

Procedure for the approval of programmes, modules, and other credit bearing provision

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V1	17 May 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. (Minute 1380.2)
V2	3 rd 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 . (1511.1)
V3	8 th July 2024	Martine Woodward Lois Price	<p>Re-naming of the procedure to include the approval of programmes, modules, and other credit bearing provision.</p> <p>Removal of Stage 1 Strategic Approval at College and RASG. Replace with the University Integrated Planning Process managed by Strategic Planning.</p> <p>Addition of section on institutional programme development support to ensure that proposals recommended through the strategic approval process are progressed as scheduled; are given appropriate support for curriculum development; are ready to be operationalised and marketed once approved.</p> <p>Update of the section on changes to existing programme to include changes over the threshold as outlined in the confirming programme information process approved annually by ASQC (Minute 1361.7)</p> <p>Inclusion of the procedure for approving modules and other credit bearing provision.</p>

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Procedure for the approval of programmes, modules, and other credit bearing provision

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Institutional oversight

From 1 August 2024, this document outlines the University's procedure for the approval of programmes, modules, and other credit bearing activity.

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

Developing taught programmes with external partners 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.

Any proposals of this nature will need to consider all elements outlined in the Education Partnerships Policy and procedure with support and guidance available via EducationPartnerships@cardiff.ac.uk.

Exclusions

Non-credit-bearing activity

The University offers a variety of non-credit-bearing opportunities that do not lead to a Cardiff University award. It is expected that the monitoring and review of all non-credit-bearing provision will follow the principles set out in this Policy. Some non-credit-bearing programmes are accredited by external professional bodies and as such may also be subject to their policies and practices regarding quality assurance.

Part One: Approving programmes leading to a Cardiff University Award.

This section is designed to support you in understanding the process for approving programmes leading to a Cardiff University Award.

Strategic approval

Whether you're undertaking revalidation or proposing the development of a new programme, all initial proposals will be considered through the University's [Integrated Planning Process](#) (IPP).

Through this institutional level process, a holistic review and recalibration of each school's education provision (UG, PGT and PGR) will be discussed to ensure both the education and recruitment strategic priorities of the Institution can be considered together.

Once the outcomes of any IPP discussions are known, the timescales and priorities for the development of specific programmes/groups of programmes/disciplines must be agreed before moving forward with your programme development.

Institutional programme development support

Arrangements will be made to ensure that programme proposals which have been recommended through the IPP process are progressed as scheduled; are given appropriate support for curriculum development; are ready to be operationalised and marketed once approved; will recruit students for the intended entry point; and will be able to demonstrate alignment with [Institutional Expectations](#) when submitted to the Programme Approval and Revalidation Sub-Committee. The arrangements will be co-ordinated by teams from Education Governance and Strategic Planning.

It is expected that all schools will commit to the agreed timescales to ensure both the education and recruitment strategic priorities of the Institution can be met.

Updates on programme proposals will be provided to the Chair of ASQC, College PVCs; and College Education Deans.

Documentation

All documentation has been aligned with the Institutional Expectations to provide schools and the Programme Approval and Revalidation Sub-Committee (PARSC) with a straightforward way of reviewing and evaluating programme(s) against the baseline requirements. The same documentation will be required for programme approval and revalidation including:

- School overview
- Programme Information Template (one for each programme variant)
- Module descriptions
- Learning outcomes mapping (one for each programme variant)
- Assessment mapping (one for each programme variant)
- Programme delivery and assessment line plan (one for each programme variant)
- Graduate attributes mapping
- Assessment/marking criteria for all types of assessment (essay, presentation, group work etc).

All documentation provided by the school will be used by the Sub-Committee to evaluate your proposal and aid decision making. Any areas for further consideration/development will be presented in terms of meeting the requirements of the Institutional Expectations.

Submitting your proposal for consideration at PARSC.

At the start of the programme development process, your College Quality Officer will not be able to confirm an exact date when your proposal will be submitted to PARSC as this will depend on the following:

- the timescales and priorities agreed as part of the Integrated Planning Process.
- successful submission of documentation to the College Education Dean and Chair of the Programme Approval and Revalidation Sub-Committee for a mid-point review to assess progress, ensure that suitable support is being provided, identify any issues.
- confirm an appropriate and realistic timescale for submission to the sub-committee based on the mid-point review feedback and analysis.
- Submission of finalised documentation 4 weeks before the agreed sub-committee meeting for review by the College Quality Officer and submissions to PARSC members.

