

## Part 5

# Approval and Validation of Award-Bearing Courses (non-collaborative)

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 All proposals for new courses require Initial Approval by the relevant school and university committees.
- 1.2 School Quality Committees approve all non-collaborative courses. Part 11 of this manual outlines procedures for the approval of collaborative courses.
- 1.3 After school approval, all non-collaborative courses are validated via the peer review process.
- 1.4 Education & Experience Committee formally monitor the addition of courses to the university portfolio.

### 2 The Initial Approval Process

- 2.1 Before a new course is developed, Initial Approval must be obtained. The aim is to ensure that time is spent productively on developing proposals that are viable, accord with the UEL vision and strategic plans and are likely to succeed at validation.
- 2.2 Initial Approval should be obtained eighteen months before the first intake of students. Exceptions with tighter timescales may be approved if an appropriate rationale is received.
- 2.3 Final deadlines:

Phase	Stage / Intake Point	Sep-22	Jan-23	Sep-23	Jan-24
	Schools to complete Initial Approval Form for each course and submit to QAE	October 2020	April 2021	October 2021	April 2022
	Marketing to insert detailed market analysis with projected student numbers	December 2020	May 2021	December 2021	May 2022

Initial Approval	Finance to provide costing based on projected student numbers from Marketing	December 2020	June 2021	December 2022	June 2022
	Initial Approval Forms circulated to stakeholders for 2 weeks for consideration	January 2021	July 2021	January 2022	July 2022
	Initial Approval Forms considered at post-consultation review meeting	January 2021	August 2021	January 2022	August 2022
Validation	SLTQC Validation to take place by	February 2022	May 2022	February 2023	May 2023
	Quality Audit (Peer Review) completed by	March 2022	July 2022	March 2023	July 2023

2.4 Before initial approval forms are completed, Schools and Strategic Recruitment and Marketing will use market insights to develop a list of potential areas for growth.

2.5 Initial approval activities and responsibilities:

Activity	Responsibility	Action (communications via Teams site)	When (week of)
Market insight delivered to Schools	Marketing	Share detailed insight doc to Deans and Heads of School	19/10/20
New course list for September 2022 development	Schools	Work on a proposed list of course titles to share	19/10/20 - 9/11/20
Confirm proposed new course list for September 2022	Schools	Share proposed course list for Marketing to review	9/11/20
Discuss and confirm final new course list	Schools and Marketing	Teams meeting to discuss and confirm	9/11/20
Complete Initial Approval forms for approved courses	Schools	Submit Initial Approval forms to QAE by COP 27/11/20	9/11/20-23/11/20
Input into Initial Approval forms	Marketing	Add insight (from initial phase) and projected numbers	23/11/20-7/12/20
Input into Initial Approval forms	Finance	Add financial viability assessment based on Marketing numbers	23/11/20-7/12/20
Final Initial Approval forms processed	QAE	Collation of forms and identification and completion of any gaps	7/12/20-21/12/20
Stakeholder consultation	QAE	Circulate Initial Approval forms for 14-day consultation (phased)	14/12/20-18/1/21
Post-consultation review meeting	QAE	Meeting with key stakeholders - decision on Initial Approval	25/1/21
Confirmation of Initial Approvals granted	QAE	Email confirmation of courses initially approved	25/1/21
Set-up and promotion of courses	C&S / Admissions / Marketing	Add courses to internal systems and launch on website	1/2/21 onward

2.6 As part of the development process, the Course proposer should contact staff in the following services at the earliest opportunity in order to discuss the proposal:

