Programme Course Design Policy

The University is required to have strategic oversight of and to consistently apply effective processes for the design, development, approval, changes and closure of programmes and courses.

A **programme** of study is the sum of all the elements leading to a defined graduating curriculum. A **course** is a unit of teaching and learning formally offered within the University, which carries credit expressed in credit points and which may contribute to a University award.

This policy, and the programmes and courses pages of the Academic Services website, constitute the University's approach to and management of the processes for design, development, approval, changes and closure of programmes and courses.

This policy covers academic aspects of programme and course design, development, approval, changes and closure. The responsibility for consideration of the business case and resourcing aspects resides with the Faculty and/or Institute and takes place in consultation with other support services as appropriate. Programme and course approval decisions should be evidence-based with consideration given to all relevant matters including: likely students demand; resource implications; income generation; and input required from other subject areas or external contributors. Information on the requirements for business case and resourcing aspects will be detailed in Institute level guidance.

Programme and Course Design and Development

Programme and course **design** is a creative activity which may result in innovative ideas for higher education provision. It is followed by a process of **development** which leads to the creation of a programme or course. This is where the content, modes of delivery, structure and components of the programme or course (including assessment methods and the means by which students will be engaged with the curriculum) are considered and, for programmes, developed into a coherent programme of study. This development process may also be used to enhance an existing programme, for example in response to the outcomes of programme monitoring and review. Programme design and development is carried out at the Faculty or subject area level.

Criteria for Proposals

Programme and course proposals must demonstrate the following:

Programmes	Courses
Purpose	
Learning outcomes (LOs) necessary to meet that purpose.	
Mechanisms by which students demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the LOs.	

Programmes	Courses
Organisational aspects such as workload, volume and nature of assessment in order for students to meet LOs.	
Details of the level of award and credits	Details of the credit level and credits
The programme as a whole is coherent.	The relationship of the course to programme(s) (not applicable for standalone courses).
If other Faculties are involved: evidence of consultation; consideration; communication of impact; and support for the proposal. Confirmation of primary responsibility should be defined at the outset (there can only be one owning Faculty).	
Consultation with relevant support services (e.g. Library, IS).	
Evidence of consideration of Internal Reference Points	**Evidence of consideration of Internal Reference Points:**
Evidence of consideration of External Reference Points: • Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body(PSRB) requirements • Employers and Industry • Designing programmes to be accessible so they do not present any unnecessary insurmountable barriers to students with protected characteristics	**Evidence of consideration of External Reference Points (as appropriate):** • Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body(PSRB) requirements • Employers and Industry • Designing courses to be accessible so they do not present any unnecessary insurmountable barriers to students with protected characteristics
Student involvement – students must be proactively involved at the earliest practicable point in programme and course design, development, approval, changes and closure processes. Their involvement should be proportional to the activity taking place and representative. The opportunity to be involved must allow for representation from students with protected characteristics. Consultation should involve students academically closest to the proposed changes and be in line with the University Student Engagement Statement.	
Evidence of expertise from outside the programme. In programme approval, the involvement of individuals external to the University is required to offer independence and objectivity to the decisions taken.	

Collaboration/Partnerships

The University recognises that collaboration and partnerships are increasingly important, and offer many benefits to both the University and to students. Details about the University's collaborative agreements and arrangements, and guidelines for developing collaborative provision, are available from the Governance and Strategic Planning Policy and Procedures.

Documentation for Proposals

Programme and course proposals must ensure a transparent and auditable 'paper-trail' providing a rationale for decisions. Documentary evidence must include the following:

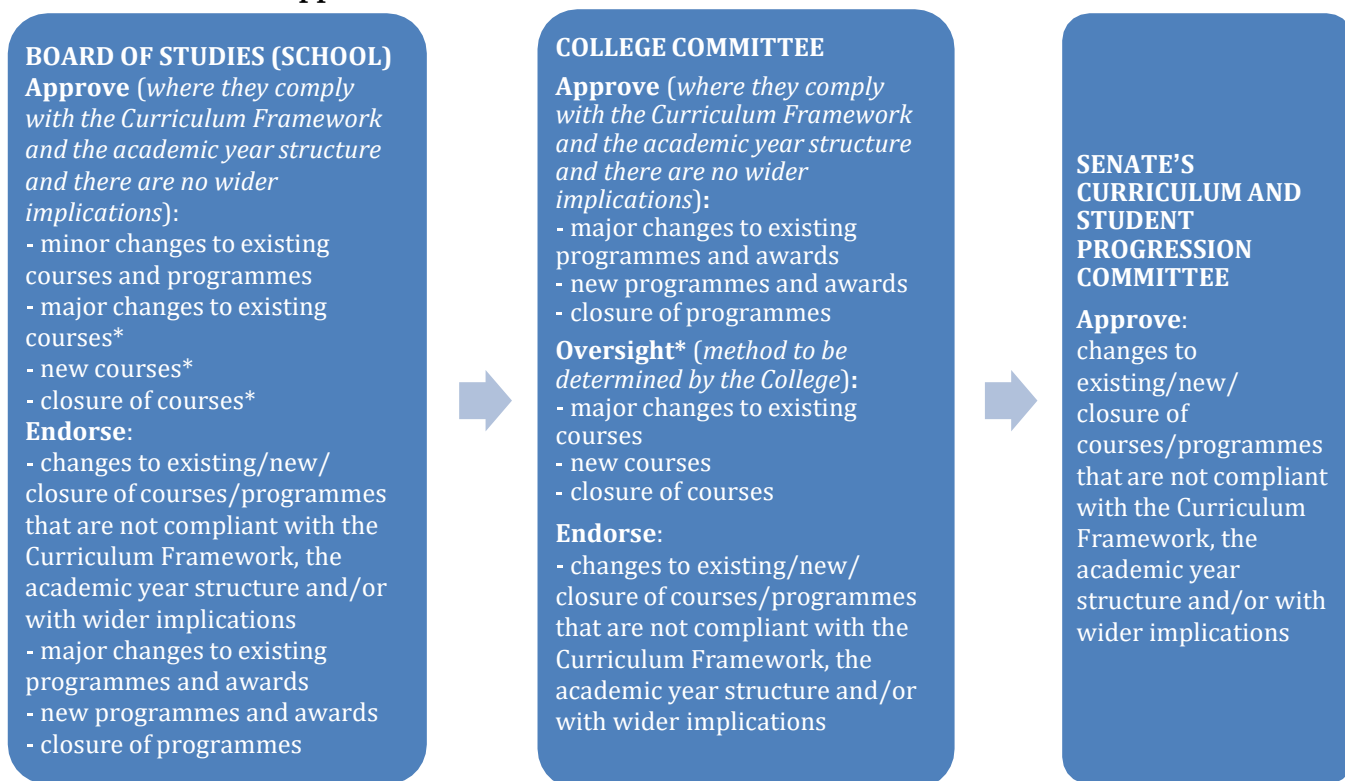| Programmes	Courses
Degree Programme Specification (the final version is posted on the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study)	Course creation, approval and maintenance information
Programme Proposal Template for Fees Strategy Group/Central Management Group approval	
New Programme Request Form	Documentation requirements will be detailed in Institute Guidance.
Documentation requirements will be detailed in Institute Guidance.	

Programme and Course Approval, Changes and Closure

The University programme and course approval, changes and closure processes ensure institutional oversight of standards and quality. Authority is delegated by the University, via the Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC), to Institutes and, where appropriate, to Faculties. The level of authority required should be proportionate to the extent of the proposal and decisions must ensure objectivity and impartiality. To this end, Institutes may elect to wholly delegate the authority to approve all changes to existing courses, proposals for new courses, and closure of courses to Faculties but must retain a method of oversight, particularly to ensure that decisions are taken independently of the home subject area of the course. Institutes must retain authority to approve major changes to existing programmes and new programmes.

All programmes and courses are approved indefinitely unless otherwise stated. Programme and course information is entered into database, which feeds information to the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study (DRPS), and forms the definitive record of programmes and courses.

The responsibilities of the CSPC are detailed in the Committee's Terms of Reference. The responsibilities of Boards of Studies are detailed in the Board of Studies Terms of Reference.

Minimum Levels of Approval

BOARD OF STUDIES (SCHOOL)
Approve (*where they comply with the Curriculum Framework and the academic year structure and there are no wider implications*):
- minor changes to existing courses and programmes
- major changes to existing courses*
- new courses*
- closure of courses*
Endorse:
- changes to existing/new/ closure of courses/programmes that are not compliant with the Curriculum Framework, the academic year structure and/or with wider implications
- major changes to existing programmes and awards
- new programmes and awards
- closure of programmes

COLLEGE COMMITTEE
Approve (*where they comply with the Curriculum Framework and the academic year structure and there are no wider implications*)**:**
- major changes to existing programmes and awards
- new programmes and awards
- closure of programmes
Oversight* (*method to be determined by the College*)**:**
- major changes to existing courses
- new courses
- closure of courses
Endorse:
- changes to existing/new/ closure of courses/programmes that are not compliant with the Curriculum Framework, the academic year structure and/or with wider implications

SENATE'S CURRICULUM AND STUDENT PROGRESSION COMMITTEE

Approve: changes to existing/new/ closure of courses/programmes that are not compliant with the Curriculum Framework, the academic year structure and/or with wider implications

Minor and Major Changes to Existing Programmes

The categories outlined below are regarded as **major** change not because they are more important but because they potentially impact on students and other interdependent processes such as external reporting requirements. These therefore cannot be routinely changed locally in the absence of Institute level approval with a formal link to central student record systems.