Discussing your proposal at PARSC

Members of the sub-committee will review and discuss all documentation provided by the school as a means of 'evaluating' how your proposal meets (or exceeds) the institutional expectations.

It is important that there is appropriate representation of both academic and professional service staff from the school (including the lead academic and professional service members of staff) to allow you the opportunity to 'bring to life' the vision for your programme (s) going forward.

Members of the sub-committee may invite you to answer questions on a range of areas to ensure they have a full understanding of your proposal and the outcomes you expect to gain. This should be seen as a supportive process that acknowledges, understands and appreciates the work involved from schools in submitting the proposal whilst ensuring that the programme meets all requirements of the Institutional Expectations, regulations, policies, and procedures.

Outcomes of PARSC

After your proposal has been considered by PARSC, one of the following outcomes will be recommended:

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

Proposal is sent to the Chair of ASQC recommending immediate approval (via executive action by the College Quality Officer).

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](#).

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 PARSC.*

Where the proposal has been referred back to the school, **resubmission of the updated documentation will be presented to PARSC 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 meeting. This will be confirmed by your College Quality Officer when you are notified of the outcome.

ASQC approval

For proposals recommended for approval, or once the Chair of PARSC has confirmed that all conditions have been met, a recommendation will be submitted to the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education & Student Experience for approval on behalf of ASQC. This will be done via executive action by the College Quality Officer.

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.

Part Two: Making routine changes to existing programmes

Confirming Programme Information

A standardised process and date for Schools to confirm all programme information is agreed by ASQC each year. This process is designed in line with the University's responsibilities under consumer protection law to minimise the number of late changes.

Any programme information provided to students and applicants (Coursefinder, Open Days, handbooks etc) is considered 'material information' that is likely to be used to make informed choices (whether to apply, which modules to study, how they will be assessed) and forms part of the University's contract with its students.

[The Board of Studies](#) has a key role in reviewing and confirming all programme information as part of its regular cycle of business. This allows for a timely and proactive approach to discussions around portfolio changes whilst taking into consideration any advice and guidance provided by the wider School, College, and University level committees/groups.

Approving routine changes via your Board of Studies

Your Board of Studies can only make changes within set parameters outlined in the [thresholds of change](#). The Board cannot approve any changes to core/required modules that directly impact the PLO's (except changes to assessment). These changes are considered fundamental to the structure and integrity of the programme and Award title therefore, you'll need to discuss these changes with your College Education Dean.

Changes should only be with the purpose of making modifications to the programme and not a different programme. If wider changes are needed e.g., making major structural changes to degree programmes, programme descriptions or programme learning outcomes, the Board of Studies cannot consider or approve the proposal.

Any changes that involve external education partnerships must be reviewed in line with the requirements outlined in the Education Partnership Policy to ensure they comply with both regulatory and contractual requirements.

Changes over the threshold.

There may be instances where the changes you want to make go over the threshold of change in response to external requirements or school action plans. Where possible,

we will try and support these changes to avoid schools going through the full programme approval process outlined in [Part One](#).

In these circumstances, you will need to discuss the rationale with your College Education Dean who will evaluate the proposal and the impact it may have on current students/applicants however, there will be some changes that cannot be facilitated through this process as they may have wider reaching impact.

Adding a Year of Study Abroad to an existing programme

You can only add an additional 120 credits of 'with a Year of Study Abroad' to an existing programme (Single or Joint Honours degrees) through this procedure if you have existing, up to date, programme information (approved within 3 years) and Strategic Approval has been received via the IPP process. Programmes that do not have this will need to go through the procedure outlined in [Part One](#).

Board of Studies Review

- School to complete a pre-populated Programme Information Template (PIT), using the information contained in the standard, up to date, programme variant.
- Update relevant sections to reflect the proposed inclusion of the Year of Study Abroad e.g., including at least one additional Programme Learning Outcome to reflect the Year of Study Abroad.
- Add the centrally developed module to the programme diet (Each school will have their own module code, but the content cannot be changed)
- School to consider the information at the appropriate Board of Studies and recommend to the College Education Dean for approval.
- Board of Studies to confirm how they will operate and manage the study abroad programme in line with the [Education Partnerships Procedure](#).

