

Appendix 1. PROGRAMME APPROVAL AND PERIODIC REVIEW PROCESS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Programme approval, periodic review and early review processes will be adjusted so that they are appropriate for the risk associated with the proposal. Periodic reviews are conducted on the same basis as initial approval, but must also include a critical appraisal of the operation of the programme. This will include a review of the cumulative annual monitoring reports.
- 1.2 A schedule of programme approval and review activity is agreed between Faculties and Academic Quality annually taking into account the following:
- the Faculty's Delivery Plan;
 - the Faculty's liaison with the BU Market Research team in relation to any new programme developments;
 - the Faculty's liaison with current and proposed future Partners;
 - consideration of whether all undergraduate or postgraduate programmes should be reviewed together in one year to take into account common features or shared resources;
 - the need for an early review based on stakeholder feedback or new internal/external requirements;
 - a deferral of a review from the academic year in which it is due (requires approval from ASEC based on a formal request from the Faculty).
- 1.3 When finalising the programme approval and review schedule, Faculties should be mindful of the proposed start date of new programmes and for revised versions of existing programmes to ensure sufficient lead time for appropriate marketing activity to take place.
- 1.4 Where a Faculty wishes to defer a programme review, it must apply to ASEC for an extension to the programme's period of approval. Before a deferral request is presented to ASEC, a 'health check' on the programme will be carried out by Academic Quality. This will normally involve scrutiny of the latest external examiner report(s) and reports and action plans from the latest Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review. If the programme benefits from professional accreditation, the programme team must demonstrate that the relevant PSRB supports the deferral request (i.e. it would not jeopardise the programme's accreditation status).

2. Process

- 2.1 **New programmes or changes to titles of existing programmes** must be approved by the Faculty Executive (or Doctoral College for Standard Research Degree programmes and PhDs by publication), referring to the [Programme Development Proposal form](#) completed by the programme leader. The Faculty Executive/Doctoral College will consider the business case and points below for each proposal:
- the programme's fit with the Faculty's strategic direction and Delivery Plan;
 - the programme's alignment with BU's fusion strategy as outlined in BU2025
 - evidence of a viable market for the new or revised programme title(s) as provided by the BU Market Research team;
 - appropriate resource and staffing are in place to secure effective delivery and the student experience for the programme(s);
 - scrutiny of the resource requirements for the programme via a draft [Course Costing form \(the level of detail required at this stage should be determined by the Faculty Executive\)](#).
- 2.2 It is the responsibility of the Faculty Executive to agree what is required in order for an appropriate discussion to take place and for the *Faculty Executive sign off and actions template* to be fully completed. The programme leader may be asked to provide some additional information to support the *Programme Development Proposal form* in advance and may be invited to attend a meeting with the Faculty Executive. Programme leaders/development teams can refer to the *Faculty Executive sign off and actions template* to see the areas which will be considered.
- 2.3 In order for the Faculty to robustly establish market demand and the 'value to the student' for new or revised programme titles, the marketing information provided by the programme leader to the Faculty Executive should include consideration of the points listed below. Additional advice and support should be sought from the Market Research team in Marketing & Communications (M&C).

- what value (i.e. benefits/quality/opportunities) will a student get from studying the proposed programme
- what are the programme's unique selling points (USPs)
- what are the competitive alternatives to the proposed programme
- how is this programme different from those offered by BU's competitors and what 'advantage' does this difference(s) give BU
- how will this programme be positioned in the market place

2.4 Once the Faculty Executive is satisfied that a new programme proposal or change of existing title can go ahead, the completed *Faculty Executive sign off and actions template* is appended to the *Programme Development Proposal form* as evidence of the discussion that has taken place. The form is then submitted for consideration by the Faculty Academic Standards and Education Committee (FASEC). Due to the scheduling of meetings, consideration by FASEC may be completed electronically with members of the committee and the outcome reported to the Chair so that Chair's Action can be taken. Once proposals have been supported by FASEC they are submitted to ASEC for approval, and to Faculty Academic Board for information. The purpose of ASEC consideration is to approve new and revised programme proposals for development in relation to the University's overall academic profile and strategic objectives. ASEC will in particular expect to be assured of a viable market for the programme proposed. Where a new award of the University is requested, this must be approved by Senate following ASEC and the award subsequently included in *2A – Awards of the University: Policy*. ASEC approval signals the formal commencement of the development process. The *Programme Development Proposal form* and appended *Faculty Executive sign off and actions template* will be included in the Briefing and Resources document for the External Panel meeting.