Change to any of the following requires Institute approval:

- ◎ The name of the programme: any change made to the name of a programme, other than to correct spelling or syntax, is considered a 'major change' and requires a new programme to be proposed and approved.
- ◎ The content of the programme: major change to the content of a programme is defined as the addition or closure of courses or major changes to existing courses (see below 'Minor and Major Changes to Existing Courses') comprising 20% of the total credit volume of the programme, or at least 50% of the credit volume in any single year of the programme.
- ◎ The structure of a programme: major change to the structure of a programme is defined as a change in the balance of credits between different components of the programme (e.g. between core/option courses or dissertation/taught courses) comprising 20% of the total credits of the programme, or at least 50% of the credits in any single year of the programme.
- ◎ The mode of study – PT or FT
- ◎ The place of study - on campus or distance learning

◎ The period of study
◎ Collaboration or change of partner
◎ The home Faculty or Institute

All other categories are regarded as **minor** change and therefore can be approved at Faculty level.

Minor and Major Changes to Existing Courses

The categories outlined below are regarded as **major** change not because they are more important but because they potentially impact on students and other interdependent processes. These therefore cannot be routinely changed locally in the absence of an approvals process with aformal link to central student record systems.

◎ The name of the course
◎ The level of the course
◎ The credit value
◎ The aims of the course
◎ The learning outcomes
◎ The ratio of assessment types
◎ The home subject area

Where other changes are made to course content (e.g. outline syllabus and course topics) theseare regarded as **minor** changes.

All other categories (e.g. change of course organiser, learning resources, reading lists, core reading) can be routinely refreshed in accordance with normal Faculty procedures and discipline practices.

New Degree Qualifications

New degree qualifications, with degree titles not already used by the University, need to be approved by CSPC, on the basis of a proposal from the relevant Institute committee. CSPC asks the University Court for any necessary degree Resolution and adds the degree qualification title to the list of degrees in the annual Court Resolution on undergraduate or postgraduate degree regulations. The Resolution to create the degree qualification needs to come into effect before the University opens the programme for applications. The CSPC Secretary can advise on whether a degree needs CSPC approval and a Court Resolution. For example, an MA or BSc for a new discipline does not need a Resolution and would only require CSPC approval if it does not comply with the University's Curriculum Framework or has wider, cross-Institute implications; a new degreetitle, even if the programme conforms with the Curriculum Framework, requires CSPC approval and a Court Resolution. Proposals for new qualifications should include information about exit awards and whether the qualification can be awarded at Ordinary/Honours level or, for taught postgraduate degrees, includes the award of named diploma or certificate.

Programme and Course Management – Responsibilities

Programmes

The Head of Institute is formally responsible for degree programmes. Within this overall responsibility each programme, and course within it, is owned by a particular Faculty which ensures its management. The Head of Faculty or Director of Teaching delegates responsibility for the management of a degree programme to a Programme Co-ordinator or Director (or equivalent).

Courses

Course Organisers are responsible for individual courses within a Faculty. The Head of Faculty or Director of Teaching appoints Course Organisers to take responsibility for individual courses. The scope of the Course Organiser's remit varies according to local Faculty organisation, but in outline the Course Organiser is responsible for:

- general course management
- assessment and feedback
- advising and supporting students on course-related matters
- monitoring and reviewing courses
- agreeing routine changes to courses

Programme Closure

Programmes may be withdrawn for a variety of reasons such as a decline in student demand, a reduction in funding or in funded student numbers, or a change in University/Institute/Faculty priorities for academic development.

In the event of a decision to discontinue a programme, measures must be taken to notify and protect the interests of students matriculated on, or accepted for admission to, the programme. The Faculty must ensure appropriate management and resourcing of the final student cohorts in the programme to be closed. Programme information must be removed from the website and other publicity materials to ensure that prospective students are not disappointed. Collaborative partners must also be informed in a timely manner.

In normal circumstances a programme must be supported for every student matriculated or accepted onto the programme. Only in the most exceptional circumstances may a programme on which students have been offered a place, admitted to, or matriculated be closed. In these circumstances, the students(s) must be informed and the Head of Faculty must ensure that the situation is resolved. No programme to which students have been admitted or matriculated may be withdrawn until the University's obligations to those students have been reasonably and fairly fulfilled.

Staff Support and Development

Training and support is available for those involved in programme and course design, development, approval, changes, and closure from the Institute for Academic Development.

Review of Process

This Policy will be reviewed regularly in line with Academic Services practice.