



## Quality Assurance Code of Practice

### Approval of New Programmes of Study

**This document is primarily intended for:**

- Developers of new programmes
- Assistant Registrars (Faculty/School) or equivalents
- Members of committees involved in the approval of new programmes

**Queries:**

First point of contact –

- Assistant Registrars (Faculty/School) or equivalent

Technical specialist

- Academic Registry

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Form QA3.2	Programme Specification
Form QA3.3	Market Information
Guidance note	Preparing a Programme Specification
Guidance note	Appointment and role of External Reviewers
Diagram	Overview of the approval process for new programmes (non-collaborative, taught provision <b>not including new programmes being developed as part of the University's curriculum transformation initiative</b> )

## 1 Purpose and Scope

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- 1.1 This QA statement sets out the principles and process for approval of a new programme of study and 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, integrated PhDs);
  - 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).
- 1.2 Where a proposed new programme of study is to be delivered by or with a new or existing collaborative partner, then this QA statement should 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. The approval process for joint research degrees is covered in QA20.
- 1.3 This QA statement should also be read in conjunction with the [New Framework for Assessment](#) (NFAAR).
- 1.4 **The processes have been adapted for programmes which are being developed as part of the University's curriculum transformation initiative. Further information is available from Academic Registry.**

## 2 Principles and Overview

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- 2.1 The University needs to ensure that any new programme is consistent with the [University's Strategy](#), including the [Education 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 whilst facilitating innovation and updating of the academic portfolio.

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).

- 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](#) is available).
- 2.4 The process for the approval of new taught programmes is 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 Timescales

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- 3.1 In planning for the introduction of a new programme, programme proposers need to take into account:
- lead time 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; inserts can be made into the e-version relatively quickly (see also 6.9 below) ; it is advisable to allow 18 months prior to the first Autumn student intake for postgraduate provision in order that a viable cohort can be recruited;
  - 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;
  - timescale for timetabling of teaching space (information is gathered between Easter and Summer in the year prior to an Autumn student intake).
- 3.2 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. 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.

### 4 Preparing for the approval of a new programme

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- 4.1 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 Annex A, "The Academic Framework: Guidance for Programme Planners".
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 It is recognised that in some cases new initiatives will arise more quickly as the University takes advantage of emerging opportunities. Nevertheless 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 (APC) prior to submission of the bid. Further advice can be obtained from the Assistant Registrar in the relevant Faculty/School.

- 4.4 Where a new University award is being proposed (list of existing awards can be found in Annex B), advice should 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.
- 4.5 A business case on form QA3.1 needs to be approved by the [University Executive Board \(UEB\)](#), prior to presentation of the programme for Initial Strategic Approval. The Committee meets regularly. Advice can be sought from Departmental and Faculty Accountants.

## 5 Stage One Initial Strategic Approval

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- 5.1 The aims of the Initial Approval stage are:
- to establish that the proposal fits with the [University Strategy](#) and forms a coherent pattern of provision with other existing or planned programmes in the University;
  - to establish that the proposal is financially viable including if the market information/intelligence is rigorously evidenced and robust;
  - to establish that the University has the necessary capacity in human and physical resources to deliver a high quality student learning experience in respect of the proposal;
  - 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 agree the proposed success criteria for the programme;
  - 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.
- 5.2 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);
  - a **draft Programme Specification** setting out the title, level, anticipated start date, 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. For stage 1 this can be drafted on Form [QA3.2](#) but for stage 2 will be transferred to the electronic Curriculum Management Information System (CMIS);
  - **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, Undergraduate Admissions & Outreach / Postgraduate Taught Student Recruitment & Admissions and the International Relations Office. In certain 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;
  - **the business case** on Form [QA3.1](#), setting out anticipated student numbers and fees, staffing and resource requirements, estimated income, and estimated costs. 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** (also on Form [QA3.1](#)) against which the programme will be reviewed after two full years of operation: between three and five criteria (covering for example 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(s)** – 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, for example a need to seek exemption from NFAAR, the need to establish a new category of award, or seek an exemption from the semester pattern (see Annex A).

