Quality Assurance Code of Practice

Approval of New Programmes of Study

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1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 This QA statement setting out the principles and process for approval of a new programme of study applies to:
- all taught programmes of study leading to an award of the University of Bath;
- research degrees with a taught element (for example professional doctorates);
- new exit awards and variants to an existing academic programme (for example, the addition to an existing programme of a new placement or study year abroad).

Where a proposed new programme of study is to be delivered by or with a new or existing collaborative partner, then this QA statement must be read in conjunction with QA20 Collaborative Provision which sets out the additional steps to be followed for the approval of collaborative partners and taught programmes.

1.2 This QA statement may also need to be read in conjunction with:
- University Ordinances and Regulations;
- the New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations (NFAAR) see http://www.bath.ac.uk/registry/nfa/index.html;
- QA44 Programme Handbooks and Programme Specifications;
- QA4 Amendments to Programmes and Units and Approval of New Units.

2. Principles and Overview

2.1 The University needs to ensure that any new programme is consistent with the University's Strategy, is financially viable and is academically appropriate and sound. The University also needs to ensure that it has the necessary capacity to deliver a high quality student learning experience.

2.2 The programme approval process is intended to provide a high level of rigorous scrutiny to new programme proposals while not creating a barrier to innovation and the introduction of new programmes. It involves two main stages:
(i) strategic consideration of a proposal for academic fit and financial viability including evidence of a viable and sustainable market (Stage One Initial Approval), followed by
(ii) a closer consideration of the detailed academic case (Stage Two Full Approval).

Where appropriate fast tracking may be permitted at Stage One (see 6.11) and/or lighter touch documentation and scrutiny requirements may be permitted at Stage Two (see 7.14).

2.3 The programme specifications, regulations and the unit descriptions required in the course of this process must meet the standards of documentation expected under the principles of QA44. Guidance on drawing up programme specifications and unit descriptions is available.

2.4 The process for the approval of new taught programmes will be underpinned by the requirement for external opinion from external examiners, professional accrediting bodies, employers and at the final stages, reports from one or more independent external reviewers.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Programme Development Teams are responsible for ensuring that:
- proposals are drawn up with due reference to the University's academic framework (Appendices 1 and 2), including where appropriate;
  - the New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations (NFAAR);
  - the requirements of the University’s QA Code of Practice;
University policies including those relating to the Equality Act and Health and Safety legislation;
- nationally recognised legislation and guidelines, including the relevant QAA [Subject Benchmark Statements](#), the requirements of professional, statutory or regulatory bodies;
- paperwork for each stage of the programme approval process is complete, is brought forward in a timely fashion, and has received the appropriate support from relevant Heads of Department and staff;
- timely consultation takes place with Faculty Marketing teams, Marketing and Communications and with the Admissions Office so that detailed evidence of a market for a proposed programme can be presented effectively.

3.2. The following **committees** are formally responsible for scrutinising the case for all new programmes:

**Senate** has overall responsibility ([Statute 19 Functions of the Senate](#)):
19.10 To make Regulations in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter.
19.11 To institute Degrees.
19.12 To institute Honorary Degrees, Diplomas, Certificates and other academic awards.
19.13 To regulate schemes of study and examinations leading to such degrees and other awards of the University.

- **Boards of Studies** are responsible for consideration of Stage One Initial Approval for all new programme proposals and making a recommendation to the Academic Programmes Committee. Chairs of Boards of Studies are responsible for the appointment of suitable External Reviewers;
- **Academic Programmes Committee** is responsible on behalf of Senate for considering and granting Stage One Initial Strategic Approval for new programmes (following a recommendation from Boards of Studies);
- **Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees** are responsible for the consideration of key draft documentation for Stage Two Full Academic Approval (prior to consideration of full documentation by the Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee), reviewing academic content and coherence, academic standards and quality, relationships with existing provision, and conformity with the University's academic framework. The Chair of the Committee is responsible for signing off the final key documentation for a new programme for submission to Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee;
- **Programmes & Partnerships Approval Committee** is responsible for the detailed scrutiny of Stage Two Full Academic Approval documentation including the consideration of requests for exemptions from elements of the University's academic framework and making recommendations to Senate for the approval of new programme proposals;
- **Senate** will give Final Approval to new programme proposals;
- **University Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee** is responsible to Senate for the oversight and monitoring of quality assurance of programme approval mechanisms, which includes approval of requests for exemption from the New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations.

3.3. The following **staff** are responsible for providing professional advice as part of the process of considering a proposal:

- **Assistant Registrars in the Faculties/School** (or equivalent) are the primary source of advice on preparing programme proposal documentation and navigating the programme approval process, including the collation of all documents required for final approval of the new programme and the arrangements with the External Reviewer(s) for their reports or attendance;
• **Director of Policy and Planning** on student numbers and new strategic developments;
• **Director of Finance** on fees and on the financial viability of proposals;
• **Academic Registry** (including Director of Academic Registry and the Head of Student Records & Examinations (SREO), on the development of programmes and new awards, the timetabling and space implications, conformity with the University's academic and other nationally recognised frameworks;
• **Student Recruitment and Admissions Office** including confirmation from the Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions that they consider that the proposed title of the programme is appropriate to the stated aims and outline of the programme content;
• **International Relations Office**
• **Marketing and Communications** on market information;
• **Careers Service** – Head of Service, on professional, vocational or broader career aims and employer expectations that can be developed and met through the learning aims of the programme and/or specific units;
• **Student Disability Advice** – Head of Service, to enable the entitlements of disabled students for access to the programme to be considered;
• **Learning and Teaching Enhancement Office** on good practice in learning and teaching; and signposting further guidance and advice for Assistant Registrars in the Faculties/School (or equivalents) on more complex issues. The Learning and Teaching Enhancement Office is also responsible for providing the University Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee with an annual evaluative report on the operation of the Programme Approval processes.

4. **Timescales**

4.1 In planning lead times for the introduction of a new programme, programme proposers need to take into account internal business processes, such as:
• ensuring information is available in a timely fashion for inclusion in marketing publications. The deadline for inclusion in the printed undergraduate prospectus is the December that falls 21 months prior to the first Autumn student intake; it is desirable to allow 18 months prior to the first Autumn student intake for postgraduate provision in order that a viable cohort can be recruited;
• sufficient lead time for the completion of the approval process prior to processing of applications. Lead times should whenever possible be planned to provide for final approval from Senate and completion of any follow-up work required, at least one academic year prior to start-date to maximise recruitment potential;
• timetabling of teaching space requirements (where information is gathered between Easter and Summer in the year prior to an Autumn student intake).

4.2 In most cases, it should be possible for a Department/School/Learning Partnerships Office (LPO) to take an initial idea through the approval process within an academic year (through Initial Approval in the one semester and Full Approval in another). This is an indicative timeline only; for instance, programmes involving collaborative provision may take longer to negotiate. On the other hand, there may be exceptional cases when the University supports a Department/School/LPO in acting more quickly in order to respond to an emerging strategic opportunity.

5. **Preparing for the approval of a new programme**

5.1 The initial development of a new programme of study takes place within a Department/School/LPO or as a group development with others. A list of the issues for consideration, including internal and external frameworks, is provided for reference in Annexes A and B.

5.2 The Head of Department/School/LPO is responsible for incorporating an indication of planned new programmes in departmental/school/partner college submissions during the
annual planning round.

5.3 It is recognised that in some cases new initiatives will arise more quickly as the University takes advantage of emerging opportunities. Where new programme proposals are included in a bid for external funding, stage one strategic approval for the programme(s) should be obtained from Board of Studies and Academic Programmes Committee prior to submission of the bid. Further advice can be obtained from the Assistant Registrar in the relevant Faculty/School.

6. STAGE ONE INITIAL STRATEGIC APPROVAL

6.1 The aims of the Initial Approval stage are principally:
- to establish that the proposed new programme is consistent with the University’s Strategy;
- to establish that the proposed new programme is financially viable, including providing an evidence base for the assessment of market viability and sustainability;
- to establish that the University has the necessary capacity to deliver a high quality student learning experience in relation to the proposed new programme;
- to agree the programme title, level and outline structure, with the understanding that this should not then normally change at the Full Approval stage (see 7.5);
- to identify, where possible, any complex aspects, such as the need for exemptions from or changes to the University's academic framework, on which early advice should be sought. The aim here is to resolve potential issues at an early stage and avoid unnecessary delays at the Full Approval stage.

6.2 In seeking initial approval for a new programme, the Programme Development Team will provide the following documentation:
- a brief rationale for the new programme with reference to the University Strategy and the strategic aims of the Faculty/School/LPO and confirmation of support from all relevant Head(s) of Department(s) or equivalent in the School (including the Head(s) of any Department(s) which would be required to provide service teaching) and proposed start date of the programme;
- a draft programme specification setting out the title, level, learning outcomes, diet of core and key optional units, and any partnership arrangements or professional accreditation, in order that the aims and shape of the proposed programme can be clearly discerned (Form QA3.2);

- market information setting out the qualitative and quantitative evidence of the size and nature of the potential market, the estimated size of the applicant pool, market trends in the discipline, and competitor activity (Form QA3.3). Advice on developing market information is available from Faculty marketing teams, Marketing and Communications, the Head of Admissions and the Head of the International Relations Office.

However, in certain limited instances, where the costs and risks to the University of approving and offering a new programme are clearly very low, a more limited marketing case may be acceptable. For example, this could apply to the development of a new variant to an existing successful programme;

- a business case setting out anticipated student numbers and fees, staffing and resource requirements, estimated income, and estimated costs (Form QA3.1). The timetabling and space implications e.g. for new units or where block (non-modular) timetabling booking is required, should be clearly stated.
In certain instances, establishing the market and business case for a proposed new programme will be relatively straightforward, with limited documentation required, such as in the case of a bespoke new programme for an external client;

- **success criteria** against which the programme will be reviewed after two full years of operation: These should be between three and five criteria (e.g. recruitment, progression to Masters and/or PhD programmes and/or student feedback statistics) to be approved by APC;

- **nominated Programme Development Team Leader and Team** which should normally include representatives from all academic departments substantially involved with the proposal;

- **nominated external reviewer** – if approved for this stage any other relevant background information, highlighting any substantive issues likely to arise in relation to the University's academic framework or norms for its provision, for example, confirmation as to the NFA-compliance of the new programme or explanation of the need to seek exemption (for programmes within the scope of the NFAAR), the need to establish a new category of award, or seek an exemption from the semester pattern - see Annex A.

### 6.3 Appointment of External Reviewers

The input and advice of approved External Reviewers may form part of the documentation for consideration at the first stage of the process and are normally a requirement for formal report for second stage approvals. The programme development team should present their nominations for External Reviewer(s) early in the process for approval by the Chair of the relevant Board of Studies.

- two External Reviewers should be appointed for completely new programme proposals, at least one of which should be familiar with UK academic standards in relation to the proposed programme; one may be a professional/industrial specialist. In particularly complex or innovative cases, the Chair of the Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee may require the attendance of an External Reviewer at the meeting of the Committee;

- one External Reviewer only will be required for variant proposals where a substantial portion of the programme content already exists;

- in determining approval of suitable nominees, the following points for the assurance of independence and objectivity should be taken into account:
  - the principles for the appointment of External Examiners (see QA12 section 4);
  - the detail of the proposed External Reviewer’s (s’) CV(s), which should include a section detailing any previous association with the University;

- existing or recent external examiners may not be appointed as external reviewers, but can give valuable advice to programme development teams.

**Good Practice:**

External Reviewers may be drawn from a peer institution in the Higher Education sector, from relevant professional or regulatory bodies, and/or from industry. It can be advantageous to include more than one external participant, particularly in cases where there are a range of elements under consideration, such as collaborative provision, innovative initiatives, elements of continuing professional development or work-based learning.
6.4 Where a **new University award** is being proposed (list of existing awards can be found in Annex B), advice should also be sought from the Academic Registry on proposing to Senate and Council the creation of a new University award, by amendment of Ordinance 14. Academic Registry will liaise with the Office of the University Secretary in providing advice.

**Faculty-level consideration: Board of Studies**

6.5 Proposals for Stage One approval will first be considered by the relevant Board(s) of Studies. They are responsible for considering:
- if the proposal fits with the strategic aims of the Faculty/School/LPO and forms a coherent pattern of provision with other existing or planned programmes within the Faculty/School;
- if the appropriate consultation has taken place, and in principle support has been received from all the Departments/School potentially affected by the proposal;
- that there is otherwise sufficient evidence that a proposed new programme will meet the requirements of the Academic Programmes Committee (see 6.7 below).

6.6 In cases of **cross-Faculty/School proposals**, the proposal must be considered by each of the Boards of Studies involved.

**University-level consideration: Academic Programmes Committee**

6.7 Once considered by the Board of Studies proposals for Stage One approval will be sent to the Academic Programmes Committee which will consider:
- if the proposal fits with the **University Strategy** and forms a coherent pattern of provision with other existing or planned programmes in the University;
- if the proposal is financially viable including if the market information/intelligence is rigorously evidenced and robust;
- if the University has the necessary capacity in human and physical resources to deliver a high quality student learning experience in respect of the proposal;
- if the programme title is appropriate;
- if the proposed success criteria for the programme are appropriate.

6.8 Following Stage One Initial Approval the Secretary to the Academic Programmes Committee will advise the Programme Development Team and the Recruitment and Admissions Office of the new programme for inclusion in the following publications, as appropriate:
- UCAS database and website;
- relevant postgraduate programme listings (e.g. Prospects);
- University of Bath prospectuses.

6.9 Once initial approval is given by Academic Programmes Committee, the Department/School/LPO may advertise the programme; all advertising must clearly state that the programme is subject to Full Approval. Applications cannot be processed until Full Approval has been received.

6.10 Where more than eighteen months has elapsed between the granting of Stage One Initial Approval and Stage Two Full Approval commencing, renewal of Stage One Initial Approval must be sought from Academic Programmes Committee. This will give the University the opportunity to satisfy itself that the strategic and business case remain valid.

**Fast tracking through Stage One Initial Strategic Approval**

6.11 A proposal for a new programme may be considered for fast-tracking through Stage One Initial Approval where there is a compelling case. For example, proposals which are the
subject of a submission to bid for external funding but which have a very short deadline where it can be demonstrated that the timing of the normal validation process would result in the loss of the opportunity to bid. Further guidance on the appropriateness of fast tracking may be obtained from the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Office.

Fast tracking through Stage One will consist of a process bypassing consideration at both full committee meetings, by permitting consideration firstly by the Chair of the Board of Studies, and on that recommendation, for approval by the Chair of the Academic Programmes Committee. The proposal must include evidence to justify fast tracking. The documents to be submitted to the respective Chairs to support the case for Stage One approval remain the same as for the normal process, proportionate to the circumstances or the particular criterion for fast tracking being claimed.

The Chairs of either the Board of Studies or the Academic Programmes Committee may refer the proposal back for further work or consult with other members before making decisions on whether:
- the circumstances are appropriate for fast tracking, or
- the case presented for Stage One approval is adequate, or
- both.

7. STAGE TWO FULL ACADEMIC APPROVAL

7.1 The aim of Stage Two Full Approval is to undertake scrutiny of the academic detail of the proposed new programme, namely the:
- appropriateness of standards in accordance with the level and title of the award
- academic coherence of the programme;
  o curriculum design principles underpinning the programme including:
    • consideration of assessment methodologies as appropriate to the discipline. See QA16, Assessment Marking and Feedback;
    • verification that the programme learning outcomes will be met by all who would graduate under the normal assessment and award provisions (e.g. by use of Designated Essential Units to underpin requirements without which the named award could not be made).
  o nature of the learning opportunities offered by the programme, and the accessibility of these learning opportunities to a diverse student body;
  o relationship between the programme and current research in the field;
  o availability of the resources necessary to support the programme;
  o relationship between the programme and the requirements of professional accrediting or regulatory bodies, employers’ expectations and essential requirements to facilitate placement or work based learning (where relevant);
  o content of the programme specification proposed for publication.

Stage 2 approval will check specifically that the programme and its learning outcomes are aligned to the correct level of the Framework for Higher-Education Qualifications (and any relevant Subject Benchmark Statements).

7.2 It is a key element of the programme approval process that a range of perspectives are sought during programme development. In developing the full programme proposal, the Programme Development Team should seek:
- written advice and guidance from the Academic Registry on areas such as student records, time-tabling implications, award certification, programme structures, compliance with the regulatory structure, and any exemption required from the University's academic framework, e.g. relating to credit, modular (block) structures or the New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations (NFA:AR). Consultation should take place early in the process, particularly when developing complex or innovative programmes to avoid delays later on at the committee stages;
• written advice and guidance from the Student Recruitment and Access Office regarding admissions and from the Careers Service regarding the employability prospects of future students;
• comments from the Librarian, the Director of Computing Services and/or the relevant Heads of Professional Services on any potential service requirements beyond existing baseline provision;
• relevant external inputs from potential employers, academic peers, intended partners in collaborative provision, professional and regulatory bodies, and, where appropriate, from potential students (for example, for continuing professional development programme proposals, or where students on existing programmes are viewed as likely recruits to a proposed higher level programme)

Faculty-level consideration: Faculty/School Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee

7.3 Prior to the complete documentation being prepared (see 7.8) for submission to the Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee, draft elements of the documentation should be submitted to the Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee(s). Ideally, this should occur soon after Stage One Initial Approval has been granted, so that the Committee's feedback may guide development of the final full documentation. The committee will review;
• academic content and coherence;
• academic standards and quality;
• relationships with existing provision, and;
• conformity to the University's academic framework.

7.4 Although it is for Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee(s) to determine which elements of draft documentation they wish to routinely review for this purpose, it should normally include as a minimum;
• the draft full programme specification;
• programme regulations where these are not governed by the NFA:AR;
• and all unit descriptions.

The Programme Development Team Leader and other representatives from the Programme Development Team should normally be invited to attend the relevant Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee when the draft documentation is under consideration.

7.5 If there are any substantial changes to the proposal since Stage One Initial Approval, it is the responsibility of the Programme Development Team to draw this to the attention of the relevant Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee and ensure that a clear case is being made for the changes, together with assurances that this will not entail an impact on resources, the University's profile/marketing, or bring resource implications for other Departments or their equivalents (such as through changes to teaching patterns). If there is substantial doubt about these aspects, then it is open to the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee to refer the proposal back for Stage One Initial Approval.

7.6 Where a new programme of study involves collaboration between Departments or their equivalents in more than one Faculty/School, the key draft documentation should be reviewed by each of the relevant Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees (or an ad hoc forum comprising representatives from all the relevant Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees).

7.7 The Programme Development Team is responsible for liaising with the Assistant Registrar in the Faculty/School to obtain approval from the Chair(s) of the relevant faculty/School-level Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee(s) for the final set of programme documents prior to submission to Programmes and Partnership Approval Committee.
University-level consideration: Programmes & Partnerships Approval Committee

7.8 For Stage Two Full Approval, the following documentation (the Full Proposal) will be required to be submitted to the Secretary to the Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee via Assistant Registrars in the Faculties/School (or equivalent):

a. introduction setting out the rationale for the proposed programme highlighting key points for consideration, such as developments since Stage One Initial Approval, details of consultation undertaken, etc;

b. extracts of relevant minutes from Board(s) of Studies, the Academic Programmes Committee, and Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee(s);

c. the full programme specification including the programme description (see Annex A and Form QA3.2) which must be fully differentiated in respect of any exit awards;

d. programme regulations whether these are governed by the NFA:AR or in other cases where a distinctive set is required (e.g. some PGR programmes), (see Annex A, NFA:AR (UG, PGT, FD, HY, or CPD), "Assessment in the programme context" and Appendix 3 [http://www.bath.ac.uk/registry/nfa/index.htm];

e. unit descriptions, new and existing;

f. a copy of (or web link to) the relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statement, if appropriate;

g. a copy of (or web link to) the relevant QAA level descriptor, and the QAA Foundation Degree benchmark, Masters, or Doctoral degree characteristics, if appropriate;

h. the rationale for any exemption required from the University's academic infrastructure including the consequences for any other programmes or on resources;

i. written submission from the External Reviewer(s) on the above documentation, to be provided at least one week before the date of the meeting, although a written submission may be dispensed with if the External Reviewer(s) will be attending the relevant meeting of the Programme and Partnership Approvals Committee;

j. a written response from the Programme Development Team Leader to the External Reviewer(s) report (not required if the External Reviewer is attending)

Good Practice

Where the External Reviewer is making a written submission and not attending the Programme and Partnerships Approval Committee (PAPAC) meeting, the programme development team may wish to arrange for the External Reviewer to be contactable for consultation by the Committee during its meeting to help resolve any queries that may arise.

7.9 The Stage Two Full Proposal will be considered at a meeting of the Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee. Where appropriate, it may be possible for similar programmes in cognate disciplines to be considered together. Advice should be sought on this in advance from the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Office. Where particularly complex or innovative programmes are being considered, on the request of the Chair, one or more of the External Reviewers may be asked to attend the meeting rather than submit a report, to assist the Committee directly with its decisions. The Programme Development Team Leader, and representatives from the Programme Development Team if appropriate, will also be invited to take questions from the Committee.

7.10 It is the responsibility of the Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee to employ its specialist expertise, with the input from the External Reviewer, to undertake detailed scrutiny of the programme proposal in accordance with the aims set out in paragraph 7.1 (including assuring itself that any issues previously raised by staff or committees during the
programme approval process have been adequately resolved) and to make a recommendation to Senate.

7.11 Where a new programme is recommended for approval the Minutes should explicitly record that the Committee is satisfied that the programme is aligned to the appropriate level in The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and is appropriately engaged with any relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

7.12 The Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee has three options open to it: to recommend to Senate:
   a) approval of the proposal;
   b) approval of the proposal subject to conditions and/or requirements;
   c) rejection of the proposal.

   Conditions must be met prior to the new programme commencing, whereas requirements must be met by a specified date after the programme has commenced. Completion of conditions and requirements must be signed off by the Chair of Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee.

7.13 The Secretary of the Committee will report the Programmes and Partnership Approval Committee’s recommendation in summary form to Senate, which will consider full and final approval of the new programme. Once full and final approval is granted, the Secretary of the Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee will forward the programme paperwork to the Assistant Registrar and to the Student Records and Examinations Office for setting up on the University student record system (SAMIS) and web catalogue.

Stage Two ‘light touch’ approval process

7.14 The Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee may consider and approve requests from Departments/ the School for lighter touch paperwork and scrutiny requirements in relation to Stage Two Full Approval of new programmes where the potential benefits are considered to outweigh the risks. For example, for new exit awards associated with existing programmes where no or very small additional resources will be needed and no separate marketing will be undertaken or for new variant awards constructed very substantially from existing units and requiring only marginal additional resources. Further guidance on this may be obtained from the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Office.

8. Review and Monitoring

8.1 New programmes of study and any recommendations from the Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee made at the time of Stage Two approval will be monitored by Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees through External Examiners’ reports, Annual Monitoring processes and Degree Scheme Reviews, drawing upon feedback, such as unit and programme evaluation and proceedings of Staff/Student Liaison Committees.

8.2 The impact of subsequent amendments to units and programmes will be monitored through the processes required by QA4 Amendments to Programmes of Study and Units, External Examiners’ reports, Annual Monitoring processes and Degree Scheme Reviews, drawing upon feedback, such as unit and programme evaluation and proceedings of Staff/Student Liaison Committees.

8.3 After two full years of operation the Academic Programmes Committee will review new programmes of study against the success criteria identified by the programme team (see 6.2 above). If the criteria are not met the programme will be discontinued unless there are strong grounds to indicate otherwise.
8.4 The Learning and Teaching Enhancement Office will produce an annual overview report for the University Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee which will include:

- a list of all new programmes approved and a note of completion of actions conditional at the time of approval;
- identification of recurrent issues and common themes;
- notes of good practice of institutional significance;
- analysis of the incidence and application of fast tracking and light touch protocols;
- analysis of degree of compliance with the programme approval process as laid out in this statement and associated guidance documents and templates;
- an evaluation of the programme approval process;
- recommendations for further action.
Statement Details

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THE ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK - GUIDANCE FOR PROGRAMME PLANNERS

1. Developing a new programme of study

In developing a new programme for approval, the Programme Development Team should take into account the following:

- the educational aims of the programme, i.e. the rationale prompting the design of the course;
- how the proposed programme fulfils the Departmental/School/LPO and University's strategic aims (see the University’s Corporate Plan and Education Strategy);
- the viability of offering the proposed programme based on projected student numbers and the resources available, taking into account the extent to which comparable provision in the subject area already exists and anticipated student demand;
- the level and the title of the final award, with reference to the table in QA3, Annex B and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. In line with guidance set out in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications the expectation is that for programmes with "and" in the title, e.g. BSc Economics and Computing, there will be an approximate 50/50 split between disciplines; for programme titles containing "with", e.g. BSc Economics with Computing, the split will be between 80/20 and 60/40.
- the intended learning outcomes, i.e. the range of knowledge and abilities that a student may be expected to have acquired upon successful completion of the programme. Learning outcomes should be clear and explicit and defined, where possible, in terms of key skills and in terms of external reference points i.e. the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements
- the curriculum structure and the proposed length of the programme, as applicable to both full and part-time students - taking into account progression with an increasing level of demand at each stage of the programme;
- the modes and weighting of assessment for each component of the programme;
- the balance of the programme, incorporating a range of modes of delivery and assessment and a balance of breadth and depth in the curriculum. This should also include consideration of the accessibility of the programme to a diverse range of potential students and in particular, the capacity to meet the anticipatory duty to meet the entitlements of disabled students;
- the overall coherence and integrity of the programme - how the component parts link together to meet the overall purpose and objectives of the programme;
- the entrance requirements, including acceptable qualifications and experience and arrangements for accrediting prior (experiential) learning;
- the likely opportunities available to students upon completion of the programme;
- external reference points:
  - Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
  - any relevant Subject Benchmark Statement
- internal reference points:
  - University Ordinances on minimum periods of study and aegrotat awards;
  - University Regulations, particularly Regulation 15 on assessment;
  - New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations;
  - Postgraduate commonality rules (most postgraduate programmes now come under NFA);
  - the University's academic framework (see section 2 and Annex B below);
  - QA35 Assessment procedures (for programmes not compliant with NFAAR only);
Annex A

- where relevant, QA20 Collaborative Provision;
- Equalities and diversity policies;
- Statement of Equality Objectives 2013-15;
- requirements of professional or statutory bodies, and advice from relevant employers and the University’s Careers Service

2. University Academic Framework

2.1 The University's academic framework is composed of the decisions taken by Senate regarding the credit and modular framework and summarised below.

2.2 Requests for exemption from elements of the University's academic framework will normally be considered at Stage Two Full Approval by the Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee (although this may be sought earlier where appropriate from the same Committee). The exception to this is exemptions from NFAAR which are approved by the University, Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee. Such requests should be accompanied with a clear rationale for the exemption being sought. Exemption from unitisation is normally only permitted on the grounds that the provision requires collaboration with partner organisations or has constraints on the pattern of delivery dictated by the requirements of professional bodies.

2.3 A programme of study leading to a named award within the University's unitised academic framework comprises a defined number of discrete units which have their own learning outcomes and assessment.
  - **Compulsory units** are those components of a programme of study which must be taken by all students; in the NFA context some or all of these might also be designated essential units (DEUs);
  - **Optional units** are those units that students can select from a prescribed range specified within the programme of study or other, Director of Studies-approved units. Electives are a particular sort of optional unit which can be chosen from across the University's provision by a student as part of their programme of study. In the NFA context, some or all optional units might also be designated essential units (DEUs). The availability of all optional units may be constrained by timetabling or resource availability;
  - **Extra-curricular units** are taken outside the programme of study, up to a maximum of 6 credits per year. They can be chosen by a student but do not contribute to progression requirements, or to the final degree classification. Credits achieved in these units may count towards an undergraduate award of Certificate of Higher Education or Diploma of Higher Education.

The programme structure should ensure that the programme learning outcomes are met by all who would graduate under the normal assessment and award provisions, e.g. by using Designated Essential Units to underpin requirements without which the named award could not be made.

The University uses the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) as the basis for its unitisation. Proposals for new programmes should reflect the requirements set out in Annex B on award titles and minimum levels of credit, in accordance with the (FHEQ)

2.4 A student engaged in full time undergraduate study for an Honours Degree is normally required to attain 60 credits per academic session. A student engaged in full time taught postgraduate study is normally required to complete 30 credits per semester or 90 credits per calendar year. Students may opt to take additional free/extra-curricular units to a maximum of 6 additional credits in any one academic year (with the prior approval of their Director of Studies)

2.5 Normally, units are based on one tenth of a full-time academic year of study and will have a
weighting of 6 credits, half units of 3 credits, double units of 12 credits. Project units based on multiples of 6 will also be permitted and industrial placements may also be assigned a credit tariff based on multiples of 6.

2.6 The University has set a minimum expectation of 100 notional learning hours associated with a 6 credit unit, which equates to a minimum of 1000 learning hours in an academic year (or 1500 learning hours in a calendar year) of full-time study. It is recognised that additional private study time might be required, but it is expected that this should not result in more than 1200 notional learning hours for an academic year (or 1800 notional learning hours for a calendar year) of full-time study.

2.7 Units should be a full semester long and there should be no less than two units totalling at least 12 credits assessed by summative assessment during semester 1 of each academic year. Year-long units made up from the combination of any normal (3-, 6-, 12-credit) semester-based unit-dimensions are permitted to a maximum of 36 credits per year per programme. The impact of year-long units on inter-disciplinary programmes or generally available units should be considered and agreed with the relevant programme teams prior to approval.

3. Programme Specifications (see also Guidance on Preparing a Programme Specification and Programme Description)

3.1 Programme Specifications are definitive, formal and concise descriptions of programmes that are comprehensible to a general audience and made publicly available via the University website. Programme Specifications are public documents that support external accountability, intended for students, current and prospective.

3.2 The University also uses programme specifications in programme approval processes to ensure that the aims and intended learning outcomes of programmes are clear, and that the learning outcomes can be achieved and demonstrated.

3.3 In emphasising this formal and concise form of programme specification, it is recognised that programme specifications form only one part of:

- the programme information made available to students, with the University prospectus providing the primary point of contact and detail for prospective students, and programme handbooks being the key point of day-to-day reference for current students;
- the documentation required for programme approval. The concise information including a programme specification with a view to a general audience, should be distinct from introductory or supporting information necessary to make the case for approval of a proposed programme from academic peers; and from programme regulations intended for internal use, which set out in detail the structure and routes through a programme.

3.4 Further guidance on the content of programme specifications, including common content on University indicators of quality and student support structures, is available in the Programme Specification Guidance and the templates available on-line under QA3.

3.5 Further information on national expectations regarding programme specifications is available from the Quality Code.

4. Programme Regulations

4.1 Regulation 15.2.b states that “Schemes of Study” are those documents which set down the approved curriculum, rules, requirements and scheme of assessment for a programme of study. This regulation is realised in detailed programme regulations; the information from which is set out in concise form in programme specifications.
4.2 Programme regulations should be drawn up to reflect the University's academic framework and regulations and to articulate how these are given effect for the programme and will specify any further stipulations for that programme, such as any professional or statutory body requirements, unit choices, student conduct and any other special responsibilities. Programme regulations describe the structure of, and routes through, a programme. For example, where the University Regulations give the overall admissions requirements for the University, those for specific subjects go into the Scheme of Study or programme regulations.

- for NFA-compliant programmes, see NFAAR UG, PGT, FD, HY, or CPD, "Assessment in the programme context" and Appendix 3 “Scheme of study and scheme of assessment details” of each document;
- for other programmes, a clear and fully detailed set of programme regulations is required as definitive and accurate information on the rules governing entry, progression, assessment and awards, under the provisions of the University Regulations, for reference by students, staff, and Boards of Examiners including External Examiners.

4.3 Credit will be awarded for successful completion of a unit. This will normally be defined as the achievement of the pass mark for the summative assessment(s). The programme regulations should define any additional criteria for the award of credit to be applied at the level of individual components of assessment. In particular, the regulations should specify:

- if a candidate must pass each individual component of the assessment in order to complete the unit successfully;
- if the candidate is required to reach a minimum threshold in any, or all, of the components of the assessment.

4.4 In instances where the teaching of a level 6 (H) level unit and an M level unit is shared, the learning outcomes and assessment must be appropriately differentiated.

4.5 For programmes fully compliant with the New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations, the programme regulations should outline the progression requirements by referring directly to the criteria in the relevant appendices of the relevant NFAAR document (UG, PGT, FD, HY, or CPD) and note any key features identified in “Assessment in the programme context” sections of the relevant NFAAR document. If progression to a placement year is contingent upon having fulfilled all the progression requirements (i.e. if it is not possible to progress to a pre-arrangement before repeating a stage), this must be stated in the programme regulations.

4.6 For other programmes, the programme regulations should outline the criteria for progression from one year, or part of the programme, to the next, and should in particular, specify:

- the minimum threshold to be achieved in a unit before credit can be awarded by compensation;
- the maximum number of failed units for which credit might be awarded by compensation;
- the criteria for the award of credit by compensation in the light of a satisfactory academic profile during the academic year;
- the criteria for an interim award or transfer to another defined award;
- any differences in the treatment of compulsory, optional and elective units with respect to the award of credit by compensation.

4.7 For programmes fully compliant with the New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations, the programme regulations should define the timing and nature of any re-assessment or supplementary assessment permitted, indicating the mechanisms for retrieval appropriate to different degrees of failure, and referring directly to the criteria in the relevant appendices of the relevant NFAAR document (UG, PGT, FD, HY, or CPD)
4.8 For other programmes, the programme regulations should define the timing and nature of any re-assessment or supplementary assessment permitted, indicating the mechanisms for retrieval appropriate to different degrees of failure and having heed to the following principles:

• candidates may not be permitted an opportunity for reassessment solely to improve upon their marks/degree classifications if they have already been deemed to have satisfied the Examiners;
• candidates will not normally be required to undertake any reassessment for units that they have already passed unless the extent of their original failure was deemed by the Board of Examiners for Programmes to necessitate that they repeat the whole year in order to satisfy the progression requirements of the programme;
• final year candidates on three, four or five year undergraduate degree programmes may not be permitted an opportunity for reassessment unless the Faculty/School Board of Studies determines that exceptional circumstances have affected the candidate's performance.

4.9 For programmes fully compliant with the New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations, the programme regulations should define how a candidate's final degree classification is reached by referring directly to the criteria in the relevant appendices of the relevant NFAAR document (UG, PGT, FD, HY, or CPD).

4.10 For other programmes, the programme regulations should define how a candidate's final degree classification is reached having due regard to the principle that the formulaic calculation is intended as an aid to reaching a decision on an individual candidate and does not override the Board of Examiners for Programmes' discretion to take account of other appropriate evidence, and in particular such regulations should specify:

• the weighting of individual units in the calculation of the final award, including classification where appropriate;
• the criteria for an interim award or transfer to another defined award.

4.11 Where appropriate, the programme regulations should also define any criteria for transfer points between programmes of study (e.g. between BEng and MEng). Where programmes fully compliant with the New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations are concerned, this should be done by specifying the criteria according to which a student might be admitted or transferred to an alternative programme (since other criteria are already determined by the relevant NFAAR documents).

4.12 Generic awards, Certificate in Higher Education (CertHE) and Diploma in Higher Education (DiplHE), are available to students on undergraduate programmes, who meet the relevant award requirements and who are obliged or wish to leave their programme prematurely. Programme Regulations should state whether students are eligible for these awards (if it is not considered appropriate to offer one or both awards, an exemption should be sought from Senate). Exemptions from specific aspects of the CertHE and DiplHE may be approved by PAPAC. Credit achieved through a placement or study abroad cannot contribute to either award, unless explicitly stated otherwise in the relevant Programme Regulations and approved by PAPAC.
### University of Bath award titles and levels of credit within the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) (for 2014/15)

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* T/R* - Predominantly Taught or Research