

Curriculum Development

This section of the Hartpury Quality Enhancement Framework covers the development and approval of new programmes and modules, amendments to existing curriculum and suspension and closure of curriculum.

Key reference points

QAA Quality Code, Southern England Consortium (SEEC) Credit level descriptors and appropriate institutional strategic documents.

Audience

Members of staff and particularly Heads of Department, members of programme or module design teams, and members of committees involved in the development of programmes and modules.

Sections

1. Scope and principles
2. Key roles and responsibilities
3. Timescales
4. Approval of new curriculum
5. Curriculum Amendment
6. Curriculum Suspension and Closure
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1. Scope and principles

This section outlines the principles and processes for approval of new curriculum, amendment, suspension and closure of all programmes and modules.

The curriculum development process aims to ensure that developments:

- Align with the institution's strategic direction.
- Make a positive contribution to financial sustainability and risk.
- Are vocationally relevant.
- Meet national requirements on standards.
- Are academically robust.

This is tested by a period of consultation involving internal and external sources as appropriate. At all points, ensuring a programme of study offers a high quality and vocationally relevant student experience is central to this process.

2. Key roles and responsibilities

Key individuals

- a) The **Academic Registrar** has oversight of the curriculum development and approval process.
- b) The **Curriculum Records Manager** is the primary source of advice on curriculum design and approval, including the collation of all documents required for final approval, the administrative responsibilities in ensuring the process is logged and complete and the arrangements for the external reviewer's attendance at a Curriculum Validation Committee.
- c) The **Head of Department** is responsible for planning and monitoring curriculum development activity within their department, to ensure it aligns with the institution's mission, meets key objectives and provides a high quality and vocationally relevant student experience.
- d) The nominated **Curriculum Development Leader** is responsible for leading the development work, compiling all the necessary documentation, chairing/coordinating design meetings, ensuring deadlines are met and liaising with the necessary team members and support services.
- e) The **Curriculum Design Team** (in collaboration with the Curriculum Development Leader) is responsible for designing the academic content of a curriculum development and ensuring the development:
 - supports a high quality student experience,
 - meets expectations of academic quality and standards,
 - conforms with academic regulations, and;
 - supports students in developing to be the best they can become.

Committees

- a) The **Corporation** has responsibility for the overall educational character and mission of the institution and as such oversight of curriculum development that may affect it, including large scale curriculum development and closure.
- b) The **Academic Board** has delegated responsibility for the final approval of curriculum development to the Curriculum Validation Committee.
- c) The **Curriculum Validation Committee**, is responsible to Academic Board for the approval of new programmes and modules and for the approval of revisions to approved programmes and modules. It also oversees closure of curriculum once approved by Academic Board (permanent closure of curriculum to new entrants and subsequent removal from the curriculum portfolio). The Curriculum Validation Committee provides an annual report of activity to Academic Board.
- d) The **Higher Education Executive** is responsible for ensuring that a proposed curriculum development or suspension is aligned to the Higher Education strategic plan, and will consider the resource and public information implications of initial proposals for curriculum approval, amendment, suspension and closure. HE Executive provides a forum which can respond promptly.
- e) The **Curriculum Scrutiny Panel** oversees the implementation of the guidance on curriculum approval and amendment and provides a detailed peer scrutiny of proposals that contributes to the curriculum development process, prior to the Curriculum Validation Committee.
- f) The **Departmental Committee** facilitates student and staff input to proposed curriculum developments within a department, and ensures that the Departmental Enhancement Plan includes recommendations made during the curriculum development process.

3. Timescales

In advance of an academic year the Heads of Department will be asked to present the planned curriculum development for the year to Higher Education Executive. At that point a timetable of curriculum development will be agreed. Normally the concept for a new programme would be considered by February of the year before proposed entry to enable a fully informed marketing cycle to be completed prior to the first enrolment. The Curriculum Records Manager will agree appropriate deadlines with the Curriculum Development Leader to ensure timescales are met. Should a development fall outside of these timescales, please speak to your Head of Department in the first instance.

