution's operation and strategic ambition. At Cardiff, we have engaged with a variety of external partners with the view to supporting the delivery of our education and students sub strategy and our international sub strategy. These include strategic partnerships, international exchange agreements, progression, and articulation agreements and taught programmes leading to a Cardiff University award.

The governance arrangements for setting up, developing, and maintaining all external partnership activity is clearly expressed in the Education Partnership Policy as required by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Through this policy, Cardiff takes a risk-based approach to developing and managing its arrangements, and these are identified in the Taught Education Partnership Taxonomy.

Approval requires dedicated resource and time as each arrangement is individual in its nature. The overarching principle is that the quality and standards of all Cardiff's collaborative provision arrangements must be as rigorous, secure, and open to scrutiny as those for programmes delivered entirely by Cardiff University.

Any proposals of this nature **will still need to complete all stages of the approval procedure** set out in this document including any additional requirements based on the nature and complexity of the proposal.

For further support and guidance on developing education partnerships, please contact the Education Partnerships at EducationPartnerships@cardiff.ac.uk at the start of the process and before any formal discussions/negotiations take place.

Part One: Strategic approval

This section is designed to support you in understanding the different stages and timescales for [developing new programmes](#) and [making changes to existing programmes.](#)

All proposals (new and changes to existing programmes) will be considered in the first instance, by your College Stage 1 Strategic Approval Committee. **For new programmes**, if your proposal is endorsed by the College Committee, it will be recommended to the Stage 1 Strategic Approval meeting of the Recruitment and Admissions Strategy Group for further discussion and approval.

For changes to existing programmes, strategic approval is the sole responsibility of the College Stage 1 Strategic Approval Committee. If endorsed, you will be able to proceed to Stage 2 programme development.

What do I need to consider when submitting a proposal for strategic approval?

Discussions around strategic priorities and portfolio development will take place with your School/College throughout the academic year in response to a wide range of circumstances. These may include sector comparison, survey data, external funding, and Welsh/UK/International strategic developments. [Proposals for developing new programmes](#) may be linked to these discussions or may have developed through [Annual Review and Enhancement](#).

Your College will be looking to see how your proposal answers the following questions:

- *Do we want to offer this programme and if so, why?*
- *Does the proposal work with external partners and if so, what is the nature of the collaboration?*
- *How does the proposal align with and embed our institutional priorities?*
- *How does the proposal prepare students for the jobs of the future?*
- *Do we have the appropriate resources to support the development and delivery of the programme to provide an excellent student experience?*

Proposals that identify areas of uniqueness or significant external funding opportunities but do not have obvious or significant market demand, can be considered particularly if there is evidence of external commitment to the proposal or it has been identified as strategically important to meet and embed our institutional priorities. Careful consideration will need to be given the investment and resources needed to achieve the strategic ambitions.

[Templates](#) have been developed to help capture all information required at this stage. Support and guidance are also available from your College Communication and Recruitment team (on assessing the market viability of your proposed changes) and your College Quality Officer.

Part Two: Programme development timescales

New programmes

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 meeting of RASG.

As each proposal varies in scale and complexity, it is important that you have appropriate time and resources available throughout each stage of the procedure. Proposals including external partnerships may take significantly longer to undertake where the programme may be subject to additional approval mechanisms at the partner.

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

> **PGT** - programmes should be <u>ready to market</u> *a minimum of twelve months* before the start of the programme (e.g., September 2024 for a September 2025 start.
>
> **UG** - programmes should be <u>ready to market</u> *a minimum of eighteen months*[*] before the start of the programme (e.g., March 2025 for a September 2026 start.

<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 the predicted numbers stated as part of their business plan.

Changes to existing programmes

A standardised deadline for [confirming programme information](#) has been established in April each year to reduce the number of late changes both pre and post enrolment. This will need to be factored into any Board of Studies discussions when making routine changes to existing programmes.

Late confirmation of programme diets or changes to programme information significantly impacts on the quality of the student experience (module choices and timetabling information) in addition to duplication of effort for Schools and central University staff to amend the details.

Part Three: Support for programme development

A set of [Institutional Expectations](#) for programme structure, design, and delivery has been developed that outline the key baseline requirements that should be part of all Cardiff programmes. Each section outlines the specific expectations in addition to advice and guidance on how to explore the topics further. You will not be limited to discussing the baseline requirements only, but they must be a clear part of the proposal. The [Learning and Teaching Academy](#) have a wide range of expertise to support with developing your proposals beyond the baseline.