### Appointment of External Reviewers

5.3 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. The External Reviewers should be selected to provide informed comment on the various elements under consideration e.g. collaborative provision, innovative initiatives, elements of continual professional development or work-based learning.
- in particularly complex or innovative cases, the Chair of CPAC 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.

### Faculty-level consideration: Faculty/School Board of Studies

5.4 Proposals for Stage One Approval will first be considered by the relevant Faculty/School 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 APC (see 5.2 above).

5.5 In cases of cross-Faculty/School proposals, the proposal must be considered by each of the Boards of Studies involved. For new research degree programmes with a taught element, the proposal must also be strategically considered by University Doctoral Studies Committee (UDSC) prior to consideration by APC.

### University-level consideration: Academic Programmes Committee (APC)

- 5.6 Once considered by the Faculty/School Board of Studies (and UDSC if applicable), proposals for Stage One Approval will be sent to APC which will consider the points set out in 5.1 above.
- 5.7 Following Stage One Initial Approval the Secretary to APC 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.
- 5.8 Once Initial Approval is given by APC, 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.
- 5.9 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 APC. This will give the University the opportunity to satisfy itself that the strategic and business cases remain valid.

### Fast tracking through Stage One Initial Strategic Approval

- 5.10 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 approval process would result in the loss of the opportunity to bid. Further guidance on the appropriateness of fast tracking may be obtained from Academic Registry.
- 5.11 Fast tracking through Stage One will consist of permitting consideration firstly by the Chair of the Board of Studies on behalf of the Board, 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.
- 5.12 The Chairs of either the Faculty/School Board of Studies or APC 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;
  - the case presented for Stage One approval is adequate.

## 6 Stage Two Full Academic Approval

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- 6.1 The aim of Stage Two Full Approval is to undertake scrutiny of the academic detail of the proposed new programme, namely the:
- (i) appropriateness of standards in accordance with the level and title of the award
  - (ii) academic coherence of the programme:
  - (iii) curriculum design principles underpinning the programme including:
    - appropriateness of the range of assessment methodologies in relation to the discipline and aligned to the learning outcomes and in consideration of the University's approach to anonymous marking. 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).

- (iv) nature of the learning opportunities offered by the programme, and opportunities to enable all students within the diverse student body to achieve the learning outcomes
- (v) relationship between the programme and current research in the field
- (vi) availability of the resources necessary to support the programme
- (vii) relationship between the programme and the requirements of professional accrediting or regulatory bodies, employers' expectations
- (viii) the role of placement or work based learning (where relevant)
- (ix) content of the Programme Specification proposed for publication.

- 6.2 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 appropriately engaged with any relevant [Subject Benchmark Statements](#). This will be explicitly recorded in the minutes of CPAC where a new programme is recommended for approval.

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

- 6.3 Prior to the complete documentation being prepared (see 6.8) for submission to CPAC, draft elements of the documentation should be submitted to the Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee(s) (F/SLTQC) using the [CMIS](#) electronic system. 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.
- 6.4 Although it is for F/SLTQC 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 NFAAR
  - all unit descriptions.

The Programme Development Team Leader and other representatives from the Programme Development Team should normally be invited to attend the relevant F/SLTQC when the draft documentation is under consideration.

- 6.5 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 F/SLTQC 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 F/SLTQC to refer the proposal back for Stage One Initial Approval.
- 6.6 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 F/SLTQCs (or an ad hoc forum comprising representatives from all the relevant F/SLTQCs).

- 6.7 The Chair of the F/SLTQC is responsible for signing off the final key documentation for a new programme for submission to Courses and Partnerships Approval Committee (CPAC) (previously Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee (PAPAC)).