4. Approval of new curriculum

An initial concept for new curriculum is raised by a Head of Department to Higher Education Executive as part of the Higher Education Executive's planning activities. Informal discussions will have been held prior to this, potentially at Departmental Committee Meetings.

The Higher Education Executive is responsible for ensuring that the proposal is aligned to the Higher Education Strategic Plan and for considering the academic credibility, resource implications (physical and human) and feasibility (including timescales) of developments. If the concept is supported, the Department then nominates a Curriculum Development Leader who must undertake the Impact and Authorisation process.

4.1 The Impact and Authorisation forms

The Impact and Authorisation forms provide an opportunity to capture detailed rationale and information on the resource implications of the curriculum development proposed. The Curriculum Records Manager will provide advice to the Head of Department and Curriculum Development Leader during its completion.

For a **new programme** a Market Impact and Authorisation form facilitates proposed developments to be evaluated to establish where the new programme will sit in comparison to competitors and to provide sufficient information to enable the programme to be marketed to prospective applicants (contingent on approval). It will include details of any new modules proposed as part of the programme development, and whether a PSRB is likely to be involved to support planning this engagement.

For a **new module** being developed independently of a programme a Resource Impact and Authorisation form is completed if the module requires resources additional to those within the department's planning and budget.

The form will be reviewed by the appropriate Head of Department and then considered by Higher Education Executive. Where appropriate the Higher Education Executive will ensure that the Senior Management Team and Corporation are consulted (for example, where a proposal may have a significant impact on the educational character of the institution or resource requirements).

The Curriculum Records Manager will complete the outcome section of an Impact and Authorisation form including any conditions and recommendations. If the Impact and Authorisation form is authorised to proceed the Curriculum Development Leader must explicitly address the conditions or recommendations during the approval process. Once new curriculum has been authorised then it can be marketed as 'subject to validation'. The Curriculum Development Leader, Admissions Department and Marketing work together to ensure that

marketing information is accurate, up to date and informative, in line with legislative requirements, guidance and best practice.

Usually the approval process would be expected to be complete within two years of the authorisation, otherwise the Impact and Authorisation Form should be re-presented to the Higher Education Executive for consideration. Higher Education Executive should be consulted as to whether the authorisation to develop still applies.

4.2 Following authorisation to develop

The Curriculum Development Leader, in discussion with the Head of Department, will identify a design team. Whilst the membership of the design team may vary depending on the nature of the development it will usually include the following:

Curriculum Records Manager	Arrange communications, assist in drafting and development of documentation, provide advice to the programme team on process, requirements and regulations, oversee the timeline for consideration by relevant committees.
Module leaders	Draft new module specifications or consider whether existing modules may contribute to the development.
Student Representation	To provide insight from a student perspective.
Subject external advisers (eg external examiners, employers, industry experts)	To advise on the development of the curriculum within the context of their specialist expertise. This must include advice on current developments in the discipline and relevant benchmark statements.
Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (as appropriate)	To advise the development team of specific PSRB requirements.

4.3 The design phase

The following documentation must be completed during the design of the curriculum:

- a) Programme design and consultation form.
- b) Definitive documents: programme and/or module specifications.
- c) Academic profile template providing details of personnel involved in delivery and/or assessment of the programme.
- d) Details of any variant regulations that may be required (usually originating from PSRB requirements).

The Programme Design and Consultation form is designed to support the Curriculum Development Team through the significant consultation which will underpin a proposal for a new curriculum development.

A programme specification is the definitive description of a programme and will be made publicly available. A module specification is the definitive description of a module. They should be written in a way that is comprehensive to a lay audience but are mainly intended for both current and future students. All curricula must have completed definitive documentation.