College Education Dean Approval

- School submits updated documentation to their relevant College Education Dean for final consideration and approval.
- The College Dean will liaise with the Quality and Academic Standards Team to review the Programme Information Template.
- The College Education Dean to confirm their decision on approving the 'with Year of Study Abroad' programme variant with the school (copying in Academic Quality).

Programme Set Up

- Schools submit their programme information template (in both English and Welsh) to Academic Quality by the [confirming programme information deadline](#)
- The documentation will be shared with the Programme Information and Statutory Returns Team to set up the programme on SIMS.
- A new programme code will be set up to create a 4 -year version of the Study Abroad programme.

Requesting a change to a programme title

There are considerable, and necessary, resource implications for making a change to a programme title, and it should be only undertaken if there is confidence in significant improvement in student recruitment and return of investment. When proposing a programme title change, you will need to submit your request to the appropriate College Education Dean, providing a rationale and including a summary of student number planning – historic and projected intakes.

Your College will review the information and supporting evidence and will recommend/not recommend it for Strategic Approval via the IPP process based on:

- the timing of the request
- existing programme is up to date i.e., has been approved with the last 3 years.
- the potential +/- impact on student recruitment
- reputational and financial consideration of visa implications for students who may have already applied and accepted their offer
- the availability of school and central resources to support programme name change e.g., as a programme title is part of the programme's 'primary key', a change to the programme title requires a new programme structure to be built in SIMS. The existing programme structure and title must always be retained in SIMS for any students who remain on the programme and for historical Student Records.

If approved, a specific communication and marketing plan must be developed to alert applicants to name change with a named contact to answer questions or complaints. If not approved, the programme will need to undertake the full programme approval process outlined in [Part One](#).

Quality assurance

Once strategic approval is given, you will need to provide the following information for review:

- Brief overview of the changes made.
- Updated Programme Information Template (English and Welsh) with the name change clearly marked
- Module descriptions
- Learning Outcomes mapping

The College Quality Officer will review the documentation and depending on the nature and volume of changes presented, they will determine whether the proposal needs to go to a full meeting of PARSC, or can be reviewed by Chair's action, only.

Proposals will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis only.

Part Three: Modules and other credit bearing provision.

All Programmes or parts of programmes (modules) offered by the school, must come under the oversight of a [Board of Studies](#). They will report to the School Education and Student Experience Committee on review, monitoring, and the delivery of programmes.

When creating a new module as part of a programme or to deliver on a stand-alone basis, it is the responsibility of the Board of Studies to ensure the module is reviewed in line with the Board of Studies guidance specifically the section '[What should the Board of Studies be looking at when reviewing module information?](#)'

When reviewing the module description, the Board must ensure it meets the baseline requirements outlined in the [institutional expectations](#) as these are the key principles that all Cardiff programmes are based upon.

Non-degree 'programmes'

All students studying for credit must be enrolled on a [programme code](#) even if they are only studying one module. [Students cannot be enrolled onto individual modules directly](#) and must be attached to an appropriate [non-degree programme code](#) that correctly reflects the mode of attendance and duration. Non-degree' programme codes are different to your standard undergraduate and postgraduate programme codes as they do not lead to a Cardiff University Award. Students will receive a transcript of credit on successfully passing the assessment.

Applying to study credit bearing modules

Anyone who applies to study or visit the University through the SIMS application process must adhere to the appropriate [admissions policies](#) including (but not limited to):

- [English language requirements](#)
- [Visa and immigration requirements](#)
- [Academic Technology Approval Scheme](#) (ATAS)
- [Online enrolment](#) and agreement with the University's [data protection statement](#).

Requesting a non-degree programme code

There are already a series of non-degree programme codes set up in each school. It is important that you check if existing codes are suitable to use before requesting to set up new ones. Your College Programme Information Manager will be able to support you with this process.

New non-degree programme codes should only be requested [in exceptional circumstances](#) to avoid unnecessary delays. Where non-degree programme codes need to be created outside of the [confirming programme information cycle](#) e.g., in

response to standalone module contract tenders or industrial partners, evidence of strategic approval must be provided by your College Registrar to support the request being made outside the current cycle of business.

Categories of 'non-degree' provision.

