



Programme Approval Handbook

A process guide for the approval of new taught academic programmes
leading to University and external qualifications

Standards and Enhancement Office (SEO) September 2024

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1. Introduction

Proposals for the development of new academic programmes of study are required to gain Strategic Approval **before** design and development begins.

Strategic Approval involves the University's Executive granting permission for the development of any new proposal. To apply for strategic approval, an **Academic Development Strategic Proposal form** should be completed, and in the case of apprenticeships, an **Apprenticeship Scoping Form (ASF)** should be completed and approved by the Apprenticeships Management Team beforehand.

Programme Approval is the formal process by which Senate via the Chair of Education Committee gives permission that a programme may be offered for study. The Standards and Enhancement Office (SEO) manages the Programme Approval process and reports the outcomes for ratification. The normal period of programme approval is five years or until the next periodic review and reapproval. The approval process ensures that the programme is meeting the [regulatory requirements of the Office for Students](#). Where relevant, the approval process will consider the requirements of any relevant *Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body* and *external awarding body/organisation*.

2. Programme Approval Routes

There are two routes to Programme Approval, as follows:

Route A: This is the standard route for programme design and development. It ends with consideration of documentation which have been uploaded onto a Proposal Development Record Moodle site by an **Approval Recommendation Panel (ARP)**.

The timeline for Route A approvals is determined by proposing teams with confirmation by the Standards and Enhancement Office.

Route B: This is the route for more complex programme developments. Like route A, Route B uses an iterative process of design and development which ends with consideration of documentation by a **Programme Approval Panel (PAP)**. Route B involves one or more Panel meetings the format of which is flexible. The timeline is determined by proposing teams with confirmation by the Standards and Enhancement Office.

The Route undertaken is determined by the Standards and Enhancement straight after confirmation of Strategic Approval.

3. Programme Approval Process Steps

Step 1: Route determined by SEO following Strategic Approval

SEO Scoping Meeting to be determined by SEO.



Step 2: SEO Programme Design Workshop and Planning Meeting

SEO provide programme design workshop and convene planning meeting to determine timelines needed.



Step 3: Programme Development and Stakeholder Consultation

Consultation with Internal Advisor, External Advisor, students and employers to develop and refine programme structure (consolidation/cohesion), contents, assessment strategy, support and resource requirements etc. Completion of the Approval Check-list by Proposer.

Route A via Academic Recommendation Panel (ARP) – Step 4 onwards

Step 4: External Advisor Consultation Report and Sign-off for Route A

External Advisor completes Approval Check-list + Consultation Report.



Step 5: Internal Advisor Sign off and SEO Check

Internal Advisor completes Approval Check-list and Internal Advisor Consultation Report.



Step 6: Documents Scrutinised by ARP - Lines of Enquiry Form completed



Step 7: ARP Meeting

The Panel meets to determine whether due process has been followed, and programme documents are complete. Changes may be made at the Panel meeting with consultation with proposers.



Step 8: ARP Outcome and Sign -off

ARP recommends an outcome to the Chair of Education Committee and if approved, programme is made "live".

Route B via Programme Approval Panel (PAP) – Step 4 onwards

Step 5: Internal Advisor Sign off and SEO Check

Internal Advisor completes Approval Check-list and Internal Advisor Consultation Report.



Step 6: Documents Scrutinised by Programme Approval Panel and Lines of Enquiry Form completed



Step 7a Optional: Lines of Enquiry Meeting with proposing team



Step 7b Optional: Programme proposers respond to Lines of Enquiry



Step 8: Programme Approval Panel Meeting

The Panel meets to determine whether due process has been followed, and programme documents are complete. Changes may be made at the Panel meeting with consultation with proposers.



Step 9: Programme Approval Panel and Sign -off

PAP recommends an outcome to the Chair of Education Committee and if approved, programme is made “live”.

4. Additional Requirements for Apprenticeship Programmes

Before a proposal for an apprenticeship can be taken forward for Academic Approval, it should first be signed off for approval by the Apprenticeships Management Team following a Scoping Meeting. The Planning and Design meetings will involve the Head of Apprenticeships or a nominee from the Apprenticeships team. Additional Programme documentation will be required including a bespoke Programme Handbook incorporating a KSB map and the accompanying Apprenticeship Programme Handbook Approval Form. See Annex 1 Sub-Section I for the additional criteria for approval.

Following the academic approval of an IfATE Integrated apprenticeship standard, the Apprenticeship team will confirm the status of the application to DfE for the subject team to become the End Point Assessment Organisation.

5. Additional Requirements for Online Only Programmes

A bespoke online Programme Guide as well as a Programme Landing page on the VLE is required, One fully populated Moodle (or alternative VLE) site for whole module delivery per level together with a specified sample of Module Guides should also be provided. See Annex 1 Sub-Section J for the additional criteria for approval.