The subject external advisers must be able to comment on the content and learning outcomes of the proposal, the level, and its currency in the market, as well as its alignment to subject benchmark statements or professional body requirements as appropriate. The approval process may require the involvement of one or more Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). PSRB representatives may be invited to join the Curriculum Validation Committee or be involved as part of the design team. For more detail on PSRBs please visit the PSRB section of the HQEF.

Student input into the design team is a key part of the process. This can be achieved by using the existing representation system within the committee structure, inviting student representatives to join design meetings, by holding open meetings or organising discussion groups for students to attend.

The design team may wish to include others such as National Teaching Fellows, Research Group Leads, specialist input for alternative forms of delivery or members of our support services (e.g. Library, Innovation, Careers and Enterprise or Achievement and Success Centre). In addition, alumni may also provide useful input into the design process.

4.4 Committee scrutiny and approval

When the new curriculum has been designed and the documentation has been confirmed as complete by the Head of Department, the proposal will be submitted to the Curriculum Scrutiny Panel. This panel provides a peer review process aimed at supporting the improvement of proposals during the development process as well as assuring their quality. Once satisfied that the documentation is appropriate and complete, the Curriculum Scrutiny Panel will recommend the proposal for consideration by the Curriculum Validation Committee. If a curriculum amendment is proposed that does not involve an amendment to current marketing information to applicants, and the Curriculum Scrutiny Panel is assured that it is in the best interests of applicants, students, the department and institution, then it may be sent to the Curriculum Validation Committee to note. Other curriculum developments will be considered more fully by Curriculum Validation Committee.

The Curriculum Validation Committee meetings are responsible to Academic Board for the approval, amendment and closure of new curriculum. Members of the curriculum design team will usually be invited to present new programmes. Additional panel members may be invited to attend as appropriate and in particular this may include individuals at the request of a PSRB.

The Curriculum Validation Committee ensures the design and organisation of the curriculum promotes student learning and achievement of the learning outcomes. As part of this process it considers the impact on the student experience of teaching, learning and assessment strategies within curriculum and facilitates external scrutiny of the proposal. It considers whether there is evidence that academic profiles underpin and enhance the provision. It ensures that the range of learner requirements has been considered and that external requirements (e.g. QAA Quality Code) and good practice have been used to enhance the learner's experiences.

The outcome of the Curriculum Validation Committee's consideration for the proposed new curriculum will be:

- a) Approval for a maximum of six years.
- b) Approval for a maximum of six years with conditions and/or recommendations.

c) Non-approval.

The Curriculum Validation Committee will identify good practice and innovative curriculum design to facilitate dissemination. The Curriculum Validation Committee will set a deadline by which the response to any conditions should be submitted. This will be considered at a future Curriculum Validation Committee meeting. The curriculum will not be open for enrolment until all conditions have been met. If recommendations are made, the response to these must be included within the Departmental Enhancement Plan and must be overseen by the relevant Head of Department. Where a proposal is not approved, a full report outlining all the concerns with specific recommendations or conditions will be produced by the Officer and appended to the Minutes of the Curriculum Validation Committee. If a programme or module reaches the end of its approval period it must be considered as part of a Periodic Curriculum Review that will consider whether to recommend it for re-approval.

As appropriate the Curriculum Development Leader and Head of Department must then work with Marketing and Admissions Departments to ensure that public information (including that externally reported) about the curriculum is accurate, up-to-date and informative, in line with legislative requirements, guidance and best practice. If changes to public information are required these must be communicated to current students and applicants as quickly as possible, ensuring that it is clear how their interests are being protected.