### University-level consideration: Courses and Partnerships Approval Committee

- 6.8 For Stage Two Full Approval, the following documentation will be required to be submitted to the Secretary to CPAC via Assistant Registrars in the Faculties/School:

- introduction and rationale for the proposed programme highlighting key points for consideration, such as developments since Stage One Initial Approval, details of consultation undertaken, etc
- extracts of relevant minutes from Board(s) of Studies, APC, F/SLTQC(s), and FDSC(s) / UDSC where appropriate
- the full Programme Specification including the programme description (Form QA3.2) which must be fully differentiated in respect of any exit awards
- programme regulations - where these are fully governed by the NFAAR a link should be provided in the "progression and assessment" section of the Programme Specification(s) to the appropriate appendix for [NFAAR](#) (UG, PGT, FD, HY, or CPD). In other cases where a more distinctive set is required (e.g. some PGR programmes) specific detail should be provided in this section. Annex A and the "Assessment in the programme context" sections of Annexes C-G provide further detail
- a copy of (or web link to) the relevant QAA [Subject Benchmark Statement](#)(s), if appropriate
- 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
- the rationale for any exemption required from the University's Academic Framework (Annex A) including the consequences for any other programmes or on resources
- 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 CPAC
- 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 CPAC 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.

- 6.9 The Stage Two Full Proposal will be considered at a meeting of CPAC. 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 Academic Registry. 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.



- 6.10 It is the responsibility of CPAC 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 6.1 (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.
- 6.11 CPAC is responsible for the consideration and approval of requests for exemption from elements of the University's Academic Framework (Annexes A and B).
- 6.12 CPAC has three options open to it: to recommend to Senate
- i) approval of the proposal
  - ii) approval of the proposal subject to conditions and/or requirements
- or
- iii) non-approval of the proposal with requirement for further work and re-presentation to a future meeting of CPAC.
- 6.13 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 CPAC.
- 6.14 The University Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee is responsible for approval of any exemptions required from NFAAR.
- 6.15 The Secretary of the Committee will report CPACs recommendation in summary form to Senate, which is responsible for full and final approval of the new programme. Once final approval is granted, the Secretary of CPAC will forward the programme paperwork to the Assistant Registrar in the Faculty/School and to Academic Registry to enable the programme to be set up on the University student record system (SAMIS) and web catalogue.

### Stage Two 'light touch' approval process

- 6.16 CPAC 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 Academic Registry.

## 7 Review and Monitoring

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- 7.1 New programmes of study and any recommendations from CPAC made at the time of Stage Two approval will be monitored by F/SLTQCs through External Examiners' reports, annual monitoring processes and periodic review, drawing upon feedback, such as unit evaluation, student surveys and proceedings of Staff/Student Liaison Committees.
- 7.2 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 periodic review, drawing upon feedback, such as unit evaluation, student surveys and proceedings of Staff/Student Liaison Committees.
- 7.3 After two full years of operation APC will review new programmes of study against the success criteria identified by the programme team (see 5.2 above). If the criteria are not met the programme will be discontinued unless there are strong grounds to indicate otherwise.

- 7.4 Academic Registry will produce an evaluative report every three years on the operation of the programme approval processes 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.

<b>Statement Details</b>		
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<b>Related Documentation:</b>	<p><u>External:</u> QAA <a href="#">UK Quality Code for Higher Education</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part A Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards</li> <li>• Chapter B1 Programme Design, Development and Approval</li> <li>• Part C Information about Higher Education Provision</li> </ul> <p><u>Internal:</u> <a href="#">University Ordinances</a> <a href="#">Regulations for Students</a> <a href="#">Guidance on preparing the Programme Specification</a> and Programme Description <a href="#">New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations (NFA:AR)</a></p>	
<b>Author:</b>	Academic Registry	



## ANNEX A - THE ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK AND OTHER GUIDANCE FOR PROGRAMME PLANNERS

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- 1 University Academic Framework – taught programmes
- 2 Developing a new programme of study – aspects to consider
- 3 Programme Specifications
- 4 Programme regulations
- 5 Assessment at the unit level
- 6 Progression and the Programme Description
- 7 Reassessment
- 8 Degree Classification
- 9 Transfer between programmes
- 10 Generic University exit awards

### 1 University Academic Framework – taught programmes

- 1.1 The University's Academic Framework is composed of decisions previously taken by Senate regarding the credit and modular framework and summarised below. **Consult Academic Registry regarding how the information in this Annex applies to new programmes being developed as part of the University's curriculum transformation initiative.**
- 1.2 A programme of study leading to a named award within the University's unitised Academic Framework comprises a defined number of discrete units. Each unit will have its own learning outcomes which will be assessed either within the unit or as part of an integrative 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.
- 1.3 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.

