

Programme Approval Policy



Summary			
- Policy for approval of new programmes, programme changes and programme suspensions/withdrawals			
Scope - This document applies to:			
UoB Staff			
For applicants entering in:	n/a	Applies to academic year:	n/a
Document Control			
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Division	Education Services		
Lead contact	Academic Quality Manager, Sophie Billings		
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Related documents	http://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/approve/approvalguidance/		
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Policy for Programme Approval

Further guidance on the Programme Approval Policy can be found on the [AQPO Website](#).

1. Principles

- 1.1. Through the Programme Approval Policy, the University:
 - maintains a strategic approach to programme design, development and approval;
 - ensures that decisions relating to new programmes and programme withdrawals are taken at the appropriate level;
 - ensures that processes are coherent and that they are applied consistently;
 - ensures that the academic interests of students are protected when a programme is closed.
- 1.2. There are two formal approval points for new programmes: business case approval and academic case approval.
- 1.3. A new programme must not accept applications from prospective students until the academic case for the programme has been approved by University Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) and agreed by University Education Committee (UEC).
- 1.4. Programme withdrawals and suspensions must be approved by AQSC and agreed by UEC before marketing and recruitment ceases.

2. Business Case Approval

- 2.1. All new programmes must develop a business case unless the faculty has agreed that the low-risk framework (ref. section 4) can be applied.
- 2.2. The University Programme Approval Board will only consider a business case that has been agreed by the Head of School and the relevant Faculty/Faculties and reviewed by the Gateway Review Group.
- 2.3. A new programme can be marketed as 'subject to academic approval' once the business case has been approved by the University Programme Approval Board unless the Board has stated otherwise.

3. Academic Case Validation

3.1. Development of the Academic Case

- 3.1.1. Every new programme must have an Academic Lead, who is responsible for developing the academic case. The academic case must include the following:
 - Approval information;
 - Programme specification;
 - Unit specifications for new units;
 - Intended Learning Outcome (ILO) mapping;
 - Student Consultation;
 - External Assessor reports (minimum of two);
 - Critical Friend report.
- 3.1.2. Two External Assessors must comment on the proposed new programme, one of whom may be a current external examiner.
- 3.1.3. The Critical Friend is an internal academic from a different faculty and is allocated by the Academic Quality and Policy Office (AQPO) upon approval of the business case.

3.2. Approval of the Academic Case

- 3.2.1. The academic case must be approved by:
 - i. relevant School Teaching and Learning Committee(s) (or equivalent);

- ii. relevant Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee(s) (or equivalent);
 - iii. University Academic Quality and Standards Committee;
 - iv. University Education Committee.
- 3.2.2. The Chair of a committee can approve proposals between meetings using Chair's Powers, if required.
- 3.2.3. Where the new programme is interdisciplinary, the Academic Lead in the leading school must ensure that all relevant schools and faculties have approved the academic case.
- 3.2.4. UEC will only consider new programmes for approval that have been approved by the relevant Faculty/Faculties, and the University Academic Quality and Standards Committee.
- 3.2.5. AQSC and UEC have the discretion to stipulate a review of the new programme after a specified length of time as a condition of approval of the programme. The review of a newly approved programme would normally be conducted after one year of operation or after the first cohort completes, and the review will form part of the school's annual review of programmes.
- 3.2.6. All new programmes that meet one or more of the following criteria will be required to undertake a review (see 3.2.5 above):
- The programme will be taught at a level that the school currently has no provision in;
 - The delivery method has not previously been in use in the school e.g., distance learning or new type of partnership arrangement;
 - The programme will be delivered in a wholly new subject area for the school;
 - The programme will be delivered as the first programme of a newly established school or centre;
 - The critical friend recommends a review to monitor the programme or aspects of the programme;
 - AQSC or UEC has recommended a review.
- 3.2.7. University Academic Quality and Standards Committee will receive an annual summary of newly approved programme review reports. The Committee will either approve the report or refer it back to the school for further work. If necessary, AQSC may recommend to UEC that a programme that is not operating satisfactorily should be closed.

4. Low-risk Approval framework for new programmes

- 4.1. Faculties have devolved responsibility for low-risk new programmes. Please see [AQPO website](#) for further guidance on new programmes that may be considered under the low-risk framework.
- 4.2. The Dean and Faculty Education Director (FED) must agree in advance that the proposal is low risk, and that a business case is not required.
- 4.3. The rationale for applying the low-risk framework must be confirmed on the low-risk rationale form and submitted to the Planning Office by the Faculty Manager.
- 4.4. The academic case is developed as described in 3.1. The FED has the discretion to ask the Academic Lead to additionally obtain a critical friend report, external references, and undertake student consultation.
- 4.5. The academic case is considered in the normal way through the committees at School and Faculty level (ref 3.2.1).
- 4.6. New programmes that are approved by the faculty committee will be reported to AQSC and UEC. Applications from prospective students must not be accepted until the new programme has been reported to UEC.

5. Approval framework for all other changes to programmes and new/revised units

- 5.1. Faculties have devolved responsibility for all other types of programme change, including new and revised units.
- 5.2. The Dean, FED or Faculty Teaching and Learning committee (or equivalent) can decide to seek approval from the Programme Approval Board and/or UEC if a programme or unit change is, after review, considered by them to be high risk.
- 5.3. New Open Units must be agreed by the University Teaching and Learning Committee (ULTC). Proposals for new open units must be developed in line with the current guidance and brought to the ULTC for consideration in February when the Open Units list for the next academic will be confirmed.

6. Programme suspensions

- 6.1. Where a school intends to suspend intake on a programme, the relevant form must be completed. Details of current student numbers, applications, and offer holders must be provided on the form.
- 6.2. The form must be signed by the Head of School, FED and Faculty Dean, and approved by UAQSC before UEC will consider approving the suspension of intake on the programme.
- 6.3. A suspension of intake will normally be granted for one year only. The faculty will need to decide if the programme is then to be reinstated; submit a form for withdrawal of the programme; or, exceptionally, to request suspension for one further year.

7. Programme Withdrawals

- 7.1. Where a school intends to withdraw a programme, the relevant form must be completed. Details of current student numbers, applications, and offer holders must be provided.
- 7.2. A detailed teaching-out plan, including how the remaining students' experience will be maintained, and the quality of the programme ensured during the teaching out phase, must be provided on the form.
- 7.3. The form must be signed by the Head of School, FED and Faculty Dean and approved by UAQSC before UEC will consider approving the closure of the programme.
- 7.4. All programmes that are teaching out are required to conduct an annual review as part of the school's annual review of programmes, which considers the student experience and how any specific issues encountered because of teaching out have been addressed. The annual review reports are submitted to AQPO.
- 7.5. The University Academic Quality and Standards Committee will receive an annual summary of all teaching-out annual programme review reports, which assures the university that the academic interests of students on withdrawn programmes are being protected.