5. Curriculum amendment

Where curriculum requires amendment the Programme Manager or Module Leader will need to request a copy of the definitive document from the Curriculum Records Manager, complete with its change log. The Curriculum Records Manager will offer advice on the proposed form and its completion. Part of this form will request information to assess whether the proposed amendment would materially alter the curriculum. A material alteration is one which would change it in such a way that marketing information about it would require amendment, e.g. change of programme title, change of learning, teaching or assessment methods significant enough to change Unistats data significantly. An amendment that materially alters the curriculum advertised will require timely, written communication advising affected parties (usually applicants and/or students) of the change and the impact it may have on them (in line with legislative requirements and sector good practice). If an amendment also involves a change to the resources required to support that curriculum, that is not currently within the department plan and budget, then a Rationale and Impact Assessment Form should be completed.

If required, the Resource Impact and Authorisation Form should be submitted by the Head of Department to the Curriculum Records Manager. The Resource Impact and Authorisation Form will be submitted to Higher Education Executive for review. If the resource is significant, then the Higher Education Executive may have to seek further input to support a decision. The outcome of the Higher Education Executive's consideration of the Resource Impact and Authorisation Forms will be:

- a) Recommend the amendment goes forward for development
- b) Recommend the amendment is revised before going forward for development
- c) Does not recommend the amendment goes forward for development

Curriculum amendments that would materially alter curriculum for students currently enrolled on that curriculum would not normally be permitted unless it can be evidenced (e.g. via student or external examiner feedback) that the change would have real and substantial benefits to the students. Support from the Departmental Committee, and evidence of discussion and advice from colleagues in the Admissions and Marketing Departments (particularly with regard to the effect on, and implications for, public information) would strengthen any such proposals.

5.1 Following authorisation to develop

The Head of Department, Curriculum Development Leader and the Curriculum Records Manager meet to confirm the documentation required for approval and who should be consulted prior to approval. The documentation usually required for a curriculum amendment are:

- a) Revised definitive documents (programme specification and/or module descriptor(s) including a completed change log).
- b) If a Resource Impact and Authorisation form highlighted a change of personnel was required then an academic profile template providing details of personnel involved in amended delivery and/or assessment should be completed.
- c) Details of any variant regulations that may be affected or special consultation required (usually originating from Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements).

To support the development of documentation that ensures the enhancement of the student experience for all potential students enrolling on that curriculum and the future employability of graduates (as well as align with current regulations, strategies and guidance) curriculum consultation should be undertaken and recorded. The nature of that consultation will differ between proposals and will usually involve any Programme Managers and/or Module Leaders that are affected by the proposed amendment, enrolled students and the external examiner(s) for the curriculum. Records of the consultation must be made and provided to the Curriculum Records Manager in addition to the documentation in order for the proposed amendment to progress. From this point the proposal will be considered as described for new curriculum.

6. Curriculum periodic re-validation

Curriculum is only approved for a maximum of six years, and this end date is stated on the definitive documents for both module descriptors and programme specifications. A list of curriculum whose end date is in 2 years or less, will be considered at Curriculum Validation Committee on an annual basis. This is to enable departments and administrative support to plan and prepare for the curriculum to be reviewed. All curriculum must be scrutinised by Curriculum Validation Committee at least every 6 years, to ensure currency of syllabus, and teaching, learning and assessment strategy to support the students' programme experience.

7. Curriculum suspension and closure

There are a number of drivers which may precipitate a decision to remove a programme from the institution's portfolio on either a permanent (closure) or temporary (suspension) basis. These include, but are not limited to, as an outcome of programme monitoring or programme review, changes in patterns of demand from prospective students, or for other reasons, underpinned by analysis of management information. The suspension or closure of curriculum should be

considered as early as possible, and normally before the intake is marketed (e.g. UCAS advertising for undergraduate provision).

Whatever the rationale for the removal of the curriculum for new entrants, the interests of current students will be paramount. In the case of closure, currently enrolled students and individuals holding an offer will be consulted, alongside the Students' Union, and wherever possible steps will be taken to ensure they are fully supported.

Consideration will also be given to how academic standards on the programme(s) will be maintained and where necessary significant external stakeholders (e.g. employers or Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies) will be consulted.