2.5 **Initial Planning meeting:** for new programmes, this is held after ASEC has approved the programme development proposal. For existing programmes, this will be initiated after Faculties have confirmed the annual schedule for review and/or the intention to close a programme. A date for the meeting will be agreed between the relevant Department and Academic Quality. The Doctoral College will lead on the initial planning meeting for any new Standard Research Degree programmes and PhDs by publication, in consultation with the Research Degrees Committee. It is recommended that attendees include the following:

- Head of Department (HoD) or senior representative of the Doctoral College as appropriate (or lead HoD if appropriate);
- Department Head of Education (DHoE);
- Deputy Dean Research and Professional Practice (for Postgraduate Research programmes);
- Programme leader(s) (and other members of the team if appropriate);
- Link Tutor/Partnership Coordinator (if applicable);
- Academic Quality.

Other members of Faculty staff may attend as appropriate.

2.6 Where there is more than one approval/review taking place within the same department, it is recommended that one initial planning meeting is arranged to cover all of the programmes within that department.

2.7 **Nominating external panel members:** the Faculty is responsible for nominating appropriate external panel members (EPMs) using the [Evaluation panel composition and external panel member nomination form](#). Completed nomination forms should be submitted to Academic Quality as soon as possible after the initial planning meeting and by a date agreed with Academic Quality.

2.8 **Faculty approval** is overseen and led by the DDEPP or their nominee, or by the Doctoral College in the case of Standard Research Degrees and PhDs by Publication; in the latter case, Faculty approval will be undertaken either as part of the Research Degrees Committee, or as a separate meeting reporting to the Academic Board arranged by the Doctoral College. Academic Quality is able to provide advice to the Faculty as required. The purpose of Faculty approval is to ensure that the proposed programme and associated documentation are ready for final scrutiny by an External Panel. Full details are provided in the [Stages in the periodic review process](#).

- The approach to Faculty approval should be proportionate to the perceived level of risk associated with the development. Faculties have flexibility to define an approach suitable for its own requirements e.g. informal face to face meetings, or approval by correspondence;
- the Link Tutor and/or Partnership Coordinator will participate in arrangements for Faculty approval to support programme teams for partnership provision.

2.9 It is recommended that **Faculty approval** is based on consideration of the following documents, some of which will be required later for the External Panel meeting:

- Briefing and Resources document;
- Programme Specification(s) (not required for Standard Research Degrees or PhDs by publication);
- Unit Specifications (for new programmes and for reviews if considered appropriate; only required for Postgraduate Research awards where there are taught credit-bearing units);
- Completed Faculty Executive sign off and actions template (can be included as an appendix to the Briefing and Resources document);
- Updated Course Costing form following initial consideration by Faculty Executive.

If applicable:

- Curriculum mapping document and associated Programme Specification(s) and Unit Specifications for internal Progression routes;
- Written confirmation of proposed external Progression routes;
- 8A – Code of Practice for Research Degrees.

2.10 **External Panel meeting:** Academic Quality, on behalf of ASEC, is responsible for appointing the panel for the External Panel meeting. The level of scrutiny required and the size of the panel will depend on the scale and scope and the perceived or actual risk associated with the programme(s).

2.11 A panel will normally comprise:

- at least one, but normally two internal and independent panel members from QAEG (one of whom will chair the meeting);
- at least one or more academic subject experts independent of BU;
- an independent panel member from industry or professional practitioner from the relevant field (a requirement for work based learning awards, including Foundation degree or Degree Apprenticeship evaluation events);
- PSRB representative(s), if appropriate;
- independent representatives from the Research Degree Committee and the Research Degrees Committee (for Standard Research Degrees and PhDs by publication);
- a representative from Academic Quality, who co-ordinates the meeting and is the main point of contact between the parties involved.

Panel composition, appropriateness of membership and any permissible variations to this will be approved by the Head of Academic Quality or their nominee.