<i>Financial Services</i>	Advice on the financial viability of the proposal and the level of tuition fee that should be set.
<i>Strategic Planning</i>	Advice on external funding.
<i>Student Recruitment and Marketing</i>	Advice on the marketing of the proposed Course.
<i>Quality Assurance and Enhancement</i>	Advice on the validation process and compatibility of courses with regulations. Advice on alignment of QAE and PSRB processes. Completion of due diligence and MoC processes for Collaborative Partnerships.
<i>International Student Recruitment</i>	Advice on demand from international students, English language and IELTS requirements.
<i>Information Technology Services</i>	Advice on IT requirements and to assess the extent to which IT services will be able support the proposed course.
<i>Library and Learning Services</i>	Advice on the ability of Library and Learning Services to support the proposed course, including availability of funding to purchase learning resources.
<i>Facilities Services</i>	The availability of standard and specialist accommodation to support the proposed course.
<i>Centre for Student Success</i>	Advice on structuring the course to enable students to succeed, during and after their studies.
<i>Graduate School</i>	For proposals for professional doctorate courses.

2.7 The course proposer is required to complete the approval form, in collaboration with the services listed above, to confirm:

- A case for how the proposed course aligns with School and Institutional strategy. With additional student related information regarding Course set up.
- Detailed staffing strategy, high level facilities/ space/ technology/ IT requirements.
- Confirmation of any funding sources.
- Timeline for approval.
- Module level detail relating to the proposed course
- Initial market analysis completed by the proposer
- Detailed market analysis, viability of the proposed course, the target market and main competitors completed by Student Recruitment and Marketing.

- Text suitable for advertising the course.
- Detailed financials covering income and expenditure for the first 3 years. Including commentary from Financial Services and relevant finance codes.

### 3 Course Validation

- 3.1 No proposal may proceed to validation unless it has been granted Initial Approval.
- 3.2 Once approved, the proposal is added to the validation schedule and progress in terms of validation is monitored by the School Quality Committee. The QAE Officer associated with the School will be available to provide advice and guidance and assist in the development of the proposal.
- 3.3 Once a proposal has received Initial Approval, the Course Proposer establishes a development team to assist with the development of the course.
- 3.4 Where a course has, or requires, recognition by a professional, regulatory or statutory body (PSRB), the body should be informed at the earliest opportunity. Depending on the approval requirements of the PSRB, a representative of that body can be involved in the approval process. QAE can advise on possible arrangements.

#### 3.5 Naming of Courses Involving Multiple Subjects

- 3.5.1 Where a single honours degree combines two subjects within its course title, the title should contain either the words 'and' or 'with':
- 3.5.1.1 **And** - should be used where there is equal weighting at all levels between the two subjects, so that there are 60 credits per subject area per level.
- 3.5.1.2 If some modules contain aspects of both subjects, there must be clear indications that there is an equal amount of content from both subject areas.
- 3.5.1.3 **With** - should be used where there are a greater number of credits in one subject compared to the other, typically 90/30. The subject with the greatest credit weighting must appear first in the degree name.
- 3.5.2 Where the course contains a dissertation, it would be assumed that the topic of this would reflect both subjects taught where the degree is 'and', with a greater bias on one rather than the other for 'with'.

#### 3.6 External Advice

- 3.7 Prior to the School Quality Committee meeting convened to consider the course for approval, the Course Proposer nominates appropriate external subject

advisers to participate in the approval process. Two external advisers are required, but this number can be increased, if appropriate, at the discretion of the Chair of the School Quality Committee. Where a substantive amount of distance or blended learning is included, at least one of the external advisers should have experience of distance learning provision.