Steps will be identified, at the point of decision, to support individuals holding an offer to study the programme or expecting to study the module to find an alternative programme or module, either at the institution or with another higher education provider. At all points the interests of applicants will be protected. The Student Protection Plan will be consulted, and action will be initiated as required.

Where a programme exists in a dormant state and there are no students or applicants holding offers, closure can take effect immediately following appropriate approval.

6.1 Proposal format

The Head of Department (or nominee) will normally, and where timeframes allow, submit a Curriculum Suspension and Closure Form to the Higher Education Executive. The Higher Education Executive can approve a suspension but if a closure is recommended the resource implications should be considered (with advice sought as necessary) and the Curriculum Suspension and Closure Form (including Higher Education Executive's recommendations) must be referred to Academic Board for consideration and approval, and submitted to Corporation. Reference to the consideration of the Student Protection Plan should be made.

6.2 Communication

The Curriculum Account Manager will ensure the completed Curriculum Suspension and Closure Form is circulated, normally within five working days of the decision, to:

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Academic Registrar and Deans	For information and action as appropriate.
Admissions	To remove the programme from UCAS (where applicable), the website and contact existing applicants as soon as possible after the decision has been made.
Marketing	To ensure the programme is removed from promotional/recruitment literature, including the website.

Academic Services and MIS	For information and to inform programme and student administration processes e.g. adding an end date to the student record system.
Chair and Officer of Curriculum Validation Committee	Curriculum Validation Committee oversees closure of curriculum
Head of Department	To inform academic staff and include in planning. In the case of closure, currently enrolled students must be contacted to confirm the outcome of the proposal, and the arrangements made to protect their interests. Particular attention should be given to articulating how student feedback as part of the closure process has been taken in to account.
Student Services	For information and action as appropriate.

7. Annex

Log of operational changes made to HQEF Curriculum Development Section

Version	Section	Change
16-17 v1	All	This was the original Approved document
17-18 v1	All	Nomenclature- Associate Faculty Board being renamed Academic Board HEFCE replacing Key Information Sets with Unistats HEFCE have replaced their KIS return with Unistats and therefore reference to KIS should be replaced by Unistats.
	4.1 Market Impact and Authorisation Forms	Reducing duplication of information between approval and marketing The Market Impact and Authorisation form was designed to try to provide information for initial approval of development and permission to market a new programme. With the increased requirements of webpage programme information provided by HEFCE through its Unistats return/audit the programme level information we provide on programmes we market had to be reviewed. It is proposed that the Course Information Sheet and information for the webpage form part of the Market Impact and Authorisation form with minimal additional information. In this way there is less duplication and less room for inaccurate information being in circulation. Resulting in: revising the Market Impact and Authorisation form and Course Information Sheet to between them provide all relevant information for initial approval to go to market.
	4.1 The Impact and	The Resource and Impact Form has been revised. The summary of Programme Amendments now requires a Course Information Sheet to be attached:

	<p>Authorisation Forms</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> You need to include the 'Course Information Sheet' with this form. Highlight the changed text that this includes to support approval.</p> <p>A reminder that when developing a new module the Employability Mapping Database will require completion.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Remember that this new module will have to be added to the Employability Mapping Database, and as such an appointment should be made with the ICE administrator. This will be requested at validation.</p> <p>A module amendment requires a revisit to the Employability Mapping Database and this is now required for that section of the RIA:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="564 542 1337 779"> <tr> <td data-bbox="564 542 1050 645">Summarise the Employability Mapping Database ratings without the amendment</td> <td data-bbox="1050 542 1337 645"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="564 645 1050 779">Summarise the Employability Mapping Database ratings with the amendment. Comment on the implications of the amendment.</td> <td data-bbox="1050 645 1337 779"></td> </tr> </table> <p>The RIA form already goes to the Head of a service affected, so that would help to close this loop. We will also add this to the Change Log on a module.</p>	Summarise the Employability Mapping Database ratings without the amendment		Summarise the Employability Mapping Database ratings with the amendment. Comment on the implications of the amendment.	
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	<p>4.3 The Design Phase</p>	<p>The academic departments have altered.</p> <p>Resulting in: change in guidance in Module Descriptor and Programme Specification documents.</p>				
	<p>5 - Curriculum Amendments</p>	<p>Remove repetition from paperwork around curriculum amendments</p> <p>Definitive documents have a Change Log, which is very useful for version control. The Resource, Impact Authorisation Form requested extensive information additionally. Many amendments had no resource implications and information was either duplicated or (more often) forms were poorly completed. It is suggested that the Change Log be used to record the amendment and the Resource, Impact and Authorisation Form only be completed where there are resource implications to the amendment. Strengthening the requirement to obtain the definitive document from the Curriculum Records Manager and following this process will enable a more effective and appropriate level of consideration and paperwork.</p> <p>Resulting in: revising the Curriculum Development web text and the Resource, Impact and Authorisation Form.</p>				
	<p>5.1 Following Authorisation to Develop</p>	<p>Introducing a requirement for programme development teams to engage with the Employability Mapping database.</p> <p>The Employability Mapping Database is being overseen by the Innovation, Careers and Enterprise centre and enables the employability skills developing within programmes to be visualised and developed strategically. Engagement with this is seen as good practice and as such reference to it has been made.</p> <p>Resulting in: inclusion of requirement to map and respond to the mapping within the Programme Design and Consultation Form.</p>				
<p>18-19 v3</p>	<p>All</p>	<p>Nomenclature Academic Registrar replaced the Associate Dean: Quality and Standards</p>				

		Curriculum Validation Committee replaced the Curriculum Approval Committee
	4.1 The Impact and Authorisation Forms	The Resource and Impact Form is now only required if the curriculum development has resource implications beyond those already within the department's plan and budget. Due to this the form has been revised to solely focus on resource implications. The MIA form has been revised to allow for modules well developed in their planning to be submitted as draft module specifications (with change log) instead of duplicating information.
	4.4 Committee scrutiny and approval	Remove reference to the Curriculum Approval Notification of Outcome. This form was not effectively communicating the outcome of the meeting and as such was an unnecessarily burdensome piece of administration that did not add to the information within the records of the meeting.
	The Module and Programme Specifications	The Change Log has been amended to enable more useful information to be held, including the sentence for the Course Information Sheets describing the module. It has also been moved to the final pages as it will be retained with the specification for publication.
19-20 v1	All	Update the documentation to accurately reflect the revised UK Quality Code.
	4.4 – Committee Scrutiny and Approval	Refine the approval process to enable curriculum amendments that do not significantly impact marketing information, and Curriculum Scrutiny Panel believes to be beneficial, to be noted at Curriculum Validation Committee. This should enable Curriculum Validation Committee to invest more time and effort in scrutinising other curriculum. Reinforce the importance of planning engagement with PSRBs, by mentioning this at planning stages, as well as development.
	6 – Curriculum Suspension and Closure	Reference to the Student Protection Plan has been added to this section.
	The Module and Programme Specifications	The first page has been amended to include the date that an approval can come into effect, rather than referring to an amendment only. The programme specification has had some guidance added to attempt to increase the worth and quality of aims and learning outcomes that are first proposed. Part 5 of the programme specification has been amended to integrate the distinctive features into the Teaching and Learning section, as the separation appeared to increase repetition and split the section artificially.
	Curriculum periodic re-validation	Inclusion of this new section to ensure that there is a clear process for identifying and reviewing curriculum if it is approaching its validated end date.

8. Section documents

Market Impact and Authorisation Form

Resource Impact and Authorisation Form

Programme Design and Consultation Form
Programme Specification
Course Information Sheet
Module Specification
Academic Profile
Curriculum Closure and Suspension Form