Visiting and occasional studies

- Individuals can be [UG, PGT, or PGR related](#).
- They will not receive teaching, study modules, or submit assessments.
- Individuals must be registered on a [non-degree programme code](#) in SIMS to enable them access to buildings, equipment or laboratories for the purposes of shadowing staff etc.
- Individuals should not be registered as visiting or occasional studies if they are students registered at another provider e.g., exchange, or AHRC SWW.
- The maximum duration of registration for visiting or occasional studies is usually one year in length depending on the nature of the activity.
- The individuals record in SIMS will be automatically closed after the end date +2 weeks.

Standalone modules and short term externally funded tenders

- Students do not receive a Cardiff University Award.
- Credits successfully achieved may be utilised to gain entry to programmes (at Cardiff or at another institution) via the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.
- Students may pay their own tuition fees directly, or they may be funded by employers, or a strategic workforce body e.g., Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW).
- Students must be registered on a [non-degree programme code](#) in SIMS that clearly show all available modules, when they are available and the mode of attendance.
- Modules must be a minimum of 1 credit.
- Collections of modules should be managed using [content collections](#) (buckets) to support students with module selection e.g., a specific Medicine HEIW umbrella non-degree programme code could contain multiple content collections to allow ease of choice within a specific topic.
- Students must enrol annually if courses exceed a year.

Setting up your non-degree programme for multiple start dates

Students may enrol onto modules at multiple points in the academic year permitting them to study on several modules attached to the same non-degree programme code for varying lengths of time.

Bespoke dates will need to be created for each student to enable them to enrol onto different modules for different lengths of time or for different entry points. Your College Programme Information Manager can provide support, advice, and guidance if you require multiple start dates.

Cross-University Standalone Modules

Developing cross-University standalone modules at level 7 can be achieved by adding all modules to the home school diet within the specific non-degree programme code in the same way that [exchange collections](#) are shared.

Schools are required to annually review their cross-University stand-alone modules in line with the [confirming programme information process](#), confirming which modules will be available for the forthcoming academic year.

Incoming study abroad and international exchange students

Schools are expected to ensure that information about the modules available is correct and up to date, with an appropriate range of modules being offered to incoming students. In line with the [confirming programme information process](#), Schools are required to annually review their incoming study abroad non-degree programme and module information and confirm which modules will be available for the forthcoming academic year.

- Incoming students must be registered at a partner provider.
- Students do not receive a Cardiff University Award.
- Students must attend face to face teaching at Cardiff.
- Students will take a range of credit bearing modules in line with the requirements of their home institution.
- Credits successfully achieved will be recorded on their transcript of credit and sent to their home institution after the examining board.
- Where incoming students are studying non-modular programmes e.g., in the School of Medicine, separate non-degree programme codes are required for modular and non-modular provision.
- Modules must be a minimum of 1 credit.
- Collections of modules should be managed using content collections (buckets) to support students with module selection e.g., an ENCAP exchange non-degree umbrella programme code could contain multiple content collections to allow ease of choice within a specific topic or discipline if modules are offered outside of one school.
- Costs must be assigned to modules to ensure student invoices can be generated at a modular level, rather than using pro-rata fees

Postgraduate taught credit accumulation

Credit accumulation at FHEQ Level 7 provides the opportunity for students to study modules that have standalone value as well as contributing to a larger package of learning. Students can accrue modules in a way that allows them to be fitted together, building, or stacking credit as they work towards their intended outcomes whether that be the completion of a single module or eventually an [award of the University](#).

Setting up your non-degree programme code for PGT credit accumulation follows the same procedure set out for [stand alone modules](#).

- Students do not receive a Cardiff University Award.
- Credits successfully achieved may be utilised to gain entry to a specific Flexible Learning Award programmes at Cardiff via the [Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](#).
- Students may pay their own tuition fees directly, or they may be funded by employers, or a strategic workforce body e.g., Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW).
- Students must be registered on a specific credit accumulation [non-degree programme code](#) in SIMS that clearly show all available modules, when they are available and the mode of attendance.
- Modules must be a minimum of 1 credit.
- Collections of modules should be managed using [content collections](#) (buckets) to support students with module selection e.g., a HCARE HEIW umbrella credit accumulation non-degree programme code could contain multiple content collections to allow ease of choice within a specific topic.
- Students must enrol annually if the non-degree programme exceeds a year.
- Students repeat on a 'loop' and can pick up between 0-60 credits each year.
- Costs must be assigned to modules to ensure student invoices can be generated at a modular level, rather than using pro-rata fees.
- Students may receive a generic Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education or Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education via a credit accumulation non-degree programme code if they have accumulated the correct amount of credit when they leave.