- 1.4 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](#).
- 1.5 A student engaged in full time undergraduate study for an Honours Degree is normally required to complete 60 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits per academic session (equivalent to 120 Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS) credits). A student engaged in full time taught postgraduate study is normally required to complete 90 ECTS credits (equivalent to 180 CATS credits). Students may opt to take additional free/extra-curricular units to a maximum of 6 additional ECTS credits (equivalent to 12 CATS credits) in any one academic year (with the prior approval of their Director of Studies).
- 1.6 Normally, units are based on one tenth of a full-time academic year of study and will have a weighting of 6 ECTS credits (equivalent to 12 CATS credits). Half units of 3 ECTS credits, double units of 12 ECTS credits and project units based on multiples of 6 will also be permitted. Industrial placements may also be assigned an ECTS credit tariff based on multiples of 6.
- 1.7 In line with national credit frameworks and QAA guidance, the University has set an expectation of 120 notional learning hours associated with a 6 ECTS credit unit (equivalent to 12 CATS credits), which equates to 1200 learning hours in an academic year for full-time undergraduates. For full-time taught postgraduate students there is an expectation that their 90 ECTS credits (equivalent to 180 CATS credits) will equate to 1800 learning hours.
- 1.8 Units made up from the combination of any normal 3-, 6-, 12-credit unit-dimensions are permitted. A clear pedagogic argument outlining the formal and summative assessment regime should be made where year-long units will total more than 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.
- 1.9 Requests for exemption from elements of the University's Academic Framework will normally be considered at Stage Two Full Approval by the Programmes and Courses Approval Committee (CPAC), 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 Developing a new programme of study

- 2.1 As set out in its [Education](#) Strategy, the University welcomes academically gifted students from any background, to create a diverse and culturally-rich community; and is committed to sustaining an inclusive, supportive, well-resourced learning environment within which independent learning flourishes and individual potential can be achieved.
- 2.2 In developing a new programme for approval, the Programme Development Team should consider 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 the [University](#) and [Education](#) Strategies
  - 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 of awards in QA3, Annex B and the [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications\(FHEQ\)](#). 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 75/25 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 pedagogically-appropriate mix of summative and formative assessment; opportunities for synoptic, and/or programme-wide assessment of learning outcomes; and the University's approach to anonymous marking ([QA16](#))
- the balance of the programme, incorporating a range of modes of delivery and assessment, aligned to the learning outcomes, and a balance of breadth and depth in the curriculum. This should also include consideration of how all students in a diverse cohort are provided with opportunities to achieve the learning outcomes in order to experience an inclusive and supportive learning environment; as well as 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
- best use of different modes of delivery and technological resources, pedagogic best-practice
- 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](#)(s)
- internal reference points:
  - [University Strategies](#)
  - [University Ordinances](#) on minimum periods of study and aegrotat awards
  - [University Regulations](#), particularly Regulation 15 on assessment and maximum periods of study
  - [New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations \(NFAAR\)](#);
  - [Postgraduate commonality](#) rules (most postgraduate programmes now come under NFA)
  - the University's Academic Framework (see section 1 above and Annex B below)
  - [QA16](#) Assessment, Marking and Feedback
  - [QA35](#) Assessment procedures for taught programmes of study
  - where relevant, [QA20](#) Collaborative Provision
  - [Equalities and diversity policies and guidance](#) on an inclusive education experience
  - Statement of [Equality Objectives](#)
  - requirements of professional or statutory bodies.