2.12 Further information for internal and external panel members is provided in *4C - Panel Members for Programme Approval, Review and Closure: Procedure*.

2.13 The **External Panel meeting** consists of a number of meetings with different stakeholders involved in the programme(s). Depending on the number of programmes being considered, the meetings normally take place over one day and are held at the place of delivery. An [indicative event schedule](#) outlines the different components of the meeting. PSRBs will be involved as needed under their own requirements.

2.14 The maximum period of approval for programmes is six years. If the panel has concerns around quality and standards and these cannot be met through conditions, a more limited approval period or no approval may be proposed. If a review is limited in scope, the existing period of approval will not change. For programmes delivered by a new Partner, the maximum period of approval is three years in the first instance. Following the first review the maximum approval period is six years.

2.15 For the External Panel meeting the following documents will normally be required (see 3 for more information on documentation):

- Briefing and Resources document;
- Programme Specification(s) (not required for Standard Research Degrees or PhDs by publication);
- Unit Specifications;
- completed Faculty Executive sign off and actions template (can be included as an appendix to the Briefing and Resources document);
- for periodic reviews, key aspects of the latest Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review (AMER) (normally the programme action plan, department summary, external examiner(s) report) and/or Research Degrees quality report as appropriate;
- Placement Handbook (unless the programme does not have a placement component) (for foundation degrees this may take the form a work-based learning handbook);

The following documents are required for evaluation of Postgraduate Research provision:

- 8A – Code of Practice for Research Degrees and Programme Handbook where information relevant to postgraduate research students is not included in 8A or the programme specification (as appropriate).

2.16 Documents provided for the External Panel meeting must be saved in the appropriate folder three weeks before the meeting takes place. Academic Quality will advise on the location to save the documents and will circulate the documents to the panel together with other information relating to the meeting.

2.17 **Following the External Panel meeting** Academic Quality will produce a set of outcomes and a written report of the meeting, which will record the process, debate and outcomes. This will be circulated to the panel and the Faculty/Partner for comment on matters of fact and accuracy.

2.18 If conditions of approval and/or recommendations are set, the HoD or the Link Tutor/Partnerships Coordinator for partner provision, together with the programme leader/development team are required to provide a full response to the conditions and at least an initial response to the recommendations by the date stated by the panel. New programmes will be promoted from the point at which conditional approval is granted by the external panel. Programmes will be opened for applications once it has been confirmed that conditions of approval have been met.

2.19 Recommendations can be adopted before the start of the programme or considered over a longer time period. Responses to recommendations will be formally incorporated into the annual monitoring process through the programme action plan so that programme teams can continue to consider the points raised and action or close them off as appropriate. Programmes cannot be delivered until formal University approval has been granted so it is important that the programme leader/development team meets the specified deadline for responding to conditions/recommendations. PSRB approval or accreditation may be granted through a joint conditions process or it may be completed separately from the University's academic award.

2.20 Once the DDEPP/HoD/Link Tutor/Partnership Coordinator is satisfied with the responses to the conditions/recommendations these are forwarded to Academic Quality who will send the response to the panel. Once all panel members have confirmed that they are satisfied that the conditions have been satisfactorily met, approval is confirmed by the Academic Quality Manager (or nominee) and notification of formal approval will be sent to the Faculty/Partner and relevant staff in Professional Services. Completion of the programme approval or review will be reported to the next meeting of ASEC.

2.21 On receipt of notification of formal approval, Faculties are responsible for ensuring that final versions of the Programme Specification(s) and Unit Specifications are provided to Academic Quality within two weeks, to be saved by Academic Quality as a PDF in the appropriate network folder, BU's central depository for all definitive documents. Academic Quality will upload Programme Specification(s) to SharePoint and M&C will link the Programme Specification(s) to Course Search to enable potential applicants to view the definitive programme information. For Partners on the Validated Partner model it is the responsibility of the Partner to advertise the programme and to provide a link to the Programme Specification. The Programme Specification(s) will also be sent to applicants. Further information is set

out in *3R – Programme Update Communications: Procedure*. The Programme Specification(s) also form the basis for student handbooks (*5A - Welcome Guide and Programme/Level Handbooks: Procedure*).