Achieving a Cardiff University Award via credit accumulation.

When developing any programme that supports credit accumulation, it will need full approval as outlined in [Part One](#). Schools must note that the maximum programme duration for achieving a Cardiff University Award via credit accumulation is 7 years from the start of the first module as outlined in the Academic Regulations.

After completing a series of modules, students may have the opportunity to use their 'stackable' credit to [internally transfer](#) an approved programme where they can gain a

Cardiff University Award. There are three approved Cardiff University Awards designed to support students studying via credit accumulation.

Using an existing programme title

The programme must have the same structure, programme level learning outcomes, and content to protect the integrity of the existing Award and Programme title.

- **MSc** [existing named programme title] = 120 taught credit plus 60 credit dissertation/project at Level 7
- **Postgraduate Diploma** [existing named programme title] = 120 taught credits at Level 7
- **Postgraduate Certificate** [existing named programme title] = 60 taught credits at Level 7

Generic programme title with formal professional development recognition

These will be a pre-defined collection of themed modules attached to a non-degree programme code that have CPD recognition by a PSRB but do not map to an existing named programme title. Collections of modules should be managed using content collections (buckets) to support students with module selection to ensure they meet any discipline specific professional development requirements.

The student transcript will show the themes chosen by the modules selected.

- **MSc** [xxxxxx] *Professional Development*: 120 taught credits plus 60 credit dissertation/project at Level 7
- **Postgraduate Diploma** [xxxxxx] *Professional Development*: 120 taught credits at Level 7
- **Postgraduate Certificate** [xxxxxx] *Professional Development*: 60 taught credits at Level 7

Generic programme consisting of a collection of modules from across the University. * ¹

After completing a series of modules, learners may choose to use their 'stackable' credit to support a generic award*. Depending on the modules selected, the naming convention of a generic programme may be based on the broad subject discipline studied by each learner e.g., a postgraduate certificate in social sciences/healthcare sciences etc.

¹ It is anticipated that this will only be used for a small number of learners. Operation of a generic programme across many disciplines will be complicated to navigate for the learner and could provide a variable learner experience.

Care will need to be taken with any protected Award titles that confers professional registration.

- **MSc** [broad subject discipline]: 120 taught credits plus 60 credit dissertation/project at Level 7
- **Postgraduate Diploma** [broad subject discipline]:120 taught credits at Level 7
- **Postgraduate Certificate** [broad subject discipline]: 60 taught credits at Level 7

English Language Provision Programmes

Run by the ELP team- these programmes are non-modular, and usually run for weeks not years to facilitate international students' English language skills before study. Once a registered student's programme end date +2 weeks has passed, the student record will be automatically closed.

Doctoral Training Partnerships.

A Doctoral Training Partnership is a consortium of partner institutions offering research opportunities to staff and students.

- Students do not receive an award or credit.
- All students will need a signed co-supervision agreement in place before enrolling.
- The student must be registered at the alternative provider
- The non-degree programme duration can be 3-7 years long.
- Students are still expected to enrol annually.
- These programmes are non-HESA returnable, and non- modular therefore if students require access to teaching materials schools will need to enrol them on Learning Central manually.
- No approval for these non-degree programmes is necessary.
- Once a registered student's programme end date +2 weeks has passed, the student record will be automatically closed.

Awarding credit

To award credit, you must have an Examining board. When setting up your non-degree programme you must consider the following:

- Where schools are utilising the same module code within the non-degree programme and an award bearing programme, you must consider all modules at the same examining board.
- Resit rules must be in place for each non-degree programme.
- All students (non-degree and award) must take the re-sit within the University agreed re-sit period.

- If schools set up independent module codes, the schedule of examining boards must be clearly outlined at the start of the academic year indicating when resits will be available to students (line plan).
- Exam boards must be held in line with approved exam board schedule to ensure a student record can be closed at the appropriate time.
- Students must enrol annually if courses exceed a year.

Further advice and guidance on all non-degree credit provision is available through your Programme Information Officer.