6. Additional Requirements for Off Campus Partnership Programmes

The following additional documents are required in the case of off-campus programmes: Partnership Initial Assessment of Operations (for new partners), Partner Operations Manual, Responsibilities Check List, Equivalency check List, Contract, any Local Licence or regulatory documentation (if relevant), website/Link to CMA tracker. See Annex 1 Sub-Section K for the additional criteria for approval.

7. Programme Approval Advisor Roles

The Internal Advisor and External Advisor will work with the Proposer and their team to ensure that documentation is ready for Panel scrutiny.

7.1 Role of the Internal Advisor

An Internal Advisor will be a Quality specialist (usually an AC SELE) nominated by the Head of School.

The role of Internal Advisor is as follows:

1. To provide expert advice and leadership from within the proposing School/Centre about University requirements for programme design, development and approval.
2. To ensure they have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the University's process for Programme Design, Development and Approval and to ensure the programme is developed according to SEO guidance.
3. To ensure that the proposing team consult stakeholders (employers/ students) and use their views in the design and development of the proposal.
4. To ensure that the proposal is fully documented in the PDR ready for external Scrutiny by the External Advisor.
5. To ensure that the programme proposer and team consider and respond, as required, to the comments within the Consultation Report from the External Advisor. To include finalizing the documentation and completing the PDR.
6. To complete a Consultation Report on the development of the proposal and to formally sign-off the PDR as ready for a University Standing Panel or a Programme Approval Panel, as relevant.

7.2 Role of the External Advisor/Panel Member

An External Advisor (Route A)/Panel Member (Route B) will be a subject specialist nominated by the Programme Proposer and approved by the Acting Academic Registrar or nominee.

The role of External Advisor/Panel Member is as follows:

1. From the perspective of their subject specialist knowledge, industrial role and/or professional expertise to understand the broad nature of the proposal and to advise the Proposer and

University on the suitability of the proposal.

2. To provide feedback to the Proposer and their team in a supportive, collegiate and transparent manner.
3. To complete the External Advisor Consultation Report and to provide feedback to the Internal reviewer and Panel on the development. – Route A only
4. To access the programme documents in the Proposal Development Record and to assess the proposal against the criteria specified in the Programme Approval Check-list (Annex 2) sections B, C, D, E and F. – Route B only

7.3 Role of the Internal Panel Member – Route B only

This will be a University of Bolton academic approved by the Acting Academic Registrar or nominee. The role of Internal Panel Member is as follows:

1. To access the programme documents in the Proposal Development Record and to assess the proposal against the criteria specified in the Programme Approval Check-list (Annex 2) sections F, G H.
2. To provide feedback to the Proposer and the Panel Chair in a supportive, collegiate and transparent manner.

8. Annexes

Annex 1 Programme Approval Check-List

Annex 2 Programme Design Tool Kit

2.1 Best Practice Guide to Curriculum Design

2.2 Programme Design Slides

2.2.1 Guidance for HE6 Programmes – PowerPoint Slides

2.2.2 Guidance for HE7 Programmes – PowerPoint Slides

2.2.3 Guidance for HE8 Programmes – PowerPoint Slides

2.3 Guidelines for Preparing a Programme Specification

2.4 Guidelines for Preparing a Module Specification

2.5 Key Information Sheets

2.5.1 Programme Specification: Key Information for HE6 programme

2.5.2 Programme Specification: Key information for HE7 programmes

2.5.3 Programme Specification: Key Information for HE8 programmes

2.5.4 Module Specification Table: Key Information Spreadsheet

2.6 Programme Guide Template with Appendices

- Example of a Programme Coherence Map

Example of an Assessment Journey Map (not required for block delivery)

- 2.7 Example of a Programme Learning Outcomes Map
- 2.8 Module Standard Delivery Hours
- 2.9 Guidance on HECoS codes
- 2.10 The Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS) | HESA

[Annex 3 Planning Meeting Agenda and Notes](#)

- 3.1 Planning Meeting Agenda and Notes

[Annex 4 Stakeholder Consultation forms](#)

- 4.1 Stakeholder Consultation Overview
- 4.2 Employer and Professional Advisor Consultation Report
- 4.3 Student and Applicant Consultation Report

[Annex 5 External Advisor Documentation](#)

- 5.1 Criteria for Approval of an External Advisor
- 5.2 Nomination form for the appointment of an External Advisor
- 5.3 External Advisor Consultation Report
- 5.4 Payment of fees for External Advisor

[Annex 6 Internal Advisor Documentation](#)

- 6.1 Internal Advisor Consultation Report

[Annex 7 SEO PDR Check Report](#)

- 7.1 Standards and Enhancement PDR Check Report

[Annex 8 Academic Recommendation Panel Documentation \(Route A\)](#)

- 8.1 Lines of Enquiry Template
- 8.2 ARP Recommendation and Programme Approval Form

[Annex 9 Programme Approval Panel Documentation \(Route B\)](#)

- 9.1 Lines of Enquiry template
- 9.2 PAP Schedule
- 9.3 PAP Recommendation and Programme Approval Form

PROGRAMME APPROVALS HANDBOOK	
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