2.3 The Programme Development Team should therefore seek written advice and guidance from a range of perspectives:

- **Assistant Registrars in the Faculties/School** (or equivalent), who are the primary source of advice on preparing programme proposal documentation and the programme

approval process, including timescales, 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

- **Department and Faculty accountants** on preparation of a business case
- **Academic Registry** on areas such as current desirable strategic direction for programme structures and modes of delivery, student records, time-tabling and teaching space implications, model programme structures, Academic Framework requirements, compliance with the New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations (NFA:AR) including and any exemption that may be required, alignment with nationally recognised frameworks, and award certification. Consultation should take place early in the process, particularly when developing complex or innovative programmes to avoid delays later on at the committee stages
- **Undergraduate Admissions & Outreach / Postgraduate Taught Student Recruitment & Admissions** regarding admissions including confirmation from the Director of Undergraduate Admissions & Outreach / Head of Postgraduate Taught Student Recruitment that they consider that the proposed title of the programme is appropriate to the stated aims and outline of the programme content (form [QA3.3](#))
- **Librarian, Director of Computing Services and relevant Heads of Department and/or Professional Services** on any potential service requirements beyond existing baseline provision
- **Disability Service Manager** to enable the entitlements of disabled students for access to the programme to be considered
- **International Relations Office** – where appropriate
- **Student Immigration Service** on visa implications relating to Designated Alternative Programmes
- **Head of Careers Service**, on development of professional, vocational or broader career aims and employability through the learning aims of the programme and/or specific units
- **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)
- **Centre for Learning and Teaching** on curriculum development assessment approaches
- **Academic Registry** on programme structure and modes of delivery.

### 3 **Programme Specifications** (see also Guidance on [Preparing a Programme Specification](#))

- 3.1 **Programme Specifications** are definitive, formal and concise descriptions of programmes that are comprehensible to a general audience, stored within the electronic Curriculum Management Information System (CMIS) and made publicly available via the University website. Programme Specifications are public documents that support external accountability, intended for a general external audience as well as current and prospective students.
- 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 The template and guidance on writing a Programme Specification are available in the CMIS system, including standard text on University indicators of quality and student support structures; a Microsoft Word version of the [template](#) is also available on-line under QA3 for use in stage 1 strategic approval only.

## 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 normally realised in detailed Programme Specifications.
- 4.2 Programme regulations summarised in or appended to the Programme Specification should be drawn up to reflect the University's Academic Framework and Regulations and to articulate how these are given effect for the programme; they 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. For example, whereas the University Regulations give the overall admissions requirements for the University, those for specific subjects go into the Programme Specification.
- 4.3 **Assessment regulations** should be covered by reference to the appropriate section of the **NFAAR**: NFAAR [UG](#), [PGT](#), [FD](#), [HY](#), or [CPD](#). For programmes which are not compliant with NFA 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.

## 5 Assessment at the unit level

- 5.1 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). Unit descriptions should specify and define any additional criteria for the award of credit to be applied at the level of individual components of assessment. In particular, where
- a candidate must pass each individual component of the assessment in order to complete the unit successfully;
  - the candidate is required to reach a minimum threshold in any, or all, of the components of the assessment.
- this should be specified in the unit description and will be recorded in the on-line unit catalogues.
- 5.2 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. The Academic Registry should be consulted if this need is anticipated.

## 6 Progression and the Programme Description

- 6.1 Programme regulations describe the structure of, and routes through, a programme. A diagrammatic description of the programme structure is included in the documentation held within CMIS (“Programme Definition and Structure”) linked to the Programme Specification.
- 6.2 For programmes fully compliant with NFAAR, the programme regulations set down in the Programme Specification 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. 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.
- 6.3 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.