3. DOCUMENTATION

3.1 The following documents are prepared by the programme leader/development team with support from the DDEPP, HoD, DHoE, ESM, Director of Operations and Academic Quality. For developments at Partners, the Link Tutor and/or Partnership Coordinator is expected to provide support to the team throughout the process. All documents are provided in electronic form, unless otherwise stated by a PSRB and saved in the appropriate network folder.

3.1.1 **Briefing and Resources document:** a template is provided [here](#).

the Briefing and Resources document:

- outlines the scope of the programme(s) and the context;
- demonstrates that the programme(s) have been designed in line with current internal and external frames of reference as set out in *2B - Programme Structure and Curriculum Design Characteristics:Policy* ;
- outlines the resources available to support the programme(s);
- **For new approvals;**
 - provides a rationale for the major features of the proposal;
 - provides information on the market research undertaken and the summary of the market findings (advice on methods and sources of information is available from the Market Research team in M&C);
- **For periodic reviews;**
 - evaluates the delivery of the programme(s) and demonstrates if and why changes are proposed based on the accumulative ARFMs/ARCMs/AMERs since the last approval/review and any new market research;
 - provides an overview of the major changes proposed and a rationale for changes being made.

3.1.2 **Programme Specification:** a Programme Specification is the defining document for each programme approved by the University (with the exception of standard research degrees and PhDs by publication which are defined by *8A – Code of Practice for Research Degrees*) and as such provides a summary of key information. It defines the aims, intended learning outcomes (ILOs), structure, credits, regulations, institutions participating, and awards that may be conferred. It may be used by academic staff, students, external examiners, professional services staff and by applicants when choosing their programme of study.

Programme Specifications are approved by an external panel and can only be amended through formal procedures for review, modification or changes in regulations which are reported to ASEC. The Faculty, in collaboration with Academic Quality, is responsible for ensuring the final version of the Programme Specification(s) following an approval, review or modification are fully completed and reflects the most current and up to date information for the programme.

Final versions of all Programme Specifications are saved as a PDF in BU's central depository for definitive documents.

Individual Programme Specifications must be produced for each separate programme.

3.1.3 **Unit Specifications:** all taught BU programmes are comprised of separately defined and credited units of study. A Unit Specification defines a unit of study in terms of aims, intended learning outcomes (ILOs), content, learning, teaching and assessment methods and learning resources. Unit Specifications are used by academic staff, students and external examiners. The combined collection of Unit Specifications presented to an External Panel meeting should clearly indicate any units that are already in approval in another programme. A Unit Specification template is provided [here](#).

Final versions of all Unit Specifications are saved as a PDF in BU's central depository for definitive documents.

- 3.1.4 **Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review (AMER):** for periodic reviews the key aspects of the latest AMER (normally the programme action plan, department summary, and external examiner report(s)). For research degrees, this should also include the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Quality Report.
- 3.1.5 **Placement Handbook:** all programmes with a placement component, including professional practice placements, must provide a Placement Handbook. The Placement Handbook may follow a standard template developed by the Faculty or may be specific to the programme. For further information please see *4K – Placements: Policy and Procedure*.
- 3.1.6 **Curriculum mapping for internal Progression routes:** for example, progression from a BU foundation degree to a BU Level 6 top up programme. See *4F – Internal Progression: Procedure* and example mapping documents at [!\Academic Services\Public\Academic Quality\Archive Prog Approval and Review\Examples of curriculum mapping](!:\Academic Services\Public\Academic Quality\Archive Prog Approval and Review\Examples of curriculum mapping). At the point of Faculty approval, the completed curriculum mapping document, the relevant Programme Specification(s) and Unit Specifications should be provided, so that the Faculty can consider whether progression will be seamless. Where this documentation is not available at the point of Faculty approval, the progression arrangement should be considered before proceeding to the External Panel stage and involve the receiving programme team to ensure the mapping is properly considered.
- 3.1.7 **External progression arrangements:** if students are expected to progress to an award at another higher education institution, an official letter of agreement from a senior departmental manager at the other institution must be provided for the Faculty to consider. This letter must set out any additional requirements, for example, attainment levels or interview processes. The Faculty will confirm whether the receiving institution provides an appropriate progression arrangement at the point of Faculty approval.