Taking a team approach to developing your programme

When developing your new programme or reviewing existing provision, it is critical for you to set up a development team. You will need to draw on a range of expertise depending on the nature of the proposal; however, as a minimum consultation on the proposal should include:

- [Learning and Teaching Academy](#): Cardiff Learning and Teaching Academy (brings together experts in learning and teaching to support staff in delivering an engaging and inclusive experience for all students. They can work collaboratively with you to identify your curriculum development needs and aspirations (as an individual or programme team), discussing tailored options and best practice with you, sharing relevant examples, and directing you to appropriate CPD events and resources.
- Staff from the [Student Futures Team](#) particularly where a programme will include employability/placement provision, and/or international mobility.
- **A wide range of students** from your own School. When developing your programme, you should consider how a range of students can contribute to programme design, collaborative methods of teaching delivery, assessment and other resources to support their learning. Working in partnership with your students can provide opportunities for co-creation of learning and teaching which is a key part of our commitment to students. **When making changes to existing programmes,** you will need to have a broader consultation with current students if the changes affect their current or future studies.
- **A critical friend** with expertise in the subject area who can provide advice and support directly and informally to your development team.
- **Key academic and professional service expertise** within your School (and outside if it is a joint proposal) to advise on content, assessment, delivery, and any professional body requirements.
- **Board of Studies**: to ensure there are additional opportunities for a wider range of staff to comment/discuss before it is submitted for approval.
- **Representatives of other Schools that share modules/programmes**: You will need to factor in additional staff expertise based on the range of disciplines being developed e.g., Joint Honours provision. The key area of focus must be in developing a coherent programme that integrates all subject disciplines even if students study them in different Schools/departments.
- **Your College Quality Officer and College Education Officer**: They will be able to advise on any regulatory requirements as it is important these are confirmed before it is presented for approval e.g., progression and award rules

Submitting your proposal to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel

As part of the development process, you will be required to consider how your proposal meets (or exceeds) each of the baseline requirements for programme structure, design, and delivery outlined in the Institutional Expectations document. You will be able to use the document as a means of 'evaluating' how each institutional expectation has been met in preparation for your submission to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel.

The same document will also be used by the Programme and Partner Standing Panel to evaluate your proposal, which will promote transparency in decision making and provide a valuable feedback mechanism if there are areas for further consideration/development.

Full details of all the required documentation and timescales for submission to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel is available on the intranet with support and guidance available from your College Quality Officer.

Recommendations of the Programme and Partner Standing Panel

After your proposal has been considered by the Programme and Partner Standing Panel, one of the following outcomes will be recommend:

1. ***the proposal should be approved unconditionally with or without recommendations.***

   Proposal gets sent for ASQC approval immediately.

2. ***the proposal should be approved subject to the satisfaction of certain conditions within a specified period, with or without additional recommendations.***

   Where conditions have been set these are mandatory, and the school will be given a maximum of 6 weeks to meet them. Proposals cannot be approved unless all conditions have been satisfactorily met.

   Where recommendations have been made, these are not mandatory but the School is required to discuss them at the Board of Studies and reflect on how they may be implemented at a later date or through revalidation.

3. ***the proposal should be referred back to the School for detailed further consideration prior to its resubmission to a later meeting of the Standing Panel.***

   Where the proposal has been referred to the School, **resubmission of the updated documentation will be presented to a Panel with the same membership as the original submission** (where possible). This is aimed at

providing consistency and transparency of decision making. Depending on the nature of the proposal, this may be done via circulation, or the School may be required to return the full resubmission to a Panel meeting. This will be confirmed by your College Quality Officer when you are notified of the outcome of the Panel.

4. *the proposal should be referred to the College*

It is anticipated that this will only occur in exceptional circumstances. During discussion at the Panel, significant operational or resourcing difficulties may be presented which were not apparent at Stage 1 Strategic Approval. Where this may significantly impact the student experience or the operation/administration of the programme, the Panel will refer the proposal to the College for further analysis.

Resubmission of the updated documentation will be presented to a Panel with the same membership as the original submission (where possible). This is aimed at providing consistency and transparency of decision making.

Depending on the nature of the proposal, this may be done via circulation, or the School may be required to return the full resubmission to a Panel meeting. This will be confirmed by your College Quality Officer when you are notified of the outcome of the Panel.

ASQC approval

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, Education & Student Experience 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.

Communicating the outcome to students and applicants (changes to existing programmes)

It is important that you have prepared a bespoke communication plan to ensure that all applicants are contacted identifying any changes that have been made in line with the University's terms and conditions of offer.

Early contact with the Admissions Team 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, you will need to 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:

Higher education: consumer law advice for providers - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)