- 3.8 The suitability of the external advisers will be determined by the Chair of the School Quality Committee subject to the following criteria:
- 3.8.1 The depth of subject knowledge.
  - 3.8.2 The relevance of subject knowledge.
  - 3.8.3 Prior experience of teaching on courses at the same level or above; and experience of distance or blended learning provision where appropriate.
  - 3.8.4 Impartiality (the nominee should not have any formal links with UEL during the last five years as a former member of staff or the last three years as an external examiner).
  - 3.8.5 Professional expertise (for vocational courses, at least one of the advisers should be a 'practitioner' drawn from a relevant business or professional background).
- 3.9 It is unlikely that any single nominee will meet all the above requirements. In making judgments about the suitability of the proposed external subject advisers, the Chair will need to consider the overall balance of expertise presented by the external advisers. The Chair may reject a nominee or require the Course Proposer to nominate additional external subject advisers in order to ensure a balance of expert advice.
- 3.10 The external adviser should receive a copy of all documentation detailed below and be asked to comment on the extent to which the documentation meets the UEL Quality Criteria.
- 3.11 Normally, comments from external advisers will be sought by correspondence and presented to a full meeting of the School Quality Committee. There is no requirement that external advisers attend a committee meeting but, at the discretion of the School Quality Committee, external advisers may be invited to attend a meeting (remotely or in person) in order to contribute to the discussion. Where an external adviser has not attended the meeting, the Course Proposer will formally notify the external adviser of the outcome of the process.
- 3.12 **Documentation**
- 3.13 The Course Proposer is responsible for ensuring that documentation is provided for the School Quality Committee's attention in advance of the meeting. It is required that documentation is circulated a minimum of 5 days in advance of the meeting. The following documentation is required for the approval of a new course.

### 3.13.1 A validation document to include:

- The context of the proposed course: This will include how the proposal meets the objectives of UEL's Strategic Plan and the School plan; the academic profile of the School and an assessment of the impact of the proposal on that profile; and any relationship of the proposal to courses run by other Schools within UEL.
- The rationale for the proposal, to include: evidence of the regional and national demand for the proposal; details of consultation with relevant employers and relevant professional bodies; the relationship of the proposal to similar provision offered elsewhere; if the course replaces one currently offered by the School, an explanation of why this is and details of consultation with students on the existing course; the target student group/expected student profile; and expected career destinations for graduates/diplomates.
- The professional context of the proposal (if relevant): This will include the influence of professional body requirements on the design of the course. (If necessary, the relevant guidelines of the professional body/bodies should be provided as an appendix).
- Course and Cluster structure diagram.
- Arrangements for the supervision and assessment of any placement element.
- School based academic and other counselling/student support arrangements.
- A statement detailing the course team's evaluation of their proposal with regard to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s) (where applicable), the QAA Quality Code, and any professional accreditation requirements (i.e. how have they been used in the development of the Course).
- A curriculum vitae for each member of staff associated with teaching on the course.
- Resources: This should include a statement making it clear what physical resources are available to support the course (e.g. library, computer hardware and software, specialist accommodation, other specialist equipment), and how distance learning students will access the resources.
- In the case of a course reapproval, confirmation of student consultation to the proposed changes and evidence of such consultation along with transitional arrangements.

### 3.13.2 Course Specification, using the standard UEL template

### 3.13.3 Module Specifications, using the standard UEL template

- 3.13.4 For distance learning proposals and proposals that involve a blend of both distance/online and on-campus learning, the proposal must also include a learning strategy, using the standard UEL template.
- 3.13.5 Templates are available at:  
<https://uelac.sharepoint.com/sites/QualityAssuranceandEnhancement/SitePages/Forms-and-Guidance.aspx>.
- 3.13.6 For approval of courses to be delivered as Higher and Degree Apprenticeships additional documentation and approval requirements are outlined in this manual Part 15. It is recommended that course proposers are familiar with the whole chapter before proposing an apprenticeship course.
- 3.13.7 Where a course incorporates modules 'owned' by another School, the course leader will obtain written agreement from the School relating to the use of the modules, and this should be presented to the approval meeting. This will facilitate subsequent notifications of changes made to these modules.
- 3.14 In addition to the documentation provided by the course proposer, the School Quality Committee will be provided with a copy of the following information to assist with their deliberations:
- The UEL Quality Criteria.
  - The relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s).
  - An extract from Part 1 of the Manual of General Regulations, providing the full description of the award to which the proposed course will lead.
  - The external advisers' written comments, and the course team's response.
  - A copy of the relevant professional body(s) requirements, where appropriate.
  - A copy of the Initial Approval form.
  - Any other information relevant to the proposal.
- 3.15 **Course Approval**
- 3.16 All proposals for new courses will be considered by a full meeting of the School Quality Committee (held in person or remotely). Proposals cannot be considered by correspondence. Schools are encouraged to set schedules for approval business and monitor these through their School Quality Committee. Where deadlines shown above cannot be met, validation can only proceed with the agreement of the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement.
- 3.17 Where a professional, statutory or regulatory body requires it, a joint validation/accreditation event may be held, either by participation of the body in