4. IMPACT AND CONSULTATION WITH CURRENT STUDENTS

- 4.1 It is the expectation that the new version of an existing programme will come into effect for the next new intake of students and will not affect current students. If this is the case the remainder of Section 4 will not apply. However, in some circumstances, the Faculty may wish the revised version to be implemented for existing students. In such cases consent must be obtained from the affected students as set out below before the changes can be implemented.
- 4.2 If significant changes are proposed which will apply to current students, all students affected must be informed of the proposed changes and the written agreement of affected students, per level, per programme, must be obtained, as per the expectations of *4B Programme and Unit Modifications*. Faculties should ensure all reasonable efforts are made to obtain student support for the proposed changes. This includes making repeated attempts to contact students. When outlining the changes to students it is suggested that the following text is included: *“Please confirm that you are happy with these changes. If you do have concerns or are not willing to consent to them, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can consider your concerns.”*
- 4.3 If consent is required, it must always be obtained before the External Panel meeting. Students must be informed that the changes remain subject to formal approval.
- 4.4 Faculties must ensure that an audit trail of the correspondence with the students is kept, including any potential issues that are raised. The outcome of the consent process must be reported to FASEC and to the External Panel to consider when reviewing the change.
- 4.5 Where less than 100% sign up is achieved during the consultation process, and where the Faculty determines that the proposed change is categorised as per section 5.2 of ARPP 4A, the Faculty should discuss this during Faculty approval after which the follow-up process as per the [CMA significant change and impact action template](#) will be instigated.
- 4.6 If the change is confirmed at the completion of the review process, existing students must be informed of the change, including any differences between the change that they were consulted about and the one that is finally made, and the response to any important issues raised by students during the consultation. More information about the communication requirements is given in *3R – Programme Update Communications: Procedure*.

4.7 As per the University's [Student Agreement](#), the Faculty must consider matters relating to fairness; both the impact of any changes and the fairness of the process followed in considering and communicating the change, as part of their deliberations.

5. CLOSING A PROGRAMME OUTSIDE OF A PERIODIC REVIEW

5.1 The Faculty must consider whether the programme to be closed has been marketed for a start date after the now proposed closing date and what steps are in place to communicate with applicants¹ or potential applicants to this programme. If applications have already been made for a start date after the proposed closing date, the arrangements for these applicants must be outlined in the Briefing document.

5.2 The Faculty must also consider whether any students that are studying a pathway at BU International College (BUINTCOL) may be holding an offer for the programme to be closed and what steps are in place to communicate with applicants to this programme. If applications have already been made for a start date after the proposed closing date, the arrangements for these applicants must be outlined in the Briefing document.

5.3 The DDEPP (and the Link Tutor/Partnership Coordinator for programmes delivered at a Partner) oversees the preparation of the Review for Closure Briefing document, by the programme leader, sets a deadline for completion of this document and confirms when the document will be considered by FASEC. Following consideration of the document by FASEC a Review for Closure meeting will be arranged by Academic Quality. A Review for Closure meeting should take place as soon as possible after the decision has been made by the Faculty to close the programme so that any concerns raised can be addressed in a timely manner to the benefit of the students remaining on the programme. For all closing programmes which have been in approval for 5 years or less, Academic Quality will complete a [programme closure evaluation form](#) to collect information about the history of the programme and reasons for the closure.

5.4 If closure of the programme also brings a partnership to an end, Academic Quality will check the period of notice in the contract and to agree if there are additional requirements for consideration at the Review for Closure meeting. Once there are no students left on the programme, Academic Quality will formally terminate the contract and send a letter to the Partner confirming that closure is complete.

5.5 The following core documents are required for a Review for Closure meeting:

- **Review for Closure Briefing document:** a template is provided [here](#);
- the current **Programme Specification(s)**;
- key aspects of the latest **Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review** (AMER) normally the programme action plan, department summary, external examiner(s) report;
- extract from the **FASEC minutes** when the Briefing document was presented and the Faculty's deliberations and approval to proceed with the closure was discussed.

5.6 Depending on the scale and complexity of the closure, the following additional documentation may also be required:

- CVs of all staff currently teaching on the programme;
- student handbook;
- unit guides;
- assessment schedule for the current academic year.

¹ Please see 3R – Programme Update Communications: Procedure for more information.