## 7 Reassessment

- 7.1 For programmes fully compliant with the NFAAR, the programme regulations set down in the Programme Specification should refer directly to the criteria in the relevant appendices of the relevant NFAAR document ([UG](#), [PGT](#), [FD](#), [HY](#), or [CPD](#)) to define the timing and nature of any re-assessment or supplementary assessment permitted, and indicate the mechanisms for retrieval appropriate to different degrees of failure.
- 7.2 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.

## 8 Degree Classification

- 8.1 For programmes fully compliant with the NFAAR, the criteria for how a candidate's final degree classification is reached are defined in the relevant appendices of the relevant NFAAR document ([UG](#), [PGT](#), [FD](#), [HY](#), or [CPD](#)).
- 8.2 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.

## 9 Transfer between programmes

- 9.1 Where appropriate, the programme regulations section of the Programme Specification should also define any criteria for transfer points between programmes of study (e.g. between BEng and MEng); where programmes are fully compliant with the NFAAR this is by reference to the relevant appendices of the relevant NFAAR document ([UG](#), [PGT](#), [FD](#), [HY](#), or [CPD](#)). The criteria according to which a student might be admitted or transferred in to an alternative programme need to be specified where relevant. Tier 4 visa requirements may constrain

programme transfer options for international students, therefore programme designers may wish to consult Student Immigration Services.

## 10 Generic University exit awards

- 10.1 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 Specifications/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 CPAC. Credit achieved through a placement or study abroad cannot contribute to either award, unless explicitly stated otherwise in the relevant Programme Specification/Regulations and approved by CPAC.

## Annex B

QA3

## University of Bath award titles and levels of credit within the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) (for 2018/19)

Type of Award	FHEQ Level	T / R*	Award as shown on certificate	Abbr.	Notional Hours	Min Duration	Total ECTS credits	Minimum levels of credit					
								4	5	6	7	8	
Doctorate	8	R	Doctor of Letters Doctor of Medicine Doctor of Philosophy Doctor of Science	DLitt MD PhD DSc		24 mths							
MS	8	R	Master of Surgery	MS									
Professional Doctorate	8	R	Doctor of Business Administration Doctor of Clinical Psychology Doctor of Education Doctor of Engineering Doctor of Health Doctor of Policy Research and Practice	DBA  DClinPsy EdD EngD DHealth DPRP	5400	24 mths	270				52	216	
MPhil	7	R	Master of Philosophy	MPhil		12 mths							
Taught Masters Degree	7	T	Master of Arts Master of Business Administration Master of Education Master of Research Master of Science	MA MBA  MEd MRes MSc	1800	12 mths	90				75		
Postgraduate Diploma	7	T	Postgraduate Diploma	PGDip	1200	2 sems	60				48		
Postgraduate Certificate	7	T	Postgraduate Certificate in Education	PGCE	1200	2 sems	60			36	24		
Postgraduate Certificate	7	T	Postgraduate Certificate	PGCert	600	1 sem	30				24		
Undergraduate Masters Degree	7	T	Master of Architecture	MArch	2400	2 years	120				120		
Undergraduate Masters Degree	7	T	Master in Science Master of Biochemistry Master of Biology Master of Chemistry Master of Computing Master of Engineering Master of Mathematics Master of Pharmacology Master of Pharmacy Master of Physics	MSci MBiochem MBiol MChem MComp MEng MMath MPharmacol MPharm MPhys	4800	4 years	240	60	48	48	60		
Bachelors Degree with Honours	6	T	Bachelor of Arts  Bachelor of Engineering Bachelor of Science	BA(Hons)  BEng(Hons) BSc(Hons)	3600	3 years	180	60	48	48			
Graduate Diploma	6	T	Graduate Diploma		1200	2 sems	60			48			
Graduate Certificate	6	T	Professional Graduate Certificate in Education	PGCE	1200	2 sems	60			60			
Graduate Certificate	6	T	Graduate Certificate		600	1 sem	30			24			
Bachelors Degree without honours (Ordinary)	6	T	Bachelor of Engineering  Bachelor of Science	BEng  BSc	3000	3 years	150	60	48	30			
Foundation Degree	5	T	Foundation Degree in Arts  Foundation Degree in Science	FdA  FdSc	2400	2 years	120	60	60				
Diploma of Higher Education	5	T	Diploma of Higher Education	DiplHE	2400	2 years	120	60	48				
Higher National Diploma	5	T	Higher National Diploma	HND	2400	2 years							
Higher National Certificate	5	T	Higher National Certificate	HNC	2400	2 years							
Certificate of Higher Education	4	T	Certificate of Higher Education	CertHE	1200	2 sems	60	60					
University Certificate	4	T	University Certificate		600	1 sem	30	30					
Open Studies Certificate	4	T	Open Studies Certificate		300	1 sem	15	15					

\* T/R - Predominantly Taught or Research

**ANNEXES C – G** PROGRAMME DESIGN INFORMATION RELATING TO ASSESSMENT UNDER THE NEW FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSMENT: ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS:

[ANNEX C](#): FIRST DEGREES

[ANNEX D](#): POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT PROGRAMMES

[ANNEX E](#): FOUNDATION DEGREES

[ANNEX F](#): HONOURS YEAR PROGRAMMES

[ANNEX G](#): CPD FRAMEWORK PROGRAMMES

## Individual schemes of study

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(sometimes referred to as “special programmes of study”)

- 1.1 Under an individual scheme of study a student is permitted, for a specific and justifiable reason, to take a diet or pattern of units or other programme variant which is not normally permitted under the Programme Regulations but is deemed to be still relevant to the programme title in terms of content and equivalent in level of challenge.
- 1.2 Boards of Studies have delegated responsibility from Senate under their Terms of Reference for approving individual schemes of study.
- 1.3 Requests to Boards of Studies for approval of an individual scheme should only be approved in exceptional circumstances, including the following:
  - students with *long-term* health conditions, disabilities, mental ill-health or learning difficulties for whom other adjustments are not practicable (requires recommendation from [Disability Service](#))
  - students wishing with good reason to change to a related programme at a point where programme regulations do not allow for this
  - students with exceptional sporting commitments.
- 1.4 An individual programme of study would not normally be approved in the following circumstances:
  - where illness or other adverse circumstances have the potential to temporarily affect individual student assessment  
*Instead consider a request for extension (see QA16 , Assessment, Marking and Feedback) or Individual Mitigating Circumstances procedures.*
  - to enable students to select options which are not offered as part of the programme
  - to enable students to change their programme of studies  
Instead, opportunities for students to move on to other closely related programmes should be managed via programme structures and Designated Alternative Programmes (DAPs) at appropriate times of the year.
  - to cover staffing issues caused by e.g. maternity leave
  - for changes of options, programme, mode of study, extension of registration, where these have been agreed by the Director of Studies or Designated Signatory and fall within the regulatory framework. Online [advice](#) is available and a [change of circumstance](#) form may need to be completed.
- 1.5 In submitting a request for approval of an individual scheme of study, Directors of Studies should
  - (i) confirm that the proposal is appropriate, that they are supportive of it, whilst drawing attention to any potential risks or issues
  - (ii) ensure that students have considered the full range of options which may be available to them and are aware of sources of specialist advice such as the [Disability Service](#), [Student Immigration Service](#), [Student Finance](#), [Careers Service](#). In cases where fees, funding and visas could be affected, students should be strongly advised to seek such specialist advice. Students on Tier 4 visas must consult the Student Immigration Service.
- 1.6 Boards of Studies should normally approve individual schemes of study which permit compliance with [Regulation 15.7](#) which relates to maximum permitted study periods. Students must be counselled appropriately where an individual scheme of study would put them at risk of not completing within the maximum permitted time. Boards of Studies may recommend to Senate

specific arrangements for any student who might be deemed, for good reason, to be unable to meet the terms of Regulation 15.7.

- 1.7 Programme Administrators should update SAMIS records to reflect approved individual schemes of study. The Academic Registry should be informed of the approval of all individual schemes of study.

Academic Registry  
September 2018