the UEL process as part of the School Quality Committee, or by a separate bespoke event that satisfies both UEL and the accrediting body needs.

- 3.18 In order for new courses to be approved, the Quality Assurance Officer and a member of staff from another School (normally a School Quality Leader, but may be a Deputy Quality Leader, Dean of School, or Director of Education and Experience), must be present at the meeting, as specified in the standard terms of reference and constitution of the School Quality Committee. For the approval of professional doctorate courses, a representative of the Graduate School will also be invited to attend.
- 3.19 The School Quality Committee will evaluate the proposal against the Quality Criteria and other external reference points, as appropriate, as set out in section 3.13 above.
- 3.20 In the case of distance and blended learning provision, the approval event will consider additionally the strategy for distance, blended or online delivery which will include the following: methods of; delivery; induction; support; implementation of the curriculum; assessment strategy; and a plan for the ongoing development of staff.
- 3.21 For approval of courses to be delivered as Higher or Degree Apprenticeships there are additional approval requirements, outlined in Chapter 15 of this manual.
- 3.22 A School Quality Committee may not consider a course for approval unless the comments of all external advisers are available to the meeting.
- 3.23 The School Quality Committee can either: (a) approve the proposal and forward it to Quality Assurance and Enhancement for formal validation after peer review or; (b) reject the proposal and require that it be revised and re-submitted for further consideration at a future meeting. The School Quality Committee may not impose conditions of approval.
- 3.24 The School Quality Committee can ask for minor amendments to the documentation as a result of discussions at the approval meeting, to be completed before the documents are circulated for peer review. As a guide, these should take no longer than two weeks to resolve (deadline to be set at the event) and might include things like wording of learning outcomes, or clarification of student facing documentation. This would not include things like the submission of missing documentation, which would require the proposal to be resubmitted to a future meeting.
- 3.25 The minutes of the School Quality Committee will record details of the discussion about the proposal and the outcome agreed by the Committee. They will also indicate clearly the action taken in respect of recommendations of external advisers. The minutes will be forwarded to Quality Assurance and Enhancement to be included in the documentation circulated for peer review.



- 3.26 Once a course has been approved by the School Quality Committee, it can be delivered, subject to formal validation by peer review. The Servicing Officer for peer review will write to each School, following successful confirmation to notify them of formal course validation.
- 3.27 All courses are validated indefinitely; the Academic Review process provides assurances that the course remains current. A shorter period may be determined by the School Quality Committee and/or a professional body(s) if necessary.
- 3.28 **Peer Review**
- 3.29 Peer reviewers will formally validate all courses, on behalf of the Education and Experience Committee and Academic Board.
- 3.30 A subset of documentation will be circulated by QAE to a peer reviewer to judge whether due process has been followed and all relevant actions have been completed.
- 3.31 Peer reviewers complete a standard review form.
- 3.32 Peer reviewers will not 'second guess' the academic judgement of the School Quality Committee nor of the external advisers.
- 3.33 To facilitate their role, peer reviewers will receive: copies of the minutes of the meeting of the School Quality Committee; a copy of the Course specification; the external advisers' comments and School response.
- 3.34 Where peer reviewers have concerns about the completion of the process by the School Quality Committee, they will make those known to the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement via the review form. The Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement may seek further information or refer the proposal back to the School Quality Committee for further consideration.
- 3.35 The Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement will report the status of courses currently being validated (and withdrawn) to Education and Experience Committee, noting when validation is complete and any issues of institutional significance that have emerged from validation activity.

<b><u>Stage</u></b>	<b><u>Notes</u></b>	<b><u>Window / Deadline</u></b>
Prep Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm courses</li> <li>• Identify authors and key stakeholders</li> <li>• Agree timelines</li> <li>• Share templates</li> <li>• Discuss document control</li> <li>• Discuss External Advisor process</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> June to 19 <sup>th</sup> June (ideally by 12 <sup>th</sup> June)
Submit first draft of course and module specifications and cluster map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial review of specs will commence from QAE Officer and Quality Lead upon receipt so that checks can be made, and feedback given prior to submission of first draft of validation document</li> </ul>	22 <sup>nd</sup> June
CELT input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss approach and shape of learning and teaching experience</li> <li>• Discuss learning outcomes and how these can be approached</li> </ul>	Ideally before first draft of validation documents are submitted on 31 <sup>st</sup> July (but can happen anytime up until documents are sent out to External Advisors and SLTQC members for review on 5 <sup>th</sup> October)
Student & Employer feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain feedback that can be used to shape the course(s) being proposed</li> </ul>	Ideally before first draft of validation documents are submitted on 31 <sup>st</sup> July (but can happen anytime up until documents are sent out to External Advisors and SLTQC members for review on 5 <sup>th</sup> October)
Submit first draft of validation document		31 <sup>st</sup> July
Key QA reviewers to review first draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likely to include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Quality Lead</li> <li>○ Quality Officer</li> <li>○ Head of Department</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	3 <sup>rd</sup> August – 7 <sup>th</sup> August
Planning meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To discuss issues picked up in first draft of validation documents, share good practice</li> </ul>	10 <sup>th</sup> August – 4 <sup>th</sup> September
Work on final draft		7 <sup>th</sup> September – 18 <sup>th</sup> September
External Advisors approved by SLTQC		18 <sup>th</sup> September

and Right to Work Check carried out		
Submit Final draft		21 <sup>st</sup> September
Quality Lead and Quality Officers to review final draft		21 <sup>st</sup> September – 2 <sup>nd</sup> October
Circulating of documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>QAE officers to collate and send packs for External Advisors and SLTQC members</li> </ul>	5 <sup>th</sup> October – 9 <sup>th</sup> October
Internal review (SLTQC) and External Review (External Advisors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Checking that validation documentation meets quality criteria and completing pro-formas</li> </ul>	12 <sup>th</sup> October – 30 <sup>th</sup> October
Clusters to respond to pro-formas and carry out amendments/actions		2 <sup>nd</sup> November – 20 <sup>th</sup> November
Close the loop		23 <sup>rd</sup> November – 8 <sup>th</sup> January
SLTQC meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Validate course(s)</li> </ul>	11 <sup>th</sup> January – 29 <sup>th</sup> January
2 <sup>nd</sup> SLTC meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For any course(s) not validated at 1<sup>st</sup> SLTQC meeting</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> February – 26 <sup>th</sup> February

Fig 2 - Example timeline for Validation of Courses in time for a September 2021 intake

**Manuals, Forms and Guidance notes relevant to Part 5**

<https://uelac.sharepoint.com/sites/QualityAssuranceandEnhancement/SitePages/Forms-and-Guidance.aspx>

- Initial Approval Form
- Module Specification Template
- Course Specification Template
- Professional Doctorate Courses Specifications Template
- School Validation Document
- Validation Annex - Strategy for Distance Blended and Online Learning
- Nomination of an External Adviser for a validation/review event
- Approval pro-forma, for external advisers to complete
- External Advisor's Claim Form
- Standard Template